

The Judeo-Christian Right Wing: Part 2

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In 1323, Pope John XXII declared that anyone who claimed that Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples lived in poverty was guilty of treason. In other words, to say something that was patently TRUE was deemed to be a CRIME. Thus, the Vatican enforced the dogmas it saw fit to enforce—among many other things: the sun revolves around the Earth and Jesus was not really an anti-materialist. (If you STILL believe in such things, you're what is called a "Catholic".) Back then, to question such edicts was heresy, punishable by death (because that's what Jesus would have wanted).

The outlandishness of this decree is illustrative insofar as it typifies the modus operandi of the Vatican, from its inception to the present day. In all but the minority of cases, to be "Catholic" requires—and has always required—an egregious ignorance of history, of the Bible, and—most importantly—the history of the Bible.

More generally: Far more often than not, to be "Christian" (of whatever kind) entails such ignorance. Alas, roughly three quarters of Americans claim to be "Christian". More than half of that demographic gravitates toward right-wing policy. Meanwhile, the majority of those who gravitate toward right-wing policy consider themselves to be (something they conventionally refer to as) "Christian". By this label, they mean—in part—**a follower of Jesus**.

Whether or not one endorses right-wing policy (and whether or not one thinks Christianity offers "the truth, the life, and the way"), this makes absolutely no sense. At least, it makes no sense insofar as the definition of "Christian" involves "follower of Jesus of Nazareth".

In the first part of this essay, I mentioned over 140 passages from the Bible (Old and New Testaments) that do not comport with right-wing policy (foreign and domestic). Right-wing economic policy, I showed, is diametrically opposed to the most fundamental lessons of Jesus of Nazareth. I also showed that Revisionist Zionism is flagrantly antithetical to the salient moral messages in Hebrew Bible.

What I did not do was cherry-pick two or three excerpts that suited my purposes—then attribute those isolated snippets to the entire book. Rather, I surveyed the complete text, and extracted dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens of crucial passages that seemed to define the overarching theme of the complete work—recognizing that anomalies existed.

There's "interpreting"; then there's "just flat-out ignoring". It is the latter on which the previous essay focused. My concern continues to be the latter because—more than just contorted exegeses—IGNORING seems to be the standard operating procedure for many people who most vociferously proclaim fealty to the Bible. In the present essay, I will continue this disquisition with further commentary on Christianity vis a vis right-wing politics.

Regarding what many of us now call “Christianity”, it is quite clear that Jesus of Nazareth would certainly not have been a “Christian”. Even an elementary reading of the Gospels (canonical or not) makes this quite obvious.

Jesus would look at the majority of Americans who call themselves “Christians” and surely be quite befuddled. In fact, he’d be utterly appalled by the kinds of things these so-called “Christians” endorse. One need not be an “expert” on scripture to recognize this fact. One need only be equipped with the literacy of a fifth-grader.

Martin Luther King Jr. gets to call himself a follower of Jesus because he actually practiced what Jesus preached. Meanwhile, for investment bankers or free market fundamentalists or pro-military “hawks” or war profiteers or racists to call themselves “followers of Jesus” while keeping a straight face requires a colossal degree of cognitive dissonance...or shameless duplicity.

On the other hand, perhaps, much of this tragic misalignment is just the result of an egregious level of ignorance. If ignorance is, indeed, the explanation for the bizarre trend of right-wing “Christians”, then my hope is that these essays will elucidate some key points—points that may help remedy the problem.

A CANDID EVALUATION:

Imagine, for a moment, a man holding up a book on vegan diets and decrying the evils of carnivores **as he avidly hands out filet mignons and baby-back ribs to as many people as possible**. Picture this odd scene and one will have a general idea of how ridiculous most “Christians” really are. Yet to point this out is somehow deemed untoward. For it upsets an enormous applecart that many would prefer not be upset.

The holy book that fundamentalists like to hold up when they harangue and castigate non-Christians seems not to be a book they’ve actually taken the time to read (and understand). I have no doubt that many of these people have, at some point, actually opened the book and peeked inside it, here and there. But other than—perhaps—a literal reading of Revelations, they have not taken the time to survey the work as a whole...or learn how the book they hold in their hands actually came to be. While fixating on the more deranged passages in the Pentateuch, many professed “Christians” obstinately refuse to make the effort to engage in a discerning reading of the Gospels. Their focus is misplaced, their religious fervor misguided.

Such people seem to have overlooked the fact that non-violence, eschewing material wealth, and helping the needy were the hallmarks of Jesus’ mission. Theology aside, to disregard the central moral message of the Gospels (while ostensibly orienting one’s life around them) is like a war-profiteer joining Amnesty International...or, conversely, like a civil rights activist joining an Aryan Supremacy league. It simply doesn’t make any sense. That is to say: such moves are irrational independently of the credence one gives to Amnesty international OR to Aryan Supremacy.

Right-wing Christians’ diligent attempts to square the circle are in vain; yet this is rarely pointed out. If someone who routinely promoted the polluting of the environment also proclaimed themselves to be a huge fan of the Sierra Club, we’d be inclined to bring to that person’s

attention that perhaps he was confused. We'd probably point out to him that what he was doing involved a fundamental contradiction. We would do this whether we agreed with him or not—and whether we supported the Sierra Club or not.

In contemporary political taxonomy, there is a name for those who actually abide by the teachings of Jesus. They're called "Progressives" and "humanists" and "social democrats"...and sometimes even "anarchists". The peculiar thing is that most of THOSE people are secular. In other words, many of the people who's lives are most consonant with the moral message found in the Gospels are not Christians; they simply know how to read.

The irony here is rather astounding...until, that is, one understands what "Christianity" has come to really mean in contemporary society. The rubric roughly has the same relation to **Jesus** as Scientology has to **science**. To wit: barring slews of sanctimonious lip service, none whatsoever.

THE GOSPEL OF DENNIS:

So what in heaven's name is going on here? It's as if there were some "secret gospel" that only certain "special" people could see. Let's call it The Gospel according to Dennis. I'm not one of these special people, so I've never seen this hypothetical Gospel...but, based on the evidence, I suspect that the first verse may read something like this:

"And the next day, Jesus said to his disciples: Let it be known that being a financier is a noble profession, for usury is holy. Drastic inequality is perfectly fine so long as a few people get to be fabulously rich. It has been ordained that a person's merit shall henceforth be gauged by his material wealth. And be it understood that unchecked corporate power is sublime, for unbridled capitalism is the ideal economic system!

"And God declares that zygotes are hereafter to be treated as full-fledged humans. Arm yourselves, my children: everyone should be able to own as many guns as he likes. And woe is love between men, as homosexuality is evil. And there shall be one nation under God in our future; so go forth to the world and proclaim: The United States is above all nations. This nation shall be founded on—and governed by—church doctrine. Blessed are the chosen empire's military interventions, as it shall impose its interests on all peoples', to all corners of the Earth, as it sees fit. And it shall not be subject to the same restrictions / obligations it imposes on all other nations of the world. Indeed, having a gigantic military-industrial complex is part of God's plan. Armies acting on behalf of the chosen empire are holy, and anyone standing in its way shall be deemed evil. So heed Providence, and carry out this agenda in my name.

"And—by the way—feel free to shun anyone who isn't like you. You can completely disregard the bit about the good Samaritan if you find that parable to be inconvenient."

This fascinating portion of the New Testament is, of course, invisible to most of us. Coincidentally, it just so happens to correspond splendidly well with the Republican platform. (Funny how that works out.) The Gospel of Dennis needn't be very long. From the sounds of it, it is very "to the point" and extremely explicit with its proclamations.

Alas, the above hypothetical passage seems to be the most salient part of the New Testament for many Christians...so maybe we should just assume it exists. And so it only stands to reason that we should expect apologists for right-wing policy who consider themselves “Christian” to argue their case in the following manner:

- Investment banking is a great way to live the life that Jesus would want (Dennis 1:1).
- Highly-concentrated wealth is in keeping with Jesus’ teachings (Dennis 1:2).
- Affluence is a measure of holiness (Dennis 1:3).
- If others stand in the way of corporate interests (or the interests of the American government), then they forfeit their right to be treated as fellow human beings (Dennis 1:4).
- The termination of a pregnancy—at any point, for any reason—is tantamount to murder (Dennis 1:5).
- Carrying lethal fire-arms is something god would encourage, as killing someone in self-defense is holy (Dennis 1:6).
- Being homosexual is blasphemous (Dennis 1:7).
- The United States of America is the greatest nation on Earth (Dennis 1:8) and is a Christian nation (Dennis 1:9).
- The Pentagon should have as large a budget as possible (Dennis 1:10).
- We should privatize everything under the sun (Dennis 1:11) because free markets are holy (Dennis 1:12).

In sum: God endorses right-wing policy across the board. Hedge-fund managers and war-profiteers can rejoice that they are doing god’s work. “Those who aren’t part of our Faith are lesser citizens, you say? Oh, yeah, that’s right. Of course: Dennis 1:13!” Later in Dennis 1, we’d most likely find such pearls of wisdom as:

- “Thou shalt not use contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies.” (Dennis 1:14)
- “Unbridled corporate power is holy, but investment in public services is sacrilegious.” (Dennis 1:15)
- “In a just nation, make sure everyone is left to fend for themselves in a draconian marketplace.” (Dennis 1:16)
- “Be it known that over a century from now, some guy named John will write a diatribe called ‘Revelations’. So make sure you take every word of it literally. In the meantime, I’ll abstain from saying anything about Armageddon.” (Dennis 1:17)

Feel free to speculate as to what statements Dennis 2 would include (basic healthcare isn’t a civil right, large businesses should be afforded the full compliment of human rights, money is speech, all taxes are evil, and non-Jews have no rights in Canaan). Assuming Dennis exists, Jesus of Nazareth would presumably read this Gospel and say: “Yep! That’s PRECISELY what I’ve been trying to say.”

Let’s leave aside the fact that there are no words in Aramaic for some of the items mentioned above. (Since Jesus was god, we can assume he’d know what it all meant—from zygotes to guns.) Assuming Dennis is the primary Gospel, Jesus wouldn’t hesitate to endorse the Republican Party—clearly the party of Jesus. Case closed.

CONCLUSION:

But there is no Gospel of Dennis (a potential ground-breaking archeological discovery notwithstanding).

This striking fact poses no insignificant problem for those who both endorse right-wing policy and call themselves “Christian”. It is extremely problematic, in fact, because—as it turns out—if all that they have to go on are THE OTHER Gospels, then they don’t have a leg to stand on. In order to square Christianity with right-wing policy, Dennis MUST exist.

So the next time one hears an endorsement of right-wing policy from a self-professed “Christian”, make sure to request that he specify the appropriate passage from Dennis on which he bases his views. When the person responds: “Dennis? But that’s not one of the Gospels!” one can simply retort: “Oh, yes, you’re right. My mistake. What passage, then, are you invoking, fine sir? Pray tell.”

An answer will be eternally forthcoming.

When arsonists claim they are the fire department, something bizarre is afoot. For the same reason, when a religion that claims to be based on a figure completely goes against everything that figure stood for, pointing the discrepancy out is probably a prudent thing to do. “Denounce Progressivism ‘til your heart’s content,” we might say, “But you can’t do that while claiming to honor Jesus.”

What would the New Testament have to say in order to get right-wing Christianity to work? The answer is undeniable: It would have to include Dennis. Short of there being Dennis somewhere in the Bible, there seems to be something very fishy going on. No matter how many mental contortions one undertakes, one simply cannot reconcile ardent support for right-wing policy (notably, Neoliberal economic policy and Neoconservative foreign policy) with a professed fealty to Jesus of Nazareth.

For a free-thinker like myself to bring 140+ passages to people’s attention isn’t being audacious; it’s just being honest. Yet when I say to most Christians: “I’m more a follower of Jesus than you are”...I am summarily scoffed at. It’s as though I had just declared that pigs could fly. But, in making such a statement, what I’ve really done is give voice to an oft-overlooked but demonstrably true fact. To be Christian these days means: “I like to talk about Jesus all the time without heeding what he actually said.”

Case in point: Pope John XXII.

That’s not “Faith”. That’s called hypocrisy.