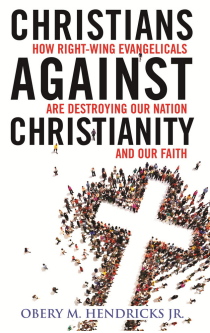


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Christians Against Christianity: How Right-Wing Evangelicals Are Destroying Our Nation and Our Faith

By Obery M. Hendricks, Jr.
On Sale Date: July 6th, 2021

The product of two deeply religious families from rural Virginia, biblical scholar and activist Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. grew up with a Christian faith that took seriously the ethical demands of the Gospel to love our neighbors as ourselves by seeking security, succor and well-being for all people, especially those in need. “But today,” writes Hendricks, “the contours of this faith are barely recognizable.” Modern right-wing evangelicals have embraced a different gospel, “a heretical ideology that refracts and distorts the love and truth of Jesus’s teachings through a lens of xenophobia, political rancor, and narrow self-interests.”

In **Christians Against Christianity: How Right-Wing Evangelicals Are Destroying Our Nation and our Faith**, Hendricks sets the record straight, defending “the truth and majesty of the Gospel from right-wing evangelicals’ crude caricature of it.” He searingly indicts white evangelicals’ allegiance to white supremacy and calls Christians to return their faith to the life-affirming message that Jesus brought and died for.

Hendricks traces the rise of the modern evangelical movement, beginning with right-wing Christian segregationists’ vociferous opposition to racial integration, through the formation of activist right-wing organizations which aim to impose a white supremacist, Christian nationalist agenda on all of American society.

He addresses why prominent right-wing evangelicals and preachers chose Trump as their “messiah,” noting how his “blank-page malleability, easy susceptibility to flattery, and a moral compass so skewed as to be virtually nonexistent” made him the perfect candidate to help them realize their goal of “forcing every aspect of American life to genuflect at the altar of their narrow brand of Christianity.”

Challenging right-wing evangelicals on the terrain of their own religious claims, Hendricks goes on to expose their misuses of the Bible in addressing contemporary issues, from their homophobia, xenophobia, and Islamophobia to their “unholy” anti-union alliance with big business and opposition to abortion and gun control.

He argues, for instance, that the NRA and right-wing evangelicals’ current stance that gun ownership is a “God-given” right is an outrageous fiction with no biblical basis. “There is simply no legitimate way that the self-serving and, ultimately, deadly claims of the NRA can be reconciled with the witness of the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.... the NRA’s conflating of the Christian cross with gun ownership is nothing short of blasphemy.”

Regarding abortion, biblical scholar Hendricks not only shows that the Bible does not support evangelicals' opposition, he contends that evangelicals' obsession with abortion reveals a troubling degree of moral bankruptcy. "For all the seeming righteousness of their claims," he writes, "right-wing evangelicals' 'pro-life' stance does not hold all human life in equal measure, for their concern for life essentially wanes at birth... The bottom line is that right-wing evangelicals really are not at all 'pro-life' in any large sense. They simply are abortion obsessed."

Hendricks takes to task the evangelicals' claim that social justice activism is not integral to the Gospel or the mission of the church. "It is simply not possible to fully understand the teachings of Jesus without a clear understanding of the centrality of social justice to the Bible.... Today he would be considered a radical, perhaps even a socialist, for preaching good news to the poor and woes to the rich; for ... denouncing the unjust, inequitable distribution of wealth and abuse of economic power in his homeland; for staging disruptive public demonstrations against an exploitive, nonresponsive political- religious establishment at the central site of their power."

Touching upon right-wing evangelical xenophobia, Hendricks observes, "Apparently, evangelicals' disdain for people of color and religious 'others' trumps even the authority of the Bible." Citing poll results, he writes, "In fact, by their own admission, the majority of evangelicals simply do not care what the Bible says about immigration." Hendricks concludes, "This is not biblical Christianity. It is right-wing ideological Christianity, in which the teachings of the Bible are twisted, distorted, and used selectively to support right-wing evangelical ends."

Reflecting on the positions and rhetoric of the right-wing evangelical movement that so sorely contradict the faith they claim as their own, especially their support of Trump, Hendricks likens its ideological underpinnings to what the New Testament calls "the spirit of antichrist." He explains, "I'm not talking about a singular figure... What I'm talking about are ideologies and pronouncements that cynically distort the teachings of Christ -- in the name of Christ - to serve the interests of a particular individual or group."

In the book's epilogue Hendricks asks if right-wing evangelicals will ever reclaim their moral authority. He finds hope for the movement in the courage of the handful of right-wing evangelicals who publicly disavowed Trump in the waning weeks of his 2020 reelection campaign. Yet, he cautions, "If one day right-wing evangelicals should seek to become fully worthy of the faith identity they claim they would have to confront the insidious evil of their white supremacist roots and the destructive false assumptions of their Christian nationalism. They would have to admit and repent for the political and moral carnage they have helped to wreak upon American society."

About the Author

Obery M. Hendricks, Jr. is a best-selling author, an activist, a religious scholar, a former theological seminary president, and an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. His books include *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted*, *The Universe Bends Toward Justice: Radical Reflections on the Bible, the Church, and the Body Politic* and a biblical novel, *Living Water*. He currently teaches religion and African American studies at Columbia University and is also a Visiting Professor of Bible and Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

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