

Media Contact: Leslie Speyers
leslie.speyers@zondervan.com
616.698.3345

Re-Imagining Politics: Vote Jesus for President

Prominent social activist Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw stir the Christian political imagination, offer an alternative to divisive two-party politics

Grand Rapids, Mich., Jan. 17 – In highly politicized times, prominent activist Shane Claiborne and artist and theologian Chris Haw are awakening the political imagination of Christians with *Jesus for President* (March 2008), redefining “political” as “simply how we relate to the world.” “Amid all the buzz, we’re ready to turn off our TVs, pick up our Bibles, and reimagine the world,” Claiborne says.



“The church has fallen in love with the state and this love affair is killing the church’s imagination. Too often the patriotic values of pride and strength triumph over the spiritual virtues of humility, gentleness and sacrificial love,” Claiborne says. Christian discipleship is politically and social engaged, but in a way that confounds and transcends parties. “It’s easy to have political views—that’s what politicians do. But it’s much harder to embody a political alternative—that’s what saints do.”

Publishers Weekly awarded *Jesus for President* a starred review, calling it “the must-read election-year book for Christian Americans. Claiborne emerges as an affable, intelligent, humorous prophet of his generation, calling people out of business-as-usual in a corrupt world and back to the radically different social order of the biblical God.”

Weaving Claiborne’s stories with Haw’s thorough research, *Jesus for President* encourages a new kind of campaign, a different kind of party, and a different kind of commander in chief, casting a vision for what the Christian Church could look like if it placed its faith in Jesus, instead of American institutions.

Claiborne, a well-known leader in the “New Monastic” movement, who inspired thousands through his first book, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* (February 2006), teamed with Haw and designers SharpSeven on *Jesus for President*, which features a creative four-color art and design.

Besides its provocative essays, the comprehensive retelling of biblical stories examines the political realities of God’s people in Jesus’ time and in the “Hebrew Scriptures” (The Old Testament)—followed by creative ideas on modern-day living that makes an impact in the world at large. “Jesus is forming a new kind of people, a different kind of party, whose peculiar politics are embodied in who we are. The church is a people called out of the world to embody a social alternative that the world cannot know on its own terms,” Claiborne says.

Jesus for President Tour:

Claiborne, Haw and his wife Cassie and dog Lucy, along with two other friends, will be touring 23 cities from June 23 through July 23 of 2008, sharing ideas and inspiring others to re-imagine

-more-

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / page 2



Media Contact: Leslie Speyers
leslie.speyers@zondervan.com
616.698.3345

politics. Cities will be announced in early February. They'll be traveling in a bus running on used vegetable oil, more referred to as the "veggie bus". The Jesus for President tour cities will feature teaching from both authors as well as storytelling, art, music and worship that provokes the political imagination. Each city will also include special guest musicians and performers.

Visit www.jesusforpresident.org

###

Jesus for President by Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw. Releases March 2008.

ISBN: 978-0-310-27842-9. US \$16.99 / UK £9.99 / CAN \$19.99. Trim: 6 x 8. 304 pages.

###

Zondervan, a HarperCollins company, is the world's leading Christian publisher of books whose authors are noted for their excellence in the craft of writing as well as their worthy contribution to the ongoing global evangelical conversation. The works published by Zondervan not only confirm readers' faith and understanding, they also challenge and stretch readers' thinking. For more than 75 years, Zondervan has delivered transformational Christian experiences through general, ministry, and academic resources by influential leaders and emerging voices, and been honored with more Christian Book Awards than any other publisher. Headquartered in Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan publishes bestselling books, audio, video, curriculum, software, and digital products in such categories as biblical languages and studies, biography, business, contemporary issues, counseling, cultural, devotional, evangelism, family, fiction, history, inspiration, leadership, ministry, pastoral, personal development, prayer, philosophy, reference, relationships, textbooks, theology, youth and more. Zondervan resources are sold worldwide through retail stores, online, and by Zondervan ChurchSource, and are translated into nearly 200 languages in more than 60 countries. Visit Zondervan Books on the Internet at www.zondervan.com/books.

