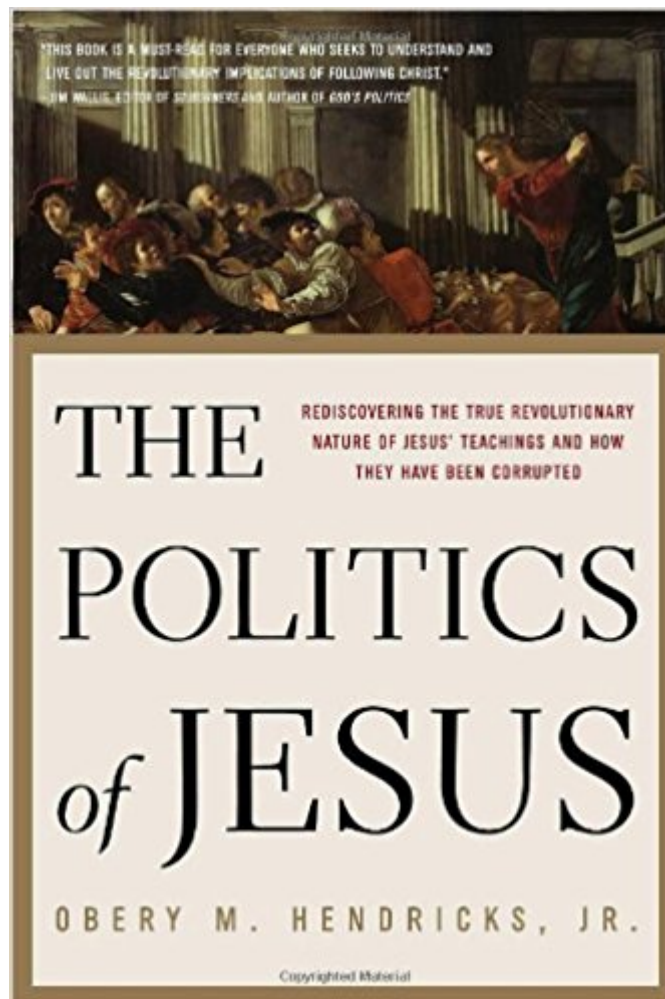


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The Politics Of Jesus: Rediscovering The True Revolutionary Nature Of Jesus' Teachings And How They Have Been Corrupted



Synopsis

Who was Jesus? And how was this first-century political revolutionary, whose teachings are meant to lead the way to freedom, turned into a meek and mild servant of the status quo? How is it possible to profess a belief in Jesus, yet ignore the suffering of the poor and the needy? Just how truly faithful to the vision of Jesus are the many politicians who claim to be Christian? These are the kinds of questions Obery Hendricks, a biblical scholar, activist, and minister, asks in this provocative new book. In this day and age of heated political debate, Hendricks's *The Politics of Jesus* stands out as much for its brilliant re-creation of the life and mind of Jesus of Nazareth as for its scathing critique of modern politicians' lack of faith. •

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Customer Reviews

This volume is divided into two parts. First, is the construction of a viable framework for understanding Jesus' immediate political and social message. Second, is the measurement of Ronald Reagan's and George W. Bush's conduct in light of that framework. I give 5 stars for the first part for its objectivity but only 3 stars for the second because it reads like so many anti-Bush books that have already been written. Nevertheless, I do agree with the central thesis that many Christians misunderstand Jesus' message...ask not what God can do for you, ask what you can do for God. And what people can do for God is "dedicate their entire being to struggling to bring the world in line with a vision of love, liberation, and justice" to all of humanity, including the dispossessed, the forgotten, and the hungry. In other words, Jesus was as concerned about an individual's citizenship on earth as an individual's citizenship in heaven. You might say that there is nothing new in this book.

(After all, it is a restatement of well accepted principles of "liberationist theology") True, but I still recommend reading the volume because the author presents his arguments as well, if not better, than others who have argued logically from the new testament texts. If every Christian read this book..and chose to follow Jesus revolutionary program, all of us would have a chance for a better world.

I really enjoyed the first part of this book. Professor Hendricks does a great job of helping us understand the Jewish roots of Jesus and how those roots influence Jesus' political confrontations with Rome. Whenever Jesus talks about the Kingdom of God/Heaven through parables or through prayer, he is firmly rooted in his Jewish heritage and he is being political. The early followers of Christ got this message when they proclaimed Jesus Lord, with the political implications that Caesar is not. Yes, Jesus was political and wanted to influence the whole world (including the political world) to be based on the Hebrew notions of justice, righteousness, and love. Five stars for the first part of the book. The second part of the book takes a sad turn. I understand Professor Hendricks desire to be prophetic in his stance against Reagan and G.W. Bush, but I have some concerns. Throughout the book, Hendricks warns us against demonizing our opponents, but this is exactly what he seems to do to these presidents. Indeed, there are some truths to his critiques of Reagan and Bush, but even prophets must be careful, lest they become consumed by their own anger and hatred. Hendricks has such a hard time letting go of his animosity for Bush that by the conclusion of the book, he alludes that Bush will be damned to Hell. I'm a liberal. I would agree that Reagan and Bush have made political mistakes and have not treated the needs of others as holy. I would also agree that the call to follow Christ means we should act quickly, but our quick actions should not be done out of anger against the oppressors, but out of compassion for the oppressed and the oppressor, for even the oppressors are human beings in need of love. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the Christian goal is reconciliation based on justice, righteousness, and love. Unfortunately, I don't think reconciliation is possible with Professor Hendricks' approach.

Regardless of your politics or religion, this book is thought provoking. If you are a "ditto head" you probably will not like that it will challenge your paradigm and push your buttons, but it is a challenge you should take on as should every other person concerned about greed, wealth accumulation, and the perversion of the teachings of Jesus. It even pushed some of my buttons but I needed to have my horizons expanded. I believe that a copy should be required reading for every religious and political figure in our world. The theology and research behind this book is outstanding and I suspect

that it will generate the types of conversations that we should start having in our places of worship and in our political circles. Do you really know why you are a conservative or a liberal? I thought I was well educated on political topics but here I was enlightened. My son and our pastor are going to read next and we are going to use as the foundation of a theological conversation to broaden understanding of how we can focus on helping those in the world who are the least among us. How anyone can find fault with this is beyond me. Read this book. Be prepared to create learning conversations around the book. We need to have this book be a catalyst to guide our actions in light of the teachings of this great man we as Christians call Christ. All I can say in summary is thank you Obery for one of the most important works of our time.

This is not the usual "my-side-is right/their-side-is-wrong" book. Obery Hendricks assesses conservatives, liberals, politicians, and Christian leaders against the same criteria, a criterion based on the politics of Jesus. Hendricks details the politics, economics, and religion that influenced Jesus ministry and politics. He outlines the political strategies Jesus used to affect a corrupt political and religious leadership and structure, and to address injustice and oppression. Hendricks reminds us of and introduces us to individuals and peoples that successfully used those strategies to fight for justice and empower the powerless. Then Hendricks does what many refuse or fail to do, he challenges the reader to hold those leaders/groups who claim to act as agents of God/Jesus/right to the standards they herald. This book is educational, enlightening, and moving. It enlists the reader to demand accountability from government, and to engage in a new and different dialog!

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