

ATONEMENT and JESUS' WAY OF NONVIOLENT LOVE OF FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Jesus of Nazareth is the Incarnation of God. Jesus is Nonviolent because God is Nonviolent. There is no separation or contradiction among Father, Son and Holy Spirit, only perfect simplicity and unity. God is One. The Will of the Father is the Will of the Son is the Will of the Holy Spirit. The One God who is invisible is love (1 JN 4:8) and rejects violence and enmity. We know this because Jesus of Nazareth, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, who is the visible image of the invisible God (COL 1: 15), who is God “*made flesh*,” rejects violence and enmity. There is no violence or enmity in God and therefore all that God is or does has to be devoid of violence and enmity—that includes the manner by which God saves humanity from the unyielding quicksand of evil and death in which it is perpetually and irrevocably trapped by its own choices of evil in thought, word and deed. Auto-salvation from evil and its consequences is impossible for human beings. Therefore “Yahweh saves” (*Yeshua*, Jesus’ name in Hebrew, means “Yahweh saves”) or there is no salvation from evil and death. The Nonviolent God does this through His Nonviolent Word Incarnate—the Nonviolent Jesus. The God, “*who is love*,” does this through the love of the God *who is love* incarnate, i.e., Jesus.

Now love (*agape*) whether divine or human has to be freely given or it is not love. If I hold a gun at someone’s head and tell him to say, “I love you,” and he says it, that is not love speaking, that is fear. That is not a person loving, that is a person fearing, despite the external manifestation of love. Violence is always a fear-full phenomenon. It therefore cannot be the manner in which God who is love saves humanity. Fear and *agape* are opposites. One drives out the other (1 JN 4:18). Fear and violence can procure obedience, respect, admiration and even adoration. But fear and violence cannot command love. Therefore, redemptive violence by the God who is revealed by Jesus in the Gospels as love is an impossibility to logically read into a Gospel understanding of Atonement. Violence and love as revealed by Jesus are antipodes. To walk down one way eliminates walking down the other. These last three sentences are true regardless of what Christians have said about God for the last 1700 years of Christianity.

Love not Suffering Saves

The most renowned Catholic Biblical Scholar of the Mid-Twentieth Century, Rev. John McKenzie, “*Mere animal pain does not save. The power, which destroys all other powers, is the power of love, the love of God revealed and active in Jesus Christ. God revealed in Jesus that He loves man and will deliver him through love and through nothing else. Identification with Jesus suffering is identification with Jesus loving.*” In a world drenched in evil, it may be necessary to suffer in order to love as Jesus loves, to love as God loves, but one is not choosing suffering as the salvific power. He or she is choosing love as the means to overcome evil in the face of an onslaught of evil that causes suffering to the one it is attacking by thought, word or deed.

Not a Robot

The salvation of a human being is not the salvation of a broken robot. Nor is God who saves the human being and humanity from their self-imprisoning history of choosing evil is not an omnipotent Robot that acts mechanically, bringing broken human robots into the repair shop, affixing new parts to them for the broken ones, whether they want them or not. Both God and the human being have freedom. If one or the other did not have it, God would not be God and the human being would not be a human being, because neither could love (*agapé*). Therefore, any Way of salvation from evil and death created by the God who is love as an act of love toward the human creature could not impose salvation on that person against that human being's freedom. Imposition would require using violence, would require violating the person's free will, would be to treat the person as a thing, a robot. God therefore could only offer salvation and the Way to salvation to a human being. The human being would then in his or her freedom have to either freely accept or reject the Way of salvation offered by God.