About Shane Claiborne:

Shane Claiborne is a prominent activist, sought-after speaker, and writer. He travels extensively to speak about peacemaking, social justice, and Jesus. With tears and laughter, he unveils the tragic messes we've made of our world and the tangible hope that another world is possible.

Claiborne is one of the founding members of The Simple Way (www.thesimpleway.org), a community in inner-city Philadelphia that has helped birth and connect radical faith communities around the world, many of which have become known as "new monasticism" communities. Claiborne and The Simple Way do much work to expose the fundamental structures that create poverty and to imagine positive alternatives.

Claiborne graduated from Eastern University and did graduate work at Princeton Seminary. His ministry experience is varied, from a 10-week stint working alongside Mother Teresa in Calcutta, to a year spent serving at Willow Creek

Community Church outside Chicago, and three weeks in Baghdad with the Iraq Peace Team.

He is featured in the DVD series "Another World Is Possible" and is the author of the *The Irresistible Revolution* (Zondervan, 2006). In his downtime, Claiborne is quite a dynamic circus performer. Shane has been featured in numerous media outlets including *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *the New York Times*, *the Washington Times*, *the Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Sojourners*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *Spin*, *Christianity Today*, *Relevant*, and the popular national radio program, *Speaking of Faith*.



About Chris Haw:



Chris Haw is an aspiring potter, carpenter, painter, and theologian. Haw and his wife, Cassie, are members of Camden House, a community in Camden, New Jersey. He grew up Catholic, spent many years growing and serving at Willow Creek Community Church outside of Chicago, and a few months studying ecology and theology while living in Belize.

Haw now enjoys periodically teaching at various congregations, conferences, and classes, as well as hosting small conferences on "the new monasticism." He works through the intersection of challenges like post-industrial ecology, economic redistribution, dissolution of community life in America, biblical formation, and ecumenical dialogue.

A graduate of Eastern University with degrees in Sociology and Theology, Haw is currently working on his graduate degree in Theology from Villanova University. He has been interviewed in *Christianity Today* and *Sojourners*, and featured in the DVD series "Another World Is Possible."

For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact Leslie Speyers at 616.698.3345 or leslie.speyers@zondervan.com

Excerpts from *Jesus for President*:

Section One: Before There Were Kings and Presidents

Once upon a time there were no kings or presidents. Only God was king. The Bible is the story of a God who is continually rescuing humanity from the messes we make of the world. God is bringing the kingdom of heaven to earth. God is leading humans on an exodus adventure out of the land of emperors and kings and into the Promised Land."

"Over and over, the people [of Israel] settled for the empty promises of empire over the eternal dreams of God. But God is relentless. God pursued, forgave, wooed them back, as a Lover."

"For the sake of a watching world, God systematically interrupted the human systems that created poverty – releasing debt, setting slaves free, prohibiting usury, and redistributing property...Sounds like a platform even we could vote for."

Section Two: A New Kind of Commander-in-Chief

"Jesus would enter his people's story, tears, sweat, and hunger and show them a way out that doesn't require the financial, military, and political power of kings and presidents and cabinets."

"Jesus would make for a bad president. And he would be considerably uncomfortable as commander in chief of the largest military in the world. Nevertheless, he was political. All of his titles granted him political authority. Calling him Messiah or Lord is like acclaiming him – unlikely as it is – as president. He was the president who did not want to be president. His politics aspired to something different from state power."



"If we might call Jesus president, we could say that his campaign slogan was 'Jubilee!'"

"This is what Jesus had in mind: folks coming together, forming close-knit communities and meeting each other's needs – no kings, no major welfare systems, no presidents necessary. His is a theology and practice for the people of God, not a set of suggestions for the empire."

"Jesus taught a third way. We see a Jesus who abhors both passivity and violence, who carves out a third way that is neither submission nor assault, neither fight nor flight."

"Jesus is ready to set us free from the heavy yoke of an oppressive way of life. Plenty of wealthy Christians are suffocating from the weight of the American dream, heavily burdened by the lifeless toil and consumption we embrace. This is the yoke from which we are being set free. And as we are liberated from the yoke of global capitalism, our sisters and brothers in Guatemala, Liberia, Iraq, and Sri Lanka will also be liberated."

