

If the Messiah has now come . . .

I sometimes feel about Christianity the way some people feel about various social systems. One cannot say much about its efficacy or success because it's never really been tried.

Of course, this only begs the question: What is Christianity? I count myself a Christian because I seek to follow Jesus of Nazareth, later proclaimed to be the Christ (Messiah), whom I regard as the single most sublime and manifest personification of God's purposes for humankind in human history, and hence, the foremost exemplar of what it means to be eminently human. Other doctrinal affirmations about Jesus may or may not be true. They are largely superfluous in my somewhat non-orthodox view. In any event, the one thing on which all Christians surely agree is the centrality of Jesus to our faith and practice.

Thus, I cannot fathom anyone who is a true follower of Jesus being zealous to own and carry a hand gun, the chief purpose of which is to maim or kill another human being. I cannot fathom any Christian being enthusiastic about any war, and believe most wars, including the current ones in Iraq and Afghanistan, are far from just, loving, or morally acceptable on Christian terms. I cannot believe that it's Christian to oppose social measures and programs that would help provide for the basic needs of fellow citizens, just because they might cost the rest of us something in taxes or economic freedoms. I cannot believe that any Christian would willingly countenance the continued absence of health care, food, clothing, shelter, or any other basic necessities of life for any human being, whether citizen or not, whether documented or not, because our society does not want to pay the price – a minuscule price compared to the cost of war, by the way. I cannot believe that any follower of Jesus would demand of any other human being conformity of belief and thought, or deny to anyone the freedom to be wrong.

Since it must be obvious that I believe many people who call themselves Christian are quite wrong about important matters, let me be clear. I would hope but never demand that they agree with me.

Some Jews believe that the Messiah will not come until every Jew acts righteously. This Christian believes that it hardly matters whether the Messiah has come if Christians do not live faithfully in accordance with Jesus' teaching and example.

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