

Pope Francis and Protecting People from “Unjust Aggression” (Part One)

That people have to be protected from evil is not an issue. Jesus came to protect people from evil now and forever. Indeed He came to protect people from evil by vanquishing evil. The Christian cannot just stand by, as Jesus did not just stand by, and let evil run rampant, while he or she does nothing but watch it take its course. To give but one obvious example, it would be wrong to simply watch the Palestinian people be subjected to war crime after war crime, crime against humanity after crime against humanity, hideous evil after hideous evil by the Netanyahu-Shamir-Begin disciples within Israel and Judaism, and do nothing.

As Pope Francis said to reporters flying back to Rome from Korea, *"In these cases, where there is an unjust aggression, I can only say that it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor. I underscore the verb 'stop.' I'm not saying 'bomb' or 'make war,' just 'stop.' And the means that can be used to stop them must be evaluated."*

In the First World's media frenzy to morally validate its own anti-Gospel violence justifying value system, it preemptively flooded every avenue of communication with the idea that what Francis said is that it is morally legitimate for Catholics and Christians to go into Israel and Gaza and kill the unjust killers of Palestinian men, women and children. He did not say that! Read the statement. He did not endorse military violence as a moral means for Catholics, Christians, or anyone else for that matter, to stop violence.

But, the universal media presentation of his words is that he morally put Peter's seal of approval on taking out the sword violent military interventionist action against the likes of Israel for the "unjust aggression" it is carrying out against Palestinians, as well as, against other groups engaged in "unjust aggression." He did not. Read his words. The secular and the Constantinian Christian media blitzkrieg to saturate the world with the thought that Pope Francis approves of Catholics and Christians, and non-Christians, using militarized homicide to stop violence is so completely overwhelming and suffocating all other possible thought on the subject that what Francis actually said cannot be separated from what others are saying he said, which, in fact, he did not say.

"I'm not saying 'bomb' or 'make war,' just 'stop.' I underscore the verb 'stop.' Those are not words that morally validate Catholics or Christians or anyone else using military violence. If anything the word "not" of itself communicates that military violence and homicide is exactly what he is not morally endorsing let alone advocating.

"And the means that can be used to stop them must be evaluated." 'Means' are always evaluated in terms ends desired and ideas that transcend the immediate moment. For example, if a person says, "We need to evaluate that candidate for the job," he or she means that there are standards that exist independent of the person that must be used to measure whether this candidate is suited or not suited to do the job that is available. The candidate has to meet those standards, to whatever degree desired by the employer, or else he or she will not have the value that the company needs in that job and his evaluation for the job will be a negative one.

So also states Pope Francis, this must be the case in dealing with *stopping* an “unjust aggressor,” whether it is by Israel, the United States, Britain, ISIS, France, Russia, etc. Certainly in evaluating the means that need to be employed to simply *stop* an “unjust aggressor,” the means being evaluated are not the means needed to conquer or to destroy or to procure surrender from an “unjust aggressor.”

“The means to stop them must be evaluated.” Francis *“underscores the verb ‘stop.’”* “Unjust aggressors” can be stopped in an untold number of ways other than killing and maiming them. For example in the case of Israel, the U.S. and the EU notifying Israel that all aid military and domestic will be cut off immediately by emergency executive order for an extended time into the future unless it *stops* its “unjust aggression” against the Palestinians, that dual citizenship status of people holding both Israeli and US or EU citizenship would be terminated and the person would have to make a choice and a renunciation, divestment from Israeli corporations, etc. have very high probability of *stopping* “unjust aggression” against the Palestinians.

In the case of ISIS or other non-state terrorist groups, who never possess the wherewithal to make one AK 47 or its ammunition, one M 16 or its ammunition, rockets or rocket launches, short range, long ranger or battlefield missiles, or any other piece of modern weaponry or replacement parts, cutting of their weapons supply has about a equally extremely high probability of stopping the “unjust aggression” of the non-state group. The black market organizations and operators who make a fortune in the arms trade by running a perpetual and overflowing river of armaments into ISISesque groups across the globe are known to every major governmental intelligence agency in the world. Moreover, those who finance the purchase of those weapons are traceable and known. Both the black market arms makers and those super-wealthy people and organization and states that ultimately pick-up the tab for the weapons have million and billions of dollars worth of assets in the U.S. and the EU that can be frozen or confiscated in order to *stop* the flow of that without which ISIS and ISISesques non-state “unjust aggressors” cannot operate.

