



All things flee thee
for
thou fleest Me

A Cry
to the Churches and Their Leaders
to Stop Running from
The Nonviolent Jesus and His Nonviolent Way

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(REV.) EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

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PREAMBLE

WHAT IS GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE ALL ABOUT?

“Fear Not!” The God of Jesus, the God who is Jesus is not going to hurt you—no way, nowhere, no how. The God who is Jesus is love (Greek: *agapé*), unconditional, everlasting, irrevocable love. If Jesus is who the New Testament and the Churches say He is, then “He is the image of the invisible God” (COL 1:15). If Jesus knows what He is talking about, then God is a God of nonviolent love. God is nonviolent love because Jesus, who teaches that He is one with the Father (JN 10:30) and that to see Him is to see the Father (JN 14:9), is nonviolent love made flesh. This is great, great news. For those who have faith in Jesus it is *the good news* because it is now certain that “Nothing can separate us from the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus, Our Lord” (RM 8:39).

No longer is there a need or a justification for human beings to feel insecure in existence, regardless of the fact that we humans appear to be totally perishable beings on a totally perishable planet in a totally perishable galaxy. No longer is there a need to fight and kill to try to do the impossible—to preserve the intrinsically impermanent in order to have security and peace. Peace and security, eternal survival and everlasting love are given to us because we, all of us without a single exception, are the immortal and infinitely cherished sons and daughters of a Parent who is immortal Life and Love Itself. As St. Edith Stein expresses it a few years before her death at Auschwitz:

I know myself held, and in this I have peace and security—not the self-assured security of a man who stands in his own strength on firm ground, but the sweet and blissful security of the child which is carried by a strong arm.

The person who believes in Jesus is called upon and yearns to proclaim, glorify, and magnify the true God to the rest of humanity by imitating his or her Divine Parent and not hurting anyone, anywhere, anytime for any reason. This yearning exists because he or she fathoms that God longs for each of His sons and daughters to be at peace and because of all the things human beings need in order to be at peace—the first and most important is the awareness that God loves them forever and will never, ever abandon them or hurt them. The Christian’s model for the proclamation of this great news is Jesus. Christ is the perfect imitation of the Father, who “makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust” (MT 5:45). The Christian, who desires to help reveal the true God to humanity, must then imitate the nonviolent Jesus who loves friends and enemies even unto physical death. Authentic evangelization is primarily imitation that magnifies the real God, so that others may “see” their Beatific Parent and know peace. It is in understanding the depth of love that God has for each person that peace on earth will be realized.

Since there is no violence or enmity in the true God and since there is no violence or enmity in Jesus, violence and enmity are always and everywhere and under all circumstances unholy, unChrist-like, contrary to the will of God. Because of who and what the true God is there is never a need for violence nor is there ever a reason for enmity. Because of who and what the true God is, violence and enmity are always the work of a false God or a false understanding of God and His Way. They are always the work of the Evil One, who spreads lies about God, who is a killjoy and who wants no one to live in the perpetual peace that comes from realizing that he or she is in the never-ending embrace of a Parent of Unconditional Love. Satan, the Accuser, the Adversary, the Divider, the Spirit of Mercilessness, the Father of the Anti-Christ is the crazed one who is out to destroy the sense of total security that people should have in God and thereby destroy people's peace as God's beloved. The Evil One ferociously engages in this labor of wickedness because it is inevitable, that once the peace of absolute security in the Father's/Mother's love is lost, this will undermine the security and hence the peace people have within themselves and among themselves. Human beings will then fear and fight each other over the possession or over the loss of possession of illusionary substitutes for that security and peace that can only come from understanding that each and everyone is held dear forever in the arms of their Heavenly Parent.

All this and the stream of personal and social implications and imperatives that flow from it are what Gospel Nonviolence is all about.

To

JOHN LEARY

February 22, 1958-August 31, 1982

†

A Magna Cum Laude Harvard Graduate

A Summa Cum Laude Catholic Worker

†

A Nonviolent Follower

of the

Nonviolent Walker of Waves

In Memoriam

A TWENTY-FOUR YEAR OLD ICON

Visible reality is but a speck of reality. Most of what is most important in life takes place on the invisible side of existence. Each life is an icon, a visible image of invisible realities. The clenched fist or the open hand does not exist in history without something unseen, but very real, within the person causing the hand to either close in hostility or to open in hospitality. So also it is with the tongue and the feet and with every conscious act of every human person at every second. I would like therefore to speak today of the invisible side of John Leary—the infinity behind the face of this Magna Cum Laude Harvard graduate and Summa Cum Laude Catholic Worker.

Because of some mysterious dynamic, John recognized early in life that outside God's will there was no genuine or lasting life, hope, love, peace or revolution. He realized that if the cacophony of evil and death were to be silenced and an ultimate harmony restored to human existence, then God would have to orchestrate it and John Leary would have to be God's willing instrument. Nothing was clearer to the "invisible John" than the fact that all attempts by an instrument to lead the band were doomed to continue the cacophony. To substitute ones own ideas on how to conquer evil and death for God's revealed Way on how to conquer evil and death was in the strictest sense of the word absurd. With a maturity beyond his twenty-four years he knew the meaning of "Our peace is in Your Will." To this end, each day, for what was to be the last two years of his life, John tried to say with his whole heart the following prayer:

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands.
Do with me as you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you.
I am ready for all. I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me
And in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul.
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
For I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
To surrender myself into your hands
Without reserve and with boundless confidence
For you are my Father.*

For John, the actual content of God's Will was revealed ultimately and definitively by Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of a God who is love (1 JN 16). John took with maximal seriousness Jesus' declarations that "The Father and I are one" (JN 10:30) and

“Whoever sees me sees the Father” (JN 14:9). Jesus and His teaching were for John the Way and Will of God to which the Christian was called to be trustfully obedient. Jesus’ New Commandment to “love one another as I have loved you” (JN 13:34) was for John Leary not a spiritual platitude to be set aside when adherence to it became difficult. It was a moral imperative for any person who believed Jesus to be who the Gospel said He was, namely, the Messiah of Israel, the Saviour of the world, the Word made flesh.

What was equally important for John was that, since Jesus’ Way was the Will of God and not just another piece of human speculation about the will of God, failure to choose according to it was de facto a choice for something other than God. This choice required explicit repentance. John repented much in the years I knew him, because he intuited that spiritual disintegration would follow, if he obstinately persisted in what he knew to be unChrist-like thoughts, words or deeds. He was aware that the refusal to acknowledge that an evil had been done would eventually result in calling evil good. He knew that an unnamed sin perpetuated itself indefinitely. We often joked about the fact, that the difference between cultural nurturing and Christ’s revelation of the Will of God, was so stark, that the Christian life often seemed like a life of repentance. Yet, the only choices available were to follow the way of God revealed by Jesus, and repent if one did not, or to waste one’s life plodding on the treadmill of moral deception, where evil is chosen to conquer evil. For John, what appeared good was not good—even if he “benefited” from it—if it was not in conformity with God’s will as revealed by Jesus Christ. The John Leary who actually existed and whom people rightly remember for his goodness was not “the boy innocent” within a corrupt and corrupting world. This very good person rightly remembered was a human being of choice and repentance, of commitment and recommitment.

All his spiritual efforts, and there were many, were not however primarily focused on himself, on his own righteousness, on his own salvation, etc. His life was intensely ordered toward others. The prayers, the choices, the daily Masses and Communions, the repentance, the study, the retreats, etc., had one aim, namely, to make possible the deeds of Christ-like love, mercy, service and kindness here and now, in the particular concrete moment. John believed he could not genuinely serve people except by serving them in the way God revealed they should be served in the person of Jesus. But, in the world in which we actually live, such Christ-like love can only be given at the price of a voluntary, invisible martyrdom. Yet for John—and everyone who knew John knows this to be true—a cup of tea given in the spirit of Christ-like love was everything, but a banquet without that spirit was just passing time at the trough (1 COR 13). Whatever John did in terms of service for the imprisoned, for the hungry, for the homeless, for the unborn, for the illiterate, for the unloved, for the deceived; whatever he did to oppose without exception homicide and enmity in all their forms, from abortion to nuclear weapons, from capital punishment to military training, was the fruit of an effort to enflesh, to em-

body, to obey the Will of God as revealed by Jesus. For him this was the Right Way to serve people, as well as, the Right Way to love God (1 JN 20-21).

Now that John is dead, some may smugly ask, “What difference did it make in the end? Who cares today whether this guy tried to love as Christ loves? Who even remembers him beyond a few friends for whom he is an occasional thought?” “Face the facts,” smirks the self-proclaimed realist, “common sense and simple observation verify that John Leary’s daily and often painful struggle to choose to live in the Spirit of Christ-like Love has proved to be utterly irrelevant, utopian and devoid of any notable visible consequences. The self-reverential realist then points out those people who are “making a difference in this world” and who are not allowing the Will of God as revealed by Jesus to interfere with the successful implementation of their projects, programs and agendas.

John was of course aware of this perception of existence, this criticism of the Gospel. He rejected it as being without intellectual merit, spiritual meaning or hope. It was the shallow, self-absolving voice of the sin of success, where success is procured by giving it a priority over fidelity to the Will of God. For John, success outside the Will of God as revealed by Jesus was failure and failure within the Will of God was success. Good Friday and Easter Sunday were the great witnesses to this truth, as well as, the great warning to those who were not going to allow their agendas to get bogged down by the unrealisms of God’s Will. John did not choose the Way of Christ because he did not know of any other options, nor did he chose it in ignorance of the objections raised against it. He chose it because there is only one Source of reality and one reality. Therefore, what is God’s Will can never be unrealistic, impractical or without temporally and eternally significant good consequences—and Jesus revealed that Will.

“Icon” is the Greek word for image. A Christ-like icon is God’s power and love in history because it invites people to a Christ-like life, which is God’s power and love in history. When therefore one looks at John Timothy Leary, a twenty-four year old icon of the invisible Spirit of Jesus Christ, one sees the Truth of the Gospel proclaimed to others with love and the choice of the Gospel offered to others with supreme kindness. Through Jesus, John knew the Heart of God, the human heart and the heart of what matters:

*Time is short. Eternity is long.
Love as Christ loves,
all else is dust in time and in eternity,
for the true God is love.*

FUNERAL LITURGY FOR JOHN LEARY

SEPTEMBER 4, 1982

HOMILIST: EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

PROLOGUE

To release a person or a community bound in a web of venomous falsehoods, that has imprisoned and malformed its mind and emotions since childhood, can be a near impossible task. In a cannibal society the theological truth of cannibalism is all but unassailable. So also is this the case with Christian mind-sets and theologies of justified homicidal violence and enmity. On a planet where 99% of Christians and Churches nurture from the cradle the moral acceptability of homicide and enmity for Christians, there is little room available for announcing the Good News of Christ's freeing and healing nonviolent love. However, as close to impossible as the task appears of extricating and restoring to spiritual health Christian minds and hearts ensnared and poisoned by homicide-justifying, enmity-approving fictions about Jesus and His Way, this is precisely the project that this small book undertakes. So let there be clarity! The secondary purpose of this book is to plead with the leadership of the Christian Churches to allow the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel and His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies to arise in the minds and hearts and lives of their communities. The primary purpose of this book is to beseech the laity of the various Christian Churches to accept Jesus as He is presented to them in the Gospel, that is, as personally nonviolent and as teaching a Way of nonviolent love as the Way of discipleship, as the Way of eternal life.

It is beyond the power of words to communicate the loss of delight, truth and peace that humanity has suffered because of the Churches' leaders chronic and obstinate refusal to teach what Jesus taught about homicidal violence and enmity. What experience of God would permeate Christianity and humanity today, what level of community would exist within humanity and among Christians at this moment if for the last 1700 years the Churches had taught and had struggled to live what Jesus taught and struggled to live in relationship to violence and enmity? In other words what would life be at this hour, and equally important, what would death be at this hour, if Christianity had religiously followed the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel and His Nonviolent Way? The Pythagorean Theorem would still be true and NaCl would still be salt if the Churches had professed and proclaimed the Nonviolent Jesus. But, how very, very, differently secular truth would have been applied, if the hundred of trillions upon hundred of trillions of moments which Christians have put into justifying and executing violence had been spent fathoming and following the Nonviolent Jesus.

Providentially, time has not yet ceased for me, for you or for humanity. Tomorrow is still a possibility. Today a truth can be proclaimed regardless of how many yesterdays failed to proclaim it. Every instant is an opportunity to bear witness to the truth and to correct a false witness from the past.

However, as Leon Festinger shows in his classic sociological study, *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), human beings can lie to themselves with sincerity, can convince themselves of what they even then know is not true.

[P]resented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence that his belief is wrong: What will happen? The individual will frequently emerge, not only unshaken, but even more convinced of the truth of his belief than ever before.

Strange, indeed, is the temptation to untruth. Who can account for the ease, enthusiasm, earnestness and tenacity with which people embrace it?

If Biblically truth is the self communication of God to human beings, if philosophically truth is the conformity of the human mind to reality, from whence comes the motivation to choose untruth, to conform mind to non-reality, to illusion? Over the four millennia of human literacy much has been written as to why people propagate or accept known untruth, i.e., the lie. Fear, that pleasure will be missed or that pain will be encountered, has often been suggested as the Great Motivator that entices a person or a group to hold tight to blatant falsehoods. But, who really knows the source of the mystery that beguiles people to entrust their one and only life to what they know in their hearts is not so. All that can be said in faith is that to willingly profess as true what one knows to be untrue is to be in the service of “the Father of Lies in whom there is no truth at all and who is a murderer from the beginning” (JN 8:44).

Whether *All things flee thee for thou fleest Me*, will accomplish the liberating and therapeutic task for which it was created is now in hands other than the hands that penned it for Jesus, for the Church and for humanity.

To Teach What Jesus Taught: A Call to Accountability

God intervenes radically only in response to a radical attitude on the part of the believer—radical not in regard to political means but in regard to faith; and the believer who is radical in his faith has rejected all means other than those of faith. The appeal to and use of violence in Christian action increase in exact proportion to the decrease in faith....Unbelief is the true root of the Christian championship of violence.

JACQUES ELLUL

The issue of whether Jesus teaches by word and deed a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies is settled. He does! All attempts today to justify violence from the life of Jesus or His teachings are devoid of spiritual and intellectual merit. That is not opinion, that is fact.

CALCULATED INATTENTIVENESS

Fortunately in our time spiritual leaders have all but ceased the farcical effort of trying to morally validate the violence of Christians by reference to Jesus and His teachings. Presently, the strategy of preference is calculated inattentiveness to the nonviolence of Jesus and the nonviolent nature of the love that He teaches to His disciples as divine and salvific. Christian Churches in our day do not, as in days past, try to explain away Jesus' teaching of nonviolent love by torturously proving that He did not really mean what He said. No, in our day they just ignore it and replace it with some philosophical conceptualization of reality and its Source, which they then raise to an equivalent or superior status to the teaching of Jesus, e.g., "It is a God-given natural right to kill those who are trying to kill you, or it is a tragic necessity in the present state of a fallen humanity with its immoral societies. To do what is natural or necessary cannot be sinful. Q.E.D.! Now on to homicide in clear Christian conscience!" In this strategy Jesus' teaching on the subject does not get a hearing, except to be peremptorily dismissed as simplistic idealism. He is allowed to enter the picture after the decision to kill has been made but only to be worshipped or perhaps to be called upon as a divine support person for the local team's homicide.

If we assume, as it is proper to do, that most religious leaders in the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Evangelical Churches are not just CEOs running multi-million dollar corporations or subsidiaries thereof, but are men and women who believe in Jesus and want to teach what Jesus taught to the world as best they can—then why are they not doing it where homicidal violence and enmity are concerned? My judgment is that at root there are two reasons: either they do not know that Jesus teaches a way of nonviolent love, or they know it but have no idea how to teach it in their communities without creating tormenting worlds of moral and spiritual chaos for their fellow Christians—and themselves.

EVASION BY SEMINARIES

Since most seminaries do not offer a single course in the history, theology or spirituality of Christian Nonviolence, it is almost inevitable that most men and women being ordained from these seminaries will know little to nothing of the subject, will not have had it integrated into the rest of their formal theological education, e.g., with sacramentology, pneumatology and ecclesiology, etc., and will therefore not emphasize in their ministry what was not emphasized in their preparation for ministry. Based upon thirty-five years of teaching Gospel nonviolence, I can assure my readers that the average bishop, minister and priest is as non-informed or misinformed on this subject as the average Christian. An occasional mention of Gandhi's or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent civil disobedience within the context of a Peace and Justice course or a momentary tip of the hat to "Peace Churches" within the context of a Church History course or a student thesis here or there on Dorothy Day or A.J. Muste, etc., is the only contact with the subject that seminaries normally have available to their students.

SINCE MOST SEMINARIES DO NOT OFFER A SINGLE COURSE IN THE HISTORY, THEOLOGY OR SPIRITUALITY OF CHRISTIAN NONVIOLENCE, IT IS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT MOST MEN AND WOMEN BEING ORDAINED FROM THESE SEMINARIES WILL KNOW LITTLE TO NOTHING OF THE SUBJECT....

The specific question of why seminaries throughout the world persist in their curriculum evasion of the Nonviolent Jesus and His teaching of Nonviolent Love is a question that pleads for a thorough investigation but is beyond the scope of this article. However, the consequence of this steadfastness in avoidance is that for a large majority of bishops, ministers and priests Jesus' nonviolence is a non-thought. This allows most of them to preach with their whole strength—without ever having to measure it by what Jesus taught—a Gospel that includes following Christ while simultaneously executing the heinous and unChrist-like acts that all wars demand of their participants. A priest told me several years ago that he had given a fellow priest who was dying a set of audiotapes of my retreat on Gospel Nonviolence. When after a week he returned to visit him, he asked him what he thought of the tapes. With visible emotion the dying priest replied, "Why didn't they tell me about this forty years ago?"

But what of those Christian religious leaders who are aware that Jesus taught a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies, yet still do not teach it? What about those pastors who know that Jesus with a machine gun is not an authentic Christian icon (image) and that a follower of Jesus with a machine gun is an equally unauthentic Christian witness? What about those overseers of the spiritual and moral well being of the various Christian communities who realize that in order to pick up the gun you have to put down the Gospel but who remain silent or diplomatically ambiguous on the issue?

Some twenty years ago a Catholic bishop said to me, “Just war? What just war? No such thing exists. But we must not tell this to the people.” Now, the easiest judgment to make at a distance on this man was that he was just a blatant hypocrite, posturing as an authoritative teacher of the Gospel when in fact he was intentionally withholding an important dimension of it. But, when seen close up he was a man of intelligence and of more than ordinary compassion. He simply did not see how he—for his people—or a Pope and a Ecumenical Council—for the entire Church—could teach that Christians cannot follow Jesus by participating in the military, without having nation after nation turn on its Christian population like enraged beasts. Lest it be thought that he was submitting a far-fetched argument to rationalize his own hypocrisy, I would here note the late Biblical scholar John L. McKenzie’s comment on the same subject:

A CATHOLIC BISHOP SAID... “JUST WAR? WHAT JUST WAR? NO SUCH THING EXISTS. BUT WE MUST NOT TELL THIS TO THE PEOPLE.”
...HE SIMPLY DID NOT SEE HOW HE...COULD TEACH THAT CHRISTIANS CANNOT FOLLOW JESUS BY PARTICIPATING IN THE MILITARY, WITHOUT HAVING NATION AFTER NATION TURN ON ITS CHRISTIAN POPULATION LIKE ENRAGED BEASTS.

The statement of the renunciation of violence as a means of dealing with other people is clear enough. Christians have never questioned either that Jesus said it or that it admits no qualification. Christians have simply decided they cannot live according to these sayings of Jesus. To put it more accurately, they have decided that they do not wish to live according to these sayings...If the Roman Catholic Church were to decide to join the Mennonites in refusing violence, I doubt whether our harmonious relations with the government would endure the day after the decision.

THE GRAND ILLUSION—THE CHRISTIAN STATE

It is illusion to believe that governments would not respond harshly to an institutional Christian withdrawal of allegiance to their militaries. All governments, democracies no less than dictatorships, require the power of homicide in order to exist and their militaries are what give them this power. All laws of a state are backed up by the organized violence of the state and will be enforced with lethal force if necessary. The renowned Protestant theologian-lawyer, Jacques Ellul says:

I have shown in detail that every state is founded on violence and cannot maintain itself save by and through violence. I refuse to make the classic distinction between violence and force. The lawyers have invented the idea that when the state applies constraint, even brutal constraint, it is exercising "Force"; that only individuals or non-governmental groups use violence. This is a totally unjustified distinction. The state is established by violence. Invariably there is violence at the start. And the state is legitimized when the other states recognize it (I know that this is not the usual criterion of legitimacy, but it is the only real one!). Well then, when is a state recognized? When it has lasted for a tolerable length of time. During the state's early years the world is scandalized that it was established by violence, but presently the fact is accepted, and after a few years it is recognized as legitimate.

Kill power is the ultimate power on which every government is based. Hence, the macabre incident during the 1992 Presidential campaign, when the white Rhodes Scholar-Governor returned to Arkansas to preside over the execution of a mentally retarded African-American man, makes total sense. No one is allowed to rise to a position of political power unless he or she proves to those who finance the ride up the political escalator that he or she is not squeamish about killing people, that he or she has the "right stuff." A non-negotiable "quality" one must exhibit for high office is the willingness to pull the trigger. As Tolstoy wrote:

In spite of the unceasing efforts made by men in power to conceal this and to ascribe a different meaning to power, power is the application of a rope, a chain by which a person will be bound and dragged along, or of a whip, with which he will be flogged, or of a knife, or an ax with which they will cut off his hands, feet, ears, head—an application of these means or the threat they will be used. Thus it was in the time of Nero and of Ghenghis Khan and thus it is even now, in the most liberal of governments.

The indispensable fuel for running the kingdoms of this world is violence. This is why Jesus rejected the temptation in the desert that offered him power over the kingdoms of the world. Power is the capacity to produce change. Jesus exercised many kinds of power. The power to heal, the power to forgive, the power to love enemies and the power of mercy are all forms of power and all produce change for the welfare of people in this world, as well as, in the next. Jesus and His cross are, in fact, called by St. Paul "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 COR 1:24). However, Jesus has no interest in the governmental power that Satan offers because governmental power is the power of homicidal violence. Jesus rejects becoming King of Israel or prime minister of a governmental political structure, and one wonders how so many of His followers over the centuries have, with clear Christian consciences, pursued, captured and exercised governmental power. However they did it, they did not do it in imitation of Christ.

**THE INDISPENSABLE FUEL FOR
RUNNING THE KINGDOMS OF THIS
WORLD IS VIOLENCE. THIS IS
WHY JESUS REJECTED THE
TEMPTATION IN THE DESERT THAT
OFFERED HIM POWER OVER THE
KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD.**

THE TEMPTATION OF POWER

In his final book, *The Civilization of Christianity*, the Biblical Scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie, in order to illuminate the meaning of the temptation that offers to Jesus violent governmental political power, creates a dialogue in the desert between Jesus, called by his Hebrew name, Yeshu, and Satan called by his nickname, Old Nick. It reads in part as follows:

Nick: Yeshu, I have plans for mankind so big you could not understand them, smart as I think you are....[But] it takes time; it takes work and it takes good people; that is why I am here. I want you.

Yeshu: You do not want a simple village carpenter from Nazareth. Whoever came from Nazareth that amounted to anything? If you want a smart Jew, you will find plenty of them in Alexandria or even a few in Jerusalem.

Nick: Do not worry; I can give you anything you need except talent, and you have that from Adonai. Think of it, Yeshu; it is the biggest thing a man can get into, he can do more for more people, and it will last longer than anything else you could do. Yeshu, a man like you ought to think big; I can make it possible for you to do big.... You will commit a sin by letting God-given talent rot in this rat hole of Palestine.

Yeshu: And I suppose it will also give me a chance to enrich myself and make the world a better place for me to live in?

Nick: I make opportunities, and it is for you to realize them. People who work for me have to work very hard, and many of them find that success is pleasure enough....

Yeshu: The late king Herod—did he work for you?

Nick: Not one of my outstanding employees—but yes, he did.... But I expect far more from you than I got from Herod; he had a bit of a heavy hand—no finesse, shall we say? Augustus (there, Yeshu, was a man of whom I am proud) said that it was better to be Herod's sow than his son.

Yeshu: Did Herod's son and grandson work for you too?

Nick: Please do not mention those swine; I got rid of them. I demand a certain level of competence in my employees.

Yeshu: Suppose I did not want to do the kind of work for you which Herod and Augustus did—and I suppose Tiberius, the present Caesar, works for you too?

Nick: He either works for me or he is not Caesar.

CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE: UNBELIEF MADE FLESH

Presently, of course, in most Christian Churches a person(s) can remain in Full Communion, be considered faithful to Jesus and still be killing, helping to kill or planning how to more efficiently kill hundreds or thousands or even tens of thousands of his or her fellow communicants! But what if Jesus' teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies were taught by the Churches as an essential for membership? What would become of those hundreds of millions of Christians

throughout the world from generals to privates who earn their living in the military? If homicide were forbidden to followers of Jesus, then could Christians play a role in assisting others to do an evil that they could not morally participate in themselves? If not, what then of the tens of millions of Christians who make their living in low tech or high tech munitions and arms factories or in the multi-billion dollar world of university homicide research, how would they survive? What would become of Christian politicians who, because of fidelity to the Lord and His Way, refused to pull the trigger? None of these questions represents a merely abstract moral dilemma unrelated to reality once a Church or all the Churches declared that following Jesus way of nonviolent love is a condition for Baptism and Full Communion. Some years ago a friend told me the response of a Protestant bishop after he listened to some of my materials on Gospel Nonviolence. “It is true,” he said, “but I do not have the faith to subject my people to that.”

PRESENTLY, OF COURSE, IN MOST CHRISTIAN CHURCHES A PERSON(S) CAN REMAIN IN FULL COMMUNION, BE CONSIDERED FAITHFUL TO JESUS AND STILL BE KILLING, HELPING TO KILL OR PLANNING HOW TO MORE EFFICIENTLY KILL HUNDREDS OR THOUSANDS OR EVEN TENS OF THOUSANDS OF HIS OR HER FELLOW COMMUNICANTS!

The above-mentioned Protestant bishop sounds like an echo of the Catholic Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*. This literary character is fully aware of the teachings of Jesus; nevertheless, he keeps his fellow Christians from knowing them, because he loves the “little” people too much to permit them to be exposed to the unbearable burden of true freedom and true love that Jesus offers them. However, the good thing about this Protestant bishop’s response is that he precisely names the location of the problem, namely, his own lack of faith. This is a notable step up from the silly justifications for Christian participation in homicidal violence that try to root themselves in a supposed lack of clarity about what Jesus taught on the subject. It is also a giant step up from the pusillanimous utilitarianism of enlightened earthly self-interest, rhetorically ennobled as the compassionate “realism” of Niebuhrianesque ethics. This approach realizes that contemporary Scripture scholarship, as well as common sense, necessitates that it affirm that Jesus and His teachings are nonviolent. It then fabricates justifications for not “obeying all that I have commanded you” (MT 28:20). The general tenor of these rationalizations is as follows:

[T]HE GOOD THING ABOUT THIS BISHOP’S RESPONSE IS THAT HE PRECISELY NAMES THE LOCATION OF THE PROBLEM, NAMELY, HIS OWN LACK OF FAITH. THIS IS A NOTABLE STEP UP FROM THE SILLY JUSTIFICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE...

The only way a Christian can respond responsibly to the tragedy of sin in the world, when confronted with a legal or an illegal horde of thugs, is to abandon Christ-God’s

Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies and embrace that which Jesus teaches is the way of the Evil One—the wickedness of homicidal violence. The immorality of all societies necessitates that Jesus' Way of nonviolent love be abandoned by the Christian when called upon by his or her totally perishable immoral society to defend it by means of human slaughter against another, totally perishable immoral society. A Christian may morally do within a crowd what he or she is not morally permitted to do alone.

Is Jesus neither compassionate nor realistic? Is the presupposition for this excuse for disobeying the Will of God as revealed by Jesus, the acceptance as true of the intellectually outrageous notion, that God, who “is love” (1 JN 4:8,16), and His Incarnate Word, “through whom all things were made” (JN 1:3) do not properly understand the essential nature of love and/or of reality?

To pray, “I believe Lord, help my unbelief” (MK 9:24) is a holy and acceptable Christian prayer for a time or for a lifetime for those struggling to be faithful to Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love. Certainly, many, if not most of the early Christian martyrs articulated this prayer in the face of the overwhelming powerful, organized, murderous, barbarities of degenerate pagan Rome. Such is probably the prayer of every Christian who seeks to be faithful during a Gethsemane moment in life. But, to tell fellow Christians that they may disobey the Lord and His teachings in the hour of a life and death crisis, on the basis of some subjective, speculative, fear-laden, sin-drenched conjectures about reality and the possibilities it contains, is neither holy, nor proper, nor faithful, nor intelligent, nor loving, nor prudent, nor moral, nor good, nor right. With this quality of Christian moral thinking every martyr known could have avoided his or her fate. Indeed, martyrdom would be seen by the Church as a socially dissolute and impotent activity, rather than as sharing in the divine life, as placing divine yeast in the human dough, as the “seed of Christianity.”

[T]O TELL FELLOW CHRISTIANS THAT THEY MAY DISOBEY THE LORD AND HIS TEACHINGS IN THE HOUR OF A LIFE AND DEATH CRISIS, ON THE BASIS OF SOME SUBJECTIVE SPECULATIVE, FEAR-LADENED, SIN DRENCHED CONJECTURES ABOUT REALITY AND THE POSSIBILITIES IT CONTAINS, IS NEITHER HOLY, NOR PROPER, NOR FAITHFUL, NOR INTELLIGENT, NOR LOVING, NOR PRUDENT, NOR MORAL, NOR GOOD, NOR RIGHT.

TO NOT TEACH WHAT JESUS TAUGHT IS EVANGELICALLY STERILE

So what is to be done? I really do not know how to minister to bishops, ministers and priests on this subject, but I know they must be ministered to. Their lack of knowledge is real and their fears are real. Yet the problem is also real. If Jesus taught a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies then those holding teaching authority in the Church, either directly by office or indirectly by delegation, would be under a divine mandate to teach what He taught on the subject of violence.

On numerous occasions I have been told by pastors of economically deprived congregations that teaching nonviolence in their churches would be destructive, since the military is one of the few ways, if not the only way, for most of their young people to get out of poverty and get a trade. So, poor pastors and poor churches can be as misleading about the nonviolent Jesus and His teaching of nonviolent love as rich popes and bishops. For almost a thousand years protocol demanded that popes and bishops prostrate themselves before the Byzantine Emperor in the East. On Christmas Day, 800 A.D., Pope Leo III, after crowning the illiterate Frankish King Charlemagne as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in the West, did the same. However, which is a more radical attack on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the ceremonial gesture of subservient fawning or the deed of refusing to proclaim the way of Christ so the way of Caesar with its rewards may be followed with an untroubled conscience? Are accessories before the fact of such traitorous deeds, e.g., priests, preachers, and pastors in any better position than the popes and bishops on their bellies before the Grand Pooh-Bah of the moment? Who knows for sure? All that is known is that Christian flunkies for the ever-violent Caesar, whether they be rich, poor or middle class, are ipso facto evangelically sterile, even if they are mouthing “Praise the Lord” all along their way from here to eternity and even if they are preaching to “standing room only” audiences.

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THE ULTIMATE NORM OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Christian cannot have an underlying good intention when he or she knowingly chooses what is contrary to the Will of God as revealed by Jesus, that is, when he or she knowingly chooses what is normatively evil. One cannot do God’s will by knowingly not doing God’s will. One cannot do good by doing evil. One cannot proclaim the truth Jesus proclaimed by not proclaiming the truth that Jesus proclaimed. One cannot follow Jesus by not following Jesus. One cannot love as Christ loves by doing things that any sane person would find morally unthinkable for Jesus Himself to do. As one of the most profound Christian theologians of the 20th Century, Rev. Hans Von Balthazar writes:

Christ is the concrete categorical imperative. He is the formally universal norm of ethical action, applicable to everyone...Christ’s concrete existence—his life, suffering, death and ultimate bodily resurrection—surpasses all other systems of ethical norms. In the final analysis it is to this norm alone, which is itself the prototype of perfect obedience to God the Father, that the moral conduct of Christians has to answer.

Regardless of how many Christian signs and symbols one places around something that is not the will of God as revealed by Jesus, it cannot be raised thereby to the status of the will of God as revealed by Jesus. There are just some activities that there are no Christ-like ways of doing. A house of prostitution can be filled with statues, icons, incense, bells, piped in Gregorian chant, a theological library and a

chapel but that does not make prostitution an act in conformity with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Nor, would the presence of a Christian chaplain in the house change anything if he or she led worship services and performed all the other duties expected of a chaplain but never raised the subject of the utter inconsistency between the teachings of Jesus and the profession of prostitution. Indeed, justified Christian prostitution could endure for a thousand years and it would still not be in conformity with the teachings of Jesus. The *autos-da-fé*, public rites at which Jews and heretics were burned at the stake, lasted from 1288 to 1826 as an officially approved Church activity. The longevity of a Christian practice does not validate this practice as an ultimate norm for the Christian life. The ultimate norm of Christian life has to be Jesus, His words and deeds—and if He is not the standard against which everything and all must be finally measured by the Christian, who or what is? Plato? Aristotle? Hugh Hefner? Cicero? Thomas Aquinas? Reinhold Niebuhr? The President? Wall Street? NBC?

THE AUTOS-DA-FÉ, PUBLIC RITES AT WHICH JEWS AND HERETICS WERE BURNED AT THE STAKE, LASTED FROM 1288 TO 1826 AS AN OFFICIALLY APPROVED CHURCH ACTIVITY. THE LONGEVITY OF A CHRISTIAN PRACTICE DOES NOT VALIDATE THIS PRACTICE AS AN ULTIMATE NORM FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

TOADIES TO THE FATHER OF LIES

The dilemma of the gross incompatibility between Christ's teaching of nonviolent love and the Christian practice of justifying homicide is acute regardless of where one looks on this planet. Mutant spiritual offspring are given birth in ever increasing numbers the longer this incompatibility endures. If Jesus' clear and unambiguous teaching in the area of homicidal violence and enmity can be rendered nugatory, then it is theological and pastoral child's play to alter any other teaching of Jesus. But again, what is to be done? Faced with the realities of lack of knowledge and fear in the minds and hearts of pastors, I do not know. The entity that is "The Father of Lies who also is a murderer from the beginning" seems to have a death grip on the organizational Church and its leadership in this area. The best and the brightest have become his toadies.

MUTANT SPIRITUAL OFFSPRING ARE GIVEN BIRTH IN EVER INCREASING NUMBERS...IF JESUS' CLEAR AND UNAMBIGUOUS TEACHING IN THE AREA OF HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE AND ENMITY CAN BE RENDERED NUGATORY, THEN IT IS THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL CHILD'S PLAY TO ALTER ANY OTHER TEACHING OF JESUS.

