

The 21st Century Creation of Zealot Jesus

The Frightful Creation of American Revolutionary Theology

by Ron Cantor

Introduction

In this essay, we'll discuss *American Revolutionary Theology* (ART). ART imagines Jesus in light of the American Revolution—*Zealot Jesus*. He's armed and angry. He's nationalistic, nasty and lacks empathy. Is this the Jesus of the New Testament? Does the New Testament have an expectation that Jesus' followers will engage in *armed revolution* to uphold his values?

Recreating Jesus

We tend to re-create Jesus into our own image rather than understand, *he created us in his image* (Gen. 1:26, Col. 1:16). “Albert Schweitzer wrote a detailed exposé of how nineteenth-century portrayals of Jesus *regularly re-created [Jesus] in the image of their authors.*”¹ The feminist scholar discovers *feminist Jesus*. Many Black pastors, like Jeremiah Wright, see Jesus like Moses, freeing the oppressed. Social justice advocates, like Shane Claiborne create *Social*

¹ Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (pp. 208-209). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

*Reformer Jesus.*² They find a sliver of truth about the character of the Messiah but often deny the greater reality.

"Perverted notions about God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long career of Israel demonstrates this clearly enough, and the history of the Church confirms it. So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it."³

White American evangelicals assume their version of Jesus is untainted, *not like those liberal theologians*. But the behavior of believers during 2020-21 revealed a new angry, aggressive version of *Jesus* who's more concerned with civil rights than saving souls. Some of the movements seers call for Civil War—a Second American Revolution.⁴ Other ART prophets boldly proclaimed between November 2020 and January 2021 that the election would be overturned and that Biden and a host of others would soon be arrested.⁵

It didn't happen, and none of them have repented. Daily, they release prophecies about Trump, Pence, and Biden and the election, and how God is turning it around, and soon, Trump will be reinstated.⁶ They have millions of followers who *love the game*. "Apostle" Johnny

² Shane Claiborne, About, accessed August 14, 2021, <http://www.shaneclaiborne.com/bio/>

³ A. W. Tozer, A Lofty Concept of God, accessed August 13, 2021, <https://www.cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer?id=1302>

⁴ Stephen Strang, Is America Heading for Civil War, July, 20, 2021, accessed 25, <https://www.charismanews.com/us/86135-stephen-strang-is-america-headed-for-civil-war>

⁵*Prophet* Tracy Cooke said things would be clear by November 18th, and by "be clear," he meant that Trump would have been declared the winner in place of Biden. *Prophet* Hank Kunneman said that we would have a *December to remember*, intimating that Trump would be declared the winner. And *Prophet* Robin Bullock said that God woke him up one morning in late November 2020 and gave him a vision of the election being turned around by Christmas.

December to remember didn't materialize. Kunneman also prophesied of a *January of justice and A February of fury* and said in the voice of God in the first person that many on the Biden team would be exposed and put on trial. He also warned people who would oppose "my prophets" of punishment and judgment. He used fear and manipulation and misused Scriptures such as 2 Chronicles 20:20.

⁶ Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=hank+kunneman+2021

Enlow regularly asks his followers to look for prophetic signs about Trump's reinstatement in sports scores.

Pillow huckster Mike Lindell predicted Trump would be reinstated on August 13th,⁷ in light of his 72-hour “reveal,” proving Trump won. “It will be the talk of the world.”⁸ Other Christian leaders say Trump is still president! This is the greatest spiritual deception in American history and millions believe it. Masses *fasted and prayed* for the election results to be overturned. It may have been the largest U.S. prayer effort ever, yet God did not acquiesce. No amount of prayer and fasting can bend heaven’s will. As Jeremiah foresaw, the prophets prophesy lies and “my people love it this way!” (Jer. 5:31)

Some have repented and the deception lifted. Jeremiah Johnson posted on November 4—just after the election—various entities from Fox News to China⁹ had declared “civil war on America.”

“Unlike those who continued to insist Trump won, by early 2021, [Jeremiah] Johnson had reversed course. *Now he barely recognizes the person who wrote that email last year*—and neither does his wife, staff, or close friends. Instead, he says, God graciously used the messy fallout over the failed Trump prophecies to begin a 'catalytic, dramatic shift' in his life.