Auto-salvation

Now there is something in the contemporary Christian consciousness, Catholic and otherwise, that perceives the choice of evil, sin, as a minor affair, or as primarily an emotional/psychological problem, or as a social/political entity. But evil, to employ the language of the early Fathers of the Church is a mystery that is only a speck short of the mystery of God. Evil chosen is not something that exists only on the visible empirical level of existence. Within a single evil act there potentially lies the power to destroy in the present and in the future, temporally and eternally. Evil chosen has the power to destroy even the desire to change—to be the good person or community one once was and could be again. In a perverted pedagogy the more and longer the chosen evil is engaged in the less one knows about it and the more one is oblivious to the destruction it is causing within the self and for others. As the great Jewish theologian, Martin Buber, wrote, commenting of the power of evil as exposed in Hebrew Scriptures, *"It is the ultimate deception of evil that it brings a person to believe that once he has chosen it, he can control it."* The spiritual thought, "When you sin you are doing the devil's work," is so hackneyed now as to be used as a punch line in jokes. Perhaps a more telling expression of the same truth is "When you sin you are laying traps in places you are unaware of in yourself and in reality to imprison oneself and others in evil." If evil chosen, sin, were what a large segment of contemporary Christian consciousness presents it as, then there would be no real need for the Incarnation, the Teachings, the Life, the Passion, Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus. In time it would all be straightened out by reason, by science, by better communications among people or by all human beings adhering, via conversion or coercion, to some formulation of natural law. God may still be seen as the Creator but humanity would extricate itself, internally and externally from the consequences of the evil it has chosen—personally and communally—by its own wits. In other words, humanity would save itself from evil and death—no Divine help needed or desired.

This patent absurdity, if it is not seen as a self-evident untruth before, it will be clearly seen as the fantasy it is as one's final breath approaches! Only God has absolute existence. Only God can say I AM. I am because God is. My existence is a contingent existence, contingent on I AM willing me into existence and keeping me in existence.

Accident or Gift

There are only two choices. The human being's individual existence and that of his or her loved one's is either the result of atoms and galaxies arbitrarily banging into each other in an indifferent universe that has no inherent ultimate purpose for itself or for anything in it, or my existence and the existence of my loved ones, indeed of all people is a gift. Existence is either pure accident or a pure gift; it cannot be both and has to be one. If it is the product of merely the random intersecting of matter in an ultimately purposeless universe, then my existence is ultimately purposeless.

But if existence in itself and my existence within existence is gift, then there has to be a Giver. The question then arises, "Why did the Giver give me existence?" In other words, the Giver of existence—all existence, all people's existence, and my existence—had to have a purpose for the gift of existence to me and to all. Searching for, finding and adhering to that purpose for which the Giver gave existence would then be the purpose of a human life gifted with a brain that can ask that question.

However, after the choice of the first person born of Fallen human beings, Cain, to act contrary to the purpose of the Giver and kill his brother Abel, the search for the truth of the purpose for which the Giver gave existence, as well as, the desire to adhere to it once found, became impossibly clouded and confused because of what Cain killed in himself, in his own brain, when he killed another human being. He closed down his capacity for empathy, which the Giver bestowed on him to guide him along the Way of the will of the Giver. The act of homicide always results in destroying something in the killer that is essential for living the life for which the Giver gave life.

Revelation Required for Salvation

In human history there are enough philosophical and theological Towers of Babel into which a person can enter to try to find the Giver and His purpose, i.e., God and God's will, to go around the earth thousands of times. In the human heart—weighed down by the gravity of personal sin and a panoply of conflicting, confusing and clouded desires—searching for, finding and adhering to the purpose of the Giver in giving existence is a task that reason, corrupted by sin and concupiscence, is unable to achieve on its own after the mystery of Fall. For example, would you or I left to our reason alone have come up with the SERMON ON THE MOUNT or the Sermon from the Cross as the Way to fulfill the purpose of the Giver of existence—the Way to do the Will of God? You bet we wouldn't! In fact, no one in the history of world presented that as the Way to fulfill the purpose for which existence was given, the Way to do the Will of God, before Jesus. And, few do today.

Revelation from God is required because reason alone in its present corrupted condition is insufficient for knowing God and God's purpose and will for humanity. God is free not to give this added gift of revelation, as the human being is free to accept or not to accept it. But why does God offer this new revelation at all to human beings and why in the person of His own incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth? Perhaps this encapsulation of the process of salvation as found in the Eastern Churches of Christianity, Catholic and Orthodox, will serve as a clarification of thought on this critical matter, as well as, on correcting the matter that God is

an eternal *Tyrannosaur Rex*, who demands human blood sacrifice before He will permit Himself to be reconciled with a humanity that has disobeyed His will, i.e., sinned:

1. God is love
2. God became human so that human beings could become God.
3. Love became human so that human beings could become Love.
4. How can a human being become Love?
5. Only by Loving.
6. Loving how, in what way?
7. By loving as Jesus, the Incarnation of God, Loves.