Until such step, and many, many others that are available, are taken against “unjust aggressors” – state or non-state—it is impossible to claim one has reach the point of last resort, which is the point one needs to reach before homicidal violence can be morally justified even in just war theory.

However, let me conclude with this anecdote from decades ago. In the spring of 1970 while teaching at the University of Notre Dame and at the height of the U.S. War on Vietnam, I organized an anti-war rally on the campus in the large courtyard between Dillon Hall and Alumni Hall. I asked Rev. John L. McKenzie who was on the faculty of the Theology Department at the time to speak to the gathering. He did. Upon the conclusion of his talk, which had several satirical but poignant references to the number of Christians killing people in Vietnam and the nonviolent and love of enemies teachings of Jesus, a student got up in the Q&A period and said with a perceptible level of aggressivity, *“What you’re saying is stupid. Nonviolence is stupid. It doesn’t work and it can’t work!”* McKenzie’s response was, *“Most Christian do not believe that Jesus knows what He is talking about in this area. They dismiss Him as unrealistic at best, probably stupid. Therefore they refuse to even to try to implement what He taught about nonviolence and love of enemies. This guarantees that His Way of nonviolence will never enter into history as more than a naïve and stupid idea. Give me the money that Christians give to the Pentagon for war, and I’ll show you nonviolence works.”*

—EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

Pope Francis and Protecting People from “Unjust Aggression” (Part Two)

Toward the end of the process that resulted in the US Catholic Bishops publishing their 1983 Pastoral, *The Challenge of Peace*, a Bishop requested to the conference of Bishops that an alteration to a particular paragraph be undertaken in order to make more palpable the nonviolence of Jesus and of the original Christian community. Cardinal Joseph Bernardine, the chair of the committee chosen to compose the pastoral on which the Bishops’ Conference would vote, responded by asking the gathering of Bishops to reject the requested change because “*it would undermine the planned ambiguity of the document.*”

One of the practical difficulties of the Petrine ministry as it presently is structured and administered is that it is very often impossible to determine if the Successor to Peter is speaking to Catholics or to Christians in general or to humanity as a whole. It is very often equally difficult to determine if he is speaking as the Pope, as a Catholic or Christian or as a human being with a point of view. I am not referring here to an infallible proclamation, which must always be unequivocally and explicitly declared by the Pope to be such. There can be no ambiguity about a statement or writing being an *ex cathedra* infallible dogma in the area of faith or morals, e.g., the Dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (Pope Pius IX, 1854) and Assumption (Pope Pius XII, 1950). An ambiguity about whether a declaration by a Pope is infallible means it is not infallible. So infallible Papal statements are not the concern here.

The concern here is the thousand upon thousands of other ideas a Pope expresses publicly. From what principles is he speaking? To what audience is he speaking? What degree of spiritual, theological or moral authority, short of infallibility, do his utterances carry beyond that of any reasonable person—and for whom?

If the Pope is saying something simply as a reasonable person to other people, that carries no more authority than the self-evident truth-quality of his premises, the accuracy of his logic and the consistency of his conclusions which his premises and logic will permit. This is precisely the situation that exists for every human being who honestly communicates with another human being about some matter. The problem enters in when it cannot be ascertained whether the Pope is speaking from self-evident premises that can be known and validated or invalidated by any human being as self-evidently true. Or, whether he is speaking from premises that are derived from the authority of His faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior, which he is logically applying to some aspect or another of the human condition. If the latter is the case, the self-evident truth of these faith-based premises is not self-evident to someone outside the Pope’s faith consciousness, and therefore norms of behavior that can be logically derived from them are not universally true for all people, and hence no person or group outside of the Pope’s faith is or can be expected to follow them—let alone be coerced into following them.

