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Taking Bob Dylan at faith value

Scott Galupo (Contact)
Friday, October 24, 2008

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Democratic strategists have racked their brains for a plausible message to attract religious conservatives. Someone should put filmmaker Joel Gilbert's "Inside Bob Dylan's Jesus Years: Busy Being Born ... Again!" in their hands. The documentary, which comes out Tuesday on DVD, mines a period in Mr. Dylan's career that is puzzled over, ignored or disdained by many fans: the three years, from 1979 to 1981, during which the rock icon devoted his recording and performing career to evangelical Christianity. For those who had followed Mr. Dylan since his days as a champion of civil rights and a peace-loving enemy of "masters of war," as he put it in his one of his classic Vietnam-era acoustic indictments,



Bob Dylan

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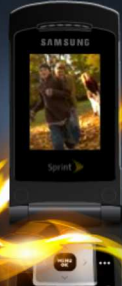
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the move meant either that Mr. Dylan had been manipulated by rank, attention-seeking Jimmy Swaggart types or that the man had taken leave of his senses. "Jesus Years" makes the perhaps easily overlooked point that Mr. Dylan's embrace of Christianity was as polarizing as his "Judas!"-eliciting switch from acoustic music to electric rock in the mid-'60s. It also makes a persuasive case that the music of the period is a worthy, even essential, part of the Dylan catalog. (The hit single "Gotta Serve Somebody" earned him his first Grammy Award.)

"A lot of Dylan fans in that era kind of shunned or felt personally betrayed that the 'Voice of a Generation' went so far off what they considered the deep end to conform to an ideology," Mr. Gilbert says.

The filmmaker, who also performs in a Dylan tribute band and wears his hair in a shocked Dylan-in-'65-ish 'do, sought to find out exactly what happened, and why. The result is a revelatory and sympathetic film about one of the oddest chapters in rock history.

"Very few people really know what it was all about on a deep level," Mr. Gilbert says. "Was it really sincere? How did it inspire his music? So many people want to know the key to his poetry."

Rather than treat conservative Christians like specimens on a microscope slide, Mr. Gilbert (who is Jewish, by the way) lets those who were close to Mr. Dylan at the time tell their story for the first time - among them pastor Bill Dwyer of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship Church, where Mr. Dylan worshipped, and singer-songwriter Al Kasha, at whose home Mr. Dylan attended Bible studies. One gets the immediate sense from "Jesus Years" that there's a reason Mr. Dylan's conversion took place when (the late '70s) and where (Southern California) it did. A professed born-again Christian, Jimmy Carter, was in the White House; an apocalyptic screed like Hal Lindsey's "The Late, Great Planet Earth" could become a best-seller; the San Fernando Valley was crawling with ex-hippies and folk singers who felt washed up at 35.

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Comments 1 - 19 of 19

By: [Maranatha.Shalom](#)

No government, no party, no politician, no mere human being will ever solve the basic problem of mankind. The basic problem of mankind is sin -- rebellion against God (which includes indifference toward Him).

Jesus Christ - the God-man - is the ONLY solution for our problem of sin. He submitted His will to the will of His Father, and surrendered His Perfect, Sinless Life on the Cross to satisfy God's perfect Justice. Only Perfect Love could satisfy Perfect Justice.

This payment for our sin is available to ALL who will receive Jesus as savior, and will believe that He died for us. Those who refuse to believe and trust in Him will have to pay the penalty for their own sins themselves -- by spending Eternity separated from everything that is good.

Having said all that, we, as Americans, have an opportunity to vote for the leaders that our political parties present. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans are "righteous" -- but I can think of no crime more heinous than to poison, burn, and/or dismember an unborn human being, made in the image of God, in his or her mother's womb.

98% of Democrats continue to vote to protect a mother's "right" to murder her child. About 75 to 80% of Republicans vote to protect the REAL right of the unborn, innocent baby to Live.

I vote Republican as a vote of protest against Democrats -- as a vote FOR the unborn children. In essence, I vote for the lesser of two evils.

If the Lord would grant us a government that would finally overturn Roe V. Wade, then I would be free to vote for other issues. But, this one issue overshadows them all.

Wildoaklaneo -- this position IS the result of years of prayer and meditation; as well as years of serving at my local Crises Pregnancy Center as a volunteer. I believe if you truly listen to the Holy Spirit, you will see that, while there are many, many other issues -- Abortion outweighs them all.