TRUSTFUL FIDELITY CAN ACHIEVE THE IMPOSSIBLE

One thing I do know is this: people cannot dialogue about, act on, or be creative with ideas they have never heard. Perhaps step one would be for bishops, ministers and priests to immerse themselves in the history, theology and spirituality of Gospel nonviolence and then to candidly present this truth to their congregations

with two understandings: first, that “we have failed miserably at this in the past, we are failing miserably at it in the present but let us work together to find our way back to fidelity in the future”; and second, that “the evil of violence is so coiled around the heart of the Church that we in our lifetime may never find our way back but will have to die in the hope that God in His Mercy will honor the fact that we have at least been truthful and that as Church we have searched for a way to return to fidelity.” Of course with Jesus, the God of the Impossible, there is always the possibility that our efforts in unwavering obedience to Christ-God will be used by God to create an Exodus or Resurrection event—a saving event of superabundant fruitfulness that is directly tied to trustful fidelity but which no human thought process could have anticipated. The infinitely improbable happens regularly when Christians trustfully pray and act in conformity with the teachings of Jesus. But, Christians cannot pray and act on a teaching of Jesus that bishops, ministers and priests will not let them genuinely hear and encounter.

OF COURSE WITH JESUS, THE GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE, THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT OUR FAITH-EFFORTS WILL BE USED BY GOD TO CREATE AN EXODUS OR RESURRECTION EVENT—A SAVING EVENT OF SUPERABUNDANT FRUITFULNESS THAT IS DIRECTLY TIED TO TRUSTFUL FIDELITY BUT WHICH NO HUMAN THOUGHT PROCESS COULD HAVE ANTICIPATED.

THE ORDAINED TACTICS—IGNORE, MOCK, TRIVIALIZE

It is a fundamental proposition of hardball politics, secular and ecclesial, that the first line of defense against an unwanted truth is to prevent it from becoming part of the community’s conversation. Such was the case with women suffrage, such was the case with racism, such was the case with feminism and such is the case today in the churches with the Nonviolent Jesus and His teachings of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies. At this hour the Nonviolent Jesus and His Nonviolent Way, when they are allowed to enter into the conversation at all, are portrayed in a mockingly ridiculous fashion, just as a woman voting was so portrayed 150 years ago. This strategy renders a serious consideration of the subject a self-evident waste of time in the minds of everyday Christians. In reality no microphone is given to an unwanted truth because those who control the microphone fear that this truth may carry implications that would demand some serious changes on their part.

[B]ISHOPS, MINISTERS, AND PRIESTS BY REFUSING TO TEACH WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ON THE PHENOMENON OF VIOLENCE HAVE NOT SERVED WELL THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED TO THEM, AND WHO TRUSTED THEM TO TEACH THE COMPLETE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS AND HIS WAY.

Referring to the carnage of the First World War at the beginning of the Twentieth Century Gandhi said, “I know I am walking on thin ice, but European Christianity

does not understand the Asiatic Jesus.” I also know that I am walking on thin ice but in reference to the carnage of the entire Twentieth Century I would say that main-line Christianity does not understand the Jesus who teaches a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies because bishops, ministers and priests have not taught what they were ordained to teach, that is, what Jesus Christ taught. An Anglican Bishop once answered Gandhi’s inquiries as to why he did not explicitly educate his flock about Jesus’ nonviolence by saying, “The people are not ready for it.” Gandhi responded, “Are you sure it is the people who are not ready?” Ready or not, somehow bishops, ministers and priests must be told that they must not continue to evade on into the Twenty-First Century this teaching of Jesus. Somehow they must be brought to see in faith that Jesus is trustworthy when He teaches His disciples a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. Somehow they must be brought to see that they need not fear teaching the truth that Jesus taught, but rather, they need fear teaching as Jesus’ truth what is not Jesus’ truth.

READY OR NOT, SOMEHOW
BISHOPS, MINISTERS AND PRIESTS
MUST...BE BROUGHT TO SEE IN
FAITH THAT JESUS IS
TRUSTWORTHY WHEN HE TEACHES
HIS DISCIPLES A WAY OF
NONVIOLENT LOVE OF FRIENDS
AND ENEMIES.

THE ENFEEBLED FRUITS OF DISHONEST SHEPHERDING

The Twentieth Century, the Century of Cain in which Christians killed more people in war—including more fellow Christians—than in all other centuries combined is proof positive that bishops, ministers, and priests by refusing to teach what Jesus taught on the phenomenon of violence have not served well those, who have been entrusted to them and who trusted them to teach the complete truth about Jesus and His Way. The Twenty-First Century is now upon us. Unless bishops, ministers and priests can be reached on this issue of Jesus and His way of nonviolent love, then Christianity can look forward to more of the same quality of ordained leadership in the Twenty-First Century that it has received in the Twentieth Century—and with precisely the same enfeebled fruits emanating from this dishonest shepherding.

THE MORAL MANTRA

WWJD, “What would Jesus do?” has almost become a moral mantra among contemporary Christians. If Christians are to be followers of Jesus as their Lord and hence be faithful to His new and unique commandment, “I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (JN 13:33-34), then to ask “WWJD” when a moral decision has to be made is just elementary spiritual sanity for the Christian. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in SECTION 1970 says, “The entire law of the Gospel is contained in Jesus’ new commandment,” and in SECTION 2822 states categorically, that Jesus’ new

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commandment “summarizes all the others and expresses His entire will.” John Paul II in his Encyclical on Christian morality, *Veritatis Splendor* proclaims:

Following Christ is thus the essential and primordial foundation of Christian morality...Jesus asks us to follow him and to imitate him along the path of love, a love which gives itself completely to the brethren out of love for God: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (JN 15:12). The word “as” requires imitation of Jesus...Jesus’ way of acting and his words, his deeds and his precepts constitute the moral rule of Christian life.

WWJD is simply a short hand fidelity formula to help Christians obey His new commandment and to help them discern how Jesus would love in a particular moral moment based on how He loved while He walked this earth. WWJD, of course, also means, “What wouldn’t Jesus do?” and this is a question equal in spiritual gravity during the decision making process as “What would Jesus do?” However neither the Christian nor the Christian Community can genuinely apply WWJD, in either its positive or prohibitory form, if those responsible for teaching what Jesus taught, do not teach what Jesus taught, e.g., in relationship to homicidal violence and enmity. When bishops, ministers, priests and Churches bracket out of their proclamation of the Gospel Jesus’ explicit, unequivocal teaching by word and by deed on revenge, retaliation, enmity, and violence, then WWJD becomes an unusable standard for Christians in these areas. Note the inordinate amount of ink and air time the issue of whether of Jesus would drive an SUV recently received. Whether Jesus would kill His enemies does not receive a drop of ink or a wavelength of air time—even when war is on the horizon. Could it be that this is precisely what the secular and ecclesiastical aristocracy of the various Churches desire?

WHEN BISHOPS, MINISTERS, PRIESTS AND CHURCHES BRACKET OUT OF THEIR PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL JESUS’ EXPLICIT, UNEQUIVOCAL TEACHING BY WORD AND BY DEED ON REVENGE, RETALIATION, ENMITY, AND VIOLENCE, THEN WWJD BECOMES AN UNUSABLE STANDARD FOR CHRISTIANS IN THESE AREAS—EXCEPT PERHAPS AS A MECHANISM OF NURTURED IGNORANCE BY WHICH EVIL IS GIVEN AN AURA OF SANCTITY.

Bishops, ministers and priests are ordained in order to nurture growth in the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ in their communities by honestly and completely telling the entire story of Jesus to those placed in their care. Jesus’ story and Spirit then becomes part of the story and spirit of their communities and part of the story and spirit of each Christian in his or her community. If a person does not wish to truthfully tell the story of Jesus and nurture His Holy Spirit then why be ordained? Why give a community or individual Christians less than the entire story of Jesus to make their own? Are the allurements of a secure income, status, power and social acceptance so magnetic that they can seduce a Christian leader into falsifying a teaching of Jesus in order to obtain them or retain them?

The Church, says the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (SEC 782) “is marked by characteristics that clearly distinguish it from all other religious, ethnic, political or cultural groups found in history: Its law is the new commandment ‘to love as Christ loved us’ (JN 13:34). This is the ‘new’ law of the Holy Spirit” (RM 8:2; GA 5:25). What is going on when Church leaders build and nurture Christian communities independent of Jesus’ teachings by word and deed of nonviolent love of friends and enemies? Should such men and women even be considered Church leaders? Do not Church leaders in the post apostolic age bear the responsibility of seeing to it that their respective Churches “remain in the teaching of the apostles” (AC 2:42)? Should men or women, who are not 100% committed to leading a Christian community by, with, in and through fidelity to Jesus’ new commandment as it is presented in the apostolic Church as specifically relating to the rejection of homicidal violence and enmity, ever be allowed in positions of Church leadership? If Jesus is nonviolent and lives a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies then that love that is “as I have loved” is nonviolent love. If a pastor cannot grasp this, which is so clearly communicated in the Gospels and which is enshrined forever in the undisputable and binding apostolic tradition of the Church, isn’t he or she a real and present spiritual danger to the community and its life in the Spirit?

RULING RELIGIOUS ELITES SELECTIVELY SHROUD THE STORY

The most renowned moral theologian in the Catholic Church of the Twentieth Century, Rev. Bernard Haring, speaks of “the stubborn resistance of the ruling religious class to Christ’s message and witness of nonviolence.” He goes on to assert, “It is not possible to speak of Christ’s sacrifice while ignoring the role of nonviolence.” Yet, I remember Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit reflecting that he went through twenty-one years of Catholic education without ever being taught about Gospel nonviolence. I can make the same attestation down to the exact number of years. I am certain there are bishops, ministers and priests whose numbers go into the hundreds of thousands in the last century alone who would have to say the same thing, if asked. Is it not time to prepare seminarians to tell the whole story of Jesus? Is it not time to let congregations hear the whole story? Is there any spiritually sound Christian option except to tell the whole story of the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies? Precisely, who or what is at work when the leaders of a Christian community hear whispered to their souls, “Don’t proclaim that Jesus is nonviolent and that His Way includes the nonviolent love of friends and enemies”?

**IS THERE ANY SPIRITUALLY
SOUND CHRISTIAN OPTION
EXCEPT TO TELL THE WHOLE
STORY OF THE NONVIOLENT
JESUS AND HIS WAY OF
NONVIOLENT LOVE OF
FRIENDS AND ENEMIES?**

Twentieth Century Christianity is what inevitably results when the whole story of Jesus is not told by all the Churches all the time. As sure as Christ died and rose from the dead the Twenty-First Century Church will be a blood-red copy of the

Twentieth Century Church unless the whole story that Jesus left to be told is told by those who have been commissioned to tell it. It takes deep faith in Jesus to speak the truth about Jesus. It takes a deeper faith in Jesus to speak the truth that Jesus spoke. “Unbelief is the true root of the Christian championship of violence.”

Quo Vadis, Domine?

Quo Vadis Domine is the name of my favorite church in Rome. It lies just outside the gates of my favorite place in Rome, the Callistus Catacombs. It is a tiny church, easily missed by tourists looking for “the grandeur that was Rome.” It commemorates that time in the life of Christianity when St. Peter decides to remain in Rome, rather than go to another city and avoid persecution and death. While the historical environment of that time (54–68 AD) is well known, the precise historical details of Peter’s choice are not. However, the spiritual drama of Peter’s decision has been illuminated and immortalized by the Nobel Prize Laureate, Henryk Sienkiewicz, in his 1905 masterpiece *Quo Vadis*.

In the climactic moment of this novel Peter is leaving Rome with his friend, Nazarius, at the height of Nero’s persecution of Christians. He meets the risen Jesus on the outskirts of the city. However, Jesus is walking into, not out of, Rome:

The traveling staff fell out of Peter’s hand. His eyes were fixed immovably ahead. His lips were open, and his face reflected unbelievable surprise, immense joy, and rapturous exaltation.

Suddenly he threw himself on his knees, his arms lifted upward and stretched to the light, and his lips cried out: “Christ! O Christ!” His head beat against the dust as if he were kissing the feet of someone only he could see.

Then there was silence.

“Quo vadis, Domine?” his voice asked at last, punctured by his sobbing. “Where are you going, Lord?”

Nazarius heard no answer. But a voice of ineffable sweetness and abundant sorrow rang in Peter’s ears, “When you abandon my people,” he heard, “I must go to Rome to be crucified once more.”

The apostle lay still and silent with his face pressed into the dust. Nazarius thought he had either died or fainted, but he rose at last, picked up his pilgrim’s staff, and turned again toward the seven hills.

“Quo vadis, domine?” the boy asked like an echo of the apostle’s cry.

“To Rome,” Peter murmured.

CONSISTENCY

Common sense in people demands a consistency between word and deed before they take seriously a proclamation that asks a sacrifice from them. Imagine if after

having taught, “Love your enemies,” for three years, Jesus, instead of saying to Peter, “Put up your sword,” had said, “Peter, get the other ear!” would people say of Him, “He teaches with authority” (LK 4:32)? If on the cross instead of praying, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” Jesus cried out, “Father, have no mercy on those who have done this to me,” would His teaching of “Love your enemies” possess any credibility?

Jesus was aware His teachings on the Way to Eternal Life would forever sound hollow if left unenfleshed. He had to walk through the furnace of His own truth before He could expect others to live what He proclaimed as the will of God. Verbal witness alone was sterile. “If he does not believe in his own truth enough to live it, why should I?” would be a reflex reaction to Jesus, or to anyone else, proclaiming the Gospel by words alone. As the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche framed it: “You will never get me to believe in a redeemer, until you act redeemed.”

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UNENFLESHED....VERBAL
WITNESS ALONE WAS STERILE.

In *Quo Vadis*, Peter visits Christians who are soon to be martyred. A Roman soldier, Vinicius, in love with a Christian woman, clandestinely places himself among the Christians in order to locate her. Peter speaks:

[I]t's not enough to love just one's own kind; God died a man's death on the cross, he spilled his blood for all mankind, and even the pagans are turning toward him now...And it's not enough to love only those who love and treat you well. Christ forgave his executioners. He removed all blame from the Jews who turned him over to Roman justice to be crucified and from the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross.... “Only love is more powerful than hatred,” the teacher said simply. “Only love can clean the world of evil.”

By the time Peter finishes Vinicius is perplexed and disoriented:

[T]hese ideas were a completely new way of looking at the world and totally rearranged everything known before. He sensed that if he were to follow the teaching, he would, for example, have to make a burnt offering of everything that had made him; he would have to destroy his thinking, crush all his perceptions, excise every habit, custom and tradition, erase his whole acquired character and the driving force of his current nature—burn it all to ashes, consign it to the winds, and fill the void with an entirely different soul and a life on a wholly different plane. A philosophy that taught love for Parthians, Syrians, Greeks, Egyptians, Gauls and Britons seemed like lunacy; love and forgiveness to an enemy and kindness in the place of vengeance were simply sheer madness...What he heard seemed totally divorced from reality as he understood it, and yet it made his reality so insignificant, it was hardly worth a passing thought.

SANCTITY

Everyone has heard the arguments for following Jesus. However, there is only one argument that will be listened to—the argument that herein dwells the quintessence of sanctity, herein lies salvation. It is Jesus and only Jesus who is the incarnation of absolute Holiness. In all creation there is not a clearer manifestation of Holiness than Jesus. Jesus is Holiness. Sanctity is freely laying down of one's life, moment-to-moment, in order to love the Father and all of His children as Jesus loves the Father and all of His children. It is by following Jesus, it is in loving one another as Jesus loves us (JN 15:12; 13:34), that a person fulfills “the entire law of the Gospel” (NEW CATECHISM, SEC. 1970), that a person walks in the Way of sanctity, in the Way of salvation.

SANCTITY IS FREELY LAYING DOWN OF ONE'S LIFE, MOMENT-TO-MOMENT, IN ORDER TO LOVE THE FATHER AND ALL OF HIS CHILDREN AS JESUS LOVES THE FATHER AND ALL OF HIS CHILDREN.

HEROISM

However, the way of sanctity is a heroic way because every step on this way is a step of love. Not a step of love as Caesar defines love, nor as Aristotle defines love, nor as Hugh Hefner defines love. It is love as Jesus defines love. It is love that has a cross not a sword at its core and as its means. It is a love that in the words of Viničius is, “simply sheer madness.” Yet, it is a love that renders every other love “so insignificant, it [is] hardly worth a passing thought.”

Fr. Zossima, Dostoevsky's primary symbol in *The Brothers Karamazov* for what it means to be a Christian, says that Christ-like love “in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared with love in dreams.” To voluntarily enter the dynamic of Christ-like love for others, friends and enemies, is heroism in the superlative. It is, as the song says, being “willing to go into hell for a heavenly cause”—and to go there with Christ-like love as one's solitary weapon. It is risking responding to hurt, hate, cruelty, shame, calumny, violence and injustice exclusively with that love made visible by Jesus. It is bearing the “unbearable burden” of the cross of non-violent, self-sacrificial Christ-like love every minute of every day because Love Itself has asked that it be done for the salvation of the world. To commit one's life to this cross-centered love in a world soaked in evil takes boldness and courage. To act on this choice is to unite with the Holy, to imitate God, to literally participate in the life of the Divine.

TO VOLUNTARILY ENTER THE DYNAMIC OF CHRIST-LIKE LOVE FOR OTHERS, FRIENDS AND ENEMIES, IS HEROISM IN THE SUPERLATIVE....IT IS RISKING RESPONDING TO HURT, HATE, CRUELTY, SHAME, CALUMNY, VIOLENCE AND INJUSTICE EXCLUSIVELY WITH THAT LOVE MADE VISIBLE BY JESUS.

Christ-like love can be very costly, but expensive or not, it is the power of God giv-

en to the Church. It has no more need of social status, coercive power, connections in high places, prestige, badges of distinction, money, intrigue or prerogative than a rose has a need to give a sermon to attract people. Humanity naturally gravitates to Christ-like love because humanity was made by Christ-like love and made for Christ-like love. Yet, heroic love is not auto-salvation; it does not depend on its own strength to face the satanic, as a nation would rely on its armaments to vanquish its enemies. Heroic Christ-like sanctity and love rest secure in the faith that regardless of how dreadful life may seem to be as a whole, or in a particular moment, God is love, almighty and present. Whether called upon or not, He is encompassing each one and all as a prodigal Father embraces a beloved son or daughter. Therefore, regardless of projected fearful outcomes, one can venture to love as Jesus loves, to be holy as Christ is holy because Love is with us now and always and forever and ever.

CHRIST-LIKE LOVE CAN BE VERY COSTLY, BUT EXPENSIVE OR NOT, IT IS THE POWER OF GOD GIVEN TO THE CHURCH....HEROIC CHRIST-LIKE SANCTITY AND LOVE REST SECURE IN THE FAITH THAT REGARDLESS OF HOW DREADFUL LIFE MAY SEEM TO BE AS A WHOLE, OR IN A PARTICULAR MOMENT, GOD IS LOVE, ALMIGHTY AND PRESENT.

Let us return for an instant to *Quo Vadis*. It was now only minutes before the Christians were to be herded into the arena of horror. Sobs, silence and desperation alternately punctuated the air. An anguished widow pleaded to God, "Give my son back to me, O Lord." A Christian father repeated and repeated, "The hangmen raped my little daughters and Christ let it happen." For another soon to die Christian, "the hair lifted on his head in terror" when he thought, "What if the Caesar of Rome was mightier than Jesus of Nazareth?" Peter quietly sat praying among the tormented faithful. Then he began speaking, so low at the outset that hardly anyone heard him:

I tell you in Christ's name you've nothing to fear! Life waits for you, not death. Joy without end, not torments. Song waits, not tears and moaning...

"I tell you as God's apostle, widow, that your son won't die but will be born in glory to a new life, and you will be together. I tell you, father, whose innocent daughters they've soiled, they'll be as unblemished as the lilies of Hebron when you meet again. I say in Christ's name to all you mothers who'll be torn away from your orphaned children, all you who'll lose your fathers, all who cry for pity, all who'll witness the death of those they love, all who are sick at heart, unfortunate and fearful, and I say again to you who must die: You will wake as if from a dream into eternal light, and the Son of God will shine in your night."

SECULARIZATION

Of all the dangers to the integrity of the Petrine ministry or the Episcopal ministry, the greatest is secularization (Latin: *saecularis*—worldly, temporal, as opposed to

eternal). By secularization is meant the adoption by the Church, its leadership and/or its laity, of the values, attitudes, beliefs, powers, needs and means of a secular society which values, attitudes, beliefs, powers, needs and means are hostile to or obfuscating of that Christ-like love that is the power of God given to the Church to lead people to Eternal Life.

The secularization of the Church, its leadership and laity, is the axial betrayal that present-day leadership must confront and confess if the Church is to be renewed and revitalized. Secularization is a process that is not decades old but centuries. It is no longer creeping through the Church, it is galloping. It also has become, due to literacy and mass media, more and more noticeable and scandalizing to more and more people—Christian and non-Christian.

The pretense can no longer be sustained that the “baptism” of secular methods of operation has served the Church well or even adequately. Can anyone look candidly at the Twentieth Century Church and maintain that the pastoral leadership of that Church is equal to the attacks that evil mounted against Christianity and humanity during the last hundred years? In 1916, as the Christian nations of Europe were savaging each other and justifying it as an acceptable and even noble pursuit for the followers of Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi re-monstrated, “European Christianity does not understand the Asiatic Jesus.”

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The diabolical monstrosity between 1914 and 1918 that Church leaders in each nation ratified as conforming to the will of God as revealed by Jesus metastasizes into the religiously camouflaged satanic abomination of 1939 to 1945. Now that this Century of Cain is over, it is known, for example, that Christians killed more people in war in the Twentieth Century than they have in all the centuries since the time of Jesus. Christians also have destroyed each other in unprecedented numbers during the last century. Abortion rates among Christians in Europe and North America are sky high. A person, who claims that Jesus Christ is his favorite philosopher and who is simultaneously the foremost executioner of prisoners in his country, is elected President by a primarily Christian electorate. How much more evidence is needed to verify that the long-term secularizing of the Church, beneath the veneer of personal or public piety, has been a spiritual and pastoral calamity?

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Unless the past has been perfect, the future should be different from the past.

Archbishop Charles Chaput writes, “Much of the western world may still appear to be Christian, but it is not—at least not in any real sense of the word ‘Christian.’” No reasonable observer of the scene would disagree. But, who is responsible for this situation? It would be hoped that no Christian would become hostile or resentful toward those who raise the specter of entrenched secularism lurking beneath so much of what the Church’s leadership and laity has done. Evasion is preposterous when salvation is at stake. Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are in accord: a sin left unnamed regenerates itself incessantly and with ever greater intensity. Denial only assures a future that mirrors the past. The “Ninth Hour” is upon the leadership of the Church. The cock crows. Jesus Christ is looking “straight at” (LK 22:61) those He has chosen (MK 3:13,14), those who have denied Him—for to deny His Way is to deny Him. His eyes are asking: “Are you, in all seriousness, ready to enter once again into the Way of the Nonviolent Messiah and bring those I have placed in your care with you?”

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SURVIVAL

The taproot of the spiritually toxic problem of secularization is veiled but not entirely concealed. Worldly leaders are concerned with the survival of their societies or institutions. Secular leaders are denounced or deposed if they fail in promoting the survival of their group and its interest. With a few moments of thoughtfulness it can be perceived how fundamental the issue is that is created when the Church or its leadership is secularized.

If there is one thing the Church never has to worry about, it is the survival of the Church. Survival, which is a primary concern in the realm of the secular, is a non-concern in the realm of the Church. The Church survives, not by superb administration, financial acuity, clever PR gimmicks, coercion, violence, catering to elites, secrecy, anathemas nor by anything else human beings do to assure the survival of worldly institutions. The Church survives for one reason only—Christ guarantees its survival. Jesus Christ has never left the Church. He still lives in the Church and exercises His headship. There is never any need for anyone, anywhere or at anytime to be concerned about the Church’s survival. In fact, a billion Christians fighting for the survival of the Church, would be an ignominious spiritual failure under the guise of a brilliant worldly success. It would be unbelief masquerading as heroic fidelity.

**IF THERE IS ONE THING THE
CHURCH NEVER HAS TO WORRY
ABOUT, IT IS THE SURVIVAL OF
THE CHURCH....THE CHURCH
SURVIVES FOR ONE REASON
ONLY—CHRIST GUARANTEES
ITS SURVIVAL.**

“My business is fidelity. God’s business is success,” explains Mother Theresa. This truth has to be deep in the heart of Jesus in Gethsemane, as well as, deep in the heart of those Christians that Peter speaks to on their way to the Circus Maximus. Likewise, it must reside deep in the heart of anyone who wishes to be a Christian—and most especially a Christian leader. Note, the saying is not, “My business is success, God’s business is fidelity.” The Church requires not one “pragmatic” sin, not one inch of departure from the way of Jesus, not one act that is not an act of Christ-like love in order to complete the mission Jesus committed to Her. The power the Church has been given to fulfill Her mission is the power of God, and that Jesus tells us is the power of love as He makes it visible in time and space. “One act of pure love,” teaches St. John of the Cross, “is more valuable to the Church than all other acts combined.” St. Paul would concur (1 COR 13). If a person wants access to a power superior to this, or to a power antagonistic to this then he or she should not be a Christian, let alone a Christian leader. If a Christian has succumbed to the temptation to employ the powers of the kingdoms of the world (LK 4:5-7; MT 4:8,9) then the “Ninth Hour” is upon him or her. If he or she will only have the courage of St. Peter and look into the Eyes that are looking “straight at” him or her, the Truth of the Non-violent Jesus will be made clear.

**“MY BUSINESS IS FIDELITY.
GOD’S BUSINESS IS SUCCESS,”
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ESPECIALLY A CHRISTIAN
LEADER...THE POWER THE
CHURCH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO
FULFILL HER MISSION IS THE
POWER OF GOD, AND THAT
JESUS TELLS US IS THE
POWER OF LOVE...**

THE NONVIOLENT FOLLOWER OF A NONVIOLENT LEADER

For a sincere follower of Jesus, the question always is “Quo vadis, Domine?”; recognizing full well that wherever Jesus is going, He is going there without the weapons of the kingdoms of the world: no swords, no guns, no halberds, no hate, no enmity. Unlike the founders of other religions, He is always armed solely with love, truth and absolute trust in the unfailing protection of the Father almighty. Only those who are interested in so following Jesus and hence in undertaking the anonymous martyrdom of a billion micro-acts of nonviolent Christ-like love toward both friends and enemies should have any interest in becoming Christians or Christian leaders. Such a commitment demands dying daily to the secularized self-understanding that has been nurtured and religiously legit-

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imized over decades of life. However, this does not mean that a Christian is condemned to chronically live on the edge of sadness because he or she, like Jesus, has renounced the dominative power, gratuities and tacky glory that the kingdoms of the world offer. On the contrary this sacrifice of the secularly nurtured self on the non-violent cross is made with magnanimity because it is required in order to love Christically—which, as noted earlier, is the *sine qua non* for proclaiming the Gospel with authority. However, proclaiming the Gospel with authority is how a follower of Jesus fulfills his or her most cherished goal, which is to co-operate with Him whose supreme desire is to insure that all who must die “will wake as from a dream into eternal light, and the Son of God shine in their night” (JN 12:31; 1 TM 2:4; TI 2:11).

What a love! What a life! What a grace to be chosen for such a vocation!

Violent Monotheism: Truth or Falsehood

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are monotheistic religions with moral absolutes rooted in an understanding of the nature and will of God as revealed by their founders—Moses, Jesus, Mohammed. Monotheism organically calls forth a “whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength” commitment from the creature once the nature and will of the Creator is known. In revelatory monotheism, regardless of whether God’s revelation or word is spoken through Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Zoroaster or through a designed order initiated in the first nanosecond of the “Big Bang,” it is of supreme importance to be sure that the word one is attributing to God is in reality the word of the Creator of “the heavens and the earth.” If an erroneous discernment is made on this point one ends up making a “whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength” commitment to unreality, falsehood, evil and idolatry. An incorrect discernment on this primal issue results in a person living his or her one and only life by the spiritual delusions of another human being.

IF AN ERRONEOUS DISCERNMENT IS MADE ON THIS POINT [THE WORD OF THE CREATOR] ONE ENDS UP MAKING A “WHOLE HEART, WHOLE SOUL, WHOLE MIND, WHOLE STRENGTH” COMMITMENT TO UNREALITY, FALSEHOOD, EVIL AND IDOLATRY.

In Mark Twain’s literary classic *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck spends a great deal of time traveling down the Mississippi River with a black slave named Jim. They get to know each other quite well. Indeed, the quality of Jim’s character, e.g., his kindness and generosity, impress and somewhat confuse Huck since Jim is a slave. At one moment in their travels Huck encounters a group of white men hunting escaped slaves of whom Jim is one. Since childhood it has been indelibly hammered into Huck’s mind and on to his conscience by his culture that God sends any white person to hell who protects a runaway slave. What is Huck to do? He has come to know Jim as a human being rather than as a slave. However, he also has been taught what God’s will is and that Huck Finn will be consigned to hell if he does not obey it. It is a terrible thing to fall for a word of God that is not the word of God.

The God of Jesus, the God Jesus reveals, the one and only true God, is not a God who will lead people in victories of homicidal violence over historical enemies.* The true God that Moses and that Mohammed reveal is a God who will lead people in victories of homicidal violence over historical enemies. Moses and Mohammed may not agree on all the details concerning this revelation of God, the “when” and “where” and “for whom” their God will sanction violence, but they are generally in accord with the fundamental truth, that the true God does sanction homicidal violence. So who has the correct vision of “what kind of God God is” and “what God expects of people,” Jesus or Moses and Mohammed?

CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS

Either Jesus or Mohammed and Moses are proclaiming a false revelation about God on an issue of primal importance. Either Jesus or Mohammed and Moses are teaching as the will of God what is not the will of God. The clarity of the revelations of each is beyond dispute. Equally beyond dispute is the fact that the revelations of Moses and Mohammed are contrary to the revelation of Jesus on this matter. The one says that there is nothing of God or God’s will or God’s way in homicidal violence, the other two say that homicidal violence can be consistent with God, his will and his way. One says homicidal violence is objectively evil. The others say it can be objectively good. Whose image of God is consistent with the Reality? Whose is erroneous on a grand scale? Whose “revelation” is revelation? Whose is just an illusionary humanly generated idea of the Deity?

HOWEVER, TO ASSERT IN MONOTHEISM THAT GOD IS BOTH VIOLENT AND NONVIOLENT IS TO DECLARE THAT GOD IS VIOLENT. IT IS ANALOGOUS TO THE PERSON WHO SAYS, “I AM NONVIOLENT BUT...” THE “BUT” IS THE PLACE WHERE VIOLENCE IS CHOSEN AND IS JUSTIFIED. NONVIOLENCE MEANS THERE IS NO “BUT.”

In a polytheistic religion there is no incongruity in asserting that one god is violent and wills homicidal violence by people against people under certain conditions, e.g., to pursue pleasure or justice, and that another god is nonviolent and wills nonviolence unto death. In polytheism, there can be gods that support or oppose incest, just as there can be gods that support or oppose violence.

However, to assert in monotheism that God is both violent and nonviolent is to declare that God is violent. It is analogous to the person who says, “I am nonviolent

*“All the Gospels agree that Jesus refused armed defense. Whether he said what Matthew quoted is really irrelevant (‘Put up your sword. He who lives by the sword perishes by the sword’ Mt. 26:52). It is a nice quotation, but we do not need it to establish that Jesus was totally opposed to the use of violence for any purpose and therefore I see no necessity to argue this uncontested truth.” —Rev. John L. McKenzie, former president of The Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, former president of the Catholic Biblical Association. Taken from *The Civilization of Christianity*, pages 137, 138.

but...” The “but” is the place where violence is chosen and is justified. Nonviolence means there is no “but.” Divine Nonviolence means that in the nature, will and way of God there is no “but.” Hence, for any morality based on serving God by doing His will on earth as it is done in heaven, it makes all the difference in heaven and on earth whether there is a “but” in the reality and will of the Holy One. In monotheism there cannot be two ultimate moral Masters nor can a person serve two contradictory truths. In the moment of choice he or she must follow one and abandon the other—a person cannot serve both nonviolence and legitimized violence.

THE MARTYR

The crowning service a person can perform for his or her Divine Master is to be a martyr in obedience to his or her Master’s will. The English word “martyr” is derived etymologically from the Greek word “martyrs” which means witness. A martyr, then, is a witness unto his or her own death to the true God and His Will. A person can be a martyr on behalf of a God of violence or on behalf of a God of nonviolence. But, she or he cannot serve as a witness for both. To die while killing another human being, believing it to be God’s will is martyrdom in submission to a certain kind of God. To die while refusing to kill another because homicide is contrary to the Will of God is also martyrdom, but it is martyrdom in obedience to another kind of God. By necessity one of these forms of martyrdom is objectively not martyrdom at all, but is instead, a waste of life on behalf of an idolatrous illusion. It is pseudo-martyrdom, subjective good intentions in the service of objective untruth and the unholy. The other of these forms of martyrdom is objectively truth and sanctity incarnate. Martyrdom is the triumph of life over death. Pseudo-martyrdom is the triumph of death over life. Which is one and which is the other depends on the kind of God God in fact is.

Something of towering temporal and eternal magnitude is at stake here. Those, who try to conceal this issue or muddle it or avoid it or denigrate its significance, perform no service for God or for humanity. Beside, Moses and Mohammed and Jesus are not cryptic in their revelations concerning God and His Will *vis-à-vis* homicidal violence. They are crystalline—and they radically disagree. The theological, spiritual, moral and practical importance of this incongruity cannot be overstressed because God is the heart of the matter regardless of what the matter is. An erroneous apprehension of His Reality and Will would have consequences so catastrophic that they would reverberate through the galaxies to the threshold of eternity—and possibly beyond that.

THE GOSPEL

The Gospel proclaims that Jesus is not only a great teacher, the Prophet, the Messiah and the Suffering Servant, but is also the Lord, the Alpha and the Omega, the pre-existent Word through whom all things were made, the definitive revelation of God, the self revelation of God, the incarnation of God, God! It is also Gospel truth that in all of Jesus’ suffering, as in all of his life and ministry, He refuses to defend

himself or others with violence let alone use homicidal violence to punish others, pursue his cause, promote his self-interest or to seek retribution. As the previously footnoted biblical scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie, states: “No reader of the New Testament, simple or sophisticated, can retain any doubt of Jesus’ position toward violence directed to persons, individual or collective, organized or free enterprise: he rejected it totally.” Why? The answer to this axial question of Christic morality is precisely stated in the words of the most renowned Catholic moral theologian of the Twentieth Century, Rev. Bernard Haring: “Jesus is nonviolent because God is nonviolent.” God acts as God is: “I and the Father are one” (JN 10:30); “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (JN 14:9); “Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God” (COL 1:15; 2 COR 4:4).

