

The Better Way of Jesus vs. Socio/Economic/Politico Powers



I have noted how authentic Christianity has been hijacked throughout history by socio/economic/politico (SEP) forces: (e.g., by Rome/Constantine (313), by the crusades (1100-1300), by the inquisitions (1231-1834), by colonialism (1400-1800), by antebellum America (1650-1850), by Jim Crow South (1870-1960), by Nazi Germany (1930-1940), by consumer/prosperity Gospel (1950-2018), and by modern political Christianity (1950-2018).

I have pointed this out in an effort to help Christians avoid being hijacked by the American Dasein and thus be better enabled to be Christ's salt and light to our people and wonderful Republic. The goal is to show that there is a better way of Jesus.

Let us consider Jesus and politics. Like today, there were several SEP groups in Judea who were always trying to figure out a better way of enhancing their lives. On the one hand, there were the Essences, who retreated to the desert so they could live holy lives away from the pagan influences of Rome. Of course, as escapists, they would be precluded from being salt and light (bringing goodness and illumination) to society. These are like self-righteous Christians today who avoid "sinners" like the plague. Jesus did not join this group or form any group like this.

There were also the Zealots who believed that to really serve God one need to overthrow the evil Romans and restore Israel's independence. For them, the goal of political independence justified the grabbing of power by any means possible. This would be like many radical political groups today. Jesus did not join this group or form any group like this.

There were also the Pharisees. These were the Bible people, the religious right. They were very serious about the study of God's Word (Old Testament) but cared very little about the poor, dispossessed, disenfranchised, or injustice in society. They were legalistic and self-righteous. Their focus was on external righteousness. They believed that as long as they performed their religious duties (studied the Bible, prayed a lot, gave to the poor, attended the synagogue, condemned sin in others. and in culture), then they were right with God. Jesus did not join this group or form any group like this (note Jesus' blistering attacks on Pharisees in Matthew 23).

There were also the Sadducees. They were liberal religious people who are more inclined to naturalism than supernaturalism. Today they would be liberals who do not believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, or in many of the miracles in the Bible. Although they believed in God, their core inclination was naturalistic (see Matt. 22:23-27; Acts 23:8). In sum, they are Rationalists (philosophical position in which authority begins with the

human mind, not divine revelation, or objective reality as such). Rationalists reject teachings that their minds cannot fully grasp (e.g., Trinity). Jesus did not join this group or form any group like this.

What all the groups have in common is the desire to build their kingdoms with God's help—they were in it for themselves first and foremost. They all wanted God to fulfill their desires in their ways. They all wanted God to make them healthy, wealthy, wise, to make the socially and economically superior to others, and for God to make them politically the most powerful.

However, Jesus does not promise SEP power. He did not offer political power or wealth to Peter, Andrew, James, John, or the Apostle Paul. It is not the case that the apostles invited Christ into their lives so they could gain more SEP power—a healthy, wealthy, and prosperous life in Rome. Rather, Christ invited them into His life of grace, truth and a self-sacrificial love for others. He invited them to be salt and light in the Roman empire. He invited them to share God's love, truth, and grace to their society.

Instead of aligning ourselves with political parties, we need to remain aligned with Christ to be lights to the world. If we don't shine our light, then people do not know where to go or what obstacles are in the way. We are to light the path for society through the love that we have for God and others. This is the mission.

We must never marry our Christianity with any political entity. Christ never entrusted Himself to any political structure. Rather, He consistently affirmed love and the good and denounced evil. His way is better. It is not an accident that Christ is recognized by historians as the greatest influence among men for good in the history of civilization.

The marriage of Christianity to any political party always leads to compromise—the salt becomes useless and good-for-nothing, as Jesus put it (Matt. 5:13). We see great compromise today in among the most devoted Christians on the Right and Left as they continue to overlook or downplay the wrongdoing of the party they are aligned with all the while condemning the enemy political party—all to maintain access to power and influence and identification. As they bash President Trump or Obama or Hilary, it is evident that their hearts have been captured more by the attitudes of unbelievers in their political parties than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moreover, they have become hypocrites as they cast stones at the prevarications of their political opponents all the while overlooking the prevarications of their own candidate. The world is well aware of this hypocrisy. These believers have become saltless, they no longer provide divine light of Jesus Christ, for example, that every human being is made in the image of God and as such has the eternal significance—so much so that Christ sacrificed Himself on the Cross for that person. Christ loves Trump, Obama, and Hilary and died for all their sins. We do not have to agree with their politics or attitudes. Neither do we have to join in all the hate that is so prevalent in our saltless and dark world. God has called us a better way of Jesus: the better way of Jesus.

Unbelievers can be excused for not being able to love those who hate them. However, this is not the case with the Christian. Consider what Jesus said in the context of being salt and light:

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44
"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who
hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 "that you may
be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good,
and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what
reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 "And if you greet your
brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48
"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Whether the believer realizes it or not, if his value of any human being is chiefly shaped by social, economic, or political considerations rather than the values of Christ, he is teaching the world that those social, economic, and political values are more important than the values of Jesus Christ and His Cross.

In His Grace,

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