Section Three: When the Empire Got Baptized

"Is it possible that we can't see the destructiveness of our economy not because we don't know it's terrible but because deep down, we feel that it's necessary and that therefore it's hopeless to criticize it?"

Excerpts from *Jesus for President* (cont...):

“Very few Scriptures can be construed to say that we are unquestionably to follow whatever kings and presidents dictate, no matter how out of line they seem to be.”

“We can support a president while also worshipping Jesus as the Son of God. But how is this possible? For one says that we must love our enemies, and the other says we must kill them; one promotes the economics of competition, while the other admonishes the forgiveness of debts. To which do we pledge allegiance?”

“When we are talking about a baptized empire, one that has dazzled the church into conformity, we are not just talking about the violent militarism of Rome or the United States or Iran or North Korea. We are also talking about a much more prevalent, subtle, and powerful empire that seeps into every home – our daily global lifestyle.”

“We might hope to change the world through better, bigger programs to stop global warming, but global warming will not end unless people become less greedy and less wasteful, gaining a fresh vision of what it means to love our global neighbor.”

“So even as we see the horror of death, may we be reminded that in the end, love wins. Mercy triumphs. Life is more powerful than death. And even those who have committed great violence can have the image of God come to life again within them as they hear the whisper of love. May the whisper of love grow louder than the thunder of violence. May we love loudly.”

Section Four: A Peculiar Party



“Jesus is forming a new kind of people, a different kind of party, whose peculiar politics are embodied in who we are. The church is a people called out of the world to embody a social alternative that the world cannot know on its own terms.”

“It’s easy to have political views – that’s what politicians do. But it’s much harder to embody a political alternative – that’s what saints do. The greater challenge is right living, not just right thinking. In Jesus we meet not a presentation of basic ideas or a new political platform, but an invitation to join up, to become part of a movement, a people who embody good news.”

“One of the ways we can embody a new economy and politics is by making our won stuff from the scraps of the empire. In our communities, we are able to make many of the things we need... Each creation is a deliberate small act of resistance to the corporate global economy.”

“We are no longer talking about an eye for an eye and a bomb for a bomb but about how one person committed to enemy-love can transform an entire conflict.”

“As much as we balk at its mysticism, the central political prayer and hope of Christians is, ‘Lord, come quickly; may your kingdom come.’”

“One thing that’s clear in the Scriptures is that the nations do not lead people to peace; rather, people lead nations to peace...The end of war begins with people who believe that another world is possible and that another empire has already interrupted time and space and is taking over this earth with the dreams of God.”

Jesus for President

Chapter/Section Summaries



Section 1

A good Creation of love and beauty takes a turn for the worse, landing it in a murderous chaos. What to do? Flood it and start fresh? Build a tower that reaches heaven? Appoint an adventurous elderly couple to lead the people out of the nations to the Promised Land? Something has to save humanity from themselves ...

Section 2

The construction of a set-apart people into a living temple of blessing is going so-so. The solution: God puts skin on to show the world what love looks like. But here's the catch: the Prince of Peace is born as a refugee in the middle of a genocide and is rescued from the trash bin of imperial executions to stand at the pinnacle of this peculiar people. A strange way to start a revolution ...

Section 3

Flags on altars, images of the gods on money ... Caesar is colonizing our imaginations. What has happened to the slaughtered Lamb, the Prince of Peace? There seems to be another gospel spreading across the empire, and two Kingdoms are colliding. What is a Jesus-follower to do when the empire gets baptized?

Section 4

Snapshots of political imagination ... the question is not are we political, but how are we political. Not are we relevant, but are we peculiar? The answer lies in how we embody what we believe. Our greatest challenge is to maintain the distinctiveness of our faith in a world gone mad. And all of creation waits, groans, for a people who live God's dream with fresh imagination.

**To discuss an excerpt or story idea, please contact Leslie Speyers
at 616.698.3345 or leslie.speyers@zondervan.com**