IT IS ALSO GOSPEL TRUTH THAT IN ALL OF JESUS’ SUFFERING, AS IN ALL OF HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY, HE REFUSES TO DEFEND HIMSELF OR OTHERS WITH VIOLENCE LET ALONE USE HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE TO PUNISH OTHERS, PURSUE HIS CAUSE, PROMOTE HIS SELF-INTEREST OR TO SEEK RETRIBUTION.

I am certain that Moses and Mohammed because of their zeal for the Holy One and His Will would have taught that God is nonviolent and therefore His ways are ways of nonviolence if they had seen God and His Will to be nonviolent. They did not! Did they not see it because it is not true or did they not see it for some other reason? This is perhaps the most critical spiritual question that humanity and all forms of monotheism must resolve. Either Jesus’ revelation is drop dead wrong or Moses and Mohammed are purveyors of gross error regarding God and His will. Who is right? Who is wrong?

WHEN

If God is the kind of God who approves the use of homicidal violence against bad people, or even against good people if the cause is thought good enough (collateral damage, human sacrifice, etc.), if God, in other words, is a violent God, then death for death, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, collateral damage for collateral damage is morally possible or required. Once it is believed God endorses homicidal violence, then the only question left for violent monotheism is, “when” He endorses it. Theologies, sophisticated and simple-minded, complementary and contradictory, abound that designate the “when.”

But, if God is nonviolent, then returning death for death, collateral damage for collateral damage, is morally impossible. If God never smiles on human slaughter, if God never smites the enemy, if monotheism is nonviolent then the issue of “when” never arises and theologies of “when” need never be written—as they were never written during the first three hundred and fifty

IF GOD IS NONVIOLENT, THEN HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE IS AS ABSENT AS INCEST FROM THE MORAL WILL OF THE DIVINITY, SINCE GOD, HIS WILL AND HIS WAY ARE ABSOLUTELY ONE, ABSOLUTELY SIMPLE, ABSOLUTELY WITHOUT DIVISION.

years of Christianity. If God is as Jesus images Him, i.e., nonviolent, then homicidal violence is forbidden regardless of whether or not it is defined by human beings as legal or illegal, romantic or sordid, just or unjust, legitimate or illegitimate, necessary or unnecessary, revolutionary or establishmentarian. If God is nonviolent, then homicidal violence is as absent as incest from the moral will of the Divinity, since God, His Will and His Way are absolutely one, absolutely simple, absolutely without division.

THE ENEMY

Does the omniscient and omnipotent God place anyone on this planet with the right to kill another person? Can the enemy of a state, tribe, religion, economic system or person objectively be the enemy of God? Can it ever be the objective will of God to kill the enemy of a state, tribe, religion, economic system or person? For the kind of God who is violent and therefore has a moral will which contains the possibility of justified violence, the answer is “Yes.” For the kind of God revealed by the nonviolent Jesus, for the nonviolent God, who communicates by word and deed a love of enemies even unto one’s own death, the answer is “No.” In such a Divinity the enemy of a state, religion, etc., is never the enemy of God but is always a daughter or son of Abba—a daughter or son who is to be loved as “God made flesh” reveals that she or he should be loved—now and always.

**DOES THE OMNISCIENT AND
OMNIPOTENT GOD PLACE ANYONE
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TO KILL ANOTHER PERSON?
...FOR THE KIND OF GOD
REVEALED BY THE NONVIOLENT
JESUS...THE ANSWER IS “NO.”**

In the world of violent monotheism, regardless of the institutional or theological architecture it assumes, it is inevitable that one person’s collateral damage will be another person’s beloved daughter or son or spouse or parent or friend, that one person’s freedom fighter will be another person’s terrorist, that one person’s military hero will be another person’s mass murderer, that one person’s God will be another person’s fiend. In the world of nonviolent monotheism such humanly contrived divisions and linguistic delinquencies are literally non-realities and non-thoughts. Because the nonviolent God made visible in Jesus and with whom Jesus is one (JN 10:30; JN 14:9), i.e., Abba, “causes His sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and His rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike” (MT 5:45; LK 6:35), He can never be experienced as any human being’s Nightmare nor can He be conscripted to justify the creation of nightmares for any of His sons and daughters.

**IN THE WORLD OF VIOLENT
MONOTHEISM...IT IS INEVITABLE
THAT ONE PERSON’S COLLATERAL
DAMAGE WILL BE ANOTHER
PERSON’S BELOVED DAUGHTER
OR SON OR SPOUSE OR PARENT
OR FRIEND, THAT ONE PERSON’S
FREEDOM FIGHTER WILL BE
ANOTHER PERSON’S TERRORIST,
THAT ONE PERSON’S MILITARY
HERO WILL BE ANOTHER
PERSON’S MASS MURDERER,
THAT ONE PERSON’S GOD WILL
BE ANOTHER PERSON’S FIEND.**

WORSHIP

Do all the monotheistic religions worship the true God? Most Jews and Muslims believe that the worship of Jesus as God is objectively a serious religious error and displeasing to God. To worship Jesus as the incarnate God falls within the cardinal theological sin of Judaism, “foreign worship,” and of Islam, “idolatry.” “It is the formal recognition and worship as God of an entity that is in fact not God,” as Rabbi David Berger states. Now, suppose a man is a monotheist but believes that God approves of or demands incest? If a Jew, Muslim and Christian were to pray with him, would they be praying with someone who believes in the same God that they do? Could a Jew, Muslim or Christian pray with this man without denying his or her own truth, faith and God? Could a Jew, Muslim or Christian bow down and worship a God who was the kind of God who justifies or requires incest? Would they be worshipping as God an entity that in fact was not God? Human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, strive to imitate the Divinity they worship—for in the imitation of the Holy One lies the Way of holiness. Is incest on this Way? Is homicidal violence on this Way? Worship of the unholy is idolatry. Imitation of the unholy is evil.

Concerning God, is the only truth that is significant in order to avoid idolatrous worship acceptance of the idea that God is One? Concerning the worship of God, is any spirit acceptable to worship in—provided only that it is the One God who is being worshipped? Jesus gives Christians concrete direction here. While not condemning all past efforts of human beings to fulfill their innate desire to worship God, He states: “But the hour will come—in fact it is here already—when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth” (JN 4: 23,24). The Spirit Jesus is speaking of here is His Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Holy, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit with whom He is consubstantial. After Jesus, is not authentic worship for the Christian, worship in the Nonviolent Spirit and the Nonviolent Truth of the Nonviolent Jesus? After Jesus, can a Christian pray:

*Destructive Daughter of Babel
A blessing on the man who treats you
As you have treated us,
A blessing on him who takes and dashes
Your babies against the rock!*

PSALM 137:8,9

or after Jesus, can a Christian:

*...slay the idolaters, wherever he finds them.
Arrest them, besiege them, and
lie in ambush everywhere for them.*

KORAN, SURA IX:5

After Jesus, can a Christian pray against enemies? After Jesus, can a Christian pray for victories of homicidal violence over historical enemies? After Jesus, can Christians pray for justice implemented by homicidal violence? After Jesus, can a Christian pray for revenge? After Jesus, can a Christian pray for an eye for an eye, for collateral damage for collateral damage? After Jesus are such prayers by Christians a burlesque of prayer? For a believer in or for a follower of Jesus, such prayers are *non sequiturs*—are they not?

OTHER DIVINE EXPECTATIONS

To avoid any confusion of mind it should be candidly stated that God expects more of people than doing violence or not doing violence. However, other expectations of God, based on the kind of God God is and His revelation, are beyond the scope of what is being addressed in this essay, namely, whether monotheism is violent or nonviolent. Judaism, Christianity and/or Islam might see mercy as the supreme attribute of the Deity. This would mean that God would expect that people created in His image and likeness would make a supreme effort at being merciful. Whether God is violent or nonviolent would be considered only to the extent that it reveals the true nature of Divine Mercy. Can Divine Mercy ever come from the barrel of a gun or can it never come from the barrel of a gun? Can or cannot the God of Mercy ever be glorified by homicidal violence? The fundamental Divine expectation here is mercy, but in order for it to be a moral good it must be ordered to the life and will of the one true God—whatever He may be, violent or nonviolent.

INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Up to this moment institutional Christianity in its Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant or Evangelical manifestations has been mentioned very little. The reason is that where homicidal violence is concerned, as the non-Christian world well knows, Christianity's history is one of complacent betrayal, its theologies are dismal tracts of doublespeak and its leadership is obdurately obscurantist. It is disquieting for a Christian author to have to acknowledge that institutional Christianity is the incarnational denial of its Founder's teaching about God, God's Will and God's Way on such a momentous phenomenon as homicidal violence.

Since the Fourth Century it has utilized a method to turn the nonviolent Jesus and His teachings upside down in order that the God of institutional Christianity could take His place alongside the other warrior

Gods of monotheism, who approve, require or assist their faithful in homicidal victories. The method by which Christian rulership did this is called, "The Just War Theory." More generally the method for standing the Nonviolent God made visible in Jesus on His head can be called "The Just Homicidal Violence Theory" when it is expanded

MORE GENERALLY THE METHOD FOR STANDING THE NONVIOLENT GOD MADE VISIBLE IN JESUS ON HIS HEAD CAN BE CALLED "THE JUST HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE THEORY" WHEN IT IS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE NOT SIMPLY THE RADICAL UNCHRIST-LIKE ACTIVITIES OF WAR, BUT ALSO...

to include not simply the radical un-Christ-like activities of war, but also the equally radical unChrist-like activities of capital punishment, homicidal acts in the name of personal self-interest and self-defense, violent revolution and abortion. This has meant that over the last 1700 years almost every species of violence has been religiously legitimized in the name of the God of institutional Christianity.

This theology of God-based, justified homicide has permitted the institutional Churches of Christianity to obtain by violence and to maintain by violence vast amounts of wealth in order to worship their God and serve His interests—and possibly those of others. Today and for seventeen centuries prior to today, institutional Christianity operationally offers humanity a God who ratifies what Jesus unambiguously rejected—homicidal violence. It dares to teach what Jesus never taught by word or deed, “Justified Homicidal Violence Theories,” and it teaches these even in face of the fact that Jesus explicitly commissioned His Church “to teach them to obey all that I have commanded you” (MT 28:20). Christianity over these seventeen centuries has more than matched Judaism and Islam in holy homicides, in justified homicide, in “God is with us” religious rhetoric on behalf of the home-team’s homicide. The question of whether the God that institutional Christianity is supposed to be following is the God that it is following when it operates out of the ethos, ethic, theology, spirituality, energy and spirit of violent monotheism is a non-question in Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Evangelical Churches. Violent monotheism is simply the taken-for-granted truth, the unexamined conclusive presumption of these institutions. Perhaps the manner of life adopted and invested in by Rome, Constantinople, Canterbury, Geneva and all subdivisions and affiliates thereof does not permit them to ask those questions that would reveal the discordance between their violent monotheism and Jesus’ nonviolent monotheism.

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE GOD THAT INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIANITY IS SUPPOSED TO BE FOLLOWING IS THE GOD THAT IT IS FOLLOWING WHEN IT OPERATES OUT OF THE ETHOS, ETHIC, THEOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY, ENERGY AND SPIRIT OF VIOLENT MONOTHEISM IS A NON-QUESTION IN CATHOLIC, ORTHODOX, PROTESTANT AND EVANGELICAL CHURCHES. VIOLENT MONOTHEISM IS SIMPLY THE TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED TRUTH...

DISTRUSTING JESUS

So today, structures built by and sustained by violent monotheism are all that humanity possesses in terms of institutional monotheism. The God of the nonviolent Jesus, the God who is the nonviolent Jesus is without a structure of human association built and sustained according to His Nonviolent Design. Nonviolent monotheism remains unincarnated in the mainline and evangelical churches of Christianity. It is as if these institutions want the person of Jesus but want Him without His revolutionary truth about “what kind of God God is” and “what God expects.” It is as if they desire Jesus without His God because like Jews and Muslims, they do

not believe Jesus knows what He is talking about on this matter of the relationship of Divinity to homicidal violence. Christian institutions, their leadership and membership, simply do not trust that Jesus knows God's Plan for conquering the spirit of Cain that roams through time, relentlessly seeking people and groups of people to possess and souls to devour. How Jesus can be God and not know God's Plan or how the teaching of the Source of Reality can be considered unrealistic or ineffective, I shall leave for others to explicate. But, since Christians and Christian leaders think Jesus' teachings on the rejection of homicidal violence are fatuous, fanciful, utopian, idealist, silly, impractical and an embarrassment, this effectively guarantees that Christian leaders and their followers will never attempt to implement them. This in turn assures that structures built on and sustained by nonviolent monotheism will never arise and give witness to the power and wisdom of the invisible God of whom the nonviolent Jesus Christ is the visible image (COL 1:15).

CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS, THEIR LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP, SIMPLY DO NOT TRUST THAT JESUS KNOWS GOD'S PLAN FOR CONQUERING THE SPIRIT OF CAIN THAT ROAMS THROUGH TIME, RELENTLESSLY SEEKING PEOPLE AND GROUPS OF PEOPLE TO POSSESS AND SOULS TO DEVOUR.

HOPPING CHRISTIANS

There is a primal truth and a foundational falsehood in conflict here. Each seeks from humanity that level of allegiance that is due to God alone. So, maybe it is time for people of all religions, and most especially for the religious aristocracy in each religious institution, to take to heart that moment on Mt. Carmel (1 KG 18:18FF) when Elijah gathers the Israelites and cries out to them: "How long do you mean to hop, first on one leg and then on the other? If Yahweh is God follow him; if Baal, follow him."

Christians, and most especially Christian leaders, please be serious spiritual people. If Jesus is wrong about God and His Way, do not follow him, follow Moses or Mohammed or some other person or philosophy that teaches a violent monotheism; but if Jesus is correct about what kind of God God is and what He expects of people, then follow Him without apology and with zeal. Be adults spiritually! If the nonviolent Jesus is mistaken about the nature of God and the will of God then he is self-evidently not who the Gospel says he is: the Christ, the Lord, the Word, etc. If, however, He is accurate in His revelation about the nature and will of God then embrace Him as your Lord, Savior and Teacher, and unreservedly affirm His Way of non-violent love of friends and enemies as the will of the All Holy One, Abba. For the

IF JESUS IS WRONG ABOUT GOD AND HIS WAY, DO NOT FOLLOW HIM, FOLLOW MOSES OR MOHAMMED; BUT IF JESUS IS CORRECT ABOUT WHAT KIND OF GOD GOD IS AND WHAT HE EXPECTS OF PEOPLE, THEN FOLLOW HIM WITHOUT APOLOGY AND WITH ZEAL.

sake of humanity and for the sake of your own integrity stop hopping between truth and falsehood.

“X” OR NOT “X”

Nonviolent monotheism or violent monotheism: which is the truth about God, which is the falsehood about God? Between two meaningful propositions “X” and not “X” there is no middle ground. If one is true, the other is false. To say this should not be offensive to a rational person who believes there is only one God, regardless of his or her denominational association. Elijah does not say and could never say, “If you cannot believe in Yahweh and follow him, *at least*, believe in Baal and follow him.” In the end there is no ecumenically delicate way to finesse this stark choice between violent and non-violent monotheism, as there is no ecumenically dainty way to water-down the radicalness of the inherent disaccord in dogma between Christianity, which proclaims Jesus is God, and Judaism and Islam, which say that Jesus is not God. The plain fact is that while Christianity teaches that Jesus is to be worshipped, Judaism and Islam say that worship of him is idolatry. Should Christians deny the Divinity of Jesus and cease worshipping Him in order not to offend the religious sensibilities of Jews and Muslims? Should Jews and Muslims proclaim that Jesus is God and worship Him in order to humor the religious sensitivities of Christians? Or, should Christians, Jews and Muslims simply agree to teach that Moses and Mohammed are also God? Of course not!

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The Foundation Document of Christianity, the New Testament, clearly presents Jesus as Lord, Logos, God from all eternity through whom all things were made. The Foundation Documents of Judaism and Islam, Hebrew Scriptures and the Koran, do not present Moses or Mohammed as God. So also, these Foundation Documents do not present Moses and Mohammed as having the same understanding of God and God’s will in relation to homicidal violence and enmity as does Jesus. Someone is right and someone is wrong as to whether the worship of Jesus is idolatry. Likewise, someone is right and someone is wrong as to whether God, His Will and His Way are nonviolent. To those who wish to be excessively politically correct in matters religious, it must be pointed out, that chronic evasion of the hard questions of religious consciousness is a solemn offense against truth, reason, integrity, meaning and God. As the Dalai

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Lama notes in his *Ethics for the New Millennium*, “[A]s we advance along the path of one tradition or another, we are compelled at some point to acknowledge fundamental differences.” The central issue being raised in this essay is not, I repeat is NOT, institutional affiliation. The issue is truth—Divine truth and truth about the Divine, true worship and worship of the true God. It is quite possible for a Jew and Muslim to believe in and follow a nonviolent God, although to do so they would have to part company with some explicit teachings of Moses or Mohammed. Likewise, it is possible for a Christian to believe in and follow a violent warrior God, although to do so he or she would have to part company with some explicit teachings of Jesus. An individual’s particular branch of religion is not the basic problematic here. What kind of God God is and what God expects of human beings *vis-à-vis* homicidal violence is the sole concern and the soul’s concern: “X” or not “X”.

He Does Not Break the Bruised Reed: Capital Punishment and Christian Mercilessness

*A man looks pleadingly at you
with a last appeal in his eyes,
and you kill him.*

“It is God, who is ‘rich in mercy,’ whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father.” With these words Pope John Paul II begins what I believe to be the most eternally significant event of his pontificate, namely, the publication of the Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, “Rich in Mercy.” Toward the end of this encyclical the Successor of Peter proclaims that “mercy [is] the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and the Redeemer.” Hence, the true God, as opposed to idols conjured up in the human psyche, is a God of Holy, Infinite and Everlasting mercy. This is good, good, good news for every human being. In fact, it is the best news any human being could hope for or imagine.

WALDORF ASTORIA

Mercy, of course, need only be given where mercy is needed. Someone consuming a \$135.00 lunch at the Waldorf Astoria is in no need of the mercy of food, although he or she may be in need of some other corporal manifestation of Divine Mercy. It is the Lazarus who dies every nine seconds from starvation in this world, the undernourished child whose brain is being irrevocably damaged, and the elderly person reduced to eating dog food who are in need of mercy made visible in bread. Likewise the only people who require the mercy of forgiveness are those who need forgiveness, that is, those who have intentionally harmed us. If someone gives us a two-week, all-expenses paid vacation we do not say, “I forgive you.” Either we mercifully forgive those who have hurt us or we do not forgive at all. “It is precisely be-

cause sin exists in the world," writes John Paul II, "that God, who is love (1 JN 4:8), cannot reveal Himself otherwise than as mercy." (EMPHASIS IN THE ORIGINAL.)

Amidst all the Christian elocutions flowing from pulpit, radio, television and audio/video tape, amidst all the high and low Christian theologizing issuing from books, journals, newspapers and the internet, it is possible for the straightforward commands of Jesus to get lost. Jesus' commission to His disciples in the last paragraph of the Gospel of Matthew could not be clearer: "Go you therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you" (MT 28:19-20). The explicit conversion command that Jesus teaches also could not be more understandable: "I want mercy, not sacrifice" (MT 9:13). Obfuscations and distortions can be concocted to assure that the obvious is never seen or to guarantee that what is of primary concern for Jesus is reduced to an incidental concern for the billions to whom He has given the gift of faith. However, "I want mercy, not sacrifice," and "[T]each them to obey all that I have commanded you" perpetually stands in judgment on such political-intellectual maneuvers. Those who profess faith in Jesus may discount, ignore, modify or rationalize away His teaching in order to advance their interests. However, His words are forever there, inviting them back to the truth of Truth Incarnate, reminding them of the purpose for which the gift of faith has been bestowed upon them.

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CHRIST'S MESSIANIC PROGRAM

If Jesus is as St. Paul says, "the visible image of the invisible God" (COL 1:15), if the God Jesus proclaims is "rich in mercy" (EPH 2:4), if "the Father and I are one" (JN 10:30), if "he or she who sees Me sees the Father" (JN 14:9), then what else could Jesus command other than, "I want mercy, not sacrifice," since the Father is "rich in mercy." Mercilessness, regardless of the quality of logic, the cleverness of euphemism or the impressiveness of ritual by which it conceals and perpetuates itself, is never of God and is never a part of the economy of salvation. It is mercy that initiates and consummates the process of salvation in Christ. This is why Pope John Paul II writes in "Dives in Misericordia," "Christ's messianic program, the program of mercy, becomes the program of His people, the program of the Church." This means Christ-like mercy

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must be the program of each baptized person without exception and without any recesses. “The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy,” declares the Pope. Hence, the individual Christian of whatever Church—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant or Evangelical—lives an authentic life when she or he professes and proclaims by thought, word and deed Christlike mercy.

ADVOCATE VS. ACCUSER

The Advocate, the Paraclete, the Public Defender that God in His mercy sends to this world to act on behalf of human beings is the Spirit of the Father who is rich in mercy, is the Spirit of the Son who is one with the Father, is the Spirit of the Holy, is the Spirit of Mercy. Satan, the Accuser, the Adversary of God and humanity, is ipso facto the spirit of mercilessness, the spirit of all that is anti-Christ. Mercilessness is from hell. Indeed, hell is a perpetual state of being confirmed in the merciless: “I was hungry and you did not give me to eat, I was thirsty and you did not give me to drink, I was naked and you did not clothe me, I was in prison and you did not visit me;” etc., (MT 25:31-46). This teaching of Jesus is the standard of judgment at the end of time: mercy or mercilessness? It does not require a doctorate from Harvard Divinity School to get this straight. There is something so profoundly different between an act of mercy and an act of mercilessness in time, that they fashion opposite outcomes in eternity.

THE ADVOCATE...THAT GOD IN HIS MERCY SENDS TO THIS WORLD TO ACT ON BEHALF OF HUMAN BEINGS IS THE SPIRIT OF THE FATHER WHO IS RICH IN MERCY...THE ACCUSER, THE ADVERSARY OF GOD AND HUMANITY, IS IPSO FACTO THE SPIRIT OF MERCILESSNESS.

RADICAL EVIL

Forget the anthropomorphic imagery of devils with pitchforks, etc. Fixating on images that try to describe what is beyond individual and communal human experience, and hence beyond description, just serves to undermine the gravity of a life and death mystery with eternal implications. Because of truths we can only get a glimpse of through the revelation of Jesus, we know that indifference to the relievable suffering of another human being—mercilessness—is radical evil (MT 25:46). We also know by this same revelation that responding to the relievable suffering of another human being—mercy—results in entrance into “the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world” (MT 25:34).

BECAUSE OF TRUTHS WE CAN ONLY GET A GLIMPSE OF THROUGH THE REVELATION OF JESUS...WE KNOW THAT INDIFFERENCE TO THE RELIEVABLE SUFFERING OF ANOTHER HUMAN BEING—MERCILESSNESS—IS RADICAL EVIL.

Provided, a person first has faith in Jesus as her or his Lord, God and Savior, this makes sense. Jesus reveals to us that God is a Father/Mother/Parent who is rich in

mercy. Reason may be able to tell us God exists but only revelation can tell us God is a Parent rich in mercy. John Paul II in his Encyclical says, "Making the Father present as love and mercy is, in Christ's own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of His mission as the Messiah." Faith in the self-revelation of God in Jesus is preeminent because until one knows what kind of God God is, one cannot know what God expects of those He created. Jesus teaches that God who is rich in mercy expects those who wish to be in union with the Divine also be rich in mercy. A God who is Father of each person expects human beings to relate to each other not as capitalists to communists, not as Americans to Iraqis, not as have's to have-not's, not as Croats to Serbs, not as the righteous to the sinners, not as Pilate to Jesus, but as brothers and sisters endeavoring to assist each other in being merciful as Christ is merciful, in being merciful as their mutual Father in heaven is merciful, in being helpers of one another on The Way of Mercy that leads to everlasting life for one and all.

A GOD IS WHO FATHER OF EACH PERSON EXPECTS HUMAN BEINGS TO RELATE TO EACH OTHER...AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS ENDEAVORING TO ASSIST EACH OTHER IN BEING MERCIFUL AS CHRIST IS MERCIFUL...IN BEING HELPERS OF ONE ANOTHER ON THE WAY OF MERCY THAT LEADS TO EVERLASTING LIFE FOR ONE AND ALL.

RENAMING MERCELESSNESS

In *Dives in Misericordia* John Paul II emphatically states that, "Mercy constitutes the fundamental content of the messianic message of Christ and the constitutive power of His mission." Now if mercy is the essential teaching and power of Jesus' mission, if mercy is His conversion demand, if mercy is the standard of judgment at the end of the world, if mercy is the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and Redeemer, is it conceivable that a Christian, someone who truly has faith in Jesus as their Lord, God and Savior, would set aside mercy even if he or she could gain the whole world or some paltry piece thereof? Would it not be unwise or incongruous for a believer in Christ to even entertain such a thought? Would it not be tragic unseriousness to engage in un-Christ-like mercilessness and then try to pacify one's soul and fool God by the crafty renaming of mercilessness as "mercy"? "If our hopes in Christ are limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable of people," writes St. Paul (1 COR 15:19). For the Christian to live in time as if eternity did not exist is senseless. A fact of life is, that even if mercy does a person no earthly good, it is of infinite value. For a Christian to choose mercilessness rather than mercy, in order to gain the totally perishable, is spiritual recklessness.

"MERCY CONSTITUTES THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTENT OF THE MESSIANIC MESSAGE OF CHRIST AND THE CONSTITUTIVE POWER OF HIS MISSION." NOW...IS IT CONCEIVABLE THAT A CHRISTIAN, SOMEONE WHO TRULY HAS FAITH IN JESUS AS THEIR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR, WOULD SET ASIDE MERCY EVEN IF HE OR SHE COULD GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD?

PHILOSOPHY OR GOD'S WILL?

State laws authorizing the homicidal violence of the death penalty, under which Christians reasonably destroy others in clear conscience, can be accredited or discredited depending on one's use of reason. What philosophy builds up, philosophy can tear down. As one of the most renowned Catholic Biblical Scholars of the Twentieth Century, the late Rev. John L. McKenzie, noted on many occasions, the Church has no commission from Jesus to teach philosophy. This means that the place of reason in the Christian life is to figure out how to implement the teachings of Jesus, not to figure out how to modify them, ignore them, dismiss them, undermine them or abandon them. Now if Jesus teaches His followers, "I want mercy, not sacrifice," if Jesus teaches His followers, "Be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful," if as Pope John Paul II says, "Mercy constitutes the fundamental content of the Messianic Message of Christ and the constitutive power of His mission," then for what purpose should reason be employed by the Christian and by the Church? To rationalize mercilessness into mercy? To legitimize the substitution of some philosophy of justified mercilessness, devised by a fellow lump of clay, for the revealed teachings of Our Lord? St. Paul's warning to the Church in Rome is pertinent here: "The more they call themselves philosophers, the more stupid they grew, until they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for a worthless imitation" (RM 1:22,23).

THE CHURCH HAS NO COMMISSION FROM JESUS TO TEACH PHILOSOPHY. THIS MEANS THAT THE PLACE OF REASON IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS, NOT TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MODIFY THEM, IGNORE THEM, DISMISS THEM, UNDERMINE THEM OR ABANDON THEM.

What cannot be denied is that in each instance of that form of homicidal violence called capital punishment the spirit of mercilessness reigns, albeit under the disguise of mercy in such gestures of pseudo-compassion as a tasty "last meal." This is only mercilessness with manners. The truth is that the spirit that enters history through Cain and does its most horrific work on Calvary is the same spirit that enters the state death houses, envelopes the guillotines, fills the gas chambers, and laughs cacophonously at God while another infinitely loved son or daughter of the Father is tormented and destroyed. Is this spirit the same spirit that acts through non-legalized killers when they take the lives of others?

WHAT CANNOT BE DENIED IS THAT IN EACH INSTANCE OF THAT FORM OF HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE CALLED CAPITAL PUNISHMENT THE SPIRIT OF MERCILESSNESS REIGNS...

You bet it is! It is the perverted and perverting spirit of mercilessness, manifest as homicidal violence, that is at the root of all this destruction, legal or illegal, reasonable or unreasonable, sordid or romantic. John Paul II wrote in his Encyclical,

Rich in Mercy, that, “[T]he genuine face of mercy has to be ever revealed anew.” Is the Face of the Father, who is rich in mercy, revealed today by those Christians, whether they be presidents, governors, legislators, judges, wardens, guards or citizens, who promote, operate or profit from the various state death chambers? Is it magnified by those bishops, pastors, priests and ministers who teach their people that as followers of Jesus they can engage in state-sponsored homicidal activities?

PRAISE THE LORD AND...

The blood on Jesus’ hands is His own. Capital punishment is not what Jesus taught, it is what He suffered. Crucifying, gassing, beheading, hanging, shooting, electrocuting and poisoning people are not deeds of Christlike mercy. The God who is rich in mercy is never glorified by homicidal violence. “Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition,” “Praise the Lord and fire-up Old Sparky,” “Praise the Lord and turn on the gas,” “Praise the Lord and release the poison,” “Praise the Lord and start the suction machine” are blasphemous falsehoods if Jesus is Lord. Their source is the “Father of lies who is a murderer from the beginning” and not the “Father who is rich in mercy.” These are the works and words of the Adversary of mercy, the Accuser of Christ, masquerading as a Divine support person for homicide. Indeed, whatever the Anti-Christ may be, its hallmark will be mercilessness—more than likely an exquisitely rational and an acutely practical mercilessness gilded with a spellbinding veneer of pseudo-holiness and intellectual sophistication.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IS NOT WHAT JESUS TAUGHT, IT IS WHAT HE SUFFERED. CRUCIFYING, GASSING, BEHEADING, HANGING, SHOOTING, ELECTROCUTING AND POISONING PEOPLE ARE NOT DEEDS OF CHRISTLIKE MERCY.

LIFE THAT OUTLASTS TIME

The death penalty for Christians is not primarily a matter of governmental politics. It is a matter of accepting or rejecting the morality taught by the Son of God as the Will of God. It is a matter that affects life which outlasts time. If Jesus is only a philosopher, then rejecting the risks of mercy in favor of power, prestige, pleasure, nationalism, religionism, comfort, or some political philosophy, etc., is a rational option. But, if Jesus is the definitive revelation of God and God’s will to humanity, then rejecting the risks of mercy is spiritual suicide. Here again perhaps, St. Paul is pertinent when he warns the Church in Corinth with these words: “As Scripture says, ‘I shall destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the learning of the learned. Where are the philosophers now?’” (1 COR 1:19-20)? Where are the philosophers and politicians, preachers and practitioners of justified mercilessness now?

“AS SCRIPTURE SAYS, ‘I SHALL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE AND BRING TO NOTHING THE LEARNING OF THE LEARNED. WHERE ARE THE PHILOSOPHERS NOW?’? WHERE ARE THE PHILOSOPHERS...OF JUSTIFIED MERCILESSNESS NOW?

All are sacred, but no one is sinless. No one is going to come to her or his last breath praying, “God, have justice on me!” But, if it is mercy we desire from God in the after-life, is it not mercy we should offer to others in this life?

Is the meaning of Jesus’ parable (MT. 18:23-35), about the debtor who is forgiven by the king and who then will not forgive someone who is in debt to him, really so nebulous? Surely, when the king asks the forgiven person who refuses to forgive, “Should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant as I have had mercy on you?”, the place of mercy in life and in death, in time and in eternity is being highlighted in neon by Jesus. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” is either meaningless babble into limitless emptiness or it is a request that God judge us as we have judged others. “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy” (MT. 5:7) is Jesus’ guarantee that mercy is the medicine for healing the soul diseased by personal sinfulness. And, how ruinous of the immortal soul does He say the choice of mercilessness is (MT 25:45-46; LK 16:19)? Take a moment and ponder the depth of disintegration that takes place in a being created in the image and likeness of a God who is rich in mercy when

*a man looks pleadingly at you
with a last appeal in his eyes,
and you kill him.*

WWJD

Christians must cease endorsing and participating in capital punishment because it is blatantly incompatible with following the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of nonviolent merciful love of friends and enemies. Christians must discontinue advocating and justifying capital punishment because it is in direct violation of Jesus’ “new commandment” to “love one another as I have loved you” (JN 13:34) which the Catechism of the Catholic Church (SEC 1970) says “contains the entire law of the Gospel,” and “summarizes all the other [commandments] and expresses His entire will” (SEC 2822). As a person cannot imagine Jesus burning heretics at the stake, he or she equally cannot imagine Him gassing, shooting, guillotining, electrocuting, poisoning or crucifying any human being for any reason. What Christians cannot see Christ doing, they are not morally permitted to do. Christians must halt all active support of capital punishment because by their support they bear false witness to other Christians and to the non-Christian world, and thereby become obstacles to people coming to Jesus and knowing the one and only true God. By bearing false witness such Christians, who were chosen to be instruments of the merciful healing power of Jesus Christ, become instead agents of the pandemic of organized mercilessness that is spreading throughout global humanity.

**CHRISTIANS...MUST ABANDON
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT BECAUSE
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MERCY FOR MERCY AND IN
JESUS THEY HAVE BEEN
GRANTED THE GIFT OF KNOWING
THAT THE WAY TO MERCY
BEYOND TIME IS BY THE WAY OF
MERCY IN TIME.**

Finally, Christians regardless of rank, status, class or occupation must abandon capital punishment because they were created from Mercy for Mercy and in Jesus they have been granted the gift of knowing that the Way to Mercy beyond time is by the Way of Mercy in time. Regardless of what other faiths or philosophies may say, Christians are commanded by Jesus to ever reveal the Face of Mercy to humanity. This they can accomplish only by following the Way of Jesus, the Nonviolent Suffering Servant of Isaiah, who in His mercy “does not break the bruised reed” (Is 42:3).

And now, my reader, let me conclude by asking you a question that only God will hear you answer. In your heart of hearts what do you desire? Do you want to “break the bruised reed” or do you want to be as merciful as Jesus? Before answering, just pause for a moment and consider the words of one of the holiest and most learned Christians in the 20th Century, St. Edith Stein, herself a victim of capital punishment and of Christian mercilessness:

“It is mercy that makes us one with God.”

The Nonviolent Trinity

"He is the image of the invisible God."

COL 1:15

It is believed by some that God can be known by observing the world. The material universe could not have created itself. Something cannot come from nothing, so the argument goes. Therefore, God must exist. There are some philosophical objections to this process of thought but let us for the moment accept as true that God's existence can be deduced from a reasoned analysis of an experience of a minuscule portion of the universe.