Love, the Alpha and the Omega

Everything begins and ends with “*God is love*” (1 JN 4:8,16). Hence everything God does is out of love. He drew all things out of nothingness into being out of love. Out of love God created human beings. Out of love God redeemed human beings after they had done evil. Out of love God made human beings in His image and likeness, which is with the freedom and ability to love. Love by its intrinsic nature is the one thing neither God nor the human being can do all alone. There must be someone else, someone to love, or there can be no love. This is a truth behind the mystery of God as a Trinity of Persons. Love creates a union, a oneness, between two or more persons. A union rooted in love has no end to its growth and intensity. Love Itself created the freedom and capacity to love in human beings so that they could love and multiply love, know the Good News of love and bring into existence an indefinite number of other human beings to know the Good News of love without end and from which “*nothing can separate us*” (RM 8:31-39).

But when Cain kills Abel, the first recorded sin in history after the Fall, the first act of un-love, of anti-love, something, as noted above, changes in Cain, as it does in all human being when they refuse to love as God loves them, when they sin. God still loves Cain. Indeed, God places a mark on Cain to protect him from capital punishment, from being killed because he killed. But from Cain’s side something of that union of love with God was destroyed when he broke his union of love with Abel, as something of our union of love with God is from our side broken when we sin against the *Father of all* by choosing not to love one or more of His infinitely loved sons and/or daughter, that is, when we decide to do evil to a neighbor—whether by gun or tongue, whether by pen or pistol.

The Sins of One Generation are Passed Onto the Next Generation

Now, living generation after generation in a consciousness altered by choosing not to love has awful consequences, not simply on the individual whose mind has been clouded by sin but also on those with whom the person comes into contact, including the smallest of children. A human child is now born and nurtured not in the harmony, knowledge and intensity of the unconditional, everlasting love (*agape*) of all people and of the God of Love who in all and loves all, but rather in some spirit or spirits other than the Holy Spirit of God-imitating-love. What will follow generation after generation then will be lethally disordered minds and destruction-based hearts in some un-loving, un-Godly spirit(s) masquerading as God and as love. These unloving spirits, e.g., envy, anger, lust, hatred, revenge, fear, greed, mercilessness, etc., indulged in generation after generation become a second nature cemented over the human being’s God given authentic nature —by society and by self. People then

live-out of this second nature as if it were their true nature, generating values, attitudes, beliefs and even gods from it, who serve to validate this second nature. Once this encrustation of a second nature is placed over the nature given to a person by the Giver who is love, which *ipso facto* must be a nature compatible with loving as God loves, then the human beings and *mutatis mutandis* the human community cannot even see that God is love, how God loves each and every human being, how each and every human being has been created at the very root of his or her being to love in the image and likeness of Uncreated Love.

Generationally nurtured lovelessness, whether named love or not by the society or person, blinds all to their Source, Purpose and Destiny. Human beings in this moribund spiritual, moral and psychological state have deprived themselves of the perception that they were created by Love out of Love to love their brothers and sisters in the human family and in the Father's family, as well as, to love the Divine Lover who created a heaven and earth that is full of the glory (magnification) of God who is love. But such deprivation of perception always results in the deprivation of reason in understanding good and evil and hence always results in a deprivation of judgment, regarding the kind of God God is and the purpose for which God gave human beings existence. The lust for heroin in a heroin addict creates a second nature out of which he or she lives and chooses. It alters his or her perception, and hence moral reason and moral judgment, because all is filtered through a mind that craves heroin. So also is the case with every unloving desire chosen. Reinforced by cultural brainwashing from the cradle forward, generation on top of generation, a person or community becomes by the exercise of reason deprived of perception the moral equivalent of the Portrait of Dorian Gray—an impeccably logical human being in the service of madness.

