

## **Just How Many People *Has* Religion Killed?**

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A popular urban legend that I've often heard is that religion has killed more people than anything else, so the world would be a lot more peaceful place were it not for religion. The top three largest examples are thought to be the Crusades of the Middle Ages, the Spanish Inquisition, and the burning of witches. Scholars estimate that the Crusades of the middle ages cost from 58,000 to 133,000 lives. The most realistic figure for the Spanish Inquisition puts the total killed from AD1480 to AD1808 at up to 31,912. Finally, records indicate that the number of witches killed may be over 30,000. Some argue that records don't tell everything and suggest that maybe even 100,000 were killed. These three events, totaling over 264,000 killed, are thought to be the largest atrocities perpetrated by one or another form of Christendom. As we shall shortly see, however, they pale into insignificance in comparison to the consequences of atheism.

There are two points to make by way of response. The first point can be made by asking the question, "Are these activities consistent with what Jesus taught?" Most people with even an elementary knowledge of Christ will admit that such killing is inconsistent with His teachings. People often try to justify their hatred, actions, and even killing by appealing to whatever is held in high regard by the population. It follows that if Christianity is or was held in high regard by populations, that certain people with the power to carry out atrocities would attempt to justify them in the name of Christianity. It is a simple-minded person indeed who reasons, "Joe claims he is a Christian--Joe committed an atrocity in the name of Christianity--therefore Christianity promotes atrocities." The Bible states that the person who says he loves God, but hates his brother, is a liar. There are many people through history that have done horrible things in the name of Christianity, but Jesus' words, "you will know them by their fruit" tell the real story regarding their love for God and whether they follow the commands of Jesus Christ.

The second point to make is that, yes, people who claim to love God do kill, but nowhere near to the extent that the lack of religion does. According to University of Hawaii political scientist Rudolph J. Rummel,<sup>1</sup> the total number killed in all of human history is estimated to be about 284,638,000. Of that number, 151,491,000 were killed during the past 100 years. The single largest killer in all of human history is, by far, atheistic Communism with a total of 110,000,000 ... over 1/3 of all people ever killed! If we add to that number just two other regimes where religion of any sort was strongly discouraged, Nazi Germany and Nationalist China, the number rises to 141,160,000. Almost 50% of all the killings in human history were committed in the past 100 years by regimes that either actively promoted atheism or strongly discouraged religion. We have not considered the over one billion abortions, where Christianity seems to be particularly unwelcome. When the murders of history are tallied up, it is very clear that atheism is the most dangerous philosophy ever embraced by humanity. The most effective restraint on mankind's inherently evil tendencies is faith in God through Jesus Christ, a faith that actually follows the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ as a daily way of life.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE1.HTM> (all stats have come from this site)