



Is It Christian to Hunt?

David Irving

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Author's statement: I began attending church about three years ago after a long absence. Not too long after I started, I was surprised to read in the church bulletin that a hunter would be giving a talk at the church. Even more surprising, the pastor announced the talk during the opening remarks at the main service and enthusiastically encouraged the congregation to attend because this hunter could be counted on to give an inspiring Christian testimonial. I was shocked to learn that Christians were attaching this cruel activity of hunting to Jesus and Christianity. It reminded me of stories I had heard long ago when I was growing up about white Christian ministers in the segregated South who gave sermons in which they promoted racial segregation. But I had just moved to an area where hunting was popular and so I was in for even bigger shocks to learn that quite a few Christian churches support hunting and that many Christian hunting organizations have formed which believe that hunting is Christian. This was not the Jesus who I knew growing up as a boy in a small Indiana community. That Jesus did not hunt, and most Christians I had ever known would not have thought so either. An essential element of Jesus' teaching seemed to me to be missing here which was that Jesus' compassion extended not just to human beings but to all creation. The great 20th century theologian Albert Schweitzer understood when he wrote: "Compassion, in which all ethics must take root, can only attain its full breadth and depth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to humankind." Schweitzer understood this, and I understood it and so did many other Christians and non-Christians wherever they lived. I just couldn't allow this Christian/hunters paradigm to stand without speaking out against it. The question for me became could I prove what I believed? Was the evidence there to be found in the Bible and in the words of Jesus himself? Was it there in the long stretch of human history visible for everyone to see if it could only be brought to the surface? Three years later, this small book, *Is It Christian to Hunt*, is the result of my study of these and other issues related to hunting. It is my challenge to Christian hunters and to all Christians who believe it is Christian to hunt.

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