Return to the Source

Only Divine Love, love as God loves, can create that union, communion, oneness between persons that is capable of indefinite and eternal growth and intensity, because only Holy Love, the Love that is the Eternal I AM, does not come to an end. And since the innate God-given knowledge of such love is layered over with the hardened decay of millennia of human generations acculturating and normalizing unlove from the first breath of the person to the last, a return to an awareness of the true Source of life and love is permanently closed down. Why? The only Way a return to Love can take place is by the Way of love. Because of the second nature of lovelessness hard layered over humanity's God-given nature by tens of thousands of years of unloving choices, humanity cannot even conceive that such a return is possible, let alone how it is possible. It is as far removed from human consciousness and consideration, as is the thought that a candidate for President of the U.S. would run his or her campaign promising to follow the SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

The Alienated Human Mind

The separation between God and humanity here is not from God's side. God still loves each of those He created out of love with a personal infinite love. The separation is from the side of humanity whose members choose not to love. What they choose is less and less loving, which leads to less and less of the capacity to love and finally, less and less of the capacity to even know what love is. By each choice not to love, union, communion, oneness with God and each other grows weaker and dimmer within people until human beings feel separated from God, feel the absence of God, feel there is no God and of course feel little unity by way of the

Holy Spirit of love with other human beings except, sometimes, with some family members or a few friends.

This isolation—the opposite of union, communion or oneness—is spelled out, true to life, in the title and content of David Riesman’s seminal work, *THE LONELY CROWD*. The entire modern genre of philosophy called existentialism—summed up in Friedrich Nietzsche’s misunderstood and misused phrase, “*God is dead*,”—is a description of and commentary on the total cosmic loneliness of the human being, lost in a universe into which he or she is thrown without their knowledge or consent and with only other almost totally ignorant lumps of clay like him or herself to tell him or her what it is all about and with no exit visible but the ultimate isolation of oblivion in the abyss of death. Such is the consequence of the choice of unlove, evil, across the ages—namely, the loss of a sense of loving union, communion, oneness with other human beings and with Love itself.

But, God who is love, never ceases to be, never ceases loving all human beings to whom He gave the gift of existence, and never ceases desiring that they would desire to be in loving union with Him and with each other. So, the Divine “quandary” was *how to save humanity from the consequences of its unloving choices while simultaneously leaving human beings free not to love other human beings and/or God—freedom being a condition precedent for loving other human beings and/or God?*

Memetics

The answer lies within the structure of the brain with which God created human beings, namely, its neurological capacity to imitate other human beings and to learn truth or untruth, good or evil thereby. Children from the earliest age begin to imitate the human beings around them. Within two days of birth a child can imitate an adult’s facial expressions and on it goes from there to peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake, to picking up a tiny toy telephone and making sounds into it in imitation of adults making telephone calls. Imitation plays a critical and major role on how, for good or for ill, a human being perceives and interprets the world from infancy onward. Good and bad, right and wrong, worthwhile and worthless, meaningful and meaningless, desirable and undesirable, truth and falsehood are all thrust into a child’s brain as normal, “*that’s the way it is*,” before he or she has any choice in the matter or knows what is happening to them, let alone has any significant ability to evaluate the input. The song from the musical, *SOUTH PACIFIC*, lays bear the terrible dangers to the person and to humanity that lurk within the innate capacity and necessity of human beings learning by imitation: “*You’ve got to be taught before it is too late, before you are six or seven or eight, to hate all the people your relatives hate. You’ve got to be carefully taught.*”

The human is indissolubly linked to imitation. He or she has the program for it functioning within him or her practically from the hour of birth. A human being becomes an operational human being in a society by imitating or copying other human beings in whose presence he or she find themselves—or in today’s world of audio and video mass media by imitating or copying simulations of human beings whose behavior he or she is experiencing. Imitation amounts to the transfer of information—true or untrue, good or evil, etc.—between individuals and down generations without the need for genetic inheritance. When enough people are presented with the same model for imitation, imitation then becomes a form of

social learning, the accuracy of which becomes near impossible to even question as truth—even when erroneous information being nurtured by imitation from the cradle to the grave is destroying human life on a grand scale internally and/or externally. Ideas about God, what kind of God God is and what God desires from and for human beings are subject to the imitation dynamic in the individual human being and in a culture as much as is language learning.

