

Even Bill Maher is calling out J.D. Hall's nonsense

Muslims have hardly been 'kind' to Christians

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Recently, comedian Bill Maher, in discussing the history of Israel and the Middle East, said the following on his show: “Young people [are learning] everything about Israel on TikTok. They don’t know s---, and their leaders are not standing up and saying, ‘Kids, you don’t know what’s going on here.’” Of course, Mr. Maher is right about all this, with one exception. Everything the burgeoning political class knows about the Middle East is not learned just on TikTok. Unfortunately, much of it is derived from pseudo-intellectuals such as disgraced Baptist minister J.D. Hall.

As I wrote two weeks ago in this column, Mr. Hall is a former pastor from Sidney, Montana, who was indicted in 2024 on charges of drug abuse, domestic violence and felony embezzlement. As a result of pleading “no contest” to these charges, he received a reduced sentence and an expunged record if he complied with all the conditions of his probation.

Today, Mr. Hall boasts of never “technically” being convicted of any of these crimes (again, because of the terms of the plea deal). This is the “theologian” Tucker Carlson featured on his show to discuss all things related to Islam, Israel and the Middle East and how Muslims have historically treated Christians.

Although the dialogue between Messrs. Carlson and Hall lasted an hour and 44 minutes, it can be summarized as follows. After spending about 54 minutes describing the evils of evangelical dispensationalists (people Mr. Carlson has said he “despises more than anyone else”), Mr. Hall began to laud how “kind” the Ottoman Empire was to Christians versus the “hostility” and “violence” perpetrated against believers in the modern state of Israel.

Mr. Hall’s curious example of Jewish animus versus Islamic love was his claim that Tel Aviv taxes the Christian church while Muslims have never taxed it.

In fact, here is exactly what he said: “The Muslim rulers didn’t tax churches. During the Ottoman period. They were very kind to Christians.”

Is this true? Were Muslim rulers in pre-British Palestine and its ancillary region very kind to Christians? And is it accurate to say that the Ottoman Empire never taxed the church?

The answer is unequivocally no. This is not true.

First, any fair reading of history quickly dispels the notion of Islamic “kindness.” Even Muslim artwork depicts the barbarity of the Ottoman reign. Beheadings and crucifixions were common practices. Christians who refused to renounce their faith were also impaled, drawn and quartered and burned at the stake.

Women were raped, and children were conscripted into slavery. Even as recently as the 1860s, the “kindness” of the Muslim massacres in Lebanon and Damascus resulted in thousands of men and women being summarily executed simply because they were followers of Christ.

What about Mr. Hall’s claim that Islam has never taxed the church? Well, that is also pure fabrication.

Take, for example, the practice of Islamic apartheid, otherwise known as the “millet system.” This was a segregationist scheme dreamed up by the Ottomans to abuse, humiliate and subjugate all the non-Muslims they had, for whatever reason, chosen not to kill.

Under this caste system, these “very kind” Muslim rulers essentially forced all Christians into ghettos (i.e., “millets”), where they were required to pay three kinds of taxes in exchange for being allowed to live.

First, there was the jizya tax. This was imposed on all non-Muslims (otherwise known as “dhimmi”) who refused to convert. The jizya was a “poll or tribute” that Christians were required to pay in exchange for being allowed to live in their now-conquered towns and villages. Failure to pay this tax resulted in serious penalties up to and including fines, imprisonment, even death. Second, there was the kharja tax. This was a tax on all private property held by Christians. It was often so overwhelming that it led to foreclosure and the confiscation of property so that it could be redistributed to local Muslims as a result. Third, there was the devshirme, otherwise known as the “blood tax,” and it was the most pernicious of all. This was a “levy of children” imposed by “kind Muslim rulers.” It forced Christian parents to “pay a tax” of one (or more) of their sons to the Ottoman state so

these little boys could then be marched off and trained to become jihadis for the Muslim empire. Refusing to pay the devshirme was considered an act of treason and punishable by death. As a former minister (defrocked though he may be), Mr. Hall surely knows that the church is not the four walls of any given building. Rather, it is the collection of believers otherwise known as “Body of Christ.” Furthermore, he must know that his claims about Ottoman rulers being “very kind” and “never taxing” it are patently absurd. Mr. Maher’s basic premise is spot on. The “kids” today don’t know anything about Israel, Islam, Christianity and the Middle East, and for two reasons: Either their education is no deeper than Tik-Tok or, worse, they are getting their information from discredited men such as J.D. Hall.

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