Waking Up
By: Matthew “Matt” Safrit

I have given much thought to the idea of reform. Prison reform, social reform, State reform (etc.). Essentially, many of my musings have centered around encouraging democratic and egalitarian equality, the folly of trapping the ‘scandalous’ in a system (prison) that does seemingly nothing for their rehabilitation but sell them religion,¹ and the need for those in office to be held accountable for their actions.

I now, however, see the glaring discrepancy between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-I-want-it-to-be:
The world-as-it-is incarcerates people in the 21st century South using a mechanism which was originally instituted to re-enslave BIPOC individuals for the purpose of forced labor (and, hence, capital accrualment).

America itself was built off of the backs of exploited minorities whose ‘masters’ got away with some of the most atrocious acts that a person can do to someone else. The American Constitution contains ‘neutral’ language such as “all men”; yet the historical-grammatical context of these words makes it painfully apparent that “all men” are not “all men.” That is: total equality in America may very well be impossible because the nation, along with many of its institutions, were never actually founded for that purpose.

The slaves, in America, have disappeared in name only—the proletariat have become the whipping posts of the ‘elite.’

The ‘prisoner class’ which I yearn to see mitigated in regards to numbers can never be completely annihilated because America’s very own infrastructure needs its finances to survive. And politicians will forever get away with their crimes because this very thing has been happening since the days of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

We cannot afford to continue arguing for the slowly-grinded axe of reform to be perfected—we need to make a change now.

We cannot afford to continue raising the debt ceiling (read, ‘fortify our own servitude’).

And we cannot afford to uphold the current status quo—we need liberation.

¹ I often, unwarrantedly, I suppose, take out my frustration on the absurdities of traditional Christianity because of its predominance in here.
As one seeking to mitigate the use of prisons in America, I believe we must support healthy ideologies in our children.

As one who seeks radical change in America, I understand that instilling ‘the masses’ with an aesthetic of anger in order to accomplish our goals will lead us into the reach of a dictatorship. And as one who is an existential absurdist, I am skeptical, yet open, to any avenue which may get the people where they need to go in the best way possible in regards to developing eudemonia. Ironically, I have found my way to Jesus in pursuit of these goals.

I am not buying into the claims of deity.
I am not sold on miracles.

However, a critically deconstructed view of the Nazarene shows a person who humbly stood up for the oppressed while catering to their needs.
Jesus helped the lowest of the low.
He ate and drank with the outcasts.
He healed the sick.
And he stood up for truth.
He did not compromise his morality when he stepped into the political arena, and he did not clamor with swords as his movement grew in numbers.
A humble, truth-seeking freedom-fighter who spends his time helping the sick and the poor is what the people of America need in order to change their situation.
The aesthetic that comes over one sacrificing their immediate interest to help those who may not be able to help themselves will provide the spiritual drive necessary to fight evil and produce health communities.
I will not speculate whether this man was God.
However, by his radical self-sacrifice he became a god among men.
As I continue my fight, I will keep this all in mind—perhaps it will rub off on those who come behind us.

References

2 As in traditional forms of Marxism, for example.
3 "usually, and usefully, rendered as happiness, well-being, self-realization, or flourishing. The latter of these translations perhaps gives the best sense of Aristotle’s meaning of eudaimonia as a way of life rather than a passing sensation, not a transitory psychological state but an ‘objective condition of a person’ (Norman 1983, 39)” (Blackledge 2012, 21)