Love is Free Love—Or It Is Not Love

Since love cannot be imposed and since human beings are lost in the darkness of imitative traditions of unlove in which humanity has blanketed the entire human condition by its generational anti-love choices, how can human beings be saved from themselves, from what they have done to all humanity by what they have done and still do in spades to the individual person?

God in His never faltering love for each and all solves the enigma of this hellish plight by choosing to become a human being in all things but sin, and as Jesus of Nazareth lives the entire process of a human life from conception to death in conformity with that love that was in the beginning, is now and ever will be, and in whose image and likeness each human being is created. The individual human being and the human community now has a flesh and blood model to freely choose to follow, to imitate, if they wish to again know and live that love that is union, communion, oneness with God and with all neighbors and is the Way to union, communion, oneness with God and with all God's sons and daughters eternally. But God Incarnate, Jesus, must first live that love within a humanity and with individual human beings who are the living results of ages of imitating unlove, of doing what is unholy, of passing on evils, 'large' and 'small,' as the normal and only reasonable way to live in this world. This means that unlove is always nearby to try to prove to Jesus and all humanity that it is the power and wisdom, the way, the truth and the life, the sustaining and the protecting force that human beings need to be truly human and to survive in this jungle that is the human condition.

The Incarnate God, Jesus, had to be "*like us humans in all things but sin,*" if He was to fulfill His merciful mission of saving the humanity in the only Way it could be saved, by loving human beings as God loves them and presenting for all to see a flesh and blood model of that love to freely choose to imitate individually and communally. By choosing to live as a human being amidst the rotten fruits of tens of thousands of years of human beings imitating unlove in the flesh, and only by doing this, was He able reveal to human beings, to show human beings the Way to love in confrontation with chronic and all-permeating unlove. Being gossiped about in derogatory terms, e.g., "*He eats with sinners and prostitutes,*" being run out of his hometown by the self-righteous, being plotted against by the holy men of His day, being thought crazy by family members and friends, being betrayed, being condemned by the best and the brightest, being tortured by soldiers, being humiliated and being killed are only some of the evil manifestations of unlove, of human existence, Jesus had to confront, endure and respond to with the love of God in order to be *the* model and witness to Divine Love, to the only love that saves, to the only love that has within it the power to result in an eternal communion, union, of love with God and with each human being. Without seeing Jesus live this love in conflict with real evil, petty and gross, imitation of Jesus in the world of sin and

death would be impossible. Then the only persons to imitate would still be people nurtured in the same way all have been nurtured generation after generation since Cain.

The Key

Jesus' "*new commandment*," spoken at the Last Supper, moments before entering into His great confrontation of evil with love, reads thus: "I give to you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34, 15:12). THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (§1970, 2822) teaches that the *new commandment* "contains the entire moral Law of the Gospel" and "summarizes the teaching of Jesus." This is because as Pope Benedict XVI has written, "Jesus and His teaching cannot be separated. His words and His deeds are one. He is His words and His words are Him." If He did not love as God—who is love—loves through the vicissitudes of unlove that human beings have to confront, His "*new commandment*" would not carry much spiritual or moral practical weight. But He was unreservedly faithful to the love that is the love of God in the common affairs of His life and in the terrifying crisis moments. And because of this, each human being and all humanity has an exit from beneath the monstrous tell of normalized, imitative unlove, un-holiness and evil with which humanity has covered itself. Did Jesus have to be crucified and yet love unceasingly throughout the specific ordeal of crucifixion to save humanity, to open a door for humanity to escape the perpetual darkness in which it had cloaked itself? Maybe not specifically crucifixion, but He would still have had to confront and endure unlove, evil, suffering and death as all human beings must—and He would have had to confront and endure them with the same steadfast love with which He confronted them in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, at the pillar of His torture and on the cross of His death, if He was to be the embodiment, model and in the end witness to, via His Resurrection, that love that saves from evil and death and re-establish humanity in that knowledge and reality of union, communion and oneness with God who is love. Freely chosen love, modeled on the Word of God who became flesh, is the only means that can re-establish for the human being consciousness of eternal communion with God, and Jesus is the infallible presentation of that love to humanity. The imitation of Christ, i.e., following the "*new commandment*," individually and by extension collectively in the Church—for the Church is supposed to be the community that is the "extension of Christ in time and space" (St. Augustine)—is the only Way to be what we truly are and to become what we were truly created to be, "*partakers of the Divine Nature*" (CCC #460) in an eternal union with the *Father of all*. Participation in a reality is a way of knowing the reality. Freely participating, by loving as Christ loves, in Divine Love is the Way to Divine Love and to awareness of being in communion with Divine Love.

