



American Textbooks and the Rise of Anti-Semitism  
by  
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Is anti-Semitism being sanctioned and taught today via the American school system? Are we witnessing the indoctrination of our students, not in the tenets of another religion as proscribed by the Supreme Court in the early 1960s, but in subtle and sometimes not so subtle anti-Semitism? There has always been visible in our textbooks both latent anti-Semitism and a shrouded disregard for the Judeo-Christian Tradition espoused and envisaged by the Founding Fathers. To be effective, both must be subtly embedded in the text. It cannot be visceral in nature if it is to indoctrinate without causing alarm. It was the primacy of Christianity over Judaism that best describes the nature of earlier textbook anti-Semitism. There was never the intent of the publishers to eliminate Judaism as a world religion, to delegitimize the Jewish state of Israel and to eviscerate the Jewish People. That is no longer the case.

In 2017 Pearson Publishers released *The Cultural Landscape An Introduction to Human Geography*. It is an Advanced Placement (AP) textbook, used in pre-college high school classes. On the surface, it is an excellent well-written textbook, suitable for 9<sup>th</sup> grade AP students. Its title *The Cultural Landscape An Introduction to Human Geography* implies a broad sweeping landscape presentation of today's world and a basic introduction to the different peoples and their contributions to the development of world culture. The textbook meets those expectations and provides the students with ample material from which to learn.

That being said, this textbook is dangerous. Its anti-Semitism is visceral, deadly, and contagious. Once this Pearson textbook is adopted and used in various States, its message will spread and infect generations of youngsters. Pearson textbooks have promulgated a subtler anti-Semitism over the years by removing the Romans from any responsibility in the death of Jesus, presenting a revisionist chronology of the development of the world religions, i.e. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, misrepresenting the basic tenets of Judaism, and creating inequality in the number of pages devoted to Judaism in comparison with those devoted to Christianity and Islam.

But it is in this textbook that Pearson has shown the perfection of its anti-Semitism and its genius at developing an irreversible method to eliminate Judaism as a world religion and thereby to endanger the security of Jews throughout the United States by encouraging and teaching anti-Semitism in the classroom.

As a scholar and researcher on anti-Semitism in U.S. textbooks, I divide anti-Semitism into two, often interrelated, categories: basic, stereotypic anti-Semitism and virulent Islamist anti-Semitism. Stereotypic anti-Semitism appears in cartoons as well as in carefully disguised and otherwise harmless photographs. It is also couched in slanted and/or biased vocabulary. Often, textbook anti-Semitism now supports the Islamist narrative. Pearson is, in my opinion, the one major publisher whose overt textual anti-Semitism is derived from this. As such, it is Pearson that is directing both the rise in anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism in American education today.

I believe that the following examples speak to the question of Pearson's methodology of espousing anti-Semitism.

In Chapter 4, on page 124 there is a section titled *Folk Clothing: Religious Traditions*. We find two photographs which teach that "Devout Muslims and Jews wear modest black clothing." While the photograph and its title appear "harmless" in themselves, they are an example of the base anti-Semitism embedded in otherwise harmless photographs. Orthodox Jews, and in particular their garb, are often used as anti-Semitic stereotypes in our textbooks. We see photos of them attired in their easily recognized black garb, wearing such religious symbols such as the *tzitzit* (or fringes or tassels worn on traditional or ceremonial garments by Jewish males as reminders of the Commandments of Deuteronomy 22:12 and Numbers 15:37-41) and *payot* (sidelocks or side curls worn by Orthodox, and Hasidic boys and men based on an interpretation of the biblical injunction against shaving the "corners" of one's head). When portrayed in chapters on Israel, these black garbed Jews often represent the "Far Right", the "religious extremists" or even the Ultra-Orthodox, who do not accept the legitimacy of the state of Israel. In chapters on the Holocaust, photos of black garbed Jews with long beards, long payot and large noses represent **the** Jews of Eastern Europe, impoverished, or usurers, uneducated or rabbis. This is the subliminal message inserted within these photos.

In the picture referenced above, Pearson attempts to establish equivalency between Muslims and Jews. It is no different than the often-used comparison of codified Sharia Law and codified Talmudic Law. Here, Pearson uses the tenet of Modesty and the black clothing, that are signs of Orthodox Jews, to indoctrinate students by showing that Muslims are not different from Orthodox Jews, as concerns black clothes and the tenet of Modesty. However, in Judaism the black clothes are not imposed on others as they are in Islam. They are not a societal concern nor do they threaten how the majority dresses. Pearson has cleverly embedded anti-Semitism into this photo by establishing a false equivalency between Islam and Judaism, the first which calls for the elimination of Israel and the Jews and the second, whose most "recognizable" and therefore most vulnerable followers are victims of constant overt anti-Semitic attacks.

However, what follows here is for me the most dangerous development present in any textbook today, regardless of the publishing house. Pearson has eliminated Judaism as one of the three World Religions. This is both anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias. In addition, it is Pearson's elevation of Islam and elimination of the Judeo-Christian Tradition upon which this country was founded.