Please, don't vote for those who would continue - yea, even expand, this detestable crime against humanity and against God.

Vote against Abortion -- vote against Democrats.

Maranatha.

October 25, 2008 at 11:15 p.m.

By: [schemeroo](#)

Wild, you are so right, and it is unfortunate most people of faith don't get it. Jesus' life was sooo unpolitical - and it was the greatness of the original US Constitution that it allowed for a very limited government, particularly the federal government, so that we could enjoy our freedoms and not have to mix



religion... unfortunately, once the cat is out of the bag, you don't get it back in. Today you have people clamoring that churches shouldn't get tax breaks -why? because its the government that is taking care of our sick, poor, hurting and lost, not our churches. Stop relying on the government! Even on

abortion - its not a political issue, its a people issue - millions of young women aren't killing their babies because of Roe v Wade or Joe Biden - they are killing their babies because their hearts are not in the right place - this is the root cause - the government spends trillions on programs for the poor - programs which have no spiritual content and tend to only spiral conditions worse - yet you're not going to fix it by backing a massive cut in the program - you're going to fix it by changing the hearts of the people, and getting the churches to step up and take their rightful role - and NOT rely on the government.... There is a hint of something to the "democrats" who push socialism as something Jesus might embrace - but what they miss is Jesus would NEVER embrace the secular government socialism - he would embrace a version of it amongst believers in the context of the church - where we each, on our own free will, support and take care of each other. I don't think either republicans or democrats get that - and I think guys like Dylan get torn because they see the needs, understand a Christian mandate, but don't know how to be an activist for it... and it leads to a falling away...

October 25, 2008 at 8:03 a.m.

By: [gore53](#)

Granted, at this writing there are only 16 comments, but I read them all, last to the very first. And I'm so glad I did, lest a future reader be tempted to miss the very first post, scroll all the way down. It's one of the best things I've read all day, and I've been rereading Gatsby along with a smattering of C.S. Lewis stuff. Really nice, Flexfamily. Hat's off.

October 25, 2008 at 3:25 a.m.

By: [wildoaklaneo](#)

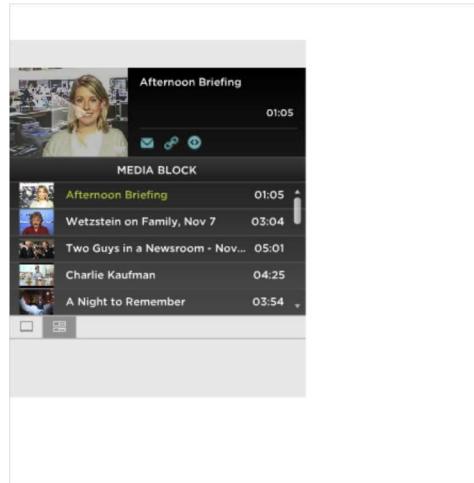
In response to Maranatha.Shalom. It truly saddens me that you can be fooled by either political party. Both the Democrats and Republicans are secular. The Republicans have wrapped themselves in a veneer of righteousness in order to win your vote, while killing hundreds of thousands of innocent babies and children, turning their backs on the poor and destitute of this country, and lying and cheating in order to keep power. I'm making no excuses anyone who believes abortion is OK. I don't. It does concern me that if we allow our government to decide what a mother does with her children, turning the

October 25, 2008 at 3:25 a.m.

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decision over to the lawyers and politicians, one day we may become like China with our lawyers and politicians deciding that we have too many children and making laws that require us to kill them. So I personally favor civil liberties and education over mandates.

Keep praying and meditating brother. May the spirit of Christ be with you.

October 24, 2008 at 7:02 p.m.

By: [Maranatha.Shalom](#)

Hey Subby,

You make some good points here - re: Contemporary Christian music. The gospel is a fantastic message -- but the Holy Spirit can use folks with true artistry gifts to really bring it home.

Have you every listened to Rich Mullin's stuff? ... particularly the cuts that don't make it to the popular lists.

IMHO, Rich was a true musical genius. He's making music with the angels now. Looking forward to hearing what he's come up with, once I get up there!

God bless...

October 24, 2008 at 5:33 p.m.

