

Just suppose Jesus was obsessed with debt, and not sex....

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[Michael Hudson](#) is an economist for whom I have always had a lot of time, for a great many reasons.

He has a new book out this year. It's called '*...And Forgive them their Debts: Credit and Redemption*'. I like the idea. It's explosive. He argues that the real life Jesus (and whatever you might think about his status, I think there was a real life Jesus) did not teach about sex and sin. Hudson argues he taught about economics and debt. As is noted on his own blog:

“The Christianity we know today is not the Christianity of Jesus,” says Professor Hudson. Indeed the Judaism that we know today is not the Judaism of Jesus either.

The economist told Renegade Inc the Lord's Prayer, 'forgive us our sins even as we forgive all who are indebted to us', refers specifically to debt.

“Most religious leaders say that Christianity is all about sin, not debt,” he says. “But actually, the word for sin and debt is the same in almost every language.”

“Schuld’, in German, means ‘debt’ as well as ‘offense’ or, ‘sin’. It’s ‘devoir’ in French. It had the same duality in meaning in the Babylonian language of Akkadian.”

The idea harks back to the concept of ‘wergeld’, which existed in parts of Europe and Babylonia, and set the value of a human life based on their rank, paid as compensation to the family of someone who has been injured or killed

“The payment — the Schuld or obligation — expiates you of the injury caused by the offense,” Dr Hudson said.

People tend to think of the Commandment ‘do not covet your neighbour's wife’ in purely sexual terms but actually, the economist says it refers specifically to creditors who would force the wives and daughters of debtors into sex slavery as collateral for unpaid debt.

"This goes all the way back to Sumer in the third millennium," he said.

Similarly, the Commandment 'thou shalt not steal' refers to usury and exploitation by threat for debts owing.

Controversially he argues:

“The economist says Jesus was crucified for his views on debt. Crucifixion being a punishment reserved especially for political dissidents.

"To understand the crucifixion of Jesus is to understand it was his punishment for his economic views," says Professor Hudson. "He was a threat to the creditors."

Jesus Christ was a socialist activist for the continuity of regular debt jubilees that were considered essential to the wellbeing of ancient economies.

I am well aware that this will offend some. Is it plausible. I offer this, from Luke, Chapter 4:

16 Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. 17 The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor,
and liberate the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* [e]

20 He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. 21 He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

Let me be quite clear: I am not seeking to convert anyone to anything. I am seeking to discuss the importance of a particular religious understanding and its role and impact on our society.

Is Hudson right? I think it plausible. And just read the Lord's Prayer in this light (this is [from the same modern translation](#) that I used above, from Luke 11):

2 Jesus told them, "When you pray, say:

'Father, uphold the holiness of your name.
Bring in your kingdom.
Give us the bread we need for today.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who has wronged us.
And don't lead us into temptation.'

Why not bring in your kingdom is it meant a debt jubilee? And then read sin as debt. And daily bread as the means to survive. And what have you got? Hudson's hypothesis.

And then we might have a Christianity obsessed with true justice and not, as it has been for too many for far too long, sexual repression. That is interesting, I think.

I am looking forward to the book.