

startribune.com

**Feeling Wild?**

startribune.com

Put	Call	Options	Derivatives	Limit
Junk bonds	Futures	Index funds	Put	
Spiders	IPO	Diamonds	Limit order	


 startribune.com

 Metro

### Related item

 [Talk: What do you think?](#)
 Previous
  List

Published Saturday, April 14, 2001

## Many take offense at a Sunday cartoon by Johnny Hart

Martha Sawyer Allen / Star Tribune

Easter and Passover are religious celebrations of joy, but few Christians and Jews are finding much to smile about in a comic strip in Sunday's Star Tribune.

Religious experts say that the "B.C." strip, which appears in newspapers across the country, touts Christianity as triumphing over Judaism.

"B.C.," by Johnny Hart, shows a menorah slowly darkening and changing into a cross as each of seven candle flames goes out. It parodies a Good Friday Christian service and then ends with the resurrection of Jesus.

Sunday is Easter as well as the end of the weeklong Passover.

Stephen R. Silberfarb, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas, said, "The menorah has no place in Christianity. It is a central symbol of Judaism. To transform a menorah into a cross with the words 'It is finished' is to say that Judaism should be eliminated."

"It implies that it's lights out for Judaism," said Rabbi Barry Cytron, director of the Jay Phillips Center for Jewish-Christian Learning at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul.

The Rev. Bruce Forbes, professor of religion at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, sent an advance copy of the cartoon to Cytron. "Comic strips often have had religious commentary, but this is not just proclaiming [Hart's] own viewpoint," Forbes said. "He also appears to be negating other viewpoints."

The Rev. David Tiede, president of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, said that any slowly darkening sanctuary during Good Friday services "symbolizes Christians confessing their own sins, not someone else's sins."

But many, many times Christians have heard that the Jews killed Jesus. "There were times in the early centuries when Good Friday resulted in [Christian] violence against Jews," Tiede said.

Within the last decade Lutherans formally apologized to Jews for the anti-Semitic writings of Martin Luther, many of which were used as justification for persecution of Jews.

On his syndicate's Web site, Hart said he was showing Christianity's Jewish

roots.

"True Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah. I am one of them," he wrote. "I regret if some people misunderstood the strip and it hurt their feelings. ... This is a holy week for both Christians and Jews and my intent, as always, was to pay tribute to both."

At least one Jewish expert, Binyamin Jolkovsky, editor in chief of the daily Web magazine JewishWorldReview.com and a former contributing editor of the national Jewish weekly, Forward, came to Hart's defense in a statement on Hart's web site.

"As a Sabbath-observant Jew, rabbinical school alumnus and publisher of the most-accessed Jewish Web site, I see absolutely nothing wrong with Hart's message," he wrote. "I believe Hart is preaching that, despite Christianity being the majority religion in this nation, members of other faiths need not worry as they must in other lands."

Hart's syndicate won't say how many of the 1,300 newspapers that carry "B.C." pulled it, but at least one paper, The Record of Bergen County, N.J., reprinted its comics section to delete it.

Tim McGuire, Star Tribune editor, said he didn't see the comic before it was printed. "But I would not have omitted the cartoon, because of the very discussion it has stimulated," he said. "The marketplace of ideas must be free so these debates can take place. The best route is to publish and let the intelligent, faith-filled discussion begin. If Hart thinks that he did not offend either Christians or Jews, then he has a serious sensitivity problem."

## Related item



[Talk: What do you think?](#)



[startribune.com](#)



[Metro](#)

-- *The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

-- *Martha Sawyer Allen is at [mallen@startribune.com](mailto:mallen@startribune.com) or 612-673-7919.*

 [Previous](#)

 [List](#)

© Copyright 2001 Star Tribune. All rights reserved.