In Chapter 6 on page 184 (under "LEARNING OUTCOME 6.1.1), students are asked to identify the world's major religions. The text presents them as follows:

The world's religions can be grouped as follows:

- Four largest religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.
- Folk religions: Chinese traditional, primal-indigenous, and African traditional
- **Other** religions: the 4 most numerous Juchte, Judaism, Sikhism, and Spiritism.
- 6 others with less adherents: Cao Dai, Jainism, Shinto, Tenrikyo, and Zoroastrianism.
- Unaffiliated (not affiliated with any of the above)

It is in this material that Pearson exhibits a most dangerous, insidious form of anti-Semitism. Pearson has diabolically restructured the World Religions using the number of adherents

and eliminating both chronology and contributions to the growth of civilization. Judaism is no longer chronologically the first World Religion, Christianity the second and Islam the third. Judaism now belongs to a category called “Other.” Pearson has set the scene for a world devoid of Judaism, Israel and the Jewish People.

In Chapter 6 on page 194, Judaism, ll.30-32; 38-40; 45-47, we find the following:

ll. 30-32 Roughly two-fifths of the world’s 14 million Jews live in the United States and another two-fifths live in Israel.

ll. 38-40 Judaism plays a more substantial role in Western civilization than its number of adherents would suggest. Judaism is the first recorded religion to espouse **monotheism**, belief that there is only one God. Fundamental to Judaism is one all-powerful God.

ll. 45-47 “The world’s two most widely practiced religions – Christianity and Islam – find some of their roots in Judaism.”

In lines 30-32, by naming only the United States and Israel and by not teaching students that Jews also live in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Latin America, South America, Asia, and in various countries in the Middle East, Pearson removes Judaism as a *world* religion and skillfully eviscerates the Jewish people.

In lines 38-40, Pearson’s first sentence is condescending at its best and substantiates the anti-Semitism and the anti-Israelism that this publishing house has exhibited in its textbooks over the years. The first sentence is the extent of Pearson’s acknowledgement of the role of Judaism in the development of civilization. Not even the Ten Commandments make it into this section or any other section of this textbook.

In lines 45-47, stating that Christianity and Islam find “some of their roots in Judaism” is anti-Semitism couched in religious revisionism. Christianity developed from Judaism. Jesus was a Jew, a rabbi who preached his enlightened interpretations. He lived and died a Jew. What he preached came from variations upon and interpretations of what he studied and believed. Christianity grew out of Judaism and went forward. It never separated itself from its origins. In this textbook, Pearson has succeeded in eliminating the Judeo-Christian tradition upon which this country’s philosophy and ideology are based. Judeo-Christian, written with the hyphen, means equality of the two religions. This is how the American Founding Fathers understood the ideological relationship shared by these two religions.

The sections that address the religions themselves remove much of the eclectic nature of Christianity and certainly of Islam. Without Judaism as the first world religion, neither Christianity nor Islam has any connection to or roots in Judaism. Base anti-Semitism is fed in this way. Jews are easily expendable and anti-Semitic acts sanctioned. World Religions have always been defined as those that shaped civilizations and not by the number of their adherents. Pearson has redefined civilization as we know it. The Judeo-Christian foundation of the United States has been eliminated. Christianity, while still numerically superior, is presented throughout the narrative in

a secondary position to Islam. The growing global genocide of Christians is paving the way for Pearson to support the supremacy of Islam based on its numbers and as such to indoctrinate our students with Christian anti-Semitism and Islamist anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism.

There remains yet another form of anti-Semitism in this Pearson textbook. It is very simple and very successful. It is one that eliminates the presence of the Jews from American history. In a perverse way, it completes the work that Hitler did not finish.

On page 85, ll. 35-41 U.S. IMMIGRATION: LATE TWENTIETH TO EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Immigration to the United States dropped sharply in the 1930s and 1940s, during the Great Depression and World War II. The number steadily increased beginning in the 1950s and then surged to historically high levels during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

More than three-fourths of the recent U.S. immigrants have emigrated from two regions:

- Latin America
- Asia

Nowhere in this immigration time-period has Pearson addressed, even numerically, the large number of Jews who fled to this country to escape religious persecution, which also included economic persecution via closing of all trades and other employment. Therefore, the Pogroms in Russia and the overt, deadly anti-Semitism in Germany and Poland do not exist for these students. The exclusion implies that no Jews were persecuted, that no Jews fled Europe and immigrated legally to the United States in search of religious and societal freedom. In addition, Pearson did not address the Quota System on the admission of Jews to this country. There is no mention of either the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 or the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act passed by Congress. Both intended to limit the immigration of Jews to the United States. The terrain for American collaboration in the extermination of the Jews during the Holocaust was prepared and put into law by our Congress. Pearson has made certain that our students learn nothing about it. Judaism is no longer a world religion. Jews are not a part of American history. The Jews are expendable. The Christians will soon be expendable. The road is paved for Islamic immigration and Islamic superiority.

Subtle anti-Semitism? Pearson's message is painfully clear.

\*\*Review written by Dr. Sandra Alfonsi at the behest of Adam Milstein