By: [ScottVA](#)

Steve Taylor sang in "Meltdown"

"Dylan may be fillin'

The puddle they designed.

Is it gonna take a miracle

To make up his mind?"

Those are pretty good lyrics, and just about sums up Dylan's backslidden state.

October 24, 2008 at 4:27 p.m.

By: [Subby](#)

Dylan's post Jesus albums seem secularized, but when you look at the lyrics I see the same Christian themes. Let him who has ears hear.

I think he's had the mix just right ever since those Jesus days.

The problem with most Christian rock is it's boring. Its boring because there's no art to dumping church terms wholesale into lyrics.

(Not every Christian artist does this, admittedly.)

Dogma's boring, whether set to rock or not.

October 24, 2008 at 3:53 p.m.

By: [Maranatha.Shalom](#)

Dear chavez66,

I have read and meditated upon the Holy Bible every day for over 12 years; since I was truly born again of the Spirit in 1996. In fact, I've read it completely through, Genesis to Revelation, many times.

I'd be interested to know (if you will tell the truth), how much of it you have actually read yourself.

I ask this because your understanding of it (or lack thereof), belies your criticism of those of us who "do" understand it. Be careful of telling the Children of God that we don't understand His Book or hear His Voice.

Because, by His grace, and through His Spirit, we do!

Abortion, homosexual behavior, and dividing His creation into "secular" and "religious" (there is NO such thing!) are also greivous sins among the sins of selfishness and greed.

Your Democratic party openly embraces these first three sins. You have NO basis for stating that My Savior is "in every conceivable way more of a democrat than a republican". You're just dead wrong. He transcends all politicians, political parties, and politics itself.

I repeat:

The Light shines in the darkness...

... but the darkness has not understood it.

October 24, 2008 at 1:46 p.m.

By: [ScottVA](#)

Wow, Hugo66, you make no sense.

I could have sworn Roe v. Wade legalized abortion, and that Planned Parenthood pushed it.

BTW, illegal immigration is exactly the reason real wages have declined. If an employer can hire an illegal for \$5/hr without any withholding or taxes vs an American at \$15/hr, plus w/h & taxes, which will he hire?

Now the American has to take a lower wage to compete, but prices do not go down. So, Reagan's tax cuts and deregulation did not cause the problems, the Democrat Congress's amnesty program (which Pres. Reagan unfortunately signed) caused it.

Socialism has failed everywhere it has been tried. Only capitalism thrives.

Sweden is successful despite its socialism, not because of it; its prosperity derives from the capitalism it allows.

Again, read the Bible; don't cut it up for your own twisted ends.

October 24, 2008 at 12:53 p.m.

By: [chavez66](#)

Check the polls the "Big Love" state is by far the McCain strong hold. Ray-gun-nomics cause abortions while Obama shows compassion as opposed to condemnation. Jesus stands in front of Mary Magdalin when those who would cast stones at her. For what reasons? Mormons might be the only "christians" that I can think of that would reasonably use the term religious right. "I could

give you a raise but, I'm trying to get to the next tax bracket." Do we need the gov. to tempt us toward greed? How do the poor raise a child when the minimum wage stays the same nearly 20 years. Both gas and milk were under a dollar at one mark of min. wage than at the next, over 3 dollars pretty much exactly what post tax min. wage was at the time. At that time most of the country could not afford a one bedroom apartment in the most rat infested slum hole let alone buy a gallon of milk. While one illegal canadian immigrant can now milk a thousand cows a day with automation. It must be "mad cow" or something but they also get the high end tax cuts. Just in case you want clarification on how reaganomics cause abortions.

Also lest anyone think I'm a religious nut I am against censorship but republican tax cut go toward opening porn studios. Let's say you can't censor, what then, discrepancy of wealth and an education that must be bought. Those are the problems.

October 24, 2008 at 11:23 a.m.

By: [Bobbyhals57](#)

Chavez, if your comments were offered as stones from a glass house, we would see that structure reduced to shards in no time.

Rather than use any of the endless amounts of scripture that refute your points...I remind you the vast majority of 'bleeding heart liberals' sanction a legalized choice to kill babies in the womb, promote homosexual and lesbian rights, and prohibit the mention of Jesus in schools.

Now wait a minute...

You say Jesus believes in these philosophies...including the exclusion of any mention of Himself to the little children He loves and died for?

