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Wednesday November 5, 2014

Religious terrorists kidnap Jesus

By Jim Taylor

Remember Peter Finch, in the movie *Network*, flinging open a window and yelling into the night, “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore!”?

I’m mad as hell too, and I’m not going to take it anymore either. The nutcases have taken Jesus hostage, and they’re making up words for him to say.

An e-mail, a week ago, blared this subject line: “Jesus warns of major ebola outbreak.”

I was going to trash it. Then I got curious. I wondered what biblical verses someone could bend enough to turn into a prophecy about ebola.

In fact, the message totally ignored the Bible.

First came a long list of supposed ebola cover-ups, with symptoms more reminiscent of horror movie special effects than of medical practice. Then came a vision of an angel pouring vials of blood which spilled all across the U.S, while the Obama administration plotted in bunkers. The plague spread across China, Europe, and finally Africa.

But not Canada, apparently. The prophet –a woman named Linda Newkirk – seems to have more faith in Canadian border security than I do.

Or maybe we weren’t evil enough.

Message of judgement

Finally, the prophet transcribed words that Jesus spoke directly to her:

“No more will I mercifully withhold My judgements regarding your wicked ways! You are a wicked house, oh My house, and all over this nation,

you parade your wickedness! I will no longer strive with you, oh America; for you have perverted My word! You have rebelled against Me and I am against you, oh America!

“As you have loved evil and as you despise truth, I will cause you to fall and to serve evil and to fall to every lie; for you love a lie! And, I will hide Myself from those who love evil...

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth; for Satan and all of his wicked hordes are being cast down and you, oh My people, they hate with a perfect hate! Therefore, you will either turn to Me with your whole hearts, or you will perish in your iniquities! I am Jesus!”

Some other Jesus

Whoa! Is this the same Jesus who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers”? The Jesus who taught, “Love your enemies... Turn the other cheek... Go a second mile... Love your neighbour... Forgive them, for they know not what they do...”

The Jesus that Linda Newkirk quotes is either a fraud, or has been brainwashed.

This is not the Jesus I know. It is not the Jesus who spoke to Julian of Norwich or St. Francis of Assisi. It is not the Jesus revealed in the biblical Gospels.

It’s a Jesus who has been warped and twisted to suit the apocalyptic delusions of self-righteous sadists who believe that they and only they enjoy God’s favour, and who delight in the misery that they expect everyone else to suffer.

They are religious terrorists – people who foment fear and terror for their own ends. They deserve no more tolerance than political terrorists.

At the risk of sounding like them, I hope their hatred rots inside them like gangrene.

So, yes, I’m mad as hell.

They claim to speak for Jesus. They do not.

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YOUR TURN

After last week's column, Ted Wilson wrote, "You have good taste in beer [although] there was no mention of actually drinking it in this week's Soft Edges. Until now I had never realized Guinness could be a source of such ecstatic and intellectual stimulation."

James West had similar thoughts: "As far as liking Guinness, I'll drink to that. Brought back a memory of our visit to Ireland. One evening I ordered a Guinness to drink during dinner. It arrived after dessert because of the bubbles and waiting until it actually looked like a glass of drinkable liquid.

"I'm also quite entranced by your comment that back at the beginning plants gave off a waste produce called oxygen. And now our lives depend on that waste product -- recycling at its finest."

Isabel Gibson connected the column with the old hymn, "*Breathe on me, breath of God.*"

"Maybe this [the notion of all of us being connected] was what the Israelites had in mind when they talked about the breath of God. (Although they seem to include a lot of 'blown away' images.) *What a world it would be if we actually saw ourselves as part of everything else.*"

About last week's psalm paraphrase, Nenke Jongkind asked, "Which Psalm?" I gave you the relevant verses, but not the psalm number. It was Psalm 107.

PSALM PARAPHRASES

Today, we have books, and DVDs, and (ugh) Twitter. In prehistoric times, I imagine, wisdom was passed down around the campfire. In this paraphrase of Psalm 78:1-7, I imagine the women gathered, staring at the flames.

- 1 Come, children, and sit beside me. Listen while I tell you a story.
 - 2 I will teach you the old wives' tales, the wisdom of many generations
 - 3 distilled into deceptively simple sayings.
- We women have not roamed the world as solitary hunters;
ours is the hearth and the home, nurturing the lives of our loved ones.
- 4 In endless talk of nothing much,

we learn from each other's trials and troubles.
We pass our collective wisdom along as aphorisms:
A stitch in time... A rolling stone...
Sleeping dogs... Glass houses...
Each maxim gleams with its own gem of truth, sifted from the sands of time.
5 Through our collective consciousness, God guides us.
Individual insights melt into communal memory.
6 This is how we pass hard-won wisdom on to generations not yet conceived.

Someday, children, you will tell your grandchildren,
7 So that they too can know that they belong to the people of God,
so that they too can be a light to the nations,
a path pointing the way toward holiness.

**For paraphrases of most of the psalms used by the Revised Common
 Lectionary, you can order my book *Everyday Psalms* from Wood Lake
 Publishing, info@woodlake.com.**

YOU SCRATCH MY BACK...

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 Or forward them a copy of this column. But please put your name on it, so they don't think I'm sending out spam.
 For other web links worth pursuing, try

- Ralph Milton's HymnSight webpage, <http://www.hymnsight.ca>, with a vast gallery of photos you can use to enhance the appearance of the visual images you project for liturgical use (prayers, responses, hymn verses, etc.)
- David Keating's "SeemslkeGod" page, www.seemslkegod.org;
- Isobel Gibson's thoughtful and well-written blog, www.traditionaliconoclast.com
- Alan Reynold's weekly musings, punningly titled "Reynolds Rap," write reynoldsrap@shaw.ca
- Wayne Irwin's "Churchweb Canada," an inexpensive service for any congregation wanting to develop a web presence, with free consultation. <http://www.churchwebcanada.ca>
- Alva Wood's satiric stories about incompetent bureaucrats and prejudiced attitudes in a small town are not particularly religious, but they are fun; write alvawood@gmail.com to get onto her mailing list.

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You can access several years of archived columns at <http://edges.Canadahomepage.net>.

I write a second column each Sunday called Sharp Edges, which tends to be somewhat more cutting about social and justice issues. To sign up for Sharp Edges, write to me directly, at jimt@quixotic.ca, or send a note to sharpedges-subscribe@quixotic.ca
