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How Imperialism Stole Christianity and Why We Should

Steal It Back

I haven't exactly kept my fraught history with organized Christianity a secret. In fact, in keeping with my weird tradition of publishing my numerous neuroses, it's kind of become a major part of my public persona, the jagged bend in my gonzo character arc. Girl gets born in boy's body, "boy" gets heinously tormented by the Catholic Church, boy becomes bitch, bitch burns down the world in search of revenge, flowers bloom from the ashes....

Truth be told, I actually owe that wicked church a lot more than just my multiple personalities. If they hadn't deflowered my faith in virtually every institution around me at such an obscenely impressionable age, I wouldn't have a fraction of the fuel that I require to fight every conceivable authoritarian construct from the Prison Industrial Complex to your local meter maid with the ferocity of a freshly molested child with a pickaxe. I fight that which triggers me, and nothing triggers me more severely than the shadow of the church. Even in our secular age that shadow looms long and dark.

The latest fad in American totalitarianism is a sick little parochial fetish known as Christian nationalism. With the more secular schools of rampant rape politics like neoconservatism irredeemably tarnished even in the eyes of the faithful, right-wing imperialists have decided to double down on their violent Jesus-speak and use the facade of Evangelical populism to cloak their globalist agenda in something that feels a little more homespun than the responsibility to protect the new world order with constant warfare.

The new agenda involves openly embracing the massive machinery of the federal government as a means to transform Washington into a kind of Christian Riyadh so it can cleanse the empire of the elitist scourge of all things deemed woke. In reality though, this new jihad still serves the same old masters, it just does so in ways that seem tailor made to

piss me off. The only thing more sickening to a Queer anarchist than a thriving police state is a state that thrives on policing my fucking gender identity when it isn't busy blowing up the Middle East.

The most maddening thing about this moronic grift is that it actually seems to be working. MAGA has gone from one edgelord oligarch's prank gone wrong to a bulldozer for the once comatose Christian right to crash the Supreme Court and pack it with insane zealots who see nothing unconstitutional about the fusion of church and state because the framers were nuts too.

So, now Jesus is back like 1984, and the GOP is too. The Republicans have redeemed themselves in the eyes of America's working class by combatting a facade of political correctness that the duopoly's shared corporate sponsors only used to infiltrate and neutralize the left. Trump has risen and the real "good news" is that we can blow up the world again just so long as we use the excuse of clearing the Holy Land for the rapture to do it.

In my worst nightmares, I'm still trapped in that small town Catholic school in a tiny, scary body that every adult with a crucifix swinging around their neck seems to have a license to put their hands on. Not only has that nightmare come true, but it has somehow become far worse. In this year of our lord, 2024, the whole goddamn country has become Saint John the Evangelist Catholic School and I and my five personalities are officially overwhelmed.

Yet, believe it or not, I still consider myself to be a Christian. In fact, it's in times like these that I find myself turning to my mother's faded plaster Virgin Mary for shelter more than ever. That's because the Vatican isn't the only thing Jesus-shaped that defiled my faith in authoritarian institutions, the Gospels did too. No matter how hard those fucking pedophiles tried to peddle Christ as one of them, they couldn't cover up the fact that what that motherfucker was preaching was basically just spiritual anarchism.

Jesus walked the streets of Palestine when that dusty enclave was still an imperial province of Rome, the original shining superpower on the hill. He strolled from town to town, barefoot and filthy, passing over temples and banks to preach to lepers and whores, telling them the good news that they were the true people of God because they existed in the blind spot of a vile empire that used the bludgeons of church and state to rob the poor and rape the helpless. He taught the ancient lumpenproles that the kingdom of God was already within them and that any kingdom that stood outside stood for tyranny and should be torn down.

This was the kind of shit that got Jesus killed and it was a cabal of governors and priests who fucking killed him. Then, in the ultimate insult, the same empire that had this radical anti-

imperialist nailed to a fucking cross hijacked his teachings and turned them into one of the deadliest weapons ever wielded in the hands of the powerful.