BEYOND REASON TO REVELATION AND FAITH

However, even if creation can tell us that God is, what it cannot tell us is that God is love, that God is savior, that God is Father/Mother/Parent. For this awareness, revelation is necessary. A rational interpretation of the world with its horror, pain, madness, war, greed and victimization could reasonably lead a person to conclude that God is indifferent to human beings. If there is belief in a God of unconditional love and perpetual forgiveness, a saving God, then the belief is based on something other than what mere reason can establish. Such an understanding of the Source of all is a matter of faith, that is, faith in something other than human reason.

EVEN IF CREATION CAN TELL US
THAT GOD IS, WHAT IT
CANNOT TELL US IS THAT
GOD IS LOVE, THAT GOD
IS SAVIOR, THAT GOD IS
FATHER/MOTHER/PARENT.
FOR THIS AWARENESS,
REVELATION IS NECESSARY.

From where, however, does such a faith come? What is its origin? Why would one think it is true? For the Christian this faith comes through Jesus Christ. But, immediately it may be asked why a person should have faith in what Jesus teaches about God? Why is His knowledge of God superior to anyone else's knowledge of God? The straightforward answer to these questions is that Jesus Christ can tell humanity the truth about God because of who Jesus Christ is. Jesus Christ is God "made flesh" (JN 1:1-14).

When Christians of apostolic times profess that Jesus is the Son of God, the Word of God and The Lord and begin to worship Him, while simultaneously continuing

to worship the Father of Jesus as God, those who do not share the Christians Faith ask them to explain themselves. The response these apostolic Christians give to their inquirers is that Christ Jesus “is the image of the invisible God” (COL 1:15). In other Books of the New Testament the same reality is proclaimed in different language, e.g., “I and the Father are one” (JN 10:30), or “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (JN 14:9). In the person of Jesus an infallible authority on God enters history and with Him a new, revolutionary understanding of God penetrates history. The new understanding demands that a new name for God be found in history—Trinity!

**IN THE PERSON OF JESUS AN
INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY ON GOD
ENTERS HISTORY AND WITH HIM
A NEW, REVOLUTIONARY
UNDERSTANDING OF GOD
PENETRATES HISTORY.**

THE PERFECT ICON OF GOD

The early Christian community experiences Jesus as the perfect image and complete revelation of the Father. It recognizes that for the Son to be truly “the image of the invisible God,” He must possess the divine attributes of the Father. This is precisely what the Church teaches. There is nothing of the perfection of the Father that is lacking in the Son. The Son is “true God from true God.” To use the language of the theologians, there is no ontological gradation between the Father and the Son. There are no degrees of divinity between them. The Son is the consubstantial image of the Father. The Son does not simply participate in God; the Son is God.

It is because God places in human history a perfect icon of Himself, the Son, that Jesus is the Way to the Father. Jesus reveals the Father. His Messianic mission is to reveal the true God as Father/Mother/Parent. The Son is the definitive revelation of the Father. To see Jesus, that is to see Jesus in His words and deeds, is to see the Father (JN 14:9) for God acts in the way God is. As St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, “There is no contradiction at all between the will of the Father and the will of the Son. The Lord ‘is the image of the invisible God,’ immediately and inseparably united to the Father whose will He obeys in every moment.” The will of the Son never varies from the will of the Father and hence the work of the Son, which is the fruit of His own willing, reveals nothing less than the will of the Father.

**IT IS BECAUSE GOD PLACES IN
HUMAN HISTORY A PERFECT ICON
OF HIMSELF, THE SON, THAT
JESUS IS THE
WAY TO THE FATHER.**

GOD IS ONE

The New Testament is the written testimony about Jesus’ words and deeds. It faithfully hands on what Jesus Christ, while living among people, did and taught for their salvation. It is the ultimate record of His words and works, and hence of His will and the will of the Father.

Now in the New Testament Jesus teaches by words and deeds a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. This is incontestable in the realm of scholarship or of common sense. As the renowned Biblical scholar, the late Rev. John L. McKenzie says, “If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus rejects violence, we can know nothing of his person or message. It is the clearest of teachings....Jesus authorizes no one to substitute violence for love.” But, as previously noted, the work of the Son is the will of the Father. Jesus is like us in all things except sin. He wills the Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as a response to evil, even lethal evil, because God wills the Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as a response to evil—even lethal evil. Jesus lives this will of the Father with only those faculties which all human beings have at their disposal. Jesus is nonviolent because God is nonviolent and because He desires His disciples to be nonviolent as God and He are nonviolent. Again, God acts as God is. The invisible God chooses to become visible in the incarnation of Jesus so that human beings, who are made in the image and likeness of God (GN 1:26), can choose to be nonviolent as God is nonviolent, can choose to imitate God by imitating His Incarnate Word, Jesus.

“IF WE CANNOT KNOW FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT JESUS REJECTS VIOLENCE, WE CAN KNOW NOTHING OF HIS PERSON OR MESSAGE. IT IS THE CLEAREST OF TEACHINGS....JESUS AUTHORIZES NO ONE TO SUBSTITUTE VIOLENCE FOR LOVE.”

The Holy Spirit is, of course, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ (ROM 8:9). The Holy Spirit is active in Jesus and Jesus is consubstantial with the Holy Spirit. Since Jesus is nonviolent and since His Father is nonviolent, the Holy Spirit must be nonviolent since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Because the Nonviolent Son and Nonviolent Spirit are consubstantial with the Nonviolent Father, that is, because God is one, the gift that the Holy Spirit bestows on the believer is the gift of the Life of the Nonviolent God. Communion with the Nonviolent Spirit of Christ is communion with the Nonviolent God—The Nonviolent Trinity.

VIOLENT MONOTHEISM—VESTING A LIE

What is apparent from the New Testament is that Jesus rejects the lie of violent monotheism as emphatically as he rejects the lie of polytheism. God, who is to be loved whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength, is God whose image is the nonviolent Christ Jesus. Yet, somehow on July 16, 1945, the name of the God of Nonviolent Love is given as the code name for the testing of an instrument designed to produce unbound human carnage—the first atomic bomb. How is this possible? How is it possible that the Trinity of nonviolent love is the name assigned to a weapon’s test whose purpose is to secure victory by mass homicide? To code name the first atomic bomb

WHAT IS APPARENT FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THAT JESUS REJECTS THE LIE OF VIOLENT MONOTHEISM AS EMPHATICALLY AS HE REJECTS THE LIE OF POLYTHEISM.

test “Trinity” is the extreme of Orwellian doublespeak. It could not be more deceitful or absurd if the first A-Bomb were code-named “Jesus”! How could intelligent people even consider such an erroneous designation?

The answer is obvious. Seventeen hundred years before the pseudo-Trinity of violence explodes in the New Mexico desert, the pseudo-Trinity of violence explodes in the heart of Christianity. Seventeen centuries ago, Christianity begins to imbibe in violent monotheism, a monotheism whose god, contrary to the teaching of Jesus, leads people in the homicidal conquering of historical enemies. The spirits of violence, retaliation, greed, enmity, deceitfulness, oppression, destruction, terror and cruelty, all of which are utterly necessary to conduct war and all of which are utterly contrary to the Spirit of the Trinity, begin to be operationally justified as spirits compatible with the Spirit of the invisible God whose image is Christ Jesus. Christianity gradually becomes another in the line of religions employing God to validate its own violence and the violence of those who cater to its interests.

**THE SPIRITS OF VIOLENCE,
RETALIATION, GREED,
DECEITFULNESS, OPPRESSION,
DESTRUCTION, TERROR AND
CRUELTY, ALL OF WHICH ARE
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CONDUCT WAR ARE UTTERLY
CONTRARY TO THE
SPIRIT OF THE TRINITY...**

BETRAYAL OF THE NONVIOLENT TRINITY

Lest it be thought that I am exaggerating the betrayal of the Nonviolent Trinity as imaged by Jesus Christ consider the contemporary spiritual debacle of Catholic Croatia and Orthodox Serbia, of Protestant and Catholic Ireland, of Hutu and Tutsi Catholic Rwanda. Here are groups of Christians chronically and obsessively absorbed in homicidal hate of each other. However, practically everyone in each of these societies starts each day by making the sign of the cross or by saying in some manner that he or she worships the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For most Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and Evangelicals then, “God” does not incarnationally mean God as imaged by the Nonviolent Jesus Christ. On the contrary, for most Christians, Trinity means a violent monotheism that enables their homicidal activities to be placed under divine sponsorship. This has been the case in almost every place on earth where Christianity—in any of its forms—has taken hold over the last 1700 years. In the last seventeen centuries no sociologically identifiable unit of people has killed more human beings in war than the group that answers to the name Christian—the group that confesses belief in the Trinity. Is it not then understandable why the scientists and military personnel in the New Mexico desert in 1945 did not consider it

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blasphemous to name an instrument of mega-violence after what they perceived to be Christianity's God—the violent trinity?

If humanity's image of God is distorted, humanity's image of itself and of the world will be distorted. To worship and to love whole heart, soul, mind and strength a god of violent monotheism, who condones, justifies and even encourages homicidal violence, is to ensure humanity a continuing history of divinely approved, self-righteous homicide with all the nauseating vomitus it ceaselessly disgorges. Violent monotheism is not only a false presentation of God, if Christ Jesus "is the image of the invisible God," it is also a major motivator to homicide in the human situation. To divinize homicidal violence is to promote homicidal violence because what is thought to be the will of God, people are encouraged to do—and to do with great zeal. Therefore, Christians in general and Church leaders in particular are morally obligated by their Baptism and Call to profess that the god of violent monotheism, regardless of his name or of which religion proclaims him, is a non-existent Transcendent. Furthermore, those who say "Jesus is Lord" must unreservedly declare that "redemptive violence" or "divinely licensed violence" are not only a contradiction in terms, but are also explicit expressions of idolatry—congressing with a false God.

THOSE WHO SAY "JESUS IS LORD" MUST UNRESERVEDLY DECLARE THAT "REDEMPTIVE VIOLENCE" OR "DIVINELY LICENSED VIOLENCE" ARE NOT ONLY A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS, BUT ARE ALSO EXPLICIT EXPRESSIONS OF IDOLATRY—CONGRESSING WITH A FALSE GOD.

DIVINE CONSCRIPTION AS SPIRITUAL FRAUD

"God is on our side" has been the rallying cry for incalculable human slaughter. Year after year, century after century, God has been drafted to go to war by practically every state and revolutionary military operation, by practically every nation and tribe. However, before Divine conscription is possible, the religious elites of the various societies have to assure the political and economic elites, as well as, the "nobodies" who must kill and be killed, that God is indeed quite open to being drafted! But if Christ Jesus "is the image of the invisible God," then God has permanent conscientious objector status. The Nonviolent Trinity can never be honestly conscripted to legitimize, motivate or spiritually underpin homicidal violence for any earthly or heavenly reason—and the religious leadership of the Church has no commission to teach otherwise.

THE NONVIOLENT TRINITY CAN NEVER BE HONESTLY CONSCRIPTED TO LEGITIMIZE, MOTIVATE OR SPIRITUALLY UNDERPIN HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE FOR ANY EARTHLY OR HEAVENLY REASON—AND THE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCHES HAVE NO COMMISSION TO TEACH OTHERWISE.

Violent monotheism is killing humanity. It is corrupting all of human existence—

especially religion. The only antidote to this planetary spiritual plague is for Christians and Churches to commence to communicate gently, persistently and publicly that the nonviolent Jesus is the true image of the invisible God, and then to try to live out personally and socially the network of implications that proceed from the great truth and Good News of nonviolent monotheism.

WORSHIPPING AND FOLLOWING THE TRUE IMAGE OF GOD

God is the heart of the matter, no matter what the matter is. The question of God is inevitably present in all the other questions that stimulate and haunt the human mind. Each human being and all humanity are confronted with a choice. Will the best and the brightest, as well as, the least and the dullest continue down the disastrous and destructive path of worshipping and following images of God created from their own fear-full, sin-drenched, concupiscence-ridden, finite consciousnesses, or will they accept, worship and follow God as revealed in the image of the nonviolent Jesus Christ?

People, however, cannot choose an option they have never heard. Unless the true image of God as revealed by Jesus is gracefully presented to humanity, by those Jesus calls to present it, humanity will continue in its sorrowful and self-torturous enslavement to false images of the Holy. Silence on this matter serves only the status quo, serves only violent monotheism. There is an indispensable requirement, placed on those who believe, to unashamedly and unhesitatingly proclaim the Good News of The Nonviolent God of Love, The Nonviolent Trinity of Love. The active, committed witness of Christians and Churches, who believe that the nonviolent Jesus “is the image of the invisible God,” is obligatory, if all forms of violent monotheism are to become as abhorrent to the human spirit as child sacrifice now is.

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If you accept this task of Trinitarian faith, this labor of Nonviolent Christic love, you will be making a monumental contribution to genuine peace on the earth. You will also be doing what Christ chose you to do. You will be living unto eternal life what you pray when you say, “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.”

Patronizing God

For over thirty-five years throughout the world I have been teaching Christians and Non-Christians about the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel and His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. Most of the time in most places the reaction has been one of incredulity. In practically every case every sophomore in high school, every refined moral theologian, every bishop, priest and minister, every Christian in pulpit and in pew has risen to his or her feet to inform me that Jesus' teachings on nonviolent love are impractical, unrealistic, idealistic, childish, fanciful—or all of the above.

In this regard I recall a French woman who rejected the notion of a Nonviolent Jesus by offering that, "Jesus may be God but He is not stupid!" Now while this woman's phraseology may be more entertaining than that of most who reject or ignore the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels, it is an accurate encapsulation of what most Christians think about Jesus' teaching of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. They justify their dismissal of such an "irrational" teaching with rationales like the following:

Let's be realistic. In the real world no one in his or her right mind is going to give up the protection of violence. It would be crazy. It is a jungle out there. I am a nonviolent person, but if someone tries to take something away from me that I love, that I need or that is mine, I am not going to turn the other cheek or give him my tunic when he takes my cloak. I am going to give him a punch in the mouth, a kick in the groin, time in prison or a bullet in the chest—otherwise I'd become a doormat for the world. Survival is the first law of nature and no one survives in this world without the use of violence. No nation could last a week if it followed Jesus' teaching of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. That is why no Christian politician, regardless of how many Christians populate a nation, ever runs on the platform of the Sermon on the Mount. A nonviolent politician in the model of the Nonviolent Jesus would be unelectable even if a state were 100% Christian! Jesus may be God but He is not stupid—and neither are we, His disciples, supporters, and promoters!"

REJECTION OF VIOLENCE AND ENMITY

At no place in the Gospel does Jesus come into such acute conflict with the prevailing idea of God and God's will as when He confronts homicidal violence and enmity. The dichotomy, between what people believe God and God's will to be in regard

to violence and enmity and what Jesus says they are, could not be greater—then or now. The rejection of violence and of enmity is an inextricable part of the Gospel as proclaimed by Jesus in word and deed. It is also a major theme in the life of original Christianity. As one of the most renowned Catholic Biblical scholars of the Twentieth Century, Rev. John L. McKenzie, says, “If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus rejected violence, we can know nothing of his person or message. It is the clearest of teachings.”

THE REJECTION OF VIOLENCE
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Jesus’ understanding of what kind of God God is and what God expects of us is radically out of harmony with people’s religious consciousness at the time of His birth, as well as at the time of the two-thousandth anniversary celebration of His birth. In his seminal work on the subject of the Jewishness of Jesus entitled, *Jesus of Nazareth* (1921), the famous Hebrew Biblical scholar Joseph Klausner, writes:

There was yet another element in Jesus’ idea of God, which Judaism could not accept. Jesus tells his disciples to love their enemies, as well as their friends since their Father in heaven makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends his rain upon the righteous and the ungodly...With this Jesus introduces something new into the idea of God...But his teaching has not proved possible. Therefore he left the course of ordinary life untouched, wicked, cruel, pagan and his exalted ethical idea has been relegated to a book, or at most becomes a possession of monastics and recluses who live apart from the paths of ordinary life...As a sole and self-sufficient national code of teaching Judaism could by no means agree with it...and such has been the case with Christianity from the time of Constantine to this present day...Pharisaic Judaism was too mature; its purpose too fixed to change. Its leaders were fighting for their national existence and grappling with foreign oppressors and with semi-foreigners that sought to crush it, and with a decadent idolatry that sought to absorb it. In such days of stress and affliction they were themselves far removed and would remove also their fellow Jews from the dangerous fantasies [of Jesus], an extremism which most of the race could not endure. They saw at the outset what the end would be [of following Jesus]...How could Judaism accede to such an ethical ideal?

Today, can it not be said that the leaders and laity of the Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Evangelical Churches are too mature, too fixed in their purposes to teach and to follow Jesus’ Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as a sole and self-sufficient code for living? In these days of stress and affliction—when each Church is fighting for its own particular identity and survival, when each Church is grappling with decadent idolatries that are trying to influence it and when each Church must be perpetually vigilant for enemies who wish to undermine its political power and to confiscate its wealth—are not the rulers of each Church under a moral imperative to remove themselves and their fellow Christians far from the dangerous fantasies of Jesus which, if followed, would guarantee the destruction of

the Church? How could Church leaders accede to such an ethical idea, to a way of nonviolence? Does not reasonableness mandate that no Church give a “microphone” to the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies—lest Christians actually begin to follow this fatuous program of self-destructive behavior?

SIMULTANEOUS ADORATION AND REJECTION

It has long been known in Christianity that adoration of Jesus (Praise the Lord!) is much less costly than imitation of Jesus. Yet, is not each Christian obliged to ask what he or she is doing when he or she says, “I adore You, O Lord, but I am not going to follow you in your clear-cut stance toward homicidal violence and enmity?” If the One being adored has explicitly commanded a form of behavior, what does it mean spiritually to discredit a Divine Imperative issuing from the adored One? What does it mean to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God and not believe Him? What does it mean to consume the Nonviolent Lamb of God in Holy Communion with no intention of trying to become like the Lamb who is consumed? What does it mean to have faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior while at the same time justifying the premeditative, chronic and obstinate refusal to do what He commands: Love your enemies (MT 5:43; LK 6:27); Love one another as I have loved you (JN 13:34, 15:12); Put away your sword (MT 26:52); etc.? What does it mean to be a teacher in the Church and intentionally choose not to teach what Jesus taught? Finally, what does it mean, when immediately before His ascension into heaven Jesus speaks directly and exclusively to His Church’s leaders and says this:

IT HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN IN CHRISTIANITY THAT ADORATION OF JESUS (PRAISE THE LORD!) IS MUCH LESS COSTLY THAN IMITATION OF JESUS....IF THE ONE BEING ADORED HAS EXPLICITLY COMMANDED A FORM OF BEHAVIOR, WHAT DOES IT MEAN SPIRITUALLY TO DISCREDIT A DIVINE IMPERATIVE ISSUING FROM THE ADORED ONE?

“Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you” (MT 28:19-20).

ONE IS KNOWN ONLY BY WORDS AND DEEDS

The only way in this world that any person can be known—and that includes Jesus—is by his or her words and deeds. Separate a person from her or his words and deeds and there is nothing of the person to experience, to know or to have faith in. The only Jesus Christ that exists is the Jesus Christ of the words and deeds found in the Gospel. Separate Jesus from His words and deeds, and all that is left is a non-existent, humanly created, imaginary character named Jesus. For example, the Jesus of the Gospels is Jewish, regardless of how many Irishmen think, say or wish He were Irish! Any presentation of Jesus as an Irishman from Dublin rather than as a Jew from Nazareth is a presentation of a Jesus who is no more a person of

historical existence than is Spider-Man. So, also, any presentation of Jesus as someone other than a person who teaches and lives unto death a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies is a presentation of a character of the imagination, rather than a person of history. An Irish historical Jesus is a non-Jesus Christ historically. A Jesus using or endorsing homicidal violence and enmity in the name of self-interest, self-defense or social responsibility is also a non-Jesus Christ historically. Pope John Paul II writes in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), “One cannot separate Jesus from the Christ or speak of a ‘Jesus of history’ who would differ from the ‘Christ of faith’...Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.” The only Jesus there is to adore, praise, worship, proclaim, consume, imitate, trust and have faith in is the Nonviolent Jesus—who lived and taught a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies by His words and deeds in history.

[A]NY PRESENTATION OF JESUS AS SOMEONE OTHER THAN A PERSON WHO TEACHES AND LIVES UNTO DEATH A WAY OF NONVIOLENT LOVE OF FRIENDS AND ENEMIES IS A PRESENTATION OF A CHARACTER OF THE IMAGINATION, RATHER THAN A PERSON OF HISTORY.

SPIRITUAL SCHIZOPHRENIA—PRAISE GOD AND PASS THE AMMO

Most Christians are members of Churches that praise Jesus while simultaneously dismissing His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. This spiritual schizophrenia of worshipping the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel while morally endorsing the way of homicidal violence and enmity is so pervasive in the Churches of Christianity and in the Evangelical movement that it is experienced as spiritual sanity and theological acuity. Most nationalistic or ethnic Christians proudly and matter-of-factly say of their Christian ancestors: “Our forefathers, they lied, they killed, they plundered but...they kept the faith!” There is possibly no more mammoth spiritual incongruity, no more anti-Gospel spiritual ejaculation, no more distorted presentation of Jesus and His Gospel than the title of the popular Christian Hymn, “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition!” How is it possible for Christians, whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant, whether rulers or ruled to endure living with such a searing contradiction at the center of their faith and life?

THERE IS POSSIBLY NO MORE MAMMOTH SPIRITUAL INCONGRUITY, NO MORE ANTI-GOSPEL SPIRITUAL EJACULATION, NO MORE DISTORTED PRESENTATION OF JESUS AND HIS GOSPEL THAN THE TITLE OF THE POPULAR CHRISTIAN HYMN, “PRAISE THE LORD AND PASS THE AMMUNITION!”

CHURCH TEACHING REFLECTS PAUCITY OF FAITH IN JESUS

After all, Jesus did not die of old age. He died by homicidal violence and He died giving a very clear and consistent response to it—a response in continuity with what He had been teaching as God’s will for the prior three years of His public

life—a response in discontinuity with what the Churches have been operationally teaching as God’s Will for the last 1700 years.

Perhaps an analogy could be clarifying. If General George Patton commands his troops to turn right for victory and instead they salute him and then defy him by intentionally turning left, can it be honestly maintained they have faith in him? If Jesus commands, “Love your enemies,” “Put away your sword,” and His followers fall down and worship Him and then defy Him by hating and destroying enemies and justifying it, can it honestly be maintained that they have faith in Him? For most people it is difficult to fathom how one can be saved by faith in Jesus when one does not have faith in Jesus. Patton’s way ceases to be the way of people who have faith in him when they turn left. All the salutes in the world cannot compensate for what is transparently non-faith. Jesus’ Way ceases to be the way of people who have faith in Him when they turn to justifying their enmity and homicidal violence. A legion of “Praise the Lord” exaltations cannot compensate for what is transparently non-faith.

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HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE.

To lose faith in Patton’s way is ipso facto to lose faith in Patton. So, also, to lose faith in Jesus’ Way is ipso facto to lose faith in Jesus. To abandon Patton’s way is synonymous with saying, “General Patton, I don’t think you know what you are talking about. General Patton, I don’t trust you. General Patton, I will not follow you.” To abandon Jesus’ Way is likewise the equivalent of saying, “Jesus, you don’t know what you are talking about. Jesus, I don’t trust you. Jesus, I will not follow You.”

THE ABERRATIONAL TRANSITION FROM CROSS TO SWORD

Christians have turned the cross of nonviolent love upside down thus making it into a sword of holy homicide. But, Christians and Churches are not cognizant that they have inverted and perverted the nonviolent cross of Christ. Mahatma Gandhi notes that the only people in the world who do not see Jesus as nonviolent are Christians. How is this possible? One technique, which Churches employ to avoid seeing what they do not want to see, to avoid seeing what they cannot bear to see, is the process of nurturing children and adults into a taken-for-granted understanding of the Gospel that allows them to believe that patronizing Jesus is a valid substitute for obeying Jesus. Whether, it is the French woman rendering silly the Nonviolent Jesus and His way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies, or the self-reverential Christian moral theologian telling Christians how many rocks they may justly possess to throw at each other,

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or the patriotic leadership of a Church threatening excommunication if Christians refuse to kill when the politicians of their state call upon them to kill—the operational spiritual reality is the same. It is the communal humoring of Jesus by words that praise Him to the high heavens, while communally discrediting Him by morally affirming deeds that unambiguously proclaim, “I will not be caught dead following Your ridiculous Way of nonviolent love.” When practically all the Churches of Christianity reach an implicit ecumenical agreement that this is acceptable Christian practice, then the young and newly arrived are placed outside the possibility of perceiving the Nonviolent Jesus. What one has no idea of, one cannot act in conformity with.

ANTI-EVANGELIZATION IN THE EXTREME

The Christian who sets aside Jesus’ “clearest teachings,” that is, His teachings on the rejection of violence and enmity, while at the same time calling Him “Lord,” not only brings into disrepute these teachings, but also instantly tarnishes the credibility of all the teachings of Jesus, indeed, of Jesus Himself. This practice—of individually and collectively contradicting and correcting Jesus on His teaching on how God desires His followers to deal with violence and enmity—is the single most significant factor in the Church’s inability to evangelize contemporary literate people. No amount of money nor state of the art public relations technique can camouflage the Divinity-denial implicit in this contradicting and correcting behavior. To proclaim that Someone is the Pre-existent Word of God through whom all things were made and then in the next breath to pooh-pooh His teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as naively simplistic or nonsensical is anti-evangelization in the extreme. Who wants to be part of a religious community that cannot distinguish a cross morality from a sword morality? Who wants to be part of a religious group that equates taking up the sword with taking up the cross? Who wants to be part of a Church that invests so much of its intellectual and monetary resources in efforts to convince itself and the world that the sword is the cross? And finally, who wants to adore or commit himself or herself to a God who does not know what He is talking about?

THIS PRACTICE—OF INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY CONTRADICTING AND CORRECTING JESUS ON HIS TEACHING ON HOW GOD DESIRES HIS FOLLOWERS TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE AND ENMITY—IS THE SINGLE MOST SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THE CHURCH’S INABILITY TO EVANGELIZE CONTEMPORARY LITERATE PEOPLE.

LITURGICAL PAMPERING OF THE HOLY ONE IS NOT ENOUGH

When Jesus proclaims at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, “It is not those who say, ‘Lord, Lord,’ who enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of my Father who enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (MT 7:21), He is saying, “Patronizing God is not enough.” The liturgical pampering of the Holy One while ignoring, distorting and belittling His will is not the Way to salvation taught by

Jesus, the ultimate revealer of the Will of God to humanity. Christianity is not only a liturgical and conceptual religion but also is an incarnational religion. Gospel truth is meant to be conceptualized and celebrated but it is not meant just to be conceptualized and celebrated. It is also meant to be lived, incarnated, made carnal, enfleshed. The most used verb by Jesus in the Gospel is “do.” In the case of Christianity the Message and the Messenger are one and the same. Jesus is the Word of God “made flesh.” To denigrate the Message as simple-minded tripe for First Century Galilean rubes is to denigrate the Messenger. To show contempt for the Message is to stigmatize the Messenger. Faith in Jesus demands faith in His Way. The truth of this dimension of the Gospel can be articulated by the lyrics from the old song, Love and Marriage: “You can’t have one without the other.” The song goes on to insist, “Try. Try. Try to separate them, it’s an illusion.” Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies cannot be severed from each other. It is self-deception to convince oneself that a Christian or a Church can brush-off His Way of nonviolent love without brushing Him off. The Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love are two sides of the same eternally redeeming Coin. “You can’t have one without the other.” You cannot have the Coin of redemption with only one side.

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CLERICAL AND ACADEMIC DISDAIN FOR THE NONVIOLENT JESUS

I have observed for over three decades an ecumenical panorama of Church leaders, of circumlocutory academic moralists and of bombastic Evangelical preachers condescendingly assume a posture of bemused intellectual and spiritual superiority when directly confronted with the Gospel truth of the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love. With the wave of an “authoritative” hand, of arrogant ignorance, they dismiss the Nonviolent Way of Jesus with “know-it-all” one-liners like, “I haven’t time for that nonsense,” or “That’s irrelevant sectarianism,” or “That’s just a lot of fundamentalist theological drivel,” or, as one cleric of distinction disdainfully remarked when he was read a passage that Thomas Merton authored on Gospel nonviolence, “Merton lives in the woods. I live in the real world.” In the upper echelons of the Churches of Christianity Gospel Nonviolence remains the unexamined teaching of Jesus; indeed, it is the unmentioned and the unmentionable teaching of Jesus. Not surprisingly then, at the lower levels of the Churches of Christianity, it is the untaught teaching of Jesus. The powerful in each of the Churches, as well as in

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the Evangelical Movement, Marian Movement, Charismatic Movement, etc., struggle assiduously to guarantee that Gospel nonviolence will never be intelligently presented to Christians, that Gospel nonviolence will always be perceived by Christians as a featherbrained or fanatical moral option. No “microphone” is given to it in the Churches unless for some unexpected reason Church leadership absolutely has to permit the ordinary means of communication in the Church to be made available to it. However, after such rare moments occur, everything is done to shrewdly deprecate and disparage the nonviolent Message while, of course, sparing no amount of energy and money to aggrandize, salute and cheer and worship the Messenger.

TRUE PRAISE OF GOD IS ABANDONMENT TO NONVIOLENT LOVE

Patronizing God is a cosmic absurdity at which right-mindedness would have a belly-laugh if it were not for the horrid consequences that such religious inanity has brought upon the Churches and through the Churches has brought upon the rest of humanity. True praise of God can never be a patronizing activity. “Praise the Lord and Put Away Your Swords,” “Praise the Lord and Love Your Enemies,” “Praise the Lord and Love as Jesus Loves,” these are songs of authentic praise, yet to be composed. These are the hymns of Christian sanity, sanctity and fidelity. These are songs of praise that without exception communicate an unspoken but self-evident secondary theme: “Jesus, I trust in You.” However, the patronizing of Jesus that attempts to pass itself off as praise, also communicates an unspoken but self-evident secondary theme: “Jesus, I do not trust in You.”

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The decision facing the Christian and the Christian Churches is clear-cut: to patronize the Lord or to praise the Lord; to abandon oneself to the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love or to abandon the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of nonviolent love. The Christian and the Churches have a choice. They may enter into praise as a patronizing decoy for faith-less-ness, religious self-deception and “justified” disobedience. Alternatively, they may enter into praise as a gracefully empowering way to peacefully and obediently live by faith in the Cross of nonviolent love. These are the alternatives and they are exclusive alternatives. A Christian “cannot serve two masters” (MT 6:24).

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JESUS AND HIS WAY OF
NONVIOLENT LOVE.**

Now, it is time to choose! Now is the moment of judgment. The choice is before us: to praise God or to patronize God. Praising Jesus will shine such Uncreated Light on the Gospel that truths—about God, about human beings, about nature, about evil, never before seen—will be illumined for the salvation of the world. Patronizing Jesus will only continue the fear-full darkness in which the Churches of the Constantinian tradition of Christianity live. It will amount to no more than the spiritual equivalent of “whistling in the dark.” It will do nothing to enlighten, by the Nonviolent Uncreated Light (JN 1:1-14) that has come into the world, a humanity being ceaselessly butchered by its own hand. The crisis is present—now, today, this hour, this moment.

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Let us pray!

PRAYER: All praise to our Lord, God and Savior, the Nonviolent Jesus Christ and His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies, now and always and forever and ever.

RESPONSE: Amen.

What say you, my reader? Amen?

Will the Reformed Church Be a Peace Church?

I have handed over my command to Jesus, the model leader... This is my boss, my commander."

LEFTIST PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ OF VENEZUELA
ANNOUNCING ON NATIONAL TELEVISION, AFTER
CRUSHING A COUP ATTEMPT, THAT HE PLANS TO
HOLD ONTO POWER FOR ANOTHER TEN YEARS

Jesus Christ is my favorite philosopher.

RIGHTIST PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH OF THE UNITED STATES
RUNNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY AS THE STATE GOVERNOR
WHO HAS EXECUTED MORE PRISONERS THAN
ANY GOVERNOR IN THE LAST 50 YEARS

In this world the Church is always required to reach an equilibrium between integration with culture and identification with culture. The two temptations to implementing this requirement properly are the temptation of withdrawal and the temptation of secularization. Except for an occasional small group, the temptation of withdrawal is a non-temptation for the Church today. Secularization—the adoption by the Church of secular powers, values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, systems and spirits that are contrary to the teaching of Jesus—is the most serious and enticing temptation facing the Church at this time. Indeed, succumbing to the temptation of secularization is the most grievous sin of the historical Church and the most overlooked and ignored. A brief review of some fundamentals is perhaps in order before confronting the most noxious manifestation of secularization that plagues the churches to this very hour.

SECULARIZATION—THE ADOPTION BY THE CHURCH OF SECULAR POWERS, VALUES, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, BEHAVIORS, SYSTEMS AND SPIRITS THAT ARE CONTRARY TO THE TEACHING OF JESUS—IS THE MOST SERIOUS AND ENTICING TEMPTATION FACING THE CHURCH AT THIS TIME.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

There is only one Head of the Church and that is the Nonviolent Jesus Christ. There is no successor of Jesus Christ in the Church because Jesus Christ has never left the Church. The Nonviolent Jesus Christ was, is and always will be the supreme authority in the Church. The center of gravity in the Church is the enduring life of Christ in the Church, not any particular ministry. It is He who guarantees the survival of the Church, not clever administration, wealth or secular power. Therefore, it is the Church's relationship to the Nonviolent Jesus that is the non-negotiable, essential factor in determining what the Church's ends are and what means the Church may use to accomplish these ends. It is this relation that illuminates whether an activity of the Church is a spiritually healthy integration into culture or a disobedient excursion into the dead-end of secularization.

The Great Commission Jesus gives His Church is this:

Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time (MT 28:19,20).

MEANS AND ENDS

The Church then, to use St. Augustine's phraseology, is to be an extension of the life and mission of Jesus in time and space. Self-evidently, for the Church to be this, it must use Christ-like means if it expects to be faithful to and fulfill its Christic commission. UnChrist-like means cannot produce Christ-like ends. Hence, secularization, the employment by the Church of secular means and/or ends that are incompatible with the means and/or ends of Christ, is a spiritual catastrophe of the highest order when it occurs—regardless of the earthly benefits that may accrue to the Church by the use of such means.

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Now it is true, that the pope is not the Church, nor are the cardinals, bishops, priests, ministers, deacons, elders, overseers or superintendents the Church. These positions are ministries within the Church, no more or no less important than any other ministry in the Church. As the saying goes, "We are the Church." True enough. But, this theological fact carries with it obligations of the most serious temporal and eternal significance. Since we are the Church, each and everyone of us is explicitly called by our relationship to its Nonviolent Head, the ever-present Jesus Christ, to always struggle to live according to His means in order to bring about the ends for which He created the Church. Therefore it is not just popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, ministers, etc., who are subject to the temptation of secularization. It is each and every Christian that can be seduced by secular powers, val-

ues, attitudes, beliefs, systems and spirits that are incommensurate with the life, spirit, teaching and mission of the Nonviolent Jesus Christ.