To quote the Savior Himself... 'A house divided against itself cannot stand'.

Saying Christ was a bleeding heart liberal is like saying Obama is qualified to be President.

October 24, 2008 at 9:54 a.m.

By: [ScottVA](#)

Those are interesting "sound bites" of your own there, Chavez66.

Your obvious ignorance of Scripture is astounding. Perhaps you should actually read it, rather than scan it for verses to take out of context.

Jesus never told anyone to give other people's money, but their own -- that is not democrat (check charitable giving of the Communist Organizer and Joe "plagiarist" Biden).

The donkey was not the symbol of the Democrat Party in 33 AD (that's right Anno Domini); it was the standard ceremonial mode of transportation for kings of Israel.

"Let the rich among you be ready to give," does not condemn the wealthy, but admonishes them to do good with their money. (I Timothy 6:17-18).

If you would read the actual passages in Matt 19, Mark 10, and Luke 18, you would find that the Lord said harder for a rich man, not Republican, to enter the Kingdom, and that, in the very next verse, the Disciples ask Him, "Who then can be saved?" indicating that they were also rich.

I hope you will consider the true claims of Jesus Christ, and bow your knee to His great offer of rebirth and eternal life.

October 24, 2008 at 9:31 a.m.

By: [chavez66](#)

Jesus on the cross was a bleeding heart liberal. Giving free health care and feeding the poor up to that point. "Make love not war" permeated his life. Less any drug or sex. He even rode a donkey the democratic mascot. It's relevant and symbolic as opposed to beasts of war. He came not to conquer. In every conceivable way Jesus was more a democrat than a republican. He said to the rich man if you want to follow me give your money to the poor first. McCain would call that spreading of wealth socialism. "The love of money is the root of all evil" this definitely doesn't bode well for big business. It's harder for a republican to enter the kingdom of heaven than a camel through the eye of a needle. I think that camel is symbolic as well.

It just shows how effective sound bites are and how little most people know about politics.

October 24, 2008 at 8:19 a.m.

By: [Maranatha.Shalom](#)

The Light shines in the darkness,
but the darkness has not understood it.

October 24, 2008 at 8:08 a.m.

By: [g9m4](#)

dylan-a christian? anybody that thinks this communist was EVER a christian, is smoking the same thing dylan does!! is dylan a Quisling? is dylan a 5th columnist? my faith tells me he is! (for those schooled in public education please google Quisling)

October 24, 2008 at 7:36 a.m.

By: [charleskannal](#)

Thank you for this brief description of Mr. Gilbert's film on Bob Dylan's Jesus years. The film allows room for various "explanations" of a complex period in the great artist's career, and Mr. Galupo's article does not attempt to reduce the complexity. Dylan inspired millions. As one who was touched by his music and message(s), I wish him well in his relationship with the Creator.

October 24, 2008 at 7:26 a.m.

By: [stevedeery](#)

"the move meant either that Mr. Dylan had been manipulated by rank, attention-seeking Jimmy Swaggart types or that the man had taken leave of his senses"

There is a third reason someone might embrace Christianity but Mr Galupo doesn't seem to understand..

October 24, 2008 at 7:08 a.m.

By: [Maranatha.Shalom](#)

Well said, FlexFamily, well said.

And, as Jesus Himself told us:

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

John 3:8 (NIV)

Maranatha

October 24, 2008 at 7:01 a.m.

By: [flexfamily](#)

It's painfully obvious Mr. Galupo hasn't a clue about relationship with Jesus. Either you agree there is a Creator, he sent his son to reconcile us back to the Creator and the son (Jesus) sent his Spirit to guide us or....you don't.

If you don't you often use academic terminology to describe these odd cultish people who believe in the supernatural. Dylan got it because of relationship not ideology. You won't get people who have a relationship with Jesus to buy into your fake ideology that has no basis in the values and principles Jesus affirmed in his ministry on earth.

If one does they're not following the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit will not lead a mother to kill her baby or marry the same sex. This is not a matter of being close-minded, it's a matter of relationship to the Creator who knows best. Who are you following Mr. Galupo? Like Dylan pointed out, you gotta serve somebody...you don't follow your own drummer no matter how hard to want to believe that you do. In the end you will be magnetized to "the dark side" or "the kingdom of light."

October 24, 2008 at 3:21 a.m.

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