When Jesus says, "*Follow me*," He is not ordering a person to do something. He is inviting the person to imitate God who is love "*made flesh*," so that he or she can return to his or her right mind and heart and again be what they are—a being made in the image and likeness of God. So that he or she can "*become God*" (THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #460).

The Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love: '*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him* (1JN 4:9). *The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness. Jesus is the*

model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law "Love one another as I have loved you" (CCC #458, 459)

God is love and God became a human being so that human beings could become God are explicit teachings of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches and other Churches as to the ultimate 'why' of the Incarnation. The love that is modeled on the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus once chosen by a person has within it the infinite power of God. As with splitting an atom, the choice to do an act of Christlike love releases into the human situation immeasurable and unfathomable sanctifying, healing, reconciling and uniting energy. What energy of Christlike love can do for one and for all once released by the choice of a human being into the human situation is beyond imagination or calculation—even unto bringing salvation to all people.

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his or her brother or sister is a liar. This is the commandment we have from Him: Whoever loves God must also love his or her brother and sister" (1Jn: 20, 21). The love that is the love of God, the love that is Christlike love, the love by which we partake in the nature of divinity is and must be catholic since God is the *Father of all*. No son or daughter of the *Father of all* that passes our way on earth or in heaven can be unloved by us without spiritually and morally stepping back into the world of unlove and to that degree un-union with God. *"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1Jn 4:8).* Eternal unity, by way of a communion of love with the God who is love, is impossible by way of a selective love of neighbor, e.g., the exclusion of our enemies. An unloved enemy is the results of a person(s) living in and out of unlove, not in living in communion with God who is love.

The Cost of the Key

The price God had to pay for the redemption of a humanity with a free will from evil and death, from the hermetically sealed world of unlove into which human beings had sealed themselves, was to become a human being in Jesus and lived a life of Godly love in the flesh, thereby revealing the Way to exit this airtight charnel house. Not really knowing what the omniscience of God involves, He may have gotten far worse than He anticipated when He chose to enter into the human condition as an ordinary human being and love as God loves. But whatever the case may be on that point, He paid the price. He did what had to be done—which we now know was to love as God loves throughout His life, including during the nightmarish eighteen hours of His Passion—in order to give human beings the escape key, the Way to live in thought, word and deed, that would release them from the hellish inferno they had made of human existence. But like the free gift of creation from God, the free gift of redemption from God was not a gift by which the human being was stripped of his or her humanity and turned into a painless, blissful, mechanical robot. Redemption, like creation, is the redemption of a human being with free will. This means that no human being has to accept or use the key that opens the door to the Way of eternal communion with God. It also means that either God nor human beings can stop at some point loving, eternally loving, the unloving, which means that the almighty power to save is always operative in God and those in communion with God.

Atonement

This process of Atonement, which can be called by the various theological names, reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, *theosis*, deification or divinization is initiated by God's merciful love, both in its original creation dimension and in its redemption dimension. God so loves humanity that He created human beings and so loves humanity that he redeemed them by sending His Son to give His beloved human beings the key to re-opening the door to the knowledge of His love and salvation—a door humanity had closed once human beings had fallen into unlove towards each other and hence towards God. *“Love is of God, everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God for God is love”* (1 JN 4:7-8). *“God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God in him or her”* (1 JN 4:16).