With the above in mind, examine Pope Francis’ statement to reporters on his flight back to Rome from Korea. “*In these cases, where there is an unjust aggression, I can only say that it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor. I underscore the verb ‘stop.’ I’m not saying ‘bomb’ or ‘make war,’ just ‘stop.’ And the means that can be used to stop them must be evaluated.*” Is Francis speaking here as just one human being

communicating his reasonable understanding of what should be done to other human beings? Or, is he speaking here out of his faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord, God and Savior, and as the definitive revealer of God and God's will to humanity?

If it is the former I would suggest there would be no shortage of human beings who would have one or more bones to pick with him over the reasonableness of his statement in its premises and application. Depending on whose ox is being gored and what information people are allowed to know, they may see ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Israel, Hamas, the US, Britain or France as an unjust aggressor. However, within these groups they and their supporters see themselves as justified employers of violence. So by what reasonable standard is "unjust aggression" determined? If a group is firing guns at people today, who have been firing guns at them for decades, does that mean that a violent response to such a history is unjust aggression? If a group is fighting to get back land it had lived on for the thousands of years and that was stolen by murderous violence from them, is that unjust aggression? If a group is trying to protect by violence its people from those who hate them and have killed them in the past, or if a religious faith is trying to preserve itself from having the perversities of those who don't belong to it imposed upon them, is that unjust aggression? If massive financial investments that a group has made in a geographical area are on the verge of being taken or destroyed, is that groups violence unjust aggression? If a religious group is being decimated by another religious group who is sending hundreds of thousands of adherents thousands of miles to cross borders and kill and maim millions of the first groups' people, is the first religious group's violence unjust aggression? As a reasonable man making a reasonable proposal on stopping unjust aggression Francis cannot leave the term 'unjust aggressor' hanging out there without telling people what this term reasonably means to him. Without a definition of "unjust aggression," how does one reasonably know whom to stop? Ambiguity here reduces such a statement to a banal platitude. Is voicing banal, reasonable platitudes what the Petrine Ministry was instituted by Jesus for?

Beyond this, why isn't bombing and making war on unjust aggressors the right way of reasonably stopping them? And by what reasonable moral standard does one evaluate what are the moral means to stop an unjust aggression. Assuming Francis is speaking here as one reasonable person to another, if he were asked the question in a college class that the reporters on the plane asked him regarding cross-border intervention, and he answered it the way he responded to reporters, I think he might be given an 'F,' because his reasonable answer is so full of reasonable loopholes that it amounts to a non-answer. It is a highly ambiguous Rorschach answer into which each person or group can project anything it wants to see into it or put anything it wants to do under its moral canopy. It functions in the human condition exactly as the perfidious Christian Just War Theory does. Its ambiguity serves as a moral *carte blanche* for doing what Jesus taught must not be done.

Therein lies the difficulty with the planned ambiguity that results in not knowing whether the Vicar of Christ and Vicar of St. Peter is only speaking as an intelligent, well-meaning, reasonable human being, or is speaking as the Rock of faith, the Rock of the Church, adhering to the commission he and the other Apostles were explicitly given by Jesus, after His resurrection: "*Teach them to obey all that I have commanded you*" (Mt 28:19).

—EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

Pope Francis and Protecting People from “Unjust Aggression” (Part Three)

Christians and people in general who justify homicidal violence as the way to stop “unjust aggression”—whatever that is, e.g., the unjust aggression of the US against the people of El Salvador or an abortionist against a child *in utero*—are forever running to the analogy that “if there is a fire the first job is to throw water on it to extinguish the fire and save what is being destroyed, and then later fire prevention systems can be discussed and put into place.” How does one argue against such a self-evident and reasonable common sense truth such as this? One doesn’t! It would be irrational and callous to sit in Antium and fiddle around with esoteric ideas on the nature of fire while Rome is burning. “*Start throwing water on the fire now,*” would be the only reasonable, as well as compassionate, course of action. Wouldn’t it?