SECULARIZATION OF THE CHURCH

Secular society almost universally endorses exacting one's "pound of flesh" under the rubric of justice and imposing one's will by means of causing pain to another. However, as has been previously noted, the ends of secular society are not the same as the ends of that society called the Church and therefore the means cannot be the same. The end for which the Church exists is to help people become saints, that is, to help bring people into the fullness of life, into an eternally graced union with God through the Nonviolent Jesus. Therefore, a legal or illegal lynching-party or war, regardless of the earthly good it can accomplish, is never a witness to Christ or His to Way of salvation, even if it is praying the rosary or singing the St. Francis Prayer of Peace, even if all its participants are baptized and it is led by a cadre of ecclesiastics in full canonicals.

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Consider this excerpt from a syndicated newspaper column, *Joe Bob's America*, written earlier this year by Joe Bob Briggs:

When men in war councils start invoking the name of God thrice daily, every corpuscle of my cigar-wracked body groans like an infidel on the inquisitor's rack. I have nothing against the Almighty. I think the Big Guy knows what he's doing. But I'm not sure he's inclined to delegate this much work to men who have been checked out on M-16s...Personally I would prefer that we simply dispense with the Godhead in our official speech altogether, or at least leave it to the Congressional chaplain, who's generally hired for his ability to invoke the deity without being too specific about his attributes, origins, nature, or relevance to anything that might turn out to be embarrassing in the future...In my unspeakably Baptist hometown, there are children who are indoctrinated by being forced to wear T-shirts that proudly state, "What would Jesus do?" (This can result in unforeseen parental dilemmas. Some six-year-olds will take it as license to feed the family's veal cutlets to the neighborhood drunk.) But since President Bush happens to come from this selfsame fundamentalist Christian Texas world that I know so well, why shouldn't we simply cut through all the theological windsurfing and resort instead to this childlike question? The president is, after all, a Christian. He does, after all, routinely participate in prayer circles in the Oval Office. If we truly want God in the White House, and the Congress, and the Pentagon, why don't we simply ask the question, what would Christ have done?

Well, we know two things Jesus did NOT believe in: offense and defense. So you can neither attack nor defend and remain Christian. Jesus not only preached nonviolence; he preached absolute non-resistance to the violence of others. He preached not

only forgiveness of the original affront, but forgiveness seven times seven times when the affront is repeated. He preached simplicity, poverty, and the willingness to suffer. He compared himself and all who believed in him to lambs, led to the slaughter.

It will be objected, by the Pentagon chaplain, that his words were not to be taken literally. It will be objected, by the Congressional chaplain, that so long as our minds are pure and undefiled by hatred that we must fight to preserve the lives of others. It will be objected, by the Supreme Court chaplain, that such a simple reading of the New Testament would abolish all laws and render us helpless.

I didn't say it was practical. I said it's what the man said.

Violence, dominative power, i.e., the infliction of suffering or death on other human beings in order to achieve an end, is the *sine qua non* of all secular societies, all states. As Carl J. Friedrich, Eaton Professor of the Science of Government at Harvard University, writes in the concluding paragraph of his book, *The Pathology of Politics*, "Our analysis has, I hope, shown that politics needs all these dubious practices; it cannot be managed without violence, betrayal, corruption, secrecy and propaganda." Or, as Tolstoy, speaking about dominative power communicates, less prosaically but perhaps far more acutely:

**"[P]OLITICS NEEDS ALL THESE
DUBIOUS PRACTICES; IT CANNOT
BE MANAGED WITHOUT
VIOLENCE, BETRAYAL,
CORRUPTION, SECRECY AND
PROPAGANDA."**

[T]he acceptance of Christianity without the abandonment of power is a satire on, and a perversion of, Christianity. The sanctification of political power by Christianity is blasphemy; it is the negation of Christianity. After fifteen hundred years of this blasphemous alliance of pseudo-Christianity with the State, it needs a strong effort to free oneself from all the complex sophistries by which, always and everywhere (to please the authorities), the sanctity and righteousness of State-power, and the possibility of its being Christian, has been pleaded...

Let us take the history of that government which first formed an alliance with Christianity. A robbers' nest existed at Rome. It grew by robbery, violence, murders, and it subdued nations. These robbers and their descendants, led by their chieftains (whom they sometimes called Caesar, sometimes Augustus), robbed and tormented nations to satisfy their desires. One of the descendants of these robber-chiefs, Constantine (a reader of books and a man satiated by an evil life), preferred certain Christian dogmas to those of the old creeds... So he decreed that this religion should be introduced among those that were under his power.

No one said to him: "The kings exercise authority among the nations, but among you it shall not be so. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not lay up riches, judge not, condemn not, resist not him that is evil."

But they said to him: "You wish to be called a Christian and to continue to be the chieftain of the robbers—to kill, burn, fight, lust, execute, and live in luxury? That

can all be arranged." And they arranged a Christianity for him, and arranged it very smoothly, better even than could have been expected...

But more even than that: they sanctify his robber-chieftainship, and say that it proceeds from God, and they anoint him with holy oil... [T]his same religion has existed for fifteen hundred years, and other robber-chiefs have adopted it, and they have all been lubricated with holy oil, and they were all, all ordained by God...

And as soon as one of the anointed robber-chiefs wishes his own and another folk to begin slaying each other, the priests immediately prepare some holy water, sprinkle a cross, take the cross and bless the robber-chief in his work of slaughtering, hanging, and destroying...

True religion may exist anywhere except where it is evidently false, i.e., violent; it cannot be a State religion.

True religion may exist in all the so-called sects and heresies, only it surely cannot exist where it is joined to a State using violence.

There are of course innumerable methods and forms of inflicting suffering or death beyond those Friedrich and Tolstoy enumerate. However, a baptized Christian or a church using dominative power no more make it an activity in conformity with the will of God as revealed by the Nonviolent Jesus than a priest blessing soldiers before a battle makes their homicidal violence Christ-like and of God.

BARTERING AWAY JESUS' LEGACY

The acceptance by the Church of the use of dominative power by her members and for her own purposes is the primary form of secularization that has bedeviled Christianity since the Fourth Century. At that time the Church—perhaps more accurately the Church's leaders—barter away for dominative power, and for the riches and secular prestige that accompany it, the Divine Truth entrusted to her by Jesus and the Apostles, i.e., His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. Thus, she becomes a holy ornament, a cultic decoration, a religious legitimizor of the Roman Empire much like her pagan predecessors—or worse. It is a soul-chilling fact of Church history that more Christians are killed by the Roman Empire after it becomes Christian than when it was pagan. The Church, by succumbing to the temptation of secularization, begins the process of becoming a religious domination system in support of secular domination systems—liberal and conservative, democratic and dictatorial. These ecclesiastical domination systems, over the centuries, take on a variety of shapes: papal, episcopal, and congregational, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. Indeed much of the division and acrimony among the Churches of Christianity today re-

[T]HE CHURCH—PERHAPS MORE ACCURATELY THE CHURCH'S LEADERS—BARTERED AWAY FOR DOMINATIVE POWER, AND FOR THE RICHES AND SECULAR PRESTIGE THAT ACCOMPANY IT, THE DIVINE TRUTH ENTRUSTED TO HER BY JESUS...

sults from murderous “theological” fights of the past over which domination system is the holy domination system. However, what all Churches ecumenically agreed upon is that they can engage in violence and inflict suffering or death on other human beings to get the job done—whatever the job is—and still be faithful to Jesus.

SEMPER FIDELIS

“*Semper Fidelis*,” “always faithful,” is the motto of the United States Marine Corps. However, fidelity is virtuous and praiseworthy depending on what or to whom one is faithful. Unwavering fidelity to the Führer between 1933 and 1945 is fidelity. Is it virtue? Is it noble? Is it holy? If a voice is to be the voice of a faithful follower of Jesus, it must be a voice that faithfully echoes the voice of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel and His words of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. It makes no difference whether the particular voice of the faithful person speaking is the voice of a pope, a bishop, a priest, a minister, a pastor, a deacon or a lay man or woman, if he or she is not saying something consistent with the teachings of the Nonviolent Jesus, then his or her voice may be faithful to someone but that someone is not the Jesus of the New Testament. “*Semper Fidelis*” is indeed the life to which Jesus calls those He has chosen. But, “*Semper Fidelis*” to Him—everywhere and at all times and in all places. This is not what the Marine Corps means by “*Semper Fidelis*” and it seems clear that this is not what most Christians and most Churches mean by fidelity to Christ. Fidelity can be evil and the voice of fidelity can be the voice of the Evil One.

IF A VOICE IS TO BE THE VOICE OF A FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF JESUS, IT MUST BE A VOICE THAT FAITHFULLY ECHOES THE VOICE OF THE NONVIOLENT JESUS OF THE GOSPEL AND HIS WORDS OF NONVIOLENT LOVE OF FRIENDS AND ENEMIES.

WHICH POWER SAVES?

Ponder this excerpt from *Authority in the Church* by one of the most renowned Biblical scholars of the Twentieth Century, Rev. John L. McKenzie:

The offer of power over the kingdoms of the world is placed third (and presumably in the climactic position) by Matthew (4:8-10), second by Luke (4:5-9). Jesus rejects the offer with a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:13 in which it is commanded that worship be given to Yahweh alone. Certainly the story means that secular power is not to be acquired at the price of the worship of Satan; but do we grasp the import of the story fully if we think that the only thing wrong with the offer of secular power is that it came from Satan? In the New Testament, “the world” in the pejorative sense is the realm of the power and the authority of Satan; the reign of God is opposed to this power, and the struggle between the two reigns is constant and deadly. St. Ignatius Loyola made this the theme of the meditation on Two Standards in the “Spiritual Exercises.” Like most Christian interpreters from early times, St. Ignatius did not question the implicit assertion in the temptation narrative that secular power is Satan’s to

give. The offer is not rejected because Satan is unable to deliver what he promises; it is rejected because secular power is altogether inept for the mission of Jesus, indeed because the use of secular power is hostile to His mission.

Philosophically, “power” is the capacity to make things happen, the capacity to produce change. There are many forms of power available to human beings and to human communities. Knowledge is power, it makes things happen, it produces change; as does love, curiosity, hope or care. Violence, dominative power, also produces change but since it is a form of power rejected by Jesus in word and deed, right up to the moment of His death on the Cross, it cannot produce any change in the Church that is consistent with the Church’s mission. So we must be clear on how dangerous and destructive the secularization of power in the Church is. To the extent that a Christian Community has given in to the temptation of secularization, it is not only to that degree incapable of carrying out the mission of Jesus, it is to that degree incarnating a hostile force that is working against the mission of Jesus under the auspices of the name of Jesus. Secularization in the Church is complete when secular powers, values, beliefs, etc., which are overtly contrary to the teachings of Jesus become so ingrained in the modus operandi of the Church that they are taken for granted to be Jesus’ teachings, even though Jesus’ own words and deeds contradict them. It should go without saying, then, that fidelity to a secularized Church is not the same as fidelity to Christ.

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BROADWAY

“We are the Church.” We have a Head. We have a mission of Christ-centered, non-violent love and service to friends and enemies that is intended to result in eternal salvation for all humanity. We have a choice: to be or not to be what we are. “We as Church” can choose to faithfully continue down the Broadway of secularization where homicidal violence, retaliation, revenge, enmity, retribution, shaming, dominative power, vindictiveness and cruelty exist logically, legally, honorably and piously. But, before “We as Church” go this way let us just stop for a moment and ponder the implications of the words of the Biblical scholar I previously mentioned, the late Rev. John L. McKenzie:

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One can conceive of two dangers to the unity and the integrity of the Church: anarchy and the secularization of power. Of the two, Jesus spoke very little about the danger of anarchy; he spoke frequently and earnestly about the danger of the secularization of power... Jesus left no instructions on how the Church should be governed. I think this is a legitimate conclusion; he left instructions on how the Church is not to be governed, and that is according to the model of secular power. As long as this corrupting influence is excluded, he seemed to have little interest in how the leaders of the Church were to exercise their leadership...

He commissioned the Church to find new forms and structure for an entirely new idea of human association—a community of love. In an organization capable of indefinite expansion in time and space, it is more vital that it have unity of spirit, achieved by the indwelling personal Spirit, than that it have rigid forms incapable of adaptation to cultural changes and the movement of history. The Church could not fulfill this commission unless Jesus also endowed it with the resources to find new forms. He did endow it with these resources in the ideal of loving service [diakonia], a new and revolutionary form of authority which Christians could see in his own personal life and mission. Apart from this, there is the incalculable resource of the Spirit dwelling in the members of the one body of Christ. These resources can be inhibited by the greatest danger pointed out by Jesus: the creeping secularization of authority.

ETERNITY, SANCTITY, CHURCH

We are the Church and we have a choice to make, as well as a temptation to overcome, because a secularized, violence-justifying flock directing the Church is not a dram's worth of improvement on a secularized, violence-justifying shepherd running the Church. Neither can help the individual person nor all humanity reach its essential vocation of eternal participation in the life of God who is love (1 JN 4:8,16) as revealed by the Nonviolent Jesus Christ. So while it should not have to be said to Church leaders, it urgently needs to be said to Church leaders as well as "wannabe" Church leaders, that what cannot foster and support this primal vocation of one and all becoming a saint, has no legitimate place in the Church, which has the Nonviolent Jesus as its Head. Specifically this means that every scintilla of justified violence and enmity must be exorcised from the Church, because violence and enmity are hostile to the Holy Spirit of Christic sanctity and are therefore enemies of eternal salvation.

EVERY SCINTILLA OF JUSTIFIED VIOLENCE AND ENMITY MUST BE EXORCISED FROM THE CHURCH, BECAUSE VIOLENCE AND ENMITY ARE HOSTILE TO CHRISTIC SANCTITY AND ARE THEREFORE ENEMIES OF ETERNAL SALVATION.

To See God Face to Face

Recently I was driving to the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Rome. As I turned onto what I believed to be Viale SS. Pietro e Paolo, I glanced up at the street sign and it read, “Gandhi!” I looked back to the road, then looked up at the street sign again. This time it read, “Viale SS. Pietro e Paolo!”

After spending time at the Basilica, I walked to the beginning of Viale SS. Pietro e Paolo and there it was! Two street signs were on the same pole at slightly different angles: one informing its readers they were about to enter Viale SS. Pietro e Paolo, the other telling readers they were about to enter Piazza Gandhi. It turned out that Viale SS. Pietro e Paolo crossed and overlapped Piazza Gandhi. All of this brought a sense of relief, knowing that I was not hallucinating a Gandhi street sign in Rome! Upon reflection a thought came to consciousness that I had never before analyzed. I realized how symbolically appropriate it was that these two signs be together, that these two places be intersecting, that these three people be perceived in one glance.

St. Peter and St. Paul are the major figures in the first generation of Christianity. St. Peter is indisputably the leader of the Apostles and the earliest Church. St. Paul is the Apostle of the Gentiles. Both are called personally by Christ to their respective missions. Both, after arduous spiritual labor, die as martyrs in Rome and enter into an eternal union with God.

Mohandas Gandhi is born of Hindu parents on October 2, 1869 in India, where he spends most of his life. He is ordinarily called “Mahatma” (Great Soul) in the East and West. Like St. Peter he is married. For spiritual reasons, during the second half of his life, he lives under a voluntary vow of celibacy like St. Paul. Gandhi is never baptized and is never a member of any Christian Church. He remains a Hindu all his life. On January 30, 1948 he is assassinated by N.V. Godse, a conservative Hindu fanatic, who believes Gandhi is corrupting Hinduism.

Do these lives genuinely intersect as Piazza Gandhi and Viale SS. Pietro e Paolo do or do they only touch tangentially? Is there a reality in these three human existences that could honestly be considered a vital common denominator?

ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL

Peter and Paul are obviously united. In their personalities, tastes, levels of literacy and occupations they have little in common. But, the Spirit that abides in one is the Spirit that abides in the other and that Spirit is the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ. Because of this Spirit, Peter and Paul are closer to each other than each is to his own breath. So in determining whether the crossing and overlapping of the Street and the Piazza is a valid spiritual symbol, the issue is whether Mahatma Gandhi is authentically united with St. Peter and with St. Paul by the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Gandhi was better versed than most people in the Bible and in the history of Christianity. His first conceptual contact with the Christian Scriptures took place in 1889 when he met a Christian in a vegetarian boarding house in England while studying to be a lawyer. This man gave him a Bible and extracted from him a promise that he would read it. Gandhi in his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, recollected that he “plodded through” the Old Testament, “but the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart.” “The gentle figure of Christ,” he later recounted, “so patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught his followers not to retaliate when abused or struck, but to turn the other cheek—it was a beautiful example of the perfect man.”

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WITHIN YOU

He finished his study of law in England and proceeded to South Africa in 1893 where he established a lucrative practice. During these years he often had discussions with Christians of various ilks. Some impressed him; some depressed him; all wished to convert him. In 1894 he received from a Mr. Coates, a Quaker, Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. It “overwhelmed me,” he reported. “It left an abiding impression on me. Before the independent thinking, profound morality and the truthfulness of this book, all the books given me by Mr. Coates seemed to pale into insignificance.” *The Kingdom of God is Within You* was Tolstoy’s magnum opus on the nonviolent Jesus and His Sermon on the Mount. It was a profound turning point in Gandhi’s life which he publicly acknowledged for the rest of his

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days. As Raghavan Iyer wrote in his classic, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*:

His early hesitations about nonviolence were overcome by reading Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God Is Within You" and he became a firm believer in ahimsa (nonviolence).

"It was the New Testament which really awakened me to the rightness and value of passive resistance," explained Gandhi.

When I read in the Sermon on the Mount such passages as 'Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,' and 'Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father in Heaven,' I was simply overjoyed and found my own opinion confirmed where I least expected it. The Bhagavad Gita deepened the impression, and Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is Within You" gave it permanent form.

A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

In 1915 Mahatma Gandhi returned to India. Over the next thirty-three years he, like St. Peter and St. Paul, tried to live and teach the way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as proclaimed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, he even went so far as to declare, "If I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say: 'Oh yes, I am a Christian! But I know that at the present moment if I said any such thing I would lay myself open to the gravest misinterpretation.'" Yet, despite his concerns about how people, e.g., politicians, journalists, professional religionists, might misuse his reverence for and unity with Christ, he continued to publicly declare the depths of his relationship with Jesus. After a 1931 trip to Rome he wrote:

[GANDHI REMARKED], "IF I HAD TO FACE ONLY THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND MY OWN INTERPRETATION OF IT, I SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO SAY: 'OH YES, I AM A CHRISTIAN!'"

There is nowhere, in the little world I have seen, anything to compare with the wonderful frescoes in the Sistine Chapel or the marvelous sculpture in the Vatican. Apart from the incomparable Michelangelo's paintings in the Chapel, there is a statue of Jesus on the Cross which is capable of moving the stoniest heart....[W]hat would not I have given to be able to bow my head before the living image at the Vatican of Christ Crucified....The image of Jesus Christ which I saw in the Vatican at Rome is before my eyes at all times....Living Christ means a living Cross, without it life is a living death.

Certainly we have arrived at a juncture where the lives of SS. Pietro e Paolo and Gandhi intersect. The precise place where they unite is the Cross of Nonviolent Love at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, which is incarnated on Golgotha.

How profoundly Gandhi experiences his union with Jesus can be seen when he proclaims, “Jesus is nonviolence par excellence.” Remember, nonviolence is the defining word, symbol and reality of Gandhi’s life. The Indian word that he employs, which is translated into English as nonviolence, is ahimsa. It is a word, like agapé in the New Testament, which simultaneously describes the nature of God, the essential nature of each human being and the Spirit in which people should always relate to each other and to all of God’s creation. He explains it thusly:

Ahimsa requires deliberate self-suffering, not a deliberate injuring of the supposed wrong-doer...In its positive form, Ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of Ahimsa, I must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would my wrong-doing father or son....Ahimsa is love in the Pauline sense and something more than the love defined by St. Paul, although I know St. Paul’s beautiful definition is good enough for all practical purposes.

Can there be any doubt that the very same Spirit that guides the lives of Saints Peter and Paul until their martyrdom, saturates the life of Mahatma Gandhi until January 30, 1948?

JOHN PAUL II AND GANDHI

On February 1, 1986, Pope John Paul II made the cremation site of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat his first stop in India. He opened his remarks that day by noting that, “It is entirely fitting that this pilgrimage should begin here, at Rajghat, dedicated to the memory of the illustrious Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation and apostle of nonviolence. The figure of Mahatma Gandhi and the meaning of his life’s work have penetrated the consciousness of humanity.” John Paul then went on to note that, “Two days ago marked the thirty-eighth anniversary of his death. He who lived by nonviolence appeared to be defeated by violence. Yet, his teachings and the example of his life live on in the minds and hearts of millions of men and women...[T]he heritage of Mahatma Gandhi speaks to us still. And, today, as a pilgrim of peace, I have come to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi, hero of humanity.” As if this were not enough, as if he wanted to insure that his words would be as unambiguous as humanly possible, the Successor of St. Peter declared that, “From this place which is forever bound to the memory of this extraordinary man, I wish to express to the people of India and of the world my profound conviction that the peace and justice of which contemporary society has such great need will only be achieved along the path which was the core of his teaching.”

[POPE JOHN PAUL II] DECLARED THAT, “FROM THIS PLACE WHICH IS FOREVER BOUND TO THE MEMORY OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY MAN, I WISH TO EXPRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF INDIA AND OF THE WORLD MY PROFOUND CONVICTION THAT THE PEACE AND JUSTICE OF WHICH CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY HAS SUCH GREAT NEED WILL ONLY BE ACHIEVED ALONG THE PATH WHICH WAS THE CORE OF HIS TEACHING.”

It would be hard to overestimate the enormity of the spiritual and religious implications of what the Vicar of Christ said that day. Recognizing that this is the Pope speaking before the world's media about a universally known spiritual leader whose entire personal and public identity is grounded in nonviolent love as God's will and who says that Jesus is the ultimate manifestation of this nonviolent love should shock Christians in general and Catholics in particular into pondering why the Vicar of Peter should publicly so endorse and so identify with this man. The New York Times and most other newspapers around the globe reported the next day that the official Vatican spokesman, Joaquin Navarro Valls said that John Paul's praise for Gandhi was extraordinary: "I haven't heard the Pope saying such things in relation to anyone, living or dead."

REALPOLITIK AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

There are in the Church the people of realpolitik. They are the ones who, with an indulgent smile toward those they consider naïve, say "The Church will live by the Sermon on the Mount the day after the United States elects a President with the Sermon on the Mount as his platform." Perhaps they are right. In mainline and Evangelical Churches in order to be baptized or to receive communion worthily or to be ordained deacon, minister, pastor, priest or bishop, a person is not required to try to live according to the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, despite all the stellar talents that exist within the College of Cardinals in the Catholic Church, it can be fairly asked, "Where is the 'Gandhi' among them? Where is the one who is known for a lifetime of teaching that the Jesus, who Christians are to follow, is 'nonviolence par excellence'? Where is the one of whom it is said, 'The Sermon on the Mount is the Magna Carta of his life?'" The same questions could be asked about most Church leaders of most Churches for most of Christian history. In fact today and for many centuries past no one looks at the Church, whether it be the Church of Rome, the Church of Constantinople or the Church of Canterbury, and exclaims, "There is the communal incarnation of the Sermon on the Mount.

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There the Sermon on the Mount is taken seriously." It is as if Church leadership and membership have simply decided to veil the Sermon by praising it sumptuously in word while religiously ignoring it in deed. It is as if innumerable Christian worlds have been erected without any reference to it and now these worlds, out of fear of undermining their status, *modus operandi* or credibility, must abandon the Sermon operationally by claiming it to be utopian and unrealistic, a mere non-binding counsel of perfection for a spiritual elite who do not have to deal with the "real" world.

THE MASTER QUESTION

So, perhaps the believers in ecclesial realpolitik are accurate in their assessment. Gandhi thinks so when he notes that, "Much of what passes as Christianity is a

negation of the Sermon on the Mount.” But, if they are correct, one of the questions that must be asked is whether Church structures, which do not permit leadership to live according to the Sermon on the Mount, should be structures in the Church? Or alternatively, if Church structures do permit leadership ministries to abide by Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, then should not people be selected to work in these structures who possess the spiritual acumen and creativity to so operate? There is a moment in his life when Mahatma Gandhi asks an Anglican bishop why he does not teach his people about the nonviolent Jesus and His nonviolent Way. The bishop responds that, “The people are not ready for it.” Gandhi then asks, “Are you sure it is *the people* who are not ready?” The master question to be posed to those who wish the Church to operate on secular assumptions about reality and power, on non-Sermon on the Mount and non-Calvary understandings of existence is this: What is it, that the institutional Church needs to do in order to fully accomplish the mission assigned to Her by Christ, that cannot be done by fidelity to Jesus’ teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount and in the “Sermon” from Golgotha?

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THE MEDIUM AND THE MESSAGE

It has long been accepted by those who study the communication of values that, “the medium is the message.” Dissonance between content and the means of communicating it subverts content. For an anti-pornography association to raise money by selling pornography not only invalidates its anti-pornography message but also affirms a pro-pornography position. Without a great deal of dissimulation, rationalization, cunning, logical razzle-dazzle and propaganda recruiting and retaining members for such an organization from among anti-pornography advocates would be impossible.

The structures, the means and the media through which a content is made accessible must communicate the truth of that content as clearly as the rhetoric. If they do not, then the structures, means and media become a self-evident denial of the very truth they are meant to convey. Said starkly, the Sermon on the Mount cannot be taught nor can Jesus be proclaimed effectively by structures, means and methods of operation that are deprecatory, dismissive or hostile to His Sermon on the Mount. Would Christianity

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even exist at this hour if the Medium of Golgotha did not match the Message on the Mount? Is Jesus or the Jesus-event even conceivable unless the Medium is the Message? Consistency between medium and message is an undeniable and irrevocable dimension of the Divine Plan made visible by Jesus' words and deeds. For Church leadership then, the establishment and maintenance of a consistency between the ends for which the Church exists and the means chosen to achieve these ends is a paramount pastoral and moral obligation because of the immensity of what is at stake: fidelity to Jesus and eternal salvation.

THE COROLLARY

The solemn corollary of the previously posed "master question" is this: "What is it that can be done by fidelity to Jesus' teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount and in the "Sermon" from Golgotha?" Are there unimaginable miracles lying dormant in these Sermons? Is there, within fidelity to these Sermons, a hidden power that can conquer evil, destroy death, illuminate a wisdom more fundamental than human conjecture, banish all that makes the universe ceaselessly groan for redemption? Do these sermons contain the mustard seed of power that can empty tombs and make dry bones come to life?

ARE THERE UNIMAGINABLE
MIRACLES LYING DORMANT IN
THESE SERMONS?

There is an axial self-disclosure in the opening of Gandhi's autobiography that is pertinent here. Strangely, or maybe not so strangely, it is seldom referred to, even by those who are familiar with his life and writings. The passage exposes the overriding desire that directs Gandhi's life, indeed, it is the pivotal text for making sense of his life:

What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do in way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end.

It adds infinite gravity to Gandhi's decision to unconditionally walk in the way of the nonviolent Jesus and His Sermon on the Mount once it is recognized that he primarily chose this path not because it would liberate India from the British, not because it was easy or hard, not because it was culturally or religiously acceptable, but simply because he saw it to be *the way* to eternal union with God.

OPUS DEI

Gandhi's choice is in accord with the teaching of Jesus, who reveals an intimate connection between the Sermon on the Mount and salvation when, at the conclusion of the Sermon, He states, "It is not those who say, 'Lord, Lord' who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven but those who do the will of my Father in heaven" (MT 7:21). It is the will of the Father that Jesus is making known in His Sermon on the

mount. It is the Father's will that he is living on Golgotha. For those who have "minds to understand," Jesus is declaring that the work of God, *opus Dei*, cannot be accomplished by adopting and "baptizing" the mentalities and mechanizations of the world of realpolitik. To the contrary, He is explicitly announcing that the Sermon on the Mount, which is "made flesh" on Golgotha, is the *opus Dei* unto eternal salvation. SS. Pietro e Paolo and Mahatma Gandhi concur. Their crossing and overlapping lives serve, now and forever, as resplendent and corroborating signs. These signs point to the Way of Jesus as the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven, as the Way to accomplish all that needs to be accomplished to conquer evil, to empty tombs and to see God in an eternal face to face.

[JESUS] IS EXPLICITLY
ANNOUNCING THAT THE SERMON
ON THE MOUNT IS THE *OPUS DEI*
UNTO ETERNAL SALVATION.

The Wisdom of God: Nonviolent Love

*At the journey's end may each be able
to return to the Source in peace and say:
"I was not disobedient
unto the heavenly vision."*

ACTS 26:19

An enemy of a nation is not an enemy of God. The enemy of any person or group is a daughter or son of God who is to be loved as God loves her or him, that is, as Christ loves her or him. Jesus Christ is God incarnate. Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. Jesus Christ is therefore not a mere “dimension” of Christian life—Jesus Christ is the whole of Christian life. If Jesus is not all things to the Christian, He is nothing. It is His very nature as God to be all, and as human to be the pathway to all. Jesus Christ is therefore ultimately normative for a Christian sense of right and wrong, good and evil. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

Now Jesus explicitly teaches His followers to “observe all that I have commanded you” (MT 28:20). Two things He clearly commands are to “Love one another as I have loved you” (JN 13:34, 15:12), and to “Love your enemies” (MT 5:44; LK 6:27-35). The sentence, “Love your enemies” is always found in the imperative and in the plural in the Gospels. It knows no exceptions. Love of enemies, with Jesus as the model, is, however, the inverse of secular morality—sophisticated or unsophisticated. Yet, it can be said with the greatest certainty available to scripture scholarship, that this sentence goes back to Jesus himself. It can also be said with the greatest certainty available to historical scholarship, that this sentence is the most quoted saying of Jesus during the first two centuries of Christianity. It is, therefore, self-evident that the love which is incarnated in Jesus Christ, and which Christians are called to participate in and imitate is a nonviolent love towards all—even enemies.

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If Jesus Christ is the definitive norm for Christian conduct—and if He is not, it is difficult to imagine who or what would have better claim to being the ultimate standard for Christian life—then there are ethical absolutes in the life of Christian discipleship. For example, there is no Christ-like way of engaging in rape; nor is there a Christ-like way to execute mass slaughter, i.e., war. These are activities in which the Christian cannot participate because these activities are evil, contrary to the Will of God as revealed by Jesus Christ, the Word of God. It is as simple as this: it is not the Christian's task to do that which there is no Christ-like way of doing. The only goals that a Christian may pursue are goals that are achievable by Christ-like means. Of course, our faith teaches that there are no worthwhile goals to achieve that are not attainable by Christ-like means.

THE ISSUE: UNEQUIVOCAL REJECTION OF HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE

I would like to insist with the urgency with which a mother warns her child that he or she is about to step on a landmine, that THE issue for the Church today is not war or pedophilia or even the disunity among the Churches. The issue for the Church today is the total and unequivocal rejection in theory and in practice of all homicidal violence and enmity. There is nothing in the life or teaching of Jesus that would suggest that while it is illegitimate to incinerate people by a nuclear warhead, it is legitimate to incinerate people by an electric chair. Let's get it straight. Homicidal violence is the issue for the Christian, not simply the form of it called war. An anti-war morality is a necessary dimension of Christian conscience but, it is not a sufficient Christian conscience. Much more is needed in order to "put on the mind of Christ." The danger is real that in condemning war or nuclear war exclusively, a Christian can thereby give implied moral approval to other forms of homicidal violence.

AN ANTI-WAR MORALITY IS A NECESSARY DIMENSION OF CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE BUT, IT IS NOT A SUFFICIENT CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE. MUCH MORE IS NEEDED IN ORDER TO "PUT ON THE MIND OF CHRIST."

The morality of the balance of terror on a large or small scale is a morality that Christ never taught. The ethical justification for human butchery cannot be found in the teaching of Jesus. In just homicide ethics, Jesus Christ, Who is supposed to be all in the Christian life, is nothing. He might as well never have existed. In just homicide ethics, no appeal is made to Him or His teaching, because no appeal can be made to Him or His teaching, for neither He nor His teaching envision His followers engaged in human bloodshed. Therefore, neither He nor His teaching gives any standards for Christians to follow in order to determine what level of homicidal violence is acceptable, or how many rocks may be stored up in preparation for savaging an enemy.

IN JUST HOMICIDE ETHICS, JESUS CHRIST, WHO IS SUPPOSED TO BE ALL IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, IS NOTHING. HE MIGHT AS WELL NEVER HAVE EXISTED.

Parenthetically it probably should be stated at this juncture that this author offers no apology for his ugly rhetorical presentation of homicide, since any rhetoric about homicidal violence can never match the reality. In fact, one of the great impediments to seeing the necessity and the truth of the nonviolent teaching of Jesus is that people, including scholars, clergy persons and politicians, lack the perceptual courage to “see” the realities of homicidal violence. If one thinks that Heroin is more or less the equivalent of Coca-Cola, one is going to be able to devise a Christian ethic that justifies merchandising Heroin to children. The history of Christian justifications of homicidal violence and enmity is a parade of euphemisms where human blood-letting is called “force,” setting people on fire is referred to as “protective reaction,” poisoning people strapped down on a metal table is called “the law,” etc. The refusal to describe the humanly repulsive as humanly repulsive is a requirement that must be met in order to make violence morally, spiritually and politically palatable and thus justifiable. The Christian should consider what role the Father of Lies plays when violence is justified while using only mildly disagreeable terminology.

Let’s be forthright. The world is watching. Ethical hair-splitting over the morality of the various types of instruments and structures of homicide is not what the world needs from the Church—although it is what the world has come to expect from the followers of Christ. What the world needs is a grouping of Christians that will “stand up and pay up” as Jesus Christ “stood up and paid up.” What the world needs are Christians who, in language that the simplest soul can understand, proclaim: “The follower of Christ cannot participate in homicidal violence and enmity. He or she must love as Christ loved, live as Christ lived, and if necessary, die as Christ died—loving one’s enemy.”

DELUSIONAL FANTASY OR CONSPICUOUS VERACITY

There are those in the Church who would prefer to have Christ’s teaching on nonviolent love appear naïve and ridiculous to the mind of the average Christian. For reasons and from motivations that are beyond the scope of this reflection to investigate, they teach and act as if Gospel nonviolence is a theologically unsophisticated, rationally absurd, pragmatically impossible and spiritually unsubstantial understanding of Jesus Christ and His teachings. For the most part, Christians with this view dominate most of the Churches of Christianity and occupy their organizational leadership positions. Authentic Christic nonviolence is therefore seldom communicated or made available to the

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Christian community at large. When an occasional reflection on Jesus’ nonviolent love does occur within a Christian church or school or seminary, it is usually so shal-

low and vapid as to assure that no one, including Christ Himself, could take such a position seriously.