However, in all cases whether it be creation or redemption, *“we love because God loved us first”* (1 JN 4:19). But note the logic of Divine Nonviolent Love: *“In this is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”* (1 JN 4:10-11). Logic drenched in unlove of the world says *“If I love you, you should love me”* This of course makes the love that is being talked about comparable to the love of life in a brothel, tit for tat, the logic of equivalency, the logic of justice, an eye for an eye, love for love.

Atonement and a Return to Rightmindedness

Jesus' atoning sacrifice was a sacrifice of love and for love because it was necessary to reveal to fallen human beings by word and deed how to truly be the loving human beings they were created to be, and thereby again be in communion with all neighbors and with the Source and Sustainer of all—God who is love. The logic of God's love turns the logic of the world upside down, *“Since God so loved us, we should love one another”* is neither the wisdom nor practice the world. The logic of Divine Love, Christlike love, is love freely given by God to the unloving, that is to those still in sin, in order to inspire, to motivate, to empower and to energize the sinner to freely give the same gift of love to other sinners, that he or she is receiving from God via their creation and redemption. It is this logic of Divine love of neighbor and of God that God Incarnate, Jesus, at agonizing sacrifice to Himself, places by way of His entire life before the eyes of human beings to imitate. Especially does He do this at the ultimate moment of His chosen sacrifice to love for the sake of reveling authentic love—the moment of the Cross. In the midst of the horrific pain and torment of a crucifixion He loves the unloving who brought this intolerable misery down upon Him. He loves them by praying for their forgiveness and even offering an exculpating excuse to God for them: *“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”* Jesus revelation of the love that saves, that leads to and is communion with God, that is to be imitated individually and communally is clear: *“Whoever cannot love a neighbor whom he or she can see, cannot love God whom they have not seen”* (1 JN 4:20). The neighbor according to His SERMON ON THE MOUNT and His Sermon from the Cross includes the lethal enemy.

The community of Christians, the Church, is where collectively this logic of Holy love, Christlike love, is meant to be creatively lived by all the members and therefore available for observation and imitation by anyone from 9 hours to 969 years. And all that is required to participate in this process of Atonement—conceived by the merciful love of God and made

available to all by His Son's sacrifice of relinquishing all means of confronting evil in a radically unloving world except the means of Divine love—is to choose second by second until seconds are no more “*to love one another as I have loved you.*” That such a love is always nonviolent and never excludes anyone, including lethal enemies is self-evident in the inspired and revelatory text of the Gospels.

Means and Ends of Atonement

Saint Thomas Aquinas states, “*Means that cannot accomplish their intended ends are illusions.*” They may accomplish other ends. But, they are illusionary means, non-existent means, and unreal means, in relation to the ends desired. Gandhi somewhat less prosaically says, “*The means are the ends in embryo. As you choose your means, you get your ends. That is the iron law of the moral universe.*” Most people would say that this is also the binding law of the physical universe. If you sow wheat, you get wheat, not corn. You may advertise your wheat as corn and people may buy it as corn. But when they use it or eat it, its effects, e.g., on celiac disease patients, will be those of wheat, not corn.

If one wishes to be in eternal union, communion, unity with God who is love (*agape*), the only means to that end is to love (*agape*). We know what that love is and looks like on earth in confrontation with evil, as well as in daily existence from the life, teaching and death of Jesus. Nothing generates union, communion, unity, a sense of oneness of identity as does love between human beings with each other and between God and human beings. Restoring that lost union, communion, unity and oneness for human beings in time and in eternity via human beings freely deciding to live, indeed to be, Christlike Nonviolent Love is the purpose of God Incarnate's imitable atoning sacrifice of Nonviolent Love. It is a sacrifice of self to Nonviolent Love of all in all circumstances in order to reveal, energize and make practically possible to human beings the Nonviolent Love of all in all circumstances—thereby bring to light the only means to eternal union, communion, oneness with God that is not an illusionary means. It is why this process is called AT-ONE-MENT.

—EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY