



# CWRm

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## AXIS OF LOVE

# Vive la Révolution!

**W**hen Augustus Caesar was Roman Emperor, the coinage of the economy bore the image of Caesar with imperial titles such as *Son of God*, *Savior of the World*, *King of Kings*, *Prince of Peace*. Sitting in his palace on Palatine Hill, Augustus could never have imagined that in less than forty years these titles would be re-appropriated for a Galilean peasant who had suffered a state-sponsored execution under the jurisdiction of a Roman governor. Caesar Augustus could never imagine that within a few centuries, millions of people would pledge their allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth, calling him the King of all kings.

But that's what happened. If this sounds very political, you're right, it was. And it is.

Jesus didn't become a child refugee for spiritual reasons, but for political reasons. Jesus the Messiah wasn't executed by Rome for spiritual reasons, but for political reasons.

Early Christians weren't persecuted for spiritual reasons (Rome was remarkably tolerant of religions), but for political reasons.

The Christian confession, "Jesus is Lord" was not a benign spiritual platitude, but a subversive political claim.

The intuition of Herod and Pilate who persecuted Jesus at his birth and authorized his execution was correct—this Jew posed a threat to their world order. Herod attempted and Pilate succeeded in killing this single Jewish life. But the life persecuted with death, God vindicated in resurrection. Everything Jesus taught or did to announce and enact the government of heaven was endorsed by God on Easter Sunday.

The Kingdom of God is not the disembodied bliss of heaven, but God's alternative arrangement for human society. Christians confess Jesus is Lord now, not Lord-elect. Under the reign of King Jesus, the poor are blessed, the sick are healed, sinners are forgiven, war is abolished, mercy triumphs over judgment and love trumps everything.

Jesus posed a serious challenge to the status quo when he said, "Many who are first will be last, and the last first." This provoked the very rich and the

very powerful to conspire to kill Jesus.

But—even though the Kingdom of God is without coercion, persuading by love, witness, Spirit, reason, rhetoric, and if need be, by martyrdom, but never by force—to resist the Kingdom of God always leads to a self-inflicted Gehenna. Opposition to the Kingdom of Love is the highway to hell—not the retributive hell of an angry god, but the consequential hell of going against the grain of love. If God is love, then to oppose love is to hurl oneself into a godless abyss.

Of course, politics is prone to fall prey to pervert the pursuit of the common good into the demonic pursuit of power. Christ Jesus overcame this most seductive of all temptations in the wilderness and embodied his fidelity to God all the way to his crucifixion at Calvary.

I believe in the revolutionary politics of Jesus. I'm neither Republican nor Democrat. I'm neither conservative nor a liberal. I'm a revolutionary Christian. I believe Christ gave us the Sermon on the Mount as our Constitution and the Beatitudes is our Bill of Rights.

As a follower of Jesus, I am not permitted to dismiss Jesus' command to care for the poor and love our enemies as "impractical in the real world." No! The world of greed and war is a fake empire, a giant falseness, a colossal lie. The real world is the world of God's unconditional love and infinite mercy—it's what Jesus called the kingdom of God.

So, when a Roman governor in the grand fake empire asked Jesus if he was a king, Jesus affirmed that he was indeed a king and that his life bore witness to the truth of God—a truth that contradicted the grand lie of Rome at every turn.

This is why, in the end, Herod and Pilate had to kill Jesus.

And this is why, in the end, God overruled Herod and Pilate and all the principalities and powers by raising Jesus from the dead!

The revolution began at Bethlehem.

The revolution culminated at Calvary.

The revolution continues wherever Christians dare to take the red letters seriously.

**Vive la Révolution!** □