YOUR OWN PERSONAL JESUS

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The Christian faith stands (and falls) on the story of Jesus of Nazareth as recounted in the four Gospels. It is a religion founded in a historic event, described in four eye-witness accounts that have challenged and disturbed people through 2,000 years.
Category: Observations

I know what Jesus looked like. There was a poster of him on our Sunday School wall and after years of staring at it, I know that Jesus was tall, wore perfectly clean robes, had long blond hair and piercing blue eyes. In other words, he was an idealised Englishman.

Of course it stands to reason that Jesus looked English. My childhood coincided with the last days of the British Empire; that institution which (so we were told) had spread civilisation and Christianity around the world. The British were God's servants and Jesus looked like one of us.

The English aren't the only ones who have appropriated Jesus to their own cultural norms. Take the case of Joe Walsh (who is a former congressman, not the guitarist with the Eagles as I first thought).

> *If Jesus was back among us, he'd be a law-abiding gun owner.*
>
> *He'd support the Police.*
>
> *And he'd say "Merry Christmas" not "Happy Holidays."*
>
> *â€" Joe Walsh (@WalshFreedom) November 27, 2016*

There is also the accepting Jesus of the 21st century; the one who finds no fault, takes people as they are and makes no demands on their ethical lives apart from falling in with whatever the fashionableÂ *cause du jour* is. The Jesus of the Guardian comment pages.

The problem with all of this is the awkward truth that Jesus was a historical figure.Â He wasn't British, he was Jewish. He taught people to turn the other cheek, not carry guns, and the authorities didn't consider him law-abiding in the slightest. Not only that, but he did discriminate between sheep and goats, he made all sorts of ethical demands on people, including reinforcing traditional views of marriage and adultery. Jesus had his own agenda and he calls us to be his disciples; to lose our lives and follow him. He doesn't offer us the option of co-opting him to fit the way in which we'd like the world to be.

The Christian faith stands (and falls) on the story of Jesus of Nazareth as recounted in the four Gospels. It is a religion founded in a historic event, described in four eye-witness accounts that have challenged and disturbed people through 2,000 years. To be a Christian is to follow the historic Jesus in repentance and faith and to allow his teaching to shape the way we interact with culture and society. Like Jesus, we must challenge the prevailing morality and like him we must do so in meekness and humility. But we must challenge.

We are, of course, free to co-opt Jesus to fit our own agenda and our own morality. People have been doing this for centuries. However, when we do this, when we take Jesus out of his historical context and make him fit our own, we have something other than historicÂ Christianity. I'm not sure what it is, though.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpYW3qng78E