Christianity was commandeered by the Roman Empire during an age that was actually remarkably similar to the one we find ourselves in now. During the third century, Rome was on the brink of collapse in a period that became known as the Imperial Crisis. Stretched to the point of economic disintegration under the pressure of centuries of foreign invasions and increasingly violent civil strife, the people of Rome were poor, pissed, and powerless.

A variety of spiritual movements that emphasized personal spiritual knowledge, or gnosis, over the teachings and traditions of more established religious institutions travelled from the battlefields of the Orient and began to grow in popularity in the crowded cities of an empire in crisis. Christianity stood out from its rival gnostic traditions largely because of its anti-authoritarian ethos. It became particularly hip amongst Rome's more impoverished denizens who incorporated further elements of homespun collectivism and anti-elitism into the practice.

At first, the Romans actually singled out Christianity for persecution with Emperor Decius even using the demonization of these radical mystics to try to restore stability and unity to a fractured society. But when this failed the state did what the state does best; it assimilated rebellion and twisted it into something almost unrecognizable from its humble grassroots origins.

Beginning with the very convenient conversion of an embattled Emperor Constantine in the year 312, Christianity underwent a radical transformation known as the Constantinian Shift which would see a radically anti-authoritarian doctrine favored by an unruly peasantry turned into a powerful tool for the elites who oppressed them.

Thus, the Catholic Church was born as the official state religion of the Roman Empire and what followed was a bloodbath that continues to flood the world to this day. Rome used the cross to legitimize its conquests and elevate its leaders to the status of divinely appointed leaders. Then came the Crusades and the Inquisitions, the Conquistadors and Manifest Destiny, the Crown and the Pentagon and the Cold War and the War on Islam and Saint John the Evangelist.

Christianity became a surprisingly durable device for spreading western ethnocentric values across the globe and instilling a divinely ordained state of cultural universalism upon its vast unwashed masses. All those who rejected this state modified Franken Christ were deemed savages, perverts, heretics, faggots, and lunatics who needed to be converted, controlled, or destroyed.

Sickeningly, these are the Christian values that continue to define the west to this day. Even during the secular age, this cocky culture of conformity informs progressives to reorganize society in the name of humanitarian interventionism and propels conservatives to kill the Queer and save the child.

But Christianity has another history. One that runs parallel to empire and completely against it. I speak of the Christianity of ancient Jerusalem described in the Acts of the Apostles in which anarcho-communist collectives lived in harmony and shared their labor and capital equally amongst the faithful. I speak of the Christianity that inspired an illiterate, 17-year-old crossdresser named Joan of Arc to force the British Empire from French soil after a century of occupation and choose death by fire over gender conformity. I speak of the Christianity that inspired John Brown and Nat Turner to take up the gun against chattel slavery and take no prisoners.

The Christianity of the Diggers, the Catholic Workers, the Quakers, Liberation Theology, and the Universal Life Ethic. The Christianity of William Loyd Garrison, Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Illich, Jacques Ellul, Dorothy Day, and Nikolai Berdyaev.

The Christianity that gave a little girl trapped inside a molested boy the strength to hold onto her humanity and her empathy for thirty years until she could safely manifest herself in the form of an alternate personality who still prays to Mary to protect the snakes and the spiders and all the other little creatures that so many Christians seem to have forgotten come from God too.

I am not a typical Christian. I am not a typical anything. My spiritual beliefs are a complex and at times contrarian concoction of early Celtic churches like the Culdee and even earlier mystical gnostic sects like the Valentinians and the Collyridians. I am a Christian in the same sense that those who practice Voodoo, Santeria, and Candombe are Christians. My Christianity is the Queered folk Christianity of the conquered and the oppressed, the bloodied and the unbowed.

But I am still a Christian and I believe very strongly that much like Rome in its own age of imperial crisis, America needs this kind of spirituality now more than ever before.

Any philosophy can be rendered toxic under the reigns of church and state. Marx can be reduced to Stalin and Mises can be reduced to Pinochet. But that process can just as easily be reversed by decentralizing those values and returning them to actual communities that can interpret them in ways that speak to individuals instead of subjects. Some may declare this practice of reading between the Scriptures to be radical heresy but isn't that precisely what Christ practiced when he turned the Old Testament into anarchism?

Pray on it and get back to me. Me and my rosary beads will be here all Armageddon.

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