⁷ Mia Jankowicz, Mike Lindell set August 13 as the date in his bonkers theory that Trump will be reinstated as president, July 6th, 2021, accessed August 8, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.com/mike-lindell-claims-august-13-trump-reinstatement-2021-7>

⁸Patriot Takes, Mike Lindell says by August 13, The talk of the world will be to overturn the election and get the communists out. July 5, 2021, accessed August 15, 2021, <https://twitter.com/patriottakes/status/1412044845246390272>

⁹ Note: I am aware that China cannot declare Civil War on America. Apparently, Mr. Johnson was not. :-)

“I was as entrenched as anyone, ... I tell people I feel like I've been rescued—I feel the kindness of God; I feel his discipline. I've cried so many tears, just thanking the Lord for the wake-up call.”¹⁰

Theology Was Not Born in 1776

ART is colored by the American experience of successfully revolting against British tyranny. It is embedded deep in the American consciousness to rebel against perceived oppressors. I'm not being critical of this, nor am I saying that the American Revolution was ungodly. There were reasonable arguments on both sides.¹¹ John Wesley felt the Bible compelled the revolutionaries to “honor the king.”¹²

“Revolutionary clergy quoted Paul directly: ‘Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.’ In a study of how the Bible was used in the American Revolution, the historian James Byrd argues that ‘American patriots’ rejected the notion that Romans 13 required unconditional obedience. Instead, they preached from the text ‘to deny that Paul gave kings the right to be tyrants.’”¹³

As revolutionary as the Bill of Rights was, it did one big wrong. Over time we began to act like the New Testament *also* guaranteed these rights. Theology did not begin in America. You cannot do theology in light of your politics, or you'll create a mixture of the true Jesus and a partisan look-alike. And when you mix Jesus with anything else, *it is no longer Jesus at all*. But sadly, you don't know it.

¹⁰ Stefani McDade, How Could All the Prophets be Wrong About Trump?, June 21, 2021, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/july-august/trump-prophets-election-jeremiah-johnson-reckoning-charisma.html>

¹¹ Personally, I feel that both views are wrong. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 are about the individual's relationship to government and witness before society. It does not address the self-determination of would-be nation states.

¹² 1 Peter 2 has Peter's version of Romans 13, where he concludes that believers should “honor the emperor” or king, in v. 17.

¹³ Lincoln Mullen, The Fight to Define Romans 13, June 15, 2018, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/06/romans-13/562916/>

You cannot do theology apart from the Church fathers, the creeds, and millennia of scholarship. Hitler had his theologians too¹⁴—and many Christians were deceived. In my book, *Birth Pangs*, written as the pandemic was raging, I was deeply concerned about the possibility of a ‘January 6’ happening. The rhetoric from Christians had become incredibly divisive—void of the fruit of the Spirit. I was shocked at the level of vitriol with which confessing Christians were confronting each other, whether it was elections or coronavirus, masks, or vaccines.

“Off with their Heads”

We tell ourselves that no Christians were involved in the violent invasion of the Capital, but Dr. Michael Brown, in his upcoming book, outlines in detail that many of those inside *identified* as evangelical. It was not merely white supremacists who were calling for the death of Christopher Krebs (Trump’s former Director of Cybersecurity), but Christians who were posting “Krebs has committed treason! He deserves to die!”¹⁵

Brown challenged Christians on social media to denounce a Trump lawyer’s call for Krebs to be ‘drawn and quartered. *Taken out at dawn and shot.*’

“Instead, many poured out anger and hatred, even stating that execution was too small a price to pay for a man like Krebs. This was even though *not one* charge had ever been brought against Krebs. He was simply tried and convicted in the eyes of the people for the crime of saying the election was conducted fairly. ‘Off with his head!’ said the mob in response.”¹⁶

Journalist Matthew Avery Sutton gives the view of an unbeliever:

“While Americans around the country watched an inflamed mob overrun the Capitol on January 6, the evangelical participants in that mob saw something else: a holy war. Insurgents carried signs that read ‘Jesus Saves,’ ‘In God We Trust,’ ‘Jesus 2020,’ and

¹⁴ Ron Cantor, *Birth Pangs*, Tikkun Global—Revive Israel, Tel Aviv, September 2020, p. 152

¹⁵ Dr. Michael L. Brown, *The Political Seduction of the Church*, Vide Press, 2022 (forthcoming)

¹⁶ *Ibid*

‘Jesus Is My Savior, Trump Is My President.’ One man marched through the halls of Congress carrying a Christian flag, another a Bible. They chanted, ‘The blood of Jesus covering this place.’”¹⁷

On Sunday, January 10, 2021, days after the infamous riot, I was sent a plethora of fantastic lies—and *Christians were spreading them!*¹⁸ Andrew Whitehead, in his book on Christian nationalism, estimates that 20 percent of Americans strongly embrace Christian nationalism,¹⁹ meaning, America is a Christian nation, the government should promote Christian values and America is central in God's plans.²⁰ *Patriot* now means *Trump supporter*, and the phrase “*We the People*” was highjacked.