No! It would not! Throwing water on a fire can extinguish a fire, but throwing water on a fire can also exacerbate a fire. Water is a fuel for some types of fire. Used on many categories of fires it can produce a ferocious eruption of heat and flame, and in many instances leave smoldering beneath the ashes for extensive periods of time residue that has the potential to cause further destruction. One has to know the content that initiated and sustains the fire before one is in a position to stop the fire from spreading its destruction.

Pope Francis recognizes this and therefore concludes his statement on stopping “unjust aggressors” by saying, “*And the means that can be used to stop them must be evaluated.*”

‘Means’ are always evaluated in terms of ends desired and norms that transcend or exist prior to the immediate situation, e.g., God’s will, the maintenance of power and wealth, the Pythagorean Theorem if one is a carpenter who plans to build a set of stairs, etc. Means that cannot achieve the ends they were chosen to achieve are illusionary means. They may achieve other ends, but if they cannot achieve the ends they were chosen for they are fanciful means.

To stone a chronically disobedient teenager boy to death as a way of disciplining him so he will be obedient is obviously the choice of illusionary means, since the boy is no longer around to obey. To kill the evil one to stop evil is equally a choice of fanciful means. Jesus made this quite clear: “*How can Satan drive out Satan?*” (Mk 23:4 ff; MT 9:34, 12:24; Lk 11:15) Or, as Mahatma Gandhi stated it, “*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.*” Or, as W.H. Auden wrote in his poem, *September 1, 1939*, which has been so often quoted in relation to the Twin Towers’ tragedy, “*I and the public know/What all schoolchildren learn, /Those to whom evil is done/Do evil in return.*” Evil perpetuates itself by deceiving people into choosing evil to stop evil.

Many, perhaps, most people who have ever lived, including most moral theologians, regardless of religion, ignore or reject what Jesus and Gandhi are communicating as truth here. For example, such Twentieth Century theological notables as Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., obsessed with his quixotic view of the nobility of the military man and glories of battle, and Martin Buber, obsessed with a desire for a piece of geography, publicly rejected Jesus and Gandhi teaching on the

consequences of choosing evil to drive out evil. Indeed most of those whom people consider “the greats” of history, Christian or otherwise, have utterly rejected, perhaps more accurately ignored, this truth by which Jesus and Gandhi lived and for which and in which they gave their lives.

Previously in Part Two of this series on Pope Francis’ words to journalist on intervention, when I was speaking about his nebulous, non-defined term “unjust aggressor,” in his statement, I wrote, “Ambiguity here reduces this statement to a banal platitude. Francis’ statement on intervention is a Rorschach answer into which each person or group can project anything it wants to see or put anything into it that it wants to do, and do it all under a Papal or Church moral canopy. His statement functions in the human condition exactly as the perfidious Christian Just War Theory does. Its ambiguity serves as a moral *carte blanche* for doing what Jesus taught must not be done.” Well, so also is this the case with Francis’ sentence, “And the means that can be used to stop them must be evaluated.”

Again, who can disagree with the need to evaluate means in any area of endeavor, including intervention to stop “unjust aggression?” But, evaluate by whose standard, by what value system? Jesus’?; The Project for a New American Century’s?; The EU’s?; The Arab League’s?; or by the value system of the “Gang of 192,” the United Nations? All serious discussion of whose system of right and wrong, whose standard of good and evil is to be employed to evaluate *the means that can be used* to stop ‘unjust aggressors’ and why it is to be chosen is left in the moral twilight zone of ambiguity. Francis’ statement reminds one of the piece of oratory with which Dwight Eisenhower, knowing that voting Americans are big on God, often closed many of his speeches during his campaign for the Presidency: “I don’t care what God you believe in, just so long as you believe in God!”

When it comes to God, His way and His will nothing sells in the public domain of politics and mass media, and nothing bring more peace of mind in the salons of the political, military and ecclesiastical power elites, as does ambiguity. Just think, Christian rulers and Christians on both sides of every European war and every American war, north and south, for over 1700 years have declared themselves to be conducting a just war against unjustified enemy violence. And moreover, no national hierarchy has ever told the Christians of its Church that the war in which their nation is presently involved is unjust and that they may not participate in this mass murder operation. The Christian Just War Theory (CJWT), which is open to an indefinite number of interpretations of each and every aspect of its content, which is ambiguous in each and every aspect of its content, is nothing but a Christian license to engage in mass murder with impunity—and with a clear conscience. Nothing in the history of Christianity has poured more evil into the hearts of Christians and into the operation of their various institutional Churches as CJWT.

The king’s bishops, priests, ministers and theologians with chameleon dexterity color CJWT one way and then another in order to *wrongly* reassure the local Christians that if they kill for the local Grand Poobah in this particular situation they will be living in conformity with the teaching of the Church, and need not feel conflicted about whether they are living in conformity with the teaching of Jesus.

Pope Francis’ brief equivoque to a world press on stopping “unjust aggression” by means yet to be decided upon by the power elites of nations—**power elites who make every decision as if the Incarnation never occurred**—is a misuse, if not an outright abuse, of the Petrine Ministry as

instituted by Jesus. He could have proclaimed the Gospel but chose instead to dabble, while in Papal robes, in *realpolitik* in the strict sense, and I would add, that in the perception of a large part of the non-Western world in power politics in the pejorative sense. When the Pope enters the world of *realpolitik* and power politics with anything other than the teaching of Jesus and with anything other than the salvation of souls as his primary objective, he is then only speaking as a man among other human beings voicing his opinion on who is the unjust aggressor and who should decide the means to stop that unjust aggressor. He is functioning as a philosopher and as a partisan politician, two commissions never given by Jesus to Peter or to Peter's successors.

Basically, what Francis and what his two alter ego Cardinals have done with his statement is misuse the Petrine Ministry to designate one unkempt and brutalized Mafia gang an unjust aggressor while designating the other well attired Mafia gangs—who have killed a thousand time more children and innocent human beings than the now “unjust aggressor” and who are responsible for the brutalization of the people in the other Mafia gang—as agents of peace to use their power, which is not the power of Christlike love, to stop the newly designated “unjust aggressor” gang. This is morally bizarre, to say the least. But if this is how Francis wishes to spend his time on earth, that is his decision. What I vigorously object to is his using the Petrine Ministry of the Church, the Church in which I have an eternal stake, to give a Christian flavor to Western power politics, with its insatiable and savage self-interest, by sprinkling it with Papal anodynes, whose possible serpentine interpretations are left wide open for the Snake to access and publicize as only the Snake can do.

As noted in Part One, in 1983 the US Catholic Bishops voted overwhelmingly for a Pastoral addressing the issues of war and peace that had as one of its guiding composition points *planned ambiguity*. And, the fruits of that Pastoral and its *planned ambiguity* over the last thirty years have been what? US Catholics at every level of the Church and society, minus a few Catholic peace and justice groups, have totally ignored it and run off by the tens of millions to follow and support the murderous US political and media pied piper of the day—and, while in the process of following someone other than Jesus, killing and maiming tens of millions of men women and children across the globe. US Catholic military chaplains being always on duty and on call to assure Catholics so engaged that this is morally AOK with the Church and therefore with Jesus.

And so also is this already taking place with Pope Francis' calculated off-the-cuff statement on intervention by other nations with its inherent *planned ambiguity*. The power elites of the US for the last two weeks have been bombing the bejesus out of Muslims in Iraq whom they say are ISIS members. US Catholics are now supporting the bombings and US Catholic prelates are answering all objections by quoting the Pope and two Cardinals, as if they were quoting Jesus Himself.

US Catholics of every ilk and rank now believe that the US and they have a duty to intervene militarily in Iraq today (and who knows where tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow) because the Pope says Catholics “can” (the two talking Cardinals say “must”) intervene, but left the means of intervention ambiguous and wide open. So if intervention requires the military to engage in the “humanitarian killing” of more Iraqis and Muslims to put out the fire, to stop the “unjust aggression *de jour*, so be it. *Deus vult*. “It's God will.” The Church says so. Where have we heard that before?

The *planned ambiguity* of this statement on intervention against “unjust aggressors” is as insidious and destructive as the *planned ambiguity* of that mirage of Christian morality of which it is but an extension, namely, the nefarious CJWT. It will be employed by Catholics, and those who want Catholics as their canon fodder, exactly as CJWT has been employed for the last 1700 years, as a moral sound bite without Gospel content that will operationally result in giving the political and economic power mongers of the world free rein to preemptively drone, to assassinate, to sabotage, to invade, to kill people in any nation anywhere on the planet at any time self interest dictates.

For the good of the Church, for the good of humanity and for the salvation of souls, Pope Francis has to unequivocally and publicly retract his statement on intervention against “unjust aggressors,” not because those in need of help should not be helped, they must be. He must renounce it because his statement in its *planned ambiguity* is not an extinguishing agent that can help quench the immediate fire but is rather an agent that will fuel the present fire and in the hands of the wicked will fuel untold numbers of infernos long into the future.

—EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

Pope Francis and Protecting People from “Unjust Aggression” (Part Four)

I had not intended to begin Part Four with the following story but it segues perfectly from what was communicated in Part Three. Two days after I sent out Part Three I received an email from a woman who did not have my reflections on Pope Francis’ words on intervention against “unjust aggressors.” I thought she might be going to ask me what the Pope’s statement meant in terms of stopping the ‘unjust aggression’ of Russia against the Ukraine. Instead, she informed me that she was part of a Catholic adult continuing religious education fellowship. Her problem was that everyone in the gathering is “convinced that the Pope has said stop ISIS regardless.” As one member emailed her, “I think the Pope is addressing airstrikes by the US alone as unwise, but I do not think he is against stopping ISIS by whatever means the international community (U.N.) evaluates as acceptable. I find nowhere that the Pope has stated that we must “stop” but not kill...I have read several articles from several different sources (including what I consider to be some objective sources), and they all indicate the same thing.”

This woman, obviously a sincere and serious Catholic, is not wrong. She cannot be wrong. As noted in Part Three, the *planned ambiguity* of the Pope’s statement makes it a Rorschach statement in which everyone can see what he or she wants to see. The Boston Globe had this as the headline over an article by its religion columnist: “Pope offers cautious yellow light for US airstrikes in Iraq.” He is not wrong, because in the world of *planned ambiguity*, no one is wrong and no one is right. The headline could have said with equal certainty of not being inaccurate, “Pope puts red light on US airstrikes.”

The Petrine Ministry exists to be the Rock of faith for Christians by having and proclaiming a rock-solid faith in Jesus and His Way. Jesus, however, tells Peter in the most severe language imaginable—and by extension tells all Peter’s legitimate successors—not to think as the world thinks and that when Peter does this he is “an obstacle” to Jesus. “*You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do*” (Mt 16:23). Therefore, the servant of Jesus in the Petrine Ministry, if he is to be a good and faithful servant, must stand firm in his acceptance of and compliance with Jesus’ farewell command and commission to Peter and to all the Apostles, “*teach them to obey all that I have commanded you*” (Mt 28:19).

How sorrowful, that in relation to Christians confronting human violence, all that the Petrine ministry has again been able to say, as its “message that goes out through all the earth,” is another moral bromide of planned ambiguity. The history of the Petrine Ministry and the institutional Church’s administering of worldly moral bromides of *planned ambiguity* is that it always results in thousands or millions of human beings on all sides trying to kill each other and sharing—instead of Christlike love and the fruits of Christlike love—sharing of only a charnel house. And, those Christians on all sides who killed but are not killed spend their Christian lives offering the Nazi Nuremburg self-exculpatory defense to themselves and to others: “*I did nothing wrong. I was following the moral law of my Church leaders. I find nowhere that they said I must not kill and maim in this situation. I realize there are 500,000 human beings now dead and maimed, but I was just following the moral orders given to me as the will of God by my Church’s bishops, priests and ministers. I am not responsible!*”

Every Pope, except St. Peter, entered into his ministry in a Church that already had a history. So also, was the case when Pope Francis began his fifteen minutes of earthly notoriety as the Successor of Peter. And, such was the case on the day that he made his ambiguous statement on intervention against “unjust aggressors” to an international press corps. He knew