A NEW ETHIC OF SECURITY AND PEACE

Yet, in apostolic Christianity the Church saw Christ and His teachings as nonviolent. It must be remembered that the Church taught this ethic in the face of at least three serious attempts by the state to liquidate Her. It was a Church that was subject to on-going torture and death that taught unequivocally an ethic of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. If ever there was an occasion for a Christian ethic of justified retaliation and defensive homicide, whether in the form of a just war ethic or a just violent revolution ethic, this was it. The economic and political elite of the Roman state and their military backup had turned the citizens of the state against Christians and were embarked on a murderous public policy of extermination of the Christian community. Yet the Church, in the face of heinous crimes committed against Her members, insisted without reservation that when Christ disarmed Peter, He disarmed all Christians. Christians continued to believe that Christ was, to use the words from the *Kiss of Peace* of an ancient liturgy, their “fortress, refuge, and strength,” and that if Christ was all they needed for security and defense, then Christ was all they should have. Indeed, this represented an entirely new security ethic. Christians understood that if they would only follow Christ and His teachings, the possibility of failure was nonexistent. When opportunities were given for Christians to appease the state by joining the fighting Roman army, the opportunities were rejected because the apostolic Church saw a complete and obvious incompatibility between loving as Christ loves, loving one’s enemies and killing people. Christ, not Caesar, was the Lord of the apostolic Christian Community. Therefore, it was Christ, not Caesar, who determined how a Christian used her or his time, mind, money and life. It was Christ, not Caesar, who gave security and peace.

WHEN OPPORTUNITIES WERE GIVEN FOR CHRISTIANS TO APPEASE THE STATE BY JOINING THE FIGHTING ROMAN ARMY, THE OPPORTUNITIES WERE REJECTED BECAUSE THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH SAW A COMPLETE AND OBVIOUS INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN LOVING AS CHRIST LOVES AND KILLING PEOPLE.

During the 300 years following Christ’s resurrection, the Church continues to grow, indeed She flourishes. She survives without recourse to war and violence. She survives because the living Christ had guaranteed Her survival. The only ones who perceive Christ’s teachings of nonviolent love to be theologically unsophisticated, rationally absurd, pragmatically impossible and spiritually unsubstantial are either those who worship some violent god in some form of monotheism or polytheism, or those who do not believe that Christ is the Way and the Truth unto Eternal Life.

THE CHURCH CONTINUES TO GROW, INDEED SHE FLOURISHES. SHE SURVIVES WITHOUT RECOURSE TO WAR AND VIOLENCE.

MARTYRDOM—ULTIMATE ACT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

No one in the early, nonviolent Church ever taught that Christians were to ignore evil and let it run rampant. As part of Her very identity, the Church knew that She must live in a life and death struggle against evil. Jesus' entire life was engaged in this battle. Therefore the Christian, in imitation of Christ, was to fight vigorously against evil. But, she or he, again in imitation of Christ, was to overcome evil with good, and, if necessary, give her or his life, as Christ did, in this fight. But "give" her or his life did not mean "take" another's life, except in that world of political and theological double-speak where "servant" meant "ruler" and love was compatible with hatred. In other words, for the early Church, martyrdom was a taken-for-granted spiritual and social activity.

To "lay down one's life"—not kill another—in responding to evil with good is seen at this time as an act of social responsibility. It is recognized that one of the most effective ways to be positively socially involved is to refuse to collaborate with social evil, e.g., war. It is self-evident to these early Christians that it is not enough for a disciple of Christ to merely say that she or he is opposed to evil. Readiness to suffer what must be suffered in order to love as Christ loved is understood as a condition without which there could be no Christian life. Serious social responsibility requires more than saying "I am against merchandising Heroin to children," or "I am against war." Oral opposition by itself to evil is low voltage social responsibility and discipleship. The early Church understands that genuine social responsibility means refusing to participate in the evil being condemned by word. This early Christian spirituality of social responsibility, a spirituality of speaking up clearly and paying up personally, is light years away from an ethic of social responsibility that justifies speaking out ambiguously about evil and then participating in it until all others agree not to participate in it.

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The Spiritual Fathers and Mothers of the first three centuries of Christianity know that Jesus, their Lord, God and Savior, authorized none of His disciples to choose violence instead of love—and so they speak and act accordingly as socially responsible Christians. Also, as socially responsible Christians they know, that since there is only one Lord and God and since there is only one reality, that what is in conformity with the Will of God as revealed by Jesus, i.e., what is morally right, cannot ultimately be pragmatically wrong for one and for all.

GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE—THE WILL OF GOD

Gospel nonviolence then cannot be intelligently presented as nonsensical by condescending reference to it as idealism or utopianism. It is neither. Gospel nonvio-

lence is the Will of God as revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ—or else it is gross imprudence bordering on grave culpable negligence. Utopias are human fantasies to which no serious person can give allegiance. The teaching of Jesus is a Divine Mandate to which all Christians commit their total allegiance. When God speaks, unconditional obedience is the only response, for God’s Word is Truth, Reality and Power—the only Truth, Reality and Power that has eternal significance and that can effectively conquer evil and save each and every one. To obey God’s Will is to be a realist and a pragmatist and a prudent person. To refuse to obey God’s Word and Will, once it is known, is what is truly nonsensical, is what is imprudent in the extreme. The individual human being and all humanity are brought out of the silence of nothingness by God, and are kept out of the abyss of nothingness by God and God alone. For the creature to refuse to obey the Creator’s Word is more than irrational. It is madness, chaos, evil. To try to proclaim the Gospel, by continually abandoning the Gospel as naïve, is just dopey Christianity. To publicly adore Christ, while secretly believing His teaching of nonviolent love to be half-baked and quixotic, is preposterous.

GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE IS THE WILL OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST....WHEN GOD SPEAKS, UNCONDITIONAL OBEDIENCE IS THE ONLY RESPONSE, FOR GOD’S WORD IS...THE ONLY TRUTH, REALITY AND POWER...THAT CAN EFFECTIVELY CONQUER EVIL AND SAVE EACH AND EVERY ONE.

ABANDONING MARTYRDOM AND THE CROSS

There are those Christians who say that for all practical purposes, Jesus needs their correction because He does not understand very well the realities of violence and enmity. They appear to be the same Christians who feel that martyrdom as a socially and spiritually responsible activity is only valid if one cannot get his or her hands on the appropriate instruments of human destruction. “If you can kill your enemy, who needs martyrs,” looks to be the operational dynamic of the ethical and spiritual life of that form of Christianity that justifies homicide. However, to the Christians closest in time and space to Jesus, who of course today are rejected as theological bumpkins, to fight homicide with homicide, enmity with enmity, amounts to engagement in and enlargement of the very evil one is trying to eliminate. In other words, it is clear, to these so-called theological lightweights of the first three centuries, that there is no other choice but to spread the Kingdom of God by the methods of the Kingdom of God and that homicidal violence and enmity are not part of that methodology. In light of all

“IF YOU CAN KILL YOUR ENEMY, WHO NEEDS MARTYRS,” LOOKS TO BE THE OPERATIONAL DYNAMIC OF THE ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THAT FORM OF CHRISTIANITY THAT JUSTIFIES HOMICIDE....HAS THE CROSS, WHICH JESUS SAYS HIS FOLLOWERS ARE TO PICK UP DAILY, BEEN DOWN-GRADED IN TODAY’S MAINLINE CHURCHES WHILE THE GUN HAS BEEN UPGRADED?

this, one has to ask whether that which is once called “the seed of Christianity,” martyrdom, has been obsoleted as responsible activity in the mainline Churches? Or put another way, for all practical purposes has the cross, which Jesus says His followers are to pick up daily (MT 10:38, 16:24; MK 8:34; LK 9:23, 14:27), been down-graded in today’s mainline Churches while the gun has been upgraded?

CANON FOR SELF-RUIN—PREPARING TO DESTROY OTHERS

Today, Christians are ruining themselves and others in preparing to take part in the demented butcheries of raging nations tomorrow. Christians are allowing people to die of starvation and curable diseases today, in order to prepare to destroy people tomorrow. Fortunately, today, due to the cleansing effect of the whip of biblical scholarship, few are any longer pontificating on JOHN 2, MARK 12, or ROMANS 13 in order to justify Christian participation in homicidal violence and enmity. As recently as yesterday though, these isolated “proof text” are employed to justify Christian involvement in the extermination of tens of millions. Yet it is obvious to the first three centuries of Christians, who heard and read these “proof text” passages in their original Greek language, that they were never intended and could not legitimately be employed as a justification for Christians engaging in homicide. This should be equally obvious to us today. Jesus commissions no one to proclaim His teaching of nonviolent love “inoperative truth” for the time being. Justification for Christian homicidal violence and enmity cannot be found within the four corners of the New Testament.¹ Postponing today’s works of mercy in order to do today’s works of war, or in order to prepare for tomorrow’s works of war, is a choice that cannot be justified by the life and teaching of Jesus. On the contrary, Jesus tells us that to do this is a choice which results in the severest form of judgment imaginable (MT 25: 31-46; LK 16: 19-31).

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VOICES OF FEAR AND UNBELIEF

What is it that is speaking when logic is strained and argumentation twisted in order to find justifications for homicidal violence and enmity in Christ’s teachings? Are these embarrassingly shifty interpretations the voice of Truth? Or, are they the voices of fear and unbelief? One must wonder aloud if those, who are so willing to abandon the unambiguous in the New Testament in their search for a Christian justification for homicidal violence, would be equally as willing to desert the unambiguous if the Gospels were written opposite to how they, in fact, are written. Suppose, for example, that the Gospels pictured Jesus as armed, urging His followers to kill and to hate their enemies, encouraging retaliation and revenge, ordering Peter to “get the other ear,” and being killed on Golgotha while slitting the throats of Roman soldiers and calling upon God to pour out the wrath of hell upon those

who are destroying Him. If this was the image of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, mediated to us through the New Testament would the pastors and theologians, who now say that Jesus taught a way of justified homicidal violence, then say that Jesus taught a way of nonviolence? Of course not, because both interpretations of the stated facts are equally untenable.²

REASON—A TOOL FOR IMPLEMENTING CHRIST’S TEACHINGS

The place of reason in Christian life is to help the Christian figure out how to implement Christ’s teachings. It is not to be used to modify or to eliminate them. Are the tortuous interpretations of the Gospel that are preached in order to justify homicidal violence and enmity for Christians really the result of Christian faith seeking Christic Wisdom? Or, are they feeble attempts to try to overlook overwhelming evidence that points to unwanted truth? One may recall at this point Mahatma Gandhi’s remark that “The only people who do not see Jesus and His teachings as nonviolent are Christians.” But, of course, Christians are the only people who have to live according to Jesus’ teachings! Let us be honest. The search for a “Gospel with loopholes” is spiritually vacuous. It is not Truth which motivates such a search. It is fear and disbelief that Christ is risen from the dead.

THE SEARCH FOR A “GOSPEL WITH LOOPHOLES” IS SPIRITUALLY VACUOUS. IT IS NOT TRUTH WHICH MOTIVATES SUCH A SEARCH. IT IS FEAR AND DISBELIEF THAT CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

THE UNITY OF CROSS-RESURRECTION AND PERSON-MESSAGE

It is the awareness that Christ is in our midst now and ever shall be, that makes His new commandment to “Love one another as I have loved you” possible, reasonable, practical, sane and sanctifying. Without this Resurrection faith, it would be impossible and irrational to accept as one’s life project a definition of love that is founded on the Nonviolent Jesus’ words and deeds, life and death, cross and resurrection. It is Christ’s resurrection and His abiding presence with us that confirm the truth and power of His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies, as the Way of God that leads to Eternal Life.

The Christian and her or his Community should be about the task of converting people to faith in the Person of the Risen Jesus Christ and His Message. Without this conversion to belief in the Person first, belief in the Way He teaches is unreasonable. It is the Person of Jesus that validates the veracity of His teachings. Without the Resurrection of the Person, faith in His Cross of nonviolent love is inane. But, if Christ is risen, then indeed this Cross of nonviolent love is the Way and the Truth. Cross and Resurrection are one. Person and Message are one. To proclaim one without the other is just so much spiritual mush—regardless of the ecclesiastical rank or the academic credentials of the proclaimer. Indeed, to proclaim Person without Message, Resurrection without Cross, or vice versa, is simply to try to manipulate religious concepts in order to make people believe that one’s own little view of existence is God’s

view of existence. In fact, partial proclamation is more than likely just another way of trying to deny one's sinfulness, fears and/or agnosticism.

Christians have no business insisting that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ must live in the Way which He taught. The Church, it would seem, would have Her hands full and would contribute enormously to the welfare of the world, if She would just see to it that Her own people are faithfully following Christ and His teachings. If She would attend diligently to this task and simultaneously try to bring all others to believe in the Risen Christ and His Way, She would be fulfilling Her destiny. What Christians cannot be about is telling others or forcing others to live the teachings of a Person who they do not believe is the Messiah, the Lord and the Savior of the world. In the end, one senses that the ease with which some Christians distort or ignore Christ's teaching of nonviolent love is more a result of their own distrust of the Person, than it is a result of any unclarity in His teaching. Is the teaching and practice of justified Christian violence a witness to faith in Christ; or is it a witness to an absence of faith in Christ?

IT IS THE PERSON OF JESUS THAT VALIDATES THE VERACITY OF HIS TEACHINGS. WITHOUT THE RESURRECTION OF THE PERSON, FAITH IN HIS CROSS OF NONVIOLENT LOVE IS IN VAIN. ...CROSS AND RESURRECTION ARE ONE. PERSON AND MESSAGE ARE ONE.

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF CHRIST

Most people on earth do not believe in, and do not want to follow Jesus Christ, as He has so far been presented to the world by the Churches. 82% of this planet's population is non-Christian. Only God knows the purpose each person and all people play in the cosmic drama. How Christian and non-Christian destinies interrelate in God's plan is beyond fathoming. But, Christians do have a part to play even if it be only a little part, the size of a mustard seed. Followers of Christ have a role in the universe and in God's plan—a yeast-like role according to Jesus. Others have other roles to play. The task of the Christian cannot be the task of non-Christian. It is not the Christian's lot to judge others, since obviously all are not given the same gifts and options by their Creator and no Christian knows precisely what gifts and options are given to anyone. But neither is it the Christian's task to imitate the non-Christian. The truth is this: the follower of Christ is called upon to play her or his role in conformity with the Teaching, Life and Spirit of Jesus. The Christian is asked to live according to the truth of the revelation that she or he has received from Christ. It is for this that God brought the Christian out of nothingness

FOR THE CHRISTIAN TO BE WHAT HE OR SHE IS CREATED TO BE, HE OR SHE MUST LIVE BY CHRIST'S VISION OF TRUTH. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE BY "PUTTING ON THE MIND" OF CHRIST AND BEING OBEDIENT TO ITS VISION OF THE MEANS REQUIRED TO BUILD A NEW WORLD— INTERIORLY AND EXTERIORLY, FOR EVERYONE AND FOREVER.

and bestowed on her or him the gift of faith in Jesus, the Christ. To give up on the struggle to live according to this Christ-centered revelation is to that degree an abdication by the Christian of her or his role in the history of humanity's struggle against the forces of evil and death. The Christian is not a Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, atheist or agnostic. Why some are Christian and some are not is a mystery. But, for the Christian to be what he or she is created to be, he or she must live by Christ's vision of truth. This can only be done by "putting on the mind" of Christ and being obedient to its vision of the means required to build a new world—interiorly and exteriorly, for everyone and forever.

I would like to respectfully submit that all available evidence indicates that the "mind of Christ" knows that it is a spiritual and ethical absurdity to believe that homicidal violence and enmity can put an end to homicidal violence and enmity, and thereby advance the coming of the Kingdom of God. The evidence indicates that the "mind of Christ" knows that in this fatal pattern of human history, there is not the slightest hope that the various forms of violence will cancel each other out. The "mind of Christ" is acutely aware that evil cannot conquer evil, that the devil will not drive out the devil. The "mind of Christ" is laser-like in its understanding that the means chosen are the ends in embryo. One cannot build a truthful self or a truthful community by lying. One cannot build a nonviolent self or a nonviolent community by doing violence. The "mind of Christ" is fully aware that a person must gather what she or he sows. One cannot get corn if one sows wheat. The "mind of Christ" recognizes that, as sure as night follows day, the person or community that sows the seeds of violence and enmity will reap a harvest of violence and enmity.

[T]HE "MIND OF CHRIST" KNOWS THAT IT IS A SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL DEAD-END TO BELIEVE THAT HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE AND ENMITY CAN PUT AN END TO HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE AND ENMITY...

The "mind of Christ" knows homicidal violence is a dis-grace and that all who prepare for it and participate in it dis-grace themselves, dis-grace humanity and dis-grace creation. For the "mind of Christ" is certain that violence is sacrilege—that the human person is the Temple of the Holy in this world and that therefore every act of violence, legal or illegal, is an act of desecration. Homicidal violence is the maximal anti-sacrament in history. It always proceeds from a mind united with the mind of an anti-Christ.

HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE IS THE MAXIMAL ANTI-SACRAMENT IN HISTORY. IT ALWAYS PROCEEDS FROM A MIND UNITED WITH THE MIND OF AN ANTI-CHRIST.

METANOIA—CHANGE OF MIND

The first word out of Jesus' mouth at the beginning of His public ministry is "Repent" (MT 4:17). The Greek word for "repent" is metanoia, which means "change

of mind.” The Christian is to put off the “old mind” and put on the new “mind of Christ.” The ethical seriousness of this rests on the fact that a person becomes what he or she thinks and desires. If a person thinks lustful thoughts, she or he becomes a lustful person. If a person thinks resentful and jealous thoughts, she or he becomes a resentful and jealous person. If one thinks violent, hostile and hateful thoughts, then one becomes a violent, hostile and hateful person. A person’s moral or immoral life-style is the direct consequence of a person’s moral or immoral mind-style. Thought precedes action in the domain of morality. Patterns of thought precede patterns of action. Therefore, to put on the “mind of Christ” is the condition without which a Christ-like life is impossible. Imitation of Christ is, in the first instance, imitation of the “mind of Christ.”

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The responsible choice that must be made in order to live a Christ-like life is the choice to vanquish the enemy, evil, at the threshold of consciousness. Violence and enmity begin in the mind, and there they must be conquered, or else they will never be conquered. The first battlefield of the Lamb’s War against evil is the human consciousness of the individual. If one does not wish to engage in this invisible warfare of the mind, then one will engage in the visible warfare of the body. The open hand of greeting and the closed fist of violence both begin in the mind. Change of behavior demands change of mind. “Madison Avenue” knows this. States and militaries with their massive propaganda machines know this. Jesus Christ knows this.

A MIND CENTERED ON LOVE

The “mind of Christ” is not primarily a mind centered on the rejection of violence and enmity; it is primarily a mind centered on Love. The center of that Love is the Community of Love that dwells within us, namely, the Trinity. To put on the “mind of Christ” is to live in the conscious presence of the God Who is Love, of God Who is the Father/Mother/Parent, of God Who is Son, of God Who is Holy Spirit. The spirituality that is Christian is a spirituality that leads to an ever-increasing awareness of the total envelopment of the person and of all creation by this Community of Love, the Nonviolent Trinity. A mind and soul participating in this awareness are not a mind and soul filled with thoughts of violence and enmity. It is implausible that someone who is working at “putting on the mind of Christ,” who is trying to be unceasingly attentive to the presence of the all encompassing God Who is Love, would seriously think of trying to justify, let alone participate in homicidal violence. A “Christ-

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ian” just violence ethic is an attempt to justify, as morally permissible, the Christian’s refusal to “put on the mind of Christ.” The mind that flows from the Trinitarian God of nonviolent monotheism is separated by an infinity from the mind that flows from the various gods of violent monotheism or violent polytheism. To identify the latter with the former is for Christians a form of idolatry—a form of idolatry that will continue to spread its chaos and tragedy throughout creation and the Christian Churches until set aside!

PUTTING ON THE “MIND OF CHRIST”...REQUIRES THE HIDDEN MARTYRDOM OF UNCEASING PRAYER TO THE GOD OF NONVIOLENT MONOTHEISM IN ORDER TO STAY CONSCIOUS OF HIS PERPETUAL PRESENCE AND LOVE. THIS IS THE COST OF PEACE ON EARTH.

The choice is between putting on the “mind of Christ” and putting on some other mind. Neutrality is impossible. To put on the “mind of Christ”—to repent—is not easy in a world committed to and nurtured in violent monotheism or violent polytheism. It requires the hidden martyrdom of unceasing prayer to the God of nonviolent monotheism in order to stay conscious of His perpetual presence and love. This is the cost of peace on earth. But, if one does not want to pay the price of peace, then one will pay the price of unpeace.

JUSTIFIED HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE AND ENMITY

The issue for the Church is not exclusively nuclear war. The issue is justified homicidal violence and enmity. For 1600 years the People of God have been torn to pieces by members of Christian Churches because these Churches justified and promoted the abomination called homicide. However, Christian participation in the savageries of human slaughter is an incarnational denial of the Truth of the Gospel and a betrayal of what Jesus taught until His last breath. If Christians fear each other or fear non-Christians, then this is a spiritual and pastoral problem of great magnitude. Where such a spiritual malaise exists, the Church should at once begin to invest all of Her resources to heal it. But, what the Church must not do is justify grotesque misrepresentations of Christ and his teachings in order to allow Her members forms of fear-full behavior that are in contradiction to Christ’s clearest teachings, e.g., the rejection of violence and enmity. Nowhere does Christ say that His followers are relieved from following Him because they

CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE SAVAGERIES OF HUMAN SLAUGHTER IS AN INCARNATIONAL DENIAL OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL AND A BETRAYAL OF WHAT JESUS TAUGHT UNTIL HIS LAST BREATH.....ABANDONMENT TO CHRIST INCLUDES ABANDONMENT TO THE MEANS OF CHRIST.

fear the consequences of doing so. Fidelity to Christ includes fidelity to the means of Christ during times of crisis, as well as, during times of ordinary affairs. Abandonment to Christ includes abandonment to the means of Christ. Jesus calls no one to be a part-time disciple. Baptism, which in Greek means “total immersion” is a 24/7/365 commitment. The Way of Christ is the Way of the cross and the Way of

the cross is the Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies moment to moment to moment—with no “time-outs.”

After all, Jesus is the Lamb of God. He is not the lion of God, the snake of God or the wolf of God. A lamb is an unassailable symbol of nonviolence, among other things. A symbol to be valid must match the reality it symbolizes, which is why pyramids are symbols of Egypt and shamrocks are symbols of Ireland and not vice versa. Jesus is not a lion, snake or wolf in lamb’s attire. Jesus is the Nonviolent Lamb of God in symbol and in actuality.

It should perhaps also be noted here, toward the conclusion of this reflection on the Wisdom of God made manifest in nonviolent love, that the Nonviolent Lamb of God is the primary and central symbol and reality in the primary and central prayer of the Church—the Eucharist. In this unsurpassable prayer the Nonviolent Lamb of God is explicitly the One who offers and is offered, is explicitly the One who is broken, distributed and consumed. The living Community of the Nonviolent Lamb of God is enlightened and empowered by its Eucharistic encounter with the living Nonviolent Lamb of God. St. Augustine commenting on the worthy reception of Communion states: “If you receive well, you are what you receive... [therefore] be what you see and receive what you are.” Who and what specifically are Christians receiving in the Eucharist? Since at least the Seventh Century in the Western Church, the invitation to Communion has been with the words “Ecce Agnus Dei,” ““behold the Lamb of God’ who takes away the sins of the world, happy are those who are called to the banquet of the Lamb” (“ad cenam Agni”). In the East the designation of the sanctified bread as the Lamb goes back at least this far. So it is the Nonviolent Lamb of God that the Christian is seeing, adoring and consuming, and therefore it is the Nonviolent Lamb of God that he or she should desire wholeheartedly to be, to become and to imitate. Reception in Communion of the Nonviolent Lamb of God is the grace, the Gift, that makes the living of a Lamb-like human life possible in a world where lions, snakes and wolves are driven into the human mind before a child ever knows what is happening to him or her. However, the Eucharistic Nonviolent Lamb of God and the Eucharistic Community of the Nonviolent Lamb of God has within it “the power and the wisdom of God” (1 COR 1:24) to drive these sub-human, unpeaceful, bestial spirits out of the preeminent temple of God on earth—the human person.

THE NONVIOLENT LAMB OF GOD IS THE PRIMARY AND CENTRAL SYMBOL AND REALITY IN THE PRIMARY AND CENTRAL PRAYER OF THE CHURCH—THE EUCHARIST....THE EUCHARISTIC NONVIOLENT LAMB OF GOD AND THE EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY OF THE NONVIOLENT LAMB OF GOD HAS WITHIN IT “THE POWER AND THE WISDOM OF GOD” TO DRIVE THESE SUB-HUMAN, UNPEACEFUL, BESTIAL SPIRITS OUT OF THE PREEMINENT TEMPLE OF GOD ON EARTH—THE HUMAN PERSON.

A PEOPLE OF PEACE

We are called by the Prince of Peace to be a People of Peace. Will there be falls along the way? “Yes!” Repentance? “Yes!” Days off? “No!” We are to be peace-full witnesses to the Good News of the Resurrection by being happy to pray ceaselessly, to love Christically, and to disappear willingly from time. No more is expected of us. No more is needed from us. But in our freedom, we must choose: unceasing prayer or unceasing violence, the “mind of Christ” or the mind of an anti-Christ, the cross or the sword, the Lamb of God or the Imperial Lion, the Kingdom of God or a kingdom of this world, love as defined by Christ or love as defined by someone else, nonviolent monotheism or violent monotheism. We must choose.

WE ARE TO BE PEACE-FULL WITNESSES TO THE GOOD NEWS OF THE RESURRECTION BY BEING HAPPY TO PRAY CEASELESSLY, TO LOVE CHRISTICALLY, AND TO DISAPPEAR WILLINGLY FROM TIME. NO MORE IS EXPECTED OF US. NO MORE IS NEEDED FROM US.

Are there two Gospels: the Gospel of nonviolent love and the Gospel of homicidal violence and enmity? Or is there only one? Let us be obedient “unto the heavenly vision.” The rest is not our business. Let us choose the Truth of Christ, fear not, and smile. God was with us in the beginning, and God is with us in love now, and always, and forever and ever.

NOTES

1. Contrary to some Renaissance art and modern motion pictures, Jesus in the New Testament never strikes a human being nor does he ever kill a person or recommend such a course of action. The cord or whip, found only in the “Cleansing of the Temple” narrative in John, is a Messianic symbol of authority (MT 3:12; LK 3:17) employed exclusively on the livestock in order to move them out of the Temple. The fact that the moneychangers and owners of the livestock leave the Temple with the animals should speak for itself. Once the reason for their being in the Temple—to make money—is removed, their hearts know no reason to do anything other than follow their treasure and depart the premises. The Temple passage is a prophetic-symbolic condemnation of the almost universal evil of the commercialization of God by the few to the spiritual detriment of the many, and not a justification for homicidal violence.

The bankruptcy of the attempts to stand the Temple story on its head and make it a “proof text” to justify homicide and its consequent divisiveness is more than merely an intellectual, historical and spiritual embarrassment. When one considers what Jesus in full Messianic authority is trying to announce, i.e., the oneness of all humanity before God (“Does not scripture say, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all people’? But you have made it into a robbers’ den.”) embarrassment turns to fear and trembling and nausea. For the sickening reality is that the very passage whose intention it is to declare the unity of humanity before God and in God has been manipulated to promote the division of people from people and hence the separation of people from God.

Parenthetically, one can only wonder if the great anti-evangelical scandal of the Church, as a house divided against itself, could exist as it does, if Constantinian Christianity had accepted the Temple presentation for what it is—a prophetic sign, rooted in Jesus’ Messianic authority, warning against commercialized religion and a clear statement on the essential unity of the

People of God—instead of as a sham “proof text” for homicidal violence. And one further wonders whether Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches will ever be able to achieve anything but the most shallow forms of ecumenical unity until they collectively take the “Cleansing of the Temple” seriously by asking themselves of what was it cleansed, and why.

In the end the fact that the history of Christian homicidal violence has been forced to depend for justification on a narrative which has nothing to do with justifying such activity should alert the simple and the sophisticated to the impossibility of locating anything other than a nonviolent Jesus in the New Testament. The “Cleansing of the Temple” referred to by scholars as the “Overturning of the Tables” is no more supportive of Christian participation in homicidal violence than the “healing of the armed servant’s ear in Gethsemane” is supportive of Christian participation in the armed services.

Do as you will, but be aware that the justification of homicidal violence through the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus is a desperate grasping at spiritual straws while ignoring the overwhelming reality of Jesus as The Baptized Suffering Servant, The Proclaimer of the Sermon on the Mount, The Nonviolent Lover of Gethsemane and Golgotha, and the Nonviolent Lamb of God who is “led to slaughter” (Is 53:7) who now is the the Lord of lords, King of kings (RV 17:13-14) and “who reigns forever and ever” along with those whose names are written in “the Lamb’s book of life” (RV 21:22; 22:5).

2. If Jesus had said, “Put away your artificial birth control devices, for the person who lives by artificial birth control will perish by artificial birth control” would Catholic officials today interpret this with the same pretzel-like moral methodology that they presently employ to interpret what Jesus actually said: “Put up your sword, for the person who lives by the sword will perish by the sword” (MT 26:52)?

Does the fact that Jesus said nothing on a subject make it more of a moral imperative than if Jesus explicitly and imperatively spoke on the subject? Would an imperative anti-artificial birth control statement by Jesus, like the one above, really be considered only a non-binding “counsel of perfection” by Catholic popes and bishops today?

Of course ecumenical fairness requires that it be clarified that all the Churches of Christianity have and have had their “artificial birth control issues,” which could be appropriately placed in the above paraphrased quotation of Jesus with exactly the same self-evident result: making palpably conspicuous the disingenuousness of the various Churches’ justification of homicidal violence and enmity, as well as, their abandonment of Jesus’ teaching of nonviolent love.

The Nonviolent Spirituality of St. Maximus the Confessor

St. Maximus the Confessor is born in 580 A.D. in Constantinople. He lives for 82 years. Between his birth and death lies a physical life of which relatively little is known. As with many who gain renown after their deaths, the life of St. Maximus, as it is popularly known, is permeated with pious legend. Therefore, we must be content with knowing only a few of the larger and fewer of the smaller events of his time on earth. Yet this is sufficient, for the information we have confirms that this man, who is known as the “Father of Byzantine Theology,” is no mere academic speculator. What we have left of his life verifies what we have left of his writings. He speaks primarily about a reality that is alive in him. Thus we can enter into his teachings knowing that what we are reading is not the work of a compulsive theological wordsmith, but rather is the innermost thought of a person who in the end chose to die, not kill, for the truth he has, rather than purchase an extension of earthly life by living in untruth.

A LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE

St. Maximus is born into an upper class family. His formal education is of the highest quality. When it is completed, he takes employment at the imperial court. In the year 610 Emperor Heraclitus names him his First Secretary. However, in 614 he resigns from this prestigious position and enters the monastery at Chrysopolis.

By 618 he has at least one disciple, a monk named Anatasius who is to stay with him until they are both martyred more than forty years later. In 625 he leaves his first monastery and goes to the Monastery of St. George at Cyzicus. It is from this monastery that his earliest writings come. In 632 he moves to the Monastery of Euchratas in Carthage. The abbot of this monastery is Sophronius, a significant figure because he is one of the first to recognize the problems involved with monothelism,¹ the aberration of the Gospel that would eventually be responsible for taking Maximus’ life. It is during this stay in Africa that Maximus completes two of his major works—*Questions to Thatassius* and *Ambigua*.

Maximus appears to have stayed in Africa until 646 at which time he travels to Rome to continue his efforts for dyothelitism.² Pope Martin I calls a Lateran Coun-

cil in 649 in order to confront monothelitism. This Council at which Maximus is present as a monk, rejects monothelitism. When the Emperor Constans, himself a monothelitist, hears this, he arrests the Pope and Maximus. Pope Martin I is tried in 654 and is sentenced to exile in Cherson, where he dies in 655.

The trial of St. Maximus begins in 655. Consistent with the course of suffering his Master had to endure, Maximus is first subjected to trumped-up charges of crimes against the state. When this course of action proves unsuccessful, he is sent into exile for six years. In 662, at the age of 82, he is hauled back to Constantinople where a Church Council of hierarchs, more loyal to the Emperor than to Christ, anathematizes and condemns him. The traditional sentence of mutilation of those members by which “false” doctrine is expounded, is carried out. Maximus’ tongue is cut out and his right hand is amputated. He is then carted about the city of Constantinople so, like his Lord, the people he is trying to serve can mindlessly ridicule him on cue from civil and ecclesiastical politicians. After this exercise of legalized viciousness and “justified” punishment, he is sent off to exile in Lazica, where he dies on August 13, 662.

THE PERDURING EMBRACE OF LOVE ENGENDERS DEIFICATION

Having now seen the historical milieu in which Maximus lives, let us zero in on the central theme from which he derives his thoughts on Gospel nonviolence: the goodness, and above all, the love of God:

God alone is essentially good, and only a person who imitates God is good in the disposition of his soul; for this person’s chief aim is to unite the wicked with Him, who is essentially good and thus make them good. To this end, being reviled, he blesses; being persecuted, he suffers it; being defamed, he brings comfort; being slain, he prays for his slayer. He does all, lest he fall from his chief aim—love...³ For he who has love has God himself, for ‘God is Love’. To Him be glory unto ages of ages. Amen.⁴

With the above concluding words, St. Maximus, the Father of Byzantine Theology, summarizes and closes his spiritual classic, *Four Centuries on Love*. These words could equally be a summary for his entire theology. Indeed, they encapsulate Byzantine spirituality. For beyond all realities, experiences and concepts in Byzantine spirituality, the truth that “God is Love” reigns supreme. No aspect of theology, no dimension of liturgy, no practice of spirituality is outside this primal insight. All existence is a mystery in the perduring embrace of Love. “God is Love” is the quintessential notion of Byzantine theology.

“GOD IS LOVE”...NO ASPECT OF THEOLOGY, NO DIMENSION OF LITURGY, NO PRACTICE OF SPIRITUALITY IS OUTSIDE THIS PRIMAL INSIGHT.

The second most important theme in the Byzantine spiritual tradition is one which might strike the Western mind as absurd, if not blasphemous. The idea is that of “deification.” The formula, which has been universally employed to em-

body this notion, is “God became human, so that human beings may become God.”⁵ St. Maximus, in explaining the concept of deification, says:

In the same way in which the soul and the body are united, God should become accessible for participation by the soul and, through the soul intermediary, by the body, in order that the soul might receive an unchanging character, and the body immortality; and finally that the whole person should become God, deified by the grace of God-become-human, becoming whole person, soul and body, by nature and becoming whole God, soul and body by grace.⁶

To “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 PT 1:4) is the reason why men and women were created and the reason why God became a human being in Jesus, the Christ. Deification is so central to Byzantine spirituality because it represents the purpose and meaning of all human history, individual and collective.

Since God is Love, another way of formulating the notion of deification is by saying that “Love became human so that human beings may become Love.” However, the only way to become Love is by Loving. One can no more become a loving person by hating than one can become a truthful person by lying. There must be consistency between the end to be achieved and the means of achieving it. One becomes God-like by living like God. The living God is living Love. To love, according to Maximus, is not merely to imitate God; to love is to participate in the very life of God here and now. Participation here in the Divine Life is the Way to participation in the Divine Life hereafter. “The mystery of Christ is the mystery of Love.”⁷ Love is Divine Life and Divine Life is Love, here and hereafter.

“LOVE BECAME HUMAN SO THAT HUMAN BEINGS MAY BECOME LOVE.” HOWEVER, THE ONLY WAY TO BECOME LOVE IS BY LOVING.

DEIFICATION—SYNERGY BETWEEN DIVINE WILL AND HUMAN WILL

It is not exclusively through a person’s own activities, however, that he or she is deified. The process of deification occurs when the individual freely chooses to use his or her own energy in obedience to the uncreated divine energy of Love, which is the Divine Will, which is God. The synergy of these two energies finds its ontological root in Jesus Christ, the man who is God—the Person in whom this cooperation or synergy between divine will and human will is perfected. To follow Christ, then, is not merely to follow an external ethic; it is to literally live in Christ, to be one with the new reality of Immortal Love made accessible to all people. Thus, it naturally follows that when Jesus is asked what is the way to eternal life, He simply proclaims, “Love!” “Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, whole mind and whole strength.” Love your neighbor as yourself” (LK

TO FOLLOW CHRIST, THEN, IS NOT MERELY TO FOLLOW AN EXTERNAL ETHIC; IT IS TO LITERALLY LIVE IN CHRIST, TO BE ONE WITH THE NEW REALITY OF IMMORTAL LOVE MADE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL PEOPLE.

10:25). The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Love. More precisely, Love is both the Kingdom and the Way to the Kingdom. More precisely still, Love is both the Reign of God and the Way to the Reign of God.

But what is this love? Of what does it consist? How can one judge whether one is living it? After all, the atrocity cannot be imagined that at some time and place has not been committed in the name of love.

TO LOVE AS CHRIST LOVES IS THE ENTIRE LAW OF THE GOSPEL

It is the understanding of Byzantine theology that Jesus Christ is the icon or image of the Father of all—the image of God, who is Love. The person who sees and hears Jesus Christ, sees and hears the Father (JN 10:30; 14:9). “Christ is the icon of the invisible God,” says Paul (COL 1:15). Therefore, St. Maximus writes:

*‘If you love me, keep my commandments’ says the Lord (JN 14:15). ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you’ (JN 15:12). Thus he who does not love his neighbor, does not keep the commandments; and he who does not keep the commandments cannot love the Lord.*⁸

Here Maximus is expressing with acuity the concrete meaning and daily practical implications of the great commandment of love that is proclaimed by God Incarnate. To love God means to love one’s neighbor (1 JN 4:20-21). To love one’s neighbor means to love him or her as Jesus would have loved him or her, as Christ does love him or her right now. Christ, not the law; Christ, not social custom; Christ, not secular wisdom is the standard by which one determines whether he or she is loving God and neighbor.

The only commandment unique to Jesus in the entire New Testament is the one just quoted above: “Love one another as I have loved you.” Love Incarnate, Jesus, is the living Icon to which anyone who wishes to do God’s will must constantly refer in order to discern what the love of God and neighbor means in each situation in life. To love as Christ loves is the sum and substance of the entire moral life of the Christian—the entire law of the Gospel. It is the purpose of every life, the goal of every moment of life. It is the means to be employed at every instance of life in order to accomplish every task in life. An act, which is not an act of love as Christ defines love by word and deed, is an act that is morally worthless (CF 1 COR 13). Any act that cannot be done with Christ-like love is an act that neither God nor humanity has any need of.

TO LOVE AS CHRIST LOVES IS THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE ENTIRE MORAL LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN—THE ENTIRE LAW OF THE GOSPEL. IT IS THE PURPOSE OF EVERY LIFE, THE GOAL OF EVERY MOMENT OF LIFE.

If, therefore, one wishes to burn witches or engage in the mass slaughter of war in good Christian conscience, all one has to do is honestly prove to oneself that the loving Christ would have burned witches or engaged in the mass slaughter of war.

But if a person cannot see our Lord thinking, speaking or acting in a particular way, then he or she obviously cannot “love as He loves” by thinking, speaking or acting in such a fashion. When one does not love as Christ loves, one neither loves God nor one’s neighbor. When a man or woman does not love as Christ loves, he or she cannot grow in Divine life. The name for the choice of refusing to grow in Divine life, for refusing to love as Christ loves, is sin.

SIN—CHOOSING FREELY TO REVOLT AGAINST LOVE

In Byzantine spirituality, sin is a revolt against God, a revolt against Love. Sin is a thought, word or deed that misses the mark of being in conformity with the mind, the spirit and the heart of Christ. The origin of sin is freedom, which is also the necessary condition for love. Christian love is free love or it is not Christian love. Maximus states that human beings are morally free: “Since the human being was created according to the image of the blessed and supra-essential deity, and since, on the other hand, the divine nature is free, it is obvious that a human being is free by nature, being the image of the deity.”⁹

SIN IS A THOUGHT, WORD OR DEED THAT MISSES THE MARK OF BEING IN CONFORMITY WITH THE MIND, THE SPIRIT AND THE HEART OF CHRIST.

Sin has no other source than the freedom of the human being who sins. The problem of evil is the problem of the evildoer. In Byzantine spirituality, Original Sin, “The Fall,” does not mean that a baby is born full of evil. There can be no sin, Original or personal, no revolt against the God of love, without the individual’s free choice.

Indeed, human nature incurs the consequences of Adam’s sin, which is mortality. “The shadow of death is human life,” says St. Maximus.¹⁰ Having become mortal, Adam and Eve conceived mortal children and “because of death all people have sinned” (ROM 5:2). Human beings inherit mortality from “The Fall” and from mortality is born the fear of non-being, the fear of death. From this fear, which arises from the desire for bodily preservation for ourselves and those whom we love, comes the temptation to sin, to be unChrist-like and to choose unwise forms of self-love.

FROM THIS FEAR [OF DEATH]... COMES THE TEMPTATION TO SIN, TO BE UNCHRIST-LIKE AND TO CHOOSE UNWISE FORMS OF SELF-LOVE.

Thus, in Byzantine spirituality the Baptism of a baby, is not to forgive sins, which the newborn has never committed, but to communicate to the infant the new Immortal Life and Love, which Christ brought into the world by His Incarnation, Teaching, Death and Resurrection. This guarantee of Eternal Life and Love liberates the human being from the fear of death and thereby liberates him or her from the attractiveness of sin and the unChrist-likeness that seems to be required for sur-

vival. Because of faith in Jesus Christ a person is now clothed in the garment of immortality and need no longer concern himself or herself with the horrifying possibility of ceasing to be, or of being nothingized in an indifferent universe. St. Paul illuminates this good news, which is above all good news, majestically when he proclaims:

For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no principality, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord (RM 8:38-39).

In Byzantine spirituality, however, freedom is never removed from persons, therefore the “origin of sin” remains. Human beings are offered by Love (God) all that makes love possible. They are offered Love itself, but it is a gift. It can only be offered. Love cannot be imposed or coerced. A person always remains free to say “Yes” or “No” to a union in Love. In the end, without the agreement of the will of the person and the will of God, salvation is not possible. People are made in God’s image, which means that they are to some degree free for as long as they exist. Even if a person exists forever, this does not change. But how far a person advances into or separates himself or herself from God’s likeness, that is, from loving as God loves, from being like God, from participation in the very Life of God, depends on how the person exercises his or her freedom.

[H]OW FAR A PERSON ADVANCES INTO OR SEPARATES HIMSELF OR HERSELF FROM GOD’S LIKENESS, THAT IS, FROM LOVING AS GOD LOVES, FROM BEING LIKE GOD, FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE VERY LIFE OF GOD, DEPENDS ON HOW THE PERSON EXERCISES HIS OR HER FREEDOM.

Christ’s resurrection can liberate us from death and sin if we allow it to do so. But under no circumstances does Christ’s resurrection liberate us from freedom. For to take away freedom would be to simultaneously take away the possibility to love. Once freedom and love are no longer part of human existence, life, even immortal life, is at best a compulsive movement from one meaningless now to the next in an eternal Pavlovian Disneyland. Men and women are freely deified through the gift of Love accepted. Only by freely loving as Christ loves can the human being and all humanity be united ever more deeply in a communion of love with each other and with that eternal Communion of Love, the Trinity.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LOVE

But to love as Christ loves requires taking seriously the very first word that Jesus speaks at the beginning of his public ministry: “Repent” (MT 4:17). Repentance is not mere sentimental sorrow for sins. It is a significant change of mind, a fundamental change of heart. It means becoming a new person by putting on the new mind of Christ, and thereby loving what Christ loves and as Christ loves. St. Maximus sees that for people to live the life that Christ invites them to live necessitates

that each person freely enter into a discipline of love. This discipline of love is essential, not because discipline saves, but because love saves. However, the love that saves is so contrary to the values and desires that society nurtures in people, that only the most serious work to put off one's old mind in order to put on the mind of Christ can possibly be effective. Maximus understands that the human mind is a bloody mess, and that the bloody human activities and institutions that abound are the fetid fruits of mind-styles which have chosen to do other than think, desire and love as Christ thinks, desires and loves. St. Maximus has no prescription on how minds that overflow with anger, hostility, vainglory and cupidity can create institutions that are anything other than reflections of themselves.

REPENTANCE IS NOT MERE
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IT IS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE OF
MIND, A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE
OF HEART...FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE
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THEM TO LIVE NECESSITATES THAT
EACH PERSON FREELY ENTER INTO
A DISCIPLINE OF LOVE.

Maximus is concerned with the mind, the soul and the spirit of the person. He recognizes that a person becomes what he or she thinks, desires and loves, and on a larger scale, that a community becomes what its individual members think, desire and love. Thus, each person must enter into the process of changing his or her mind and heart into the mind and heart of Christ. The discipline of love which Maximus discusses amounts to insights and suggestions on what it is necessary to do and what it is necessary to avoid in order to move more deeply into the life of God Who is Love (Agapé), and thereby participate more fully in the salvation of the world.

THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE

Because of the perimeters of this article, I shall limit my discussion of Maximus' reflections on the discipline of love to those that relate specifically to the problem of violence. This is, regrettably, a somewhat artificial treatment of his spirituality because he sees an irrevocable connection on many levels between other forms of evil and violence:

Let no man deceive you by the thought that you can be saved while serving lustful pleasure...[because] a mind that falls away from God and forms friendship with material things, surrendering to lustful pleasure, becomes bestial and fights with men for such things.¹¹

Sin generates a further propensity to sin. Therefore, it is a fatal spiritual illusion to believe that sin can be compartmentalized and contained. "It is the greatest deception of evil," instructs the renowned Jewish theologian Martin Buber, "that it gets people to believe that once they have chosen it, they can control it." Violence is a manifestation of evil and cannot be effectively understood or overcome as an isolated form of evil.

For St. Maximus, loving God with one's whole heart, whole soul, whole mind and whole strength is everything. All emanates from this first great commandment, including the second great commandment, to love one's neighbor. The very first sentence of St. Maximus', *Four Centuries on Love*, reads: "Love is that good disposition of the soul in which it prefers nothing that exists to the knowledge of God."¹² This coincides with Mahatma Gandhi's explicit statement in his autobiography concerning the North Star that guides his every act:

*What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do in way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end.*¹³

Knowledge, for Maximus, does not refer to the product of abstract cognitive speculation, but is rather knowledge in the biblical sense of knowing and being known in a face to face communion of love. "But," adds Maximus, "no person can come to such a state of love if he be attached to anything earthly."¹⁴

"[H]e who has torn the mind away from love of God and from His presence and lets it attach to anything sensory prefers the body to the soul"¹⁵ and "self love, the mother of passions, is love of the body."¹⁶

"What a person loves, he or she desires to grasp with all their strength and all that obstructs them in this they push aside, lest they lose it."¹⁷ Thus a love of God "casts out every passion which hinders this end."¹⁸ "Passions taking hold of the mind attach it to material objects and separating it from God force it to be occupied with them. On the other hand, love of God, when it takes possession of the mind, severs its bonds, persuading it to value neither objects of the senses nor even temporal life itself."¹⁹

"WHAT A PERSON LOVES, HE OR SHE DESIRES TO GRASP WITH ALL THEIR STRENGTH AND ALL THAT OBSTRUCTS THEM IN THIS THEY PUSH ASIDE, LEST THEY LOSE IT." THUS A LOVE OF GOD "CASTS OUT EVERY PASSION WHICH HINDERS THIS END."

THE VOLUNTARY RELINQUISHING OF VIOLENCE

It would be very easy and very wrong to relegate Maximus to the category of a non-realist who simply espouses a doctrine of passive pietism. One of the most obvious meanings of nonviolence is the voluntary relinquishing of the protection of violence. What are the dynamics of consciousness and conscience that are necessary in order to genuinely accept this way of existence, this way of living without the protection of violence? Certainly most people who say they espouse nonviolence do not equate nonviolence with the total rejection of violence in human affairs. They may reject the more obnox-

CERTAINLY MOST PEOPLE WHO SAY THEY ESPOUSE NONVIOLENCE DO NOT EQUATE NONVIOLENCE WITH THE TOTAL REJECTION OF VIOLENCE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS.

ious and brutal forms of violence. They may reject all violence that is not socially condoned. They may reject all violence that does not seem to serve, advance or protect their earthly interests. For instance, the pacifist church, which calls on the police power of the state to protect its personal and real property, possesses worldly prudence, but is not nonviolent. Maximus says that “Love of God disposes a person to scorn all transitory things.”²⁰ Without this state of detachment, which issues from loving the God of Love, nonviolence is impossible:

If one loves someone, one strives to please him or her in all possible ways. Thus if a person loves God he or she will certainly strive to do what pleases Him.²¹...To love Him is to keep His commandments.²²...But if you are indeed keeping the commandment of loving your neighbor, why do you implant in yourself the bitterness of annoyance against him? Is it not clear that instead of active love you prefer the transitory and in protecting it you wage war against your brother or sister?²³

The love of the transitory always results in war against someone, in some way, because, knowingly or unknowingly, some neighbors assist a person in her or his particular love of the transitory, while other neighbors inhibit her or him. Those who provide assistance, usually receive good will; those who hinder them, usually receive something other than love. Only the love of God can result in love of all neighbors—enemies as well as friends—for no neighbor, regardless of her or his desire for the transitory, can separate one from the love of God. However, all neighbors, even the lethal enemy neighbor, can provide assistance in a person’s progress in his or her journey “to see God face to face.”

THE LOVE OF THE TRANSITORY
ALWAYS RESULTS IN WAR
AGAINST SOMEONE...ONLY THE
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ENEMIES AS WELL AS FRIENDS...

SEPARATING PASSIONS FROM REPRESENTATIONS

Transitory things in themselves are not evil. It is the way the individual apprehends and judges them that causes problems. People develop according to what they think and according to how they respond to what is thought. “An object is one thing, a representation another, passion yet another. An object is, for example, a man, a woman, gold and so forth; a representation, a simple thought of some such object; passion, either an irrational love or undiscerning hatred of one of these things.”²⁴ “The mind of a lover of God arms itself not against things and their representation, but against the passions connected with the representation. In other words, it rises not against the man nor against the woman who has offended it, nor against their image, but

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against the passions connected with these images.”²⁵ “The whole struggle against the demons consists in separating passions from representations.”²⁶ Or, as St. Isaac the Syrian explains it: “If you want to love your enemy, attack yourself.”

Dissolve the desire and the act never happens. Countermanding the consciousness of hate and lust ensures that murder and adultery never occur. Nurturing the consciousness of hate and lust increases the probability that murder and adultery will increase. The conquest of the only enemy a Christian has, evil, in all its forms, is in the first instance a conquest of the enemy within:

*When you see that your mind acts rightly and justly amidst worldly thoughts, know that your body will remain pure and free of sin also. But if you see your mind occupied by sinful thoughts and do not stop it, then know your body too will not fail to succumb to them.*²⁷

For St. Maximus the struggle against evil cannot be piecemeal. Human freedom ultimately resides in one’s ability to choose which thoughts one retains and with what disposition they are retained. The Christian life, that is to say, the effort to put on and live from the mind of Christ, is a very active, intense use of intellect and will. It is an ongoing commitment to choose a particular mindstyle, a mindstyle consistent with the mindstyle of Christ. As the Christian mindstyle is chosen, the Christian lifestyle will organically follow. And, where two or more have the same mindstyle and the same behavior-style, a community-style comes into being. As St. Maximus conveys:

HUMAN FREEDOM ULTIMATELY RESIDES IN ONE’S ABILITY TO CHOOSE WHICH THOUGHTS ONE RETAINS AND WITH WHAT DISPOSITION THEY ARE RETAINED.

*As things are the world for the body, so representations are the world for the mind. As the body of a man commits adultery with the body of a woman, so the mind of a man commits adultery with the representation of a woman....In the same way he revenges himself through a mental image of his body on a mental image of the man who has offended him. It is the same with all other sins; for what the body does in deed in the world of things, the mind does in the world of images.*²⁸

The battlefield for the Christian, then, is the mind. Stop the enemy, evil, on the threshold of consciousness and victory is assured. Fidelity to the metanoic struggle to “put on the mind of Christ” is the war against the source of all the wars. The refusal to fight this hidden war on this internal battlefield is tantamount to spiritually disempowering all external activity (1 COR 13).

There is a danger of interpreting Maximus as only offering another form of “Christianized” stoicism, that joyless good news of “not this—not that,” that unhappy, self-righteous mental universe of detached lovelessness. In “Christian” stoicism the primary value is control. In St. Maximus’ thought, the prime and only value is Christic love. “If we truly love God, by this very love we shall banish passion. And

to love Him means to prefer Him to the world.”²⁹ This preference amounts in the first instance to preferring thoughts of Him and His will to passionate representations of the transitory.

“Therefore,” St. Maximus says, “one must observe his mind.”³⁰ Nonviolence requires that one first be vigilant and watchful of one’s own heart:

*Thus when one’s inner perception of a brother or sister who has offended you is that of bitterness, guard against rancor in yourself. The way of those who remember injuries leads to death, because to remember an injury is also to become a transgressor.*³¹

Maximus encourages Christians to pray for those toward whom rancor is felt. By doing so they separate their

*distress from the memory of the wrong the person has done to [them] and [thereby] arrest in themselves the movement of the passion. Such passion is banished from the soul by feelings of friendliness and affection. Kindness, humility and efforts to live at peace with someone who bears malice against you will free that person from his or her passion.*³²

THE REFUSAL TO ABANDON CHRISTIC LOVE

How total is the nonviolence that St. Maximus espouses?

*A person who loves Christ is certain to imitate Him as much as he can. And Christ never ceased doing good for people; was long suffering in the face of ingratitude and revilement; and when He was scourged and put to death, He endured this, imputing evil against no one. These three actions are acts of love for the neighbor, without which a person deceives himself or herself if he or she asserts that they love Christ or that they will gain His kingdom.*³³

It is hard to envision a clearer statement regarding the centrality of nonviolence to Christ’s teaching, to the Christian life and to a genuine love of Christ. The totality of the requirement of nonviolent love under all circumstances is evident when Maximus says, “Christ does not wish you to feel hatred or malice, anger or bitterness against anyone, in whatever manner or for anything. The four Gospels preach this to all people.”³⁴ “He who abandons love for any such reason has not yet understood the aim of Christ’s commandments.”³⁵

“CHRIST DOES NOT WISH YOU TO FEEL HATRED OR MALICE...HE WHO ABANDONS LOVE FOR ANY SUCH REASON HAS NOT YET UNDERSTOOD THE AIM OF CHRIST’S COMMANDMENTS.”

Nonviolence is either total or it is non-existent. An ethic of justified violence, that is, violence made acceptable when certain conditions are present, is not nonviolence. It is precisely at the moment when violence is justified for some reason that

nonviolence becomes an operational option. Nonviolence is a total approach to all life—internal and external, private and public—or else it does not exist. As Maximus says:

*The friends of Christ love all people sincerely, but are not loved by all. Friends of the world neither love all, nor are loved by all. Friends of Christ keep the bonds of love to the end: but friends of the world love only until some discord arises between them about some earthly thing.*³⁶

What St. Maximus is indicating here is that Jesus Christ authorizes no one, under any circumstances, to choose violence and enmity, by whatever name, over Christic love.

A NONVIOLENT MINDSTYLE AND LIFESTYLE INVITE THE CROSS

The nonviolence being spoken of by Maximus here, is far removed from the nonviolence of which I once heard a peace activist speak. When this nonviolent leader was asked if he thought that the hundreds of people he was encouraging to occupy government property were, in fact, believers in nonviolence, he said, “I just hope that they believe in it enough to be nonviolent while they are on government property.” For Maximus, such nonviolence would not be nonviolence. It would just be a method of doing evil under the guise of nonviolence, what Gandhi called “the violence of the weak.” It would be the traditional absurdity of using evil to try to conquer evil by re-naming evil good.

St. Maximus himself says, “No,” to civil and ecclesiastical authorities when he feels “No” has to be said. He also suffers imprisonment and torture for his stand. But his “No,” his imprisonment and his torture are the culmination of an entire mindstyle and lifestyle. A life commitment to the daily discipline of nonviolent love is a Via Dolorosa with a high probability that a Golgotha awaits at the end of the Way. However, the postponement of gratification in order to love, the breathing out of one’s happiness in order to breath life into others is what the Way and the Cross of Nonviolent Suffering Love call for daily. Without such personal commitment by all who engage in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience, it is hard to see how authentic nonviolent civil disobedience is possible.

[T]HE POSTPONEMENT OF GRATIFICATION IN ORDER TO LOVE, THE BREATHING OUT OF ONE’S HAPPINESS IN ORDER TO BREATH LIFE INTO OTHERS IS WHAT THE WAY AND THE CROSS OF NONVIOLENT SUFFERING LOVE CALL FOR DAILY.

This is not to say or in any way imply that nonviolent civil disobedience cannot be a valid Christian activity. On the contrary, nonviolent civil disobedience can be an awesomely effective force against evil in many of its most heinous manifestations. Indeed, nonviolent civil disobedience can be an imperative of Christic love. It is only to underline for clarity’s sake, that nonviolent civil disobedience in order to

be the powerful agent against evil that it is capable of being, must proceed from the moment to moment struggle to live a disciplined nonviolent lifestyle out of a disciplined nonviolent mindstyle. To voluntarily and secretly traffic in thoughts of resentment, envy, anger, hate, self-righteousness, hostility, retaliation, revenge, etc., is to abandon nonviolence. It is to use nonviolent tactics as a cover for violence, as an instrument to hurt and/or impose one's will on others. Such nonviolence has no relationship to Christic nonviolent love and this has catastrophic implications for its ability to accomplish anything that really needs to be accomplished in the human situation (1 COR 13:1-13). In other words, a commitment to a nonviolent spirituality is that without which authentic and power full nonviolent tactics and strategies cannot be created and implemented.

[N]ONVIOLENT CIVIL
DISOBEDIENCE IN ORDER TO
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AGAINST EVIL THAT IT IS CAPABLE
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STRUGGLE TO LIVE A DISCIPLINED
NONVIOLENT LIFESTYLE OUT
OF A DISCIPLINED NONVIOLENT
MINDSTYLE.

THE REJECTION OF ALL VIOLENCE—INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

Christ does not just condemn illegal violence; He condemns all violence. Christ does not simply condemn sordid violence; He condemns romantic violence. Christ does not merely condemn personal violence; He condemns social violence. Christ does not only condemn external violence; He condemns internal violence. Gospel nonviolence is the rejection of violence at all levels because violence is evil; it is contrary to the will of the God of Unconditional and Everlasting Love as revealed by God Himself, Jesus Christ.

Gospel nonviolence is not merely the rejection and condemnation of those forms of violence—usually found in “the other”—that a person feels particularly upset over at the moment. Whether violence is chosen in the name of self-interest, self-defense or social responsibility—violence in thought, word or deed is incompatible with loving as Christ loves. Maximus knew the power that human institutions such as the family, state, religion and school have to nurture mindstyles and lifestyles of selfishness, retaliation, revengeful justice, enmity and violence. He knew the transitory loves to which the human heart can give itself and how clever the powers of this world are at manipulating these. He knew the extremes to which people go in order to get or to protect the totally perishable realities they desire. It is precisely because Maximus

GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE IS NOT
MERELY THE REJECTION AND
CONDEMNATION OF THOSE
FORMS OF VIOLENCE...THAT A
PERSON FEELS PARTICULARLY
UPSET OVER AT THE
MOMENT....[IT IS] THE EFFORT
THAT HAS TO BE MADE AND THE
PRICE THAT HAS TO BE PAID TO
LOVE AS CHRIST LOVES
PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY,
INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY.

is under no self-created or socially created delusions about the power of evil that he is so unambiguous about the effort that has to be made and the price that has to be paid to love as Christ loves privately and publicly, internally and externally.

BUILDING AN EXTERNAL COMMONWEALTH OF LOVE FOR ALL

Yet, St. Maximus' spirituality is not difficult to comprehend. Its five essential points are these: 1) God is Love, 2) God became human so that human beings may become God, 3) Love became human so that human beings could become Love, 4) The only Way to become Love is by Loving, and 5) Love as Christ-God loves. "Relate all happenings to the ultimate end,"³⁷ advises St. Maximus. The ultimate end of existence is deification—gracefully reaching eternal union with Holy Immortal Love. Nonviolent Christ-like love in thought, word and deed is the Way to this end—there is no other. So, when Maximus says, "Do not wound your brother or sister, even with insinuations, lest you receive the same in return and thus banish a loving disposition from both,"³⁸ and "Do not regard as well-meaning those who repeat to you words which engender in you vexation or enmity against a brother or sister—even if they appear to speak the truth. But turn away from such, as from deadly snakes,"³⁹ he is talking about more than the power of positive thinking. He is speaking of how to build the eternal Commonwealth of Love for all humanity.

"RELATE ALL HAPPENINGS TO THE ULTIMATE END...[WHICH] IS DEIFICATION—GRACEFULLY REACHING ETERNAL UNION WITH HOLY IMMORTAL LOVE."
...[MAXIMUS] IS TALKING ABOUT MORE THAN THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING. HE IS SPEAKING OF HOW TO BUILD THE ETERNAL COMMONWEALTH OF LOVE FOR ALL HUMANITY.

That lesser commonwealths are able to be built on enmity, on greed, on the sword, on hostility, on calumny and on many other evils is obvious. But, to relate the morality of all choices, to whether a commonwealth of the transitory will arise or be sustained, would be for Maximus deadly folly. It is the equivalent of elevating the purely transitory to the level of an ultimate criterion by which to judge the goodness of thoughts, words or deeds. The five principles that embody St. Maximus' spirituality are easy to understand; and provided one is willing to accept a Christianity with a cross, they are possible to apply and to execute on a daily basis. Nevertheless, one has to have one's priorities straight. One must seek first the Kingdom of God, the Commonwealth of Love, and its righteousness and then live in the firm faith that all else will be given in God's good time, good place and good way (MT 6:33).

THE HUMAN MIND—THE HOLY PLACE, THE TEMPLE OF GOD

For Maximus, "the holy place, the temple of God is the human mind."⁴⁰ It is here that the demons "have devastated the soul by passionate thoughts, have erected the idol of sin."⁴¹ Here also is the primary field of battle on which the war against

evil must be fought. Refuse to combat evil here and all is lost. Actions that are not the consequence of having put on the mind of Christ, that are not the fruit of Christ-like love, are simply the sound and fury signifying nothing morally (1 COR 13). “For God’s judgment,” says Maximus, “looks not only on what is done, but also on the intentions with which it is done.”⁴²

Yet, for Maximus, not only intentions, but also “what is done,” is of axial importance. Putting on the mind of Christ is not some sort of mental game or contrived peak religious experience. The only way one can know if one has, in fact, put on the mind of Christ is if one is living “a love testified by deeds.”⁴³ “Do” is the most used verb by Jesus in the Gospels says Maximus. For St. Maximus, a person who is living a mindstyle that is not testified to by deeds, is a stranger to love and “a stranger to love is a stranger to God, for God is Love” (1 JN. 4:8).⁴⁴

“[T]HE HOLY PLACE, THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS THE HUMAN MIND.”
...HERE ALSO IS THE PRIMARY FIELD OF BATTLE ON WHICH THE WAR AGAINST EVIL MUST BE FOUGHT.

DROPPING ALLEGIANCES THAT ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO LOVE

The spirituality of nonviolence of St. Maximus the Confessor is probably not the first presentation of Gospel nonviolence to which people are normally introduced. However, as other constructs of nonviolence show themselves to require greater depth in order to be able to do battle efficaciously with the powers of darkness, the Wisdom present in the spirituality enunciated by St. Maximus becomes more manifest. “He loves all men and women who loves nothing human,” says Maximus.⁴⁵ There is, of course, no end to the distortions to which such a statement is subject. But, does it not mean something as simple and as profound as dropping all allegiances to the transitory and thereby quieting all nurtured, acquisitive desires for the transitory, desires that can operate as impediments to loving all neighbors, friends and enemies? Is not this level of awareness and commitment pertinent to maximizing the power of Gospel nonviolence?

THE NONVIOLENT SPIRITUALITY OF ST. MAXIMUS IS PREDICATED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE MICROCOSMIC ACT OF CHRISTIC LOVE IS ALL HUMANITY HAS TO WORK WITH IN ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST EVIL, AND THAT THIS ACT OF LOVE IS ALL HUMANITY NEEDS TO WORK WITH IN ORDER TO BE ALL IT WAS CREATED TO BE—TO DO ALL IT WAS CREATED TO DO.

Since the Gospel is about God and since God and His Love are of infinite depth, to search continually for new depths in one’s understanding of Christic Nonviolent Love and its applications should be spiritually natural. St. Maximus is not the last word along the Way of Nonviolent Love but, it seems to me, he does have very important insights to ponder at various points along the Way. The nonviolent spirituality of St. Maximus is predicated on the understanding that the microcos-

mic act of Christic love is all humanity has to work with in its struggle against evil, and that this act of love is all humanity needs to work with in order to be all it was created to be—to do all it was created to do. Where Love is God is, because God is Love. Where Love is, Power is—the only Power capable of conquering evil and death and bringing all humanity into an eternally graced union with God.

One of the most extraordinary Christian characters in world literature is Dostoevsky's Byzantine staretz, Fr. Zossima. He is the literary embodiment of the epitome of Byzantine spirituality. Fr. Zossima is probably best known in a popular sense for his statement that "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing, compared with love in dreams."⁴⁶ But there is another reflection that the staretz made that magnificently captures the spirituality of nonviolent love of the "Father of Byzantine Theology." Let us conclude this exposition of the nonviolence of St. Maximus the Confessor with that meditation:

WHERE LOVE IS, POWER IS—THE ONLY POWER CAPABLE OF CONQUERING EVIL AND DEATH AND BRINGING ALL HUMANITY INTO AN ETERNALLY GRACED UNION WITH GOD.

At some thoughts a person stands perplexed, above all at the sight of human sin, and he wonders whether to combat it by force or by humble love. Always decide: 'I will combat it by humble love.' If you resolve on that once and for all, you can conquer the whole world. Loving humility is a terrible force: it is the strongest of all things and there is nothing else like it.⁴⁷

NOTES

1. The theology that Christ was not as the Council of Chalcedon had stated "true God and true man," but, in fact, had one will (divine), not a human will and a divine will.
2. The doctrine that Christ had two wills, and therefore, had to make choices as all human beings must.
3. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Four Centuries on Love, The Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, ed. by E. Kadlouovsky and G. E. H. Palmer (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1954) IV, p. 90.
4. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 100.
5. For example: St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, V, Preface, PG 7, col 1120; St. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi*, 54, PG 25, col 192B; St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Poema Dogmatica*, 10, 5-9, PG 37, col 465; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratoria Catechetica Magna*, 25, PG 45, col 65D. All these references to "God became man that man might become God" can also be found in: *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. by Vladimir Losskey (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974).
6. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, PG 91, col 1237AB.
7. Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1965), p. 20.
8. Maximus, *Four Centuries on Love*, I, p. 16.
9. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Disputations with Pyrrho*, PG 91, col 304C.
10. Maximus, *Four Centuries in Love*, II, p. 96.
11. *Ibid.*, II, p. 63.

12. Ibid., I, p. 1.
13. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), p. 8.
14. Maximus, *Four Centuries of Love*, I, p. 1.
15. Ibid., I, p. 8.
16. Ibid., II, p. 8.
17. Ibid., II, p. 7.
18. Ibid., II, p. 7.
19. Ibid., II, p. 3.
20. Ibid., II, p. 58.
21. Ibid., III, p. 10.
22. Ibid., I, p. 16.
23. Ibid., III, p. 15.
24. Ibid., III, p. 42.
25. Ibid., III, p. 40.
26. Ibid., III, p. 41.
27. Ibid., III, p. 52.
28. Ibid., III, p. 53.
29. Ibid., III, p. 50.
30. Ibid., III, p. 79.
31. Ibid., III, p. 89.
32. Ibid., III, p. 90.
33. Ibid., IV, p. 55.
34. Ibid., IV, p. 84.
35. Ibid., IV, p. 81.
36. Ibid., IV, p. 98.
37. Ibid., IV, p. 24.
38. Ibid., IV, p. 32.
39. Ibid., IV, p. 31.
40. Ibid., II, p. 31.
41. Ibid., II, p. 31.
42. Ibid., II, p. 37.
43. Ibid., I, p. 39.
44. Ibid., I, p. 38.
45. Ibid., III, p. 37.
46. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), Book II, Part 4.
47. Ibid., Book IV, Part 2.

The Nonviolent Eucharistic Jesus

Twelve frightened men, who feel that death is hovering over, crowd around the Son of Man whose hand is lifted over a piece of bread and over a cup.

Of what value is this gesture, of what use can it be?

How futile it seems when already a mob is arming itself with clubs, when in a few hours Jesus will be delivered to the courts, ranked among transgressors, tortured, disfigured, laughed at by His enemies, pitiable to those who love Him, and shown to be powerless before all.

However, this Man, condemned to death does not offer any defense; He does nothing but bless the bread and wine and, with eyes raised, pronounces a few words.

THE MYSTERY OF HOLY THURSDAY
FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

THE ULTIMATE NORM OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Outside of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist has no Christian meaning. Everything about it must ultimately be referenced to Him and then through Him to Abba. The same is true of the Christian life. Jesus is the ultimate norm of Christian existence; everything must be referenced to Him. If He is not the final standard against which the Church and the Christian must measure everything in order to determine if it is the will of God or not, then who or what is?

What would Christianity or the Church mean for the Christian if Jesus' Way or teachings were made subject to, or were measured for correctness by whether Plato, Hugh Hefner, or the local emperor happen to agree with them? Since for the Christian Jesus is the Word of God, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the self-revelation of God: "The one who sees me sees the Father" (JOHN 14:9), since for the Christian He is "the Way and the Truth and the Life" (JOHN 14:6), it is senseless to maintain that the Christian life can ultimately be modeled on anyone or anything except Jesus. Even the saints must be measured against Jesus and His teachings to determine what in their lives is worthy of Christian honor and what is not.

NEW COMMANDMENT CONTAINS ENTIRE LAW OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus, Himself, unequivocally commands precisely this when He says, “I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (JOHN 13:34). As the one the Church calls “the greatest saint of modern times,” St. Thérèse of Lisieux, says in her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*:

Among the countless graces I have received this year, perhaps the greatest has been that of being able to grasp in all its fullness the meaning of love...I had striven above all to love God, and in loving Him I discovered the secret of those other words “Not everyone who says Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father.” Jesus made me understand what the will was by the words he used at the Last Supper when He gave His “new commandment” and told His apostles “to love one another as He had loved them” ...When God under the old law told His people to love their neighbors as themselves, He had not yet come down to earth. As God knows how much we love ourselves, He could not ask us to do more. But when Jesus gave His apostles a “new commandment, His own commandment,” He did not ask only that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, but that we should love them as He loves them and as He will love them to the end of time. O Jesus, I know you command nothing that is impossible...O Jesus ever since its gentle flame has consumed my heart, I have run with delight along the way of your “new commandment.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “The entire law of the Gospel is contained in the new commandment of Jesus, to love one another as he has loved us” and that “This commandment summarizes all the others and expresses His [the Father’s] entire will.” Now if, as the biblical scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie, echoing the understanding of modern Biblical scholarship, says, “Jesus’ rejection of violence is the clearest of teachings in the New Testament,” then that love that is in the Spirit of Christ, that love that is imitative of Christ, that love that is Christ-like, that love that is “as I have loved,” that love which “contains the entire Law of the Gospel,” that love “which expresses His entire will” is a nonviolent love of friends and enemies.

Both Biblical scholarship and a common sense reading of the Gospel tell us that this New Commandment of Jesus to “love one another as I have loved you,” is not a throwaway line or an arbitrary insertion of a thought into the Gospel. On the contrary, the New Commandment is so placed in the Gospel as to be presented as the supreme and solemn summary of all of Jesus’ teachings and commands. The importance of all this for Eucharistic understanding and Eucharistic unity is this:

[T]HE NEW COMMANDMENT IS SO PLACED IN THE GOSPEL AS TO BE PRESENTED AS THE SUPREME AND SOLEMN SUMMARY OF ALL OF JESUS’ TEACHINGS AND COMMANDS. IT CONTAINS THE ENTIRE LAW OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus’ solemn New Commandment is given and proclaimed not on a mountain top nor in the Temple, but, as St. Thérèse notes, at the Last Supper, the First Eucharist.

Poised between time and eternity and about to be pressed like an olive by religiously endorsed, rationally justified and state executed homicidal violence, to which He knows He must respond with a love that is neither violent nor retaliatory, with a love that forgives and that seeks to draw good out of evil, He proclaimed, “I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me and as I told the Jews, where I go you cannot come; now I say to you, I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (JOHN 13:33–34).

LITURGICAL AND OPERATIONAL INDIFFERENCE

It is hard to conceive of a more dramatically powerful context to communicate the importance of a truth to people for an indefinite future. Imagine how the world would be today if this New Commandment as taught on the first Holy Thursday and lived unto death on the first Good Friday was continuously remembered in Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Eucharistic Prayers throughout the ages. For one thing, there would be no Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant division of the Church because, whatever the intellectual reasons were that promoted each division and each division of a division, the one thing that predated all of them and postdated most of them was a massive liturgical and operational indifference to the New Commandment that Jesus proclaimed by word at the First Eucharist and by example at the Sacrifice of Calvary.

All the major modern divisions in the Church follow by centuries the Church’s justification of violence and homicide with all the distortion of perspective and spirit that persistence in such activities brings to individuals and communities. And after each division all of the churches—minus a few of the ‘Peace Churches’—continued to teach, to endorse and to employ violence and homicide as part of their Christian way. This necessitated that in these churches, or any subdivision thereof, the Eucharistic liturgy be not too explicit in remembering the details of the Gospel-given history of the Lord’s Supper, of the Lord’s Passion and of the Lord’s Death. Less still could any Church that justified and participated in violence and homicide afford to be continually Eucharistically emphatic in remembering Jesus’ New Commandment given at the Last Supper and the clear relationship between it and the way He in fact historically responded to violence and homicide. What one does not underline is what one does not want to remember.

[C]OULD ANY CHURCH THAT JUSTIFIED AND PARTICIPATED IN VIOLENCE AND HOMICIDE AFFORD TO BE CONTINUALLY EUCHARISTICALLY EMPHATIC IN REMEMBERING JESUS’ NEW COMMANDMENT GIVEN AT THE LAST SUPPER AND THE CLEAR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IT AND THE WAY HE IN FACT HISTORICALLY RESPONDED TO VIOLENCE AND HOMICIDE.

A EUCHARISTIC PRAYER THAT EMBODIES NONVIOLENT LOVE

So until this very day, in the Eucharistic Liturgies of such churches, the words “suffered and died” have been quite enough memory, commemoration, remembrance,

or anamnesis for fulfilling the Lord's Command, "Do this in memory (anamnesis) of me." Of course, technically the words "suffered and died" are theologically correct, but are they pastorally sufficient for the sanctification of the Christian, the Church, and the world? What would the condition of the Church and hence the world be like today if the Eucharistic Prayers of the churches of Christianity had read at their most sacred point, "the institution narrative-anamnesis (remembrance)," something like the following over the last 1700 years:

...On the night before He went forth, like a Lamb led to slaughter, to His eternally memorable and life-giving death—rejecting violence, loving His enemies, and praying for His persecutors—He bestowed upon His disciples the gift of a New Commandment:

"Love one another. As I have loved you so you also should love one another."

Then He took bread into His holy hands, and looking up to You, almighty God, He gave thanks, blessed it, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said: "Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which will be given up for you."

Likewise, when the Supper was ended, He took the cup. Again He gave You thanks and praise, gave the cup to His disciples and said: "Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven."

"Do this in memory of me."

Obedient, therefore, to this precept of salvation, we call to mind His passion where He lived to the fullest the precepts which He taught for our sanctification. We remember His suffering at the hands of a fallen humanity filled with the spirit of violence and enmity. But, we remember also that He endured this humiliation with a love free of retaliation, revenge, and retribution. We recall His execution on the cross. But, we recall also that He died loving enemies, praying for persecutors, forgiving, and being superabundantly merciful to those for whom justice would have demanded justice. Finally, we celebrate the memory of the fruits of His trustful obedience to thy will, O God: the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand, the second and glorious coming. Therefore we offer You your own, from what is your own, in all and for the sake of all...

The explicit inclusion of the memory of Jesus' New Commandment, Jesus' rejection of violence, Jesus' love of enemies, Jesus' prayer for His persecutors, and Jesus' return of good for evil in the Eucharistic Prayer of the churches at the point of "institution-anamnesis" is not the addition of a whimsical or arbitrary insertion of haphazard events from Jesus' life. This is factually what happened from the Cenacle to Calvary. This is the memory given to us by the ultimate historical, theological and pastoral documents on the subject: the four Gospels.

MAUNDY THURSDAY—A MANDATE TO LOVE AS CHRIST LOVES

The very name for Holy Thursday, Maundy Thursday, comes from the Latin "mandatum," which means a command, commission, charge, order, injunction. It

is a direct and exclusive reference to the New Commandment given at the Lord's Supper. The inclusion of the New Commandment in the Eucharistic Prayer would not be riding one's own theological or liturgical hobby-horse into the Church's public prayer life. The New Commandment is there from Day One of the Eucharist and it is there in maximal solemnity and seriousness.

So, also, rejection of violence, love of enemies, and prayer for the persecutors are an irrevocable part of the history, scripture, and authentic memory of the Sacrifice of Love on Calvary. Refusing the protection of the sword (MT 26:52), healing the ear of the armed man who was to take Him to His death (LK 22:51) and crying out for God's forgiveness for those who were destroying Him (LK 23:34) is the memory the Gospels give to humanity of the victimization of Christ. To side-step these authentic apostolic memories in order to get to a more profound or holy or "deep" spirituality is sheer folly. One has to have the humility to accept revelation as God offers it. If one does not want to prayerfully enter into revelation as presented by God, then one has no access to revelation; for who but God can author revelation?

[R]EJECTION OF VIOLENCE,
LOVE OF ENEMIES, AND PRAYER
FOR THE PERSECUTORS ARE AN
IRREVOCABLE PART OF THE
HISTORY, SCRIPTURE, AND
AUTHENTIC MEMORY OF THE
SACRIFICE OF LOVE ON CALVARY.

EMACIATED REVELATORY REMEMBRANCE SUBVERTS DIVINE LOVE

Jesus did not die of a heart attack. He died when His heart was attacked by human beings inebriated with the diabolical spirit of justified, religiously endorsed homicide—and He died giving a definite, discernible, and consistent response to that satanic spirit. This reality cannot be insignificant in discerning the Truth of the revelation God is trying to communicate to humanity for the good of humanity in Jesus. The Sacrifice of the Cross is not about mere animal pain that is meant to assuage the lust of a sadistic, blood-thirsty, parochial god. It is about the revelation of the nature and meaning and way and power of a Divine Love that saves from an Enemy and a menace that the darkest phenomena of history can only but hint at. To consistently dismiss and to structurally ignore major facts in the God-given revelatory memory is to assure that little of what God intended to be communicated by this costly revelation will be communicated by it. So while use of the mere words "suffered and died" in the Eucharistic Prayer is theologically exact, pastorally speaking it is emaciated revelatory anamnesis (remembrance).

THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS...
IS ABOUT THE REVELATION OF
THE NATURE AND MEANING AND
WAY AND POWER OF A DIVINE
LOVE THAT SAVES FROM AN
ENEMY AND A MENACE THAT THE
BLACKEST REALITIES OF HISTORY
CAN ONLY BUT HINT AT.

However, it does not take much reflection to perceive how these detail-devoid Eucharistic Prayers—that do not mention Jesus' New Commandment given at the

Last Supper, that do not mention His rejection of violence, that do not mention His love of even lethal enemies, that do not mention His prayer for persecutors, and His struggle to overcome evil with good—serve a critical function in the life of that form of Christianity that endorses homicide. Intentional forgetfulness, structured inattentiveness, and a cavalier disparaging of Jesus’ teachings of nonviolent love have always been part of its method of operation. Without this cultivated scriptural and liturgical blind spot Jesus could not be drafted as a Divine support person for the home team’s homicide.

AMNESIA ABOUT TRUTHS IN SUFFERING AND DEATH OF CHRIST

It is possible today, as it has been possible for 1700 years, for a normal person to spend a lifetime listening to the Eucharistic Prayers of all of the mainline Christian churches and never apprehend that what is being remembered is a Person—who at the moments being remembered in the Prayers—rejects violence, forgives everyone, prays for persecutors, returns good for evil. In other words, in most Christian churches, the anamnesis has become an agency for amnesia about truths in the suffering and death of Christ that if consistently brought to consciousness at the sacred time of the community’s Eucharist would stand in judgement on a multitude of community activities, past and present.

IT IS POSSIBLE...TO SPEND A LIFETIME LISTENING TO THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYERS AND NEVER APPREHEND THAT WHAT IS BEING REMEMBERED IS A PERSON—WHO REJECTED VIOLENCE, FORGAVE EVERYONE, PRAYED FOR PERSECUTORS, RETURNED GOOD FOR EVIL.

The Rev. Frederick R. McManus, Emeritus Professor at The Catholic University of America and one of the two or three most influential Catholic liturgists of the 20th Century, writing on this issue says:

The Nonviolent Eucharist is a valuable and viable proposal to augment eucharistic anaphoras with some direct reference to the ministry and teaching of Jesus concerning peace and love, with concrete mention of the nonviolence of the Gospel message. The tradition of variety in the Eucharistic prayer, longstanding in the East and happily introduced into the Roman liturgy in the light of Vatican II’s mandate to reform the Order of Mass, is ample reason to study this proposal. The centrality of the mission of peace and nonviolence in the Gospels needs to be acknowledged in the confession of the great deeds of God in the Lord Jesus, and the Christian people need to see this essential dimension of Eucharistic peace in the prayer which they confirm and ratify with their Amen.

The most renowned moral theologian in the Catholic Church in the 20th Century, Rev. Bernard Haring, states emphatically that, “It is not possible to speak of Christ’s sacrifice while ignoring the role of nonviolence.” Yet, this is precisely what most Christian churches have been doing in their Eucharist Prayers since Constan-

tine first employed the cross as an ensign to lead people into the enmity and homicide called war.

FACT: *Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants all believe they have authentic Eucharistic communion within their own churches and often the same belief holds for communion between different Churches. This, however, has not prevented them from sojourning into slaying their own and other Christians on a grand scale and then exonerating themselves by some fantastic contortion of the Gospel.*

THE KEY TO EUCHARISTIC UNITY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Now what I am about to suggest I am sure could sound more than farfetched, but I believe it is the pivotal decision for Christic Truth on which a future of Christian unity and Eucharistic unity wait. At this time in history, the key to Eucharistic unity and Christian unity is for churches—each by whatever process of authority is internal to it—to compose new eucharist prayers which vividly call to mind the New Commandment, and the actual details of the historic confrontation between homicidal violence and Jesus’ nonviolent love of friends and enemies that took place at the moment being remembered.

THE KEY TO EUCHARISTIC UNITY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY IS FOR CHURCHES—EACH BY WHATEVER PROCESS OF AUTHORITY IS INTERNAL TO IT—TO COMPOSE NEW EUCHARIST PRAYERS WHICH VIVIDLY CALL TO MIND THE NEW COMMANDMENT...

This is not one among many things the Churches can do for peace and unity—it is what they must do. The present meagerness of scriptural and historical memory, while it does not render the Eucharistic Prayers false, does make them operationally deceptive by omission. Harnessed by nationalisms around the world, Christianity does not actually hear (remember) “suffered and died” as it was in 33 A.D., as it is presented in the Gospels. Pastoral responsibility before God and pastoral integrity before the community insist that the fitting and right textual adjustments be instituted because there is a radical spiritual danger that the “paucis verbis” of the present remembrance in the Eucharistic Prayers of all the mainline churches is serving those forces which the Eucharistic Jesus comes to conquer.

[T]HERE IS A RADICAL SPIRITUAL DANGER THAT THE “PAUCIS VERBIS” OF THE PRESENT REMEMBRANCE IN THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYERS OF ALL THE MAINLINE CHURCHES IS SERVING THOSE FORCES WHICH THE EUCHARISTIC JESUS COMES TO CONQUER.

I think it was Archimedes who said that there is a point outside the world that if he could locate it, he could move the world from it. I believe the “institution narrative-anamnesis” of the Eucharistic Prayer of the churches is that spiritual Archimedean point—if the Truth of Christ’s Sacrifice is allowed the fullness of its historical

revelatory reality there. It is not magic I speak of here. It is the hidden power of the cross that is released when those who are in Christ respond to the offer of grace through Christ—an offer made through a unique and unequalled “salvation-device” when He said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

For each Church’s leadership to authorize the recommended Eucharistic Prayer text clarifications would not be magic. For each Church’s leadership to explain the changes to the community would not be magic. For each community to consciously stand or kneel daily, weekly, or monthly in the presence of such a Nonviolent Eucharistic Lord would not be magic. From the human eye view, all would necessitate human choices, but choices aimed at cooperating more faithfully with the infinitely powerful and mysterious reality of the Divine Design for salvation in Jesus—choices on behalf of a more authentic expression and experience and encounter with the Saving Presence of Divine Love as revealed through, with and in the Nonviolent Eucharistic Christ.

NEW TIME OF CHRISTIAN AGAPÉ

I am sure that a more truthful Eucharistic Prayer is the starting point of “the fair beginning of a nobler time.” For sure, this is the point from which to move the world into a New Time of Christic Agapé because, from this point on, the Christian and the Church will derive their Life from the Bread of Life of an Agapé Meal that is reverently respectful of the “last wish” of Jesus—that the love (agapé) which He showed His disciples be remembered and lived in the community as the unbreachable standard of all Christian interaction. I know this is the Archimedean starting point because I “know” there is infinitely more to that Mysterious Meal in the Upper Room than meets the eye.

What I am also sure of is this: there is infinitely more to that New Commandment than meets the mind. As each Church Eucharistically remembers more lucidly the truth of Jesus’ life of Nonviolent Love, His death in Nonviolent Love, and His resurrection through Nonviolent Love, Jesus’ New Commandment will disclose its depth of meaning, purpose, and power to the churches of Christianity in a light that will gift them with an experience of new reality. Out of this new reality will come new insight and new spirit; and from this new reality and new insight and new spirit will come the new words, new phraseology, new language, new thoughts that will resolve aged and serious problems of truth. Rising from this new level of Eucharistic fidelity will

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come a symbiotic synthesis of Christic Love and Truth that will fuse a unity in a manner beyond present imagination. It is not magic I speak of here. Prayer changes people, and people change things, but the “Yes” for a more pastorally accurate remembrance in the Eucharistic Prayer must first be given by pastors. As at Nazareth of old, God holds His breath and awaits His chosen servant’s “fiat.”

BETRAYAL OF BAPTISMAL AND EUCHARISTIC UNITY

In a 1969 article for the *Notre Dame Alumnus*, I wrote: “To paraphrase a student slogan, ‘Suppose someone gave a war and the Christians refused to kill or harm one another’...It would be a giant step forward for humanity if the Church would preach as a minimum standard of morality, the absolute immorality of one follower of Christ killing another follower of Christ.”

In 1969 I lost on all fronts with this. For the conservatives it was “just ridiculous”; for the liberals, it was too absolutist; and for the radicals, it was Christianist and anti-humanist. But I know more surely today than I did thirty-three years ago that this is the truth of the matter. Homicide-justifying Christianity cannot dialogue itself out of the snare into which it has fallen. It must first become obedient to Jesus’ New Commandment, then out of obedience will come the grace and insight to do the other tasks committed to the Christian and the Church.

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This Christic obedience would seem to mean that the New Commandment to “Love one another as I have loved you” would expect as a dimension of Baptism and Eucharist, the willingness, if called upon to kill other Christians, to universally say: “No! I cannot comply with your order because it would reduce me to a ‘Judas-Christian’—a betrayer of the gift of my Baptismal unity in Christ and a betrayer of the task of my Eucharistic unity in His New Commandment.”

How could this not be what Jesus intended for His disciples by His New Commandment at the Last Supper? How could this not be what Jesus intended His followers to teach, nurture, encourage, foster, energize, and command when bringing people into Baptismal and Eucharistic unity with Him and through Him with each other and God? The Church will be the servant it is meant to be to humanity only to the extent that it is faithful to what it has been commanded to do internally, namely to “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.”

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DISUNITY EMANATES FROM SEPARATION OF DIVINE MANDATES

But a commandment that is consigned century after century to the doorsteps of oblivion is a non-thought in a community. Obedience to a non-thought is a patent impossibility. Yet, it is at the very same Supper that the Lord commands for all time “Do this in memory of me” that He pronounces for all time His New Commandment. How can these Divine Mandates be honestly separated? How can one be obeyed religiously while the other is ignored religiously?

It is this separation between the two great Eucharistic Commands that is the source of and the sustaining power for separation within Christianity—ecclesiastically and Eucharistically. It is this separation in Christianity between the two great Eucharistic Commands, whose mutually complementary purpose is to unite, that has reduced the Church in confrontation with the horrid reality of evil to a coping dinosaur rather than a conquering Spirit. Disunity disempowers to the detriment of all—except the Fiend.

For mercy’s sake, the pastors of Christianity must relinquish their stance of chosen ignorance. They must simply stop managing the Eucharistic Prayer in a manner that spiritually short-circuits the process of repentance—and hence unification—by perpetually camouflaging the unwanted truths of Jesus’ nonviolent love and Jesus’ command to follow His example of love. To again quote the liturgist, Rev. Frederick McManus, “The centrality of the mission of peace and nonviolence needs to be acknowledged in the confession of the great deeds of God in the Lord Jesus, and the Christian people need to see this essential dimension of Eucharistic peace in the prayer which they confirm and ratify with their Amen.”

FOR MERCY’S SAKE, THE PASTORS OF CHRISTIANITY MUST RELINQUISH THEIR STANCE OF CHOSEN IGNORANCE. THEY MUST SIMPLY STOP MANAGING THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER IN A MANNER THAT SPIRITUALLY SHORT-CIRCUITS THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE—AND HENCE UNIFICATION...

The Eucharist has no Christian meaning outside of Jesus Christ. There are not two Jesus Christs: the Eucharistic Christ of faith on one hand, and the historical Jesus on the other. John Paul II states in his Encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), “One cannot separate Jesus from the Christ or speak of a ‘Jesus of history’ who would differ from the ‘Christ of faith’...Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.” The only Jesus Christ present at the Eucharist, the only Jesus Christ to remember and receive in the Eucharist is the Jesus Christ who taught and lived unto death a way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies and who commanded His disciples to “love one another as I have loved you.”

A PASTORALLY TRUTH-FILLED EUCHARIST

Having recently concluded a Century that has killed more people by rationally justified, religiously legitimized war, revolution, abortion, and capital punishment

than all the centuries of humanity combined; having recently concluded a Century that has by the billions mercilessly murdered “the least” (MT 25:14-46) by squandering on the technology of violence and homicide the most lavish gifts of intelligence and learning ever granted a century of humanity; having recently concluded a Century that has brought a planet of humanity to the lip of a cauldron bubbling with the brew of nuclear plagues and war-generated diseases; having recently concluded a Century where Christianity has been a major player in all these evils—it is demanded that Christian pastors begin to lead their churches away from evasive Eucharistic Prayers and into remembering what God committed to them for salvific and revelatory remembrance on Holy Thursday-Good Friday, 33 A.D.

I am more than certain that a pastorally truth-filled Eucharist, as enunciated above, initiated in the beginning by the authority of each of the churches for its own community, is the key not only to the resolution of Church divisions and Eucharistic disunity, but also the key to that New Pentecost which is the only Power that can transfigure the relentless agony humanity has made of history. From a New Holy Thursday will shine a New Pentecost. I am more than certain about this because I believe that Eucharistic prayer is the most powerful prayer to which humanity will ever have access. This means that, entered into with an honest, humble and contrite heart, Eucharistic prayer in all its forms—adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication—is the supreme instrumentality available to the human being and to the human community for their sanctification—which can only express itself in time and space as deeds of Christ-like love of God, friends, and enemies.

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To love the Eucharist is to live the Eucharist. A Nonviolent Eucharistic Prayer is a mandatum of Truth, a mandatum of Peace, a mandatum of Love.

EPILOGUE

The title of this book on the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels, *All things flee thee for thou fleest Me*, is derived from Francis Thompson's poem, *The Hound of Heaven*. The poem is the story of the plight of a person, who spends his or her life running from God, from His Will and from His Way. It is also the story of God pursuing this run-away soul "with unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy." The poem opens with the now famous stanza:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

If the "I" of Thompson's poem is read not as an individual person but as that corporate person called the institutional Church, then the poem is equally the story of Christianity since the time of Constantine (D. 337 AD). An enormous portion of documented Church history over the last 1700 years has been the Church fleeing the Nonviolent Jesus. An almost invisible piece of Church history has been the Nonviolent Jesus pursuing the fleeing Church "with unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy."

Strange as it is to say, the institutional Church fears the Nonviolent Jesus, "Lest, having Him, I must have naught besides." "What will become of us," worry its leadership and laity, "if we can not righteously engage in violence like other religions? Who will defend us against the dark surges of the human psyche? Our buildings, our treasures, our achievements, our pleasures and our very lives and the lives of those we love will be cast into intolerable jeopardy if we cannot substitute violence for love, if we cannot re-name violence love?" With horrifying hypotheticals dancing in their heads and with terrifying conjectures hardening their hearts, Catholic,

Protestant, Orthodox and Evangelical Christians flee the Nonviolent Jesus, “*down the nights and down the days, down the arches of the years, down the labyrinthine ways of [their] own mind[s].*”

How unfortunate is the lot of those born into one of the Churches seeking refuge from the Nonviolent Messiah. While still in the Edenic innocence of infancy, people in these communities are given to eat of the fruits of the flight from God. They, as members of a fleeing Pilgrim Church, will more than likely never know any other way than the way that avoids facing up to the Nonviolent Jesus. Yet, their Guide Book, the New Testament, will unequivocally and continuously remind them that the Nonviolent Jesus is the Way. What warping of the soul must take place when a person, young or old, is forced out of fear or out of inculcated untruth to live a falsehood about something that is of critical importance to his or her relationship with God?

Suppose a teacher is teaching his or her class about Albert Einstein. Suppose all the proper pedagogical methodologies and technologies are utilized to instruct the class about Einstein and his thought. Now suppose the teacher, because of his or her belief that the world was created 4,212 years ago, omits informing the students about Einstein’s great insight, $E=mc^2$, believing that such information would undermine a 4,212 year-old-world theory. Beyond all this, suppose further that the teacher by a process of selective omission and emphasis cleverly arranges the content matter of the course in such a way as to leave students with the impression that Einstein actually supports a 4,212 year-old-world belief or is at least neutrally tolerant of it. Now I ask, “Is a ‘4,212 year-old-world Einstein’ Einstein?” Is Einstein Einstein without $E=mc^2$? What would such a teacher really be about: communicating truth concerning Einstein or trying to place the most authoritative name in physics on his or her own view of reality? Which is more self-servingly deceptive: an Einstein without $E=mc^2$ or a Jesus without His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies? Which is the greater absurdity: an Einstein who endorses a 4,212 year old world or a Jesus who endorses homicidal violence?

Very few Christians flee from the Nonviolent Jesus by themselves. Most require fellow travelers in order to maintain the mirage that they are following the Jesus of the Gospel, while traveling in the wrong direction down a one-way street. Much of Christian theology over the last 1700 years is an aggregation of pep talks by Christian comrades in arms spelling out how to be at peace and how to attain peace and meaning while steering clear of the Nonviolent Jesus. Much of the remainder of Christian theology, especially moral theology, is an apologia for deserting the Nonviolent Jesus of history and faith. Yet the Nonviolent Word, enshrined forever in the Gospel for all to hear and see, unrelentingly pursues His Church across the seasons and centuries “*with unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy.*”

“*All things betray thee, who betrayest Me,*” warns the “Hound.” To paraphrase

Gertrude Stein: The wrong way is the wrong way is the wrong way; the Nonviolent Word is the Nonviolent Word is the Nonviolent Word. Nothing can alter what is rooted in God for all eternity. Jesus asks His apostles, “Will you also leave me” (JN 6:68)? Peter responds with the impeccable clarity that should govern every Christians’ response to every temptation to repudiate the Nonviolent Jesus: “Lord, who shall we go to? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we know that you are the Holy One of God.” If the successors of the apostles flee the Nonviolent Jesus, where would they go? Who else has the words of eternal life? Perhaps, it is appropriate and necessary to recall, and to recall persistently and in exhaustive detail, where people have gone, spiritually and historically, when they have taken their leave of the Nonviolent Jesus. The reluctance of leadership, a reluctance that borders on willful refusal to repent, to name and own the evil and misery which it has provoked and which its predecessors have sponsored when they have cut the Church off from the Nonviolent Jesus is telling. It says, with a clarity that is embarrassingly transparent to the non-Christian world, that there is something unbearably distressing to be seen.

“All things flee thee, for thou fleest Me!” the “Hound” declares. If Jesus is the Redeemer, why doesn’t the world look more redeemed after 2000 years?” asks the entire non-Christian world. The answer is self-evident for those who have eyes and wish to see. The Kingdom of God can only be brought about by the means of the Kingdom of God. Not one speck of evil, not one unChrist-like act, not one act of homicidal violence, is needed for the Kingdom to come in all its fullness. To abandon the Nonviolent Jesus is to abandon the means that the Nonviolent Word of God communicates to humanity as the means by which the Kingdom (Reign) of God is to be established. The old Chesterton chestnut is apropos here: “It is not that Christianity has been tried and failed. It is that Christianity has been found too difficult and not tried.” The Christianity which is “not tried” is the Christianity of the Nonviolent Jesus who taught a Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. It is the Christianity that refuses to return injury for injury, that chooses to return good for injury, that accepts the cross of nonviolent suffering love which is the brick and mortar of the Kingdom of God. Every manner of kingdom can be built up by means contrary to the Way of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel—every manner of kingdom that is except the Kingdom of God. When the Churches with their leadership and laity abandon the Nonviolent Jesus and His Nonviolent Way, it must be asked what kingdom are they committed to bringing to earth? What king are they de facto serving? What King are they fleeing?

Is it only when “one stone does not remain upon another” (MK 13:1; LK 21:5; MT 24:2) at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, at St. John the Divine Cathedral in New York, at Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, in the United States, in England, in France, in Russia, in Belize that the words of the “Hound” will be understood: *“All things flee thee, for thou fleest Me!”*? Then again, maybe these words of warning can best be fathomed not by the total collapse of Westminster Cathedral, the Twin Towers or Monte

Casino, but in light of the dark, sorrowful and agonizing deathbed lament of Bishop Wolsey, “Had I but served my God with half the zeal I served my king.”

Stalin taught rather successfully that the big lie is easier to maintain and harder to expose than the small lie. In a world that operates economically on the moral acceptability of the proverb, “The rich man gains a market; the poor man loses a leg,” unmasking the lie of redemptive Christian violence looks impossible. Twenty-First Century Christianity seems as if it is going to be a blood-red Xerox of Twentieth Century Christianity which, of course, was a technologically magnified encore of the sixteen prior centuries of “justified” Christian slaughter. The big lie is almost unassailable. Even when it is pointed out, it perpetuates itself by claiming it is just one among many difficulties with which the Church must deal, like communion on the tongue or in the hand, or whether drinking alcohol is contrary to the Gospel. The big lie, however, is truth in drag. It is a major distortion of the underlying reality. When a person or group succumbs to its magnetism, the ruling lie feels like “gospel truth”—even when the Gospel explicitly repudiates it.

It is important to now stop. The truth has been stated. There comes a time when the continuation of a quibbling debate about an incontestable truth is spiritually unhealthy and serves only as an escape from decision. Because a Christian or Church does not know how to implement the Nonviolent Way of the Nonviolent Jesus does not alter the fact that He and His Way are nonviolent. The only process by which $E=mc^2$ could have had the profound effect it has had on human life is the process of millions of people spending billions of hours and dollars attempting to implement it by trial and error. Without this expenditure of time, mind and money, $E=mc^2$ would be as irrelevant to the world today as the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love are to Christianity today. Truth that is not incarnated, truth that remains only in the mind is truth that is powerless to help humanity. Known truth that is not permitted to enter human history is truth that brings judgment and pain upon humanity via the consequences that flow from its enforced absence.

One of the most faithful disciples ever of the Nonviolent Jesus is an all but unknown Protestant clergyman, Adin Ballou (1803-1890) from Hopedale, Massachusetts. Tolstoy in his masterpiece on Gospel Nonviolence, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, writes ten pages on Ballou and quotes him extensively. Ballou concludes his little book, *Christian Non-Resistance* (1846) with this poem:

*The earth, so long a slaughter-field,
Shall yet an Eden bloom;
The tiger to the lamb shall yield,
And War descend the tomb;
For all shall feel the Saviour's love,
Reflected from the cross—
That love, that non-resistant love,
Which triumphed on the cross.*

Now a truth that requires the crucifixion of the Son of God in order for it to break through the sophistries of history must be of colossal importance and must have monstrous barriers to overcome in order to be seen and accepted. The Cross of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is the truth without which the Church cannot be the Church it is supposed to be. The Nonviolent Cross is also the truth without which human beings cannot live the lives they were created to live, that is, lives of personal and social peace in communion with and in imitation of God. “The Cross,” reflects Mahatma Gandhi, “makes a universal appeal at the moment you give it universal meaning.” The Cross of Nonviolent Monotheism is humanity’s only hope because it is the authentic revelation of the nature and will of the Holy One, and hence is Divine Power acting in concert with the very structure of the universe. The Japanese Christian spiritual leader, Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960), imprisoned many times by Japanese authorities for speaking and writing about the Cross of Nonviolent Love universalizes its message and hence its invitation in these memorable words:

Love evolves perennially, never grudging sacrifice. Since love has never abhorred martyrdom, it perceives that in the process of evolution it is more effective to be killed rather than to kill. Men who fear to make the sacrifice of love will fight. Those who believe in the sacrifice through love believe in the principle of non-injury. For those who eternally evolve, there is an eternal cross.

Fleeing the Nonviolent Jesus of the Cross always remains an option. But, pursuit of the Constantinian Church, pursuit of the homicide-justifying Church, pursuit of fleeing pastors and flocks,

*down the nights and down the days;
down the arches of the years;
down the labyrinthine ways
of [their] own mind[s]...*

is the irrevocable and unconditional commitment of the Eternal Word of Nonviolent Love made flesh, Jesus Christ. His pursuit is our hope. Pursuit “*with unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy*” is the chosen task of this tremendous Lover until that day when all the Churches of Christianity can with one mind and one heart exclaim: “Now is the winter of our flight from Truth made glorious summer by facing the Nonviolent Son of God!”

*Do you see the eyes of the Crucified
Looking at you with searching gaze?
They are asking you a question:
Are you, in all seriousness,
Ready to enter once again
Into a covenant with the Crucified?
What are you going to answer?*

ST. EDITH STEIN

BIOGRAPHY

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Emmanuel Charles McCarthy is a priest of the Eastern Rite (Byzantine) of the Catholic Church. He is presently Acting Rector of St. Gregory the Theologian Byzantine Melkite Catholic Seminary in Roslindale, Massachusetts. Formerly a lawyer and a university educator, he is the founder and the original director of The Program for the Study and Practice of Nonviolent Conflict Resolution at the University of Notre Dame. He is also co-founder of PAX Christi—USA. He is married and he and his wife, Mary, who holds a Ph.D. from Boston College, have thirteen children. For over thirty-five years his primary vocation has been to call the Churches—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Evangelical—back to accepting and to following the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies. Over the decades he has directed retreats and conferences throughout the world and has written prolifically and prophetically on this unequalled betrayal of Jesus and of humanity by the Churches. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his life's work on behalf of genuine peace. His audio-video retreat on Gospel nonviolence, *Behold the Lamb*, is generally considered to be the most spiritually profound presentation of this matter available.