But do we find anything in the New Testament that would lead believers to fight so vociferously for a politician? Looking at Acts, they were not concerned about Roman oppression

¹⁷ Matthew Avery Sutton, *The Capitol Riot Revealed the Darkest Nightmares of White Evangelical America*, January 14th, 2021, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://newrepublic.com/article/160922/capitol-riot-revealed-darkest-nightmares-white-evangelical-america>

¹⁸ Nancy Pelosi has been arrested. *They* have her laptop. She's being interrogated by Sidney Powell and Lin Wood in Wyoming. US troops raided a “Dominion Voting Systems” computer warehouse in Germany, and now *we have the proof* the election was stolen! Chinese troops are on the Canadian border. Get lots of water because Trump is about to declare martial law this weekend! (This was days after January 6th.) Trump has been aware the whole time that they would try and steal the election, and he has them right where he wants them in order to expose them and drain the swamp. He's setting them up!

¹⁹ Andrew Whitehead and Samuel Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, March 2020, pg. 25

²⁰ *The Dangers of Christian Nationalism in the United States: A Policy Statement of the National Council of Churches*, accessed August 14, 2021, <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness-ncc/the-dangers-of-christian-nationalism-in-the-united-states-a-policy-statement-of-the-national-council-of-churches/>

Hallmarks, according to the National Council of Churches, of Christian Nationalism are 1) that the United States was founded as a Christian nation; 2) that America is exceptional. That is, God has given the United States particular blessings and privileges not available to people in other countries, and the nation must remain Christian in order for those blessings to continue; 3) that only Christians are the proper custodians of this nation’s heritage; 4) that Christianity (or a particular form of Christianity) should have privileged status in the United States, particularly in matters of law and political policy; 5) that, even when their presence is tolerated, people who practice other religions or none cannot be fully American — they are not welcomed, their voices are discounted, and they are not to be trusted with political and cultural leadership; 6) that Christians in general and some Christians in particular should enjoy a level of legal protection not granted to those who practice other religions; and, 7) that Christians have been made to suffer unjustly, leaving them no alternative but to respond with revolutionary zeal to preserve the United States as a great Christian nation.

or Jewish religious persecution (their rights). They just wanted to win more people to Jesus. We don't see Peter calling out *Crazy Caiaphas*, *Portly Pilate*, or *Neurotic Nero*, with the young church cheering him on. When they did defy, it was with respect. "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19-20)

They were able to discern between their relationship to government—we pray for our leaders (1 Tim 2), we submit to authorities (Romans 13, 1 Peter 2); we do not draw attention to ourselves, but "live a quiet and peaceable life" (1 Tim. 2:2)—and their duty as citizens of heaven—we declare Jesus boldly, confront the powers of darkness and stand against injustice. For many ART adherents, submission is weakness, and Joe Biden doesn't deserve our prayers. They only know, "*Fight.*"

Rights or Souls

The apostles ministered from a place of security and confidence and never uttered any concern for their own rights.²¹ In Christian nationalism, we see a deep concern about losing civil liberties. It stems from feeling inferior to perceived elites.²² I have friends in China who cannot even fathom the concept of rights—but they keep preaching Jesus!

²¹ Paul does demand his rights as a Roman, but that was to get to Rome to share the Gospel. Is Paul really offended that his rights are violated?

²² Many believers have grown tired of being portrayed as clinging to their "guns and religion" (Obama) or being called deplorable racists (Hillary). The New Testament response to such attacks is to love our enemies and share the gospel. But instead, we have chosen to fight back, and often in the ugliest ways. It feels good, it feels validating, it's just not biblical. When believers rejoice that *Demoncrats* are going to hell or even call done God's judgment, we have drifted very far from the heart of the Savior.

The idea that America just might *need* a Civil War “to achieve greater national purity and unity,”²³ as Charisma founder Stephen Strang recently wrote, does not fit the Jesus who rebuked Peter for using his sword. Like Peter, they have in mind the things of man, not God. When Jesus returns, He will make war (Zech. 14:1-2, Rev. 19:11ff), but he steered his disciples away from such ideas (Matt. 26:51-52). By asking if he came to start a rebellion (v. 55), he was saying *he wasn't*. Jesus was meek and compassionate. Trump is neither.

Conclusion

ART is dangerous. It puts America at the center of God’s agenda. It incorporates the personality attributes of the most unhinged President in U.S. history. Holding up a Bible is not reading it, and certainly not living it. *Zealot Jesus* is a distortion of Real Jesus. Mark Chironna agrees:

“When doing theology, I tend to want to look at the psychology behind poor thinking that perverts theology...nationalist tendencies lend themselves to hatred and aggression ...the psychology of hate is rather complex, but the blinding realities of it are present in many of our brothers and sisters who are nationalists...they are a living contradiction...they claim they love Jesus and their nation and hate anyone and anything that doesn't ‘love’ the way they do.”²⁴

The fact is, Jesus never said, "*America First*."

²³ Strang, Civil War

²⁴ Dr. Mark Chironna has a double PhD in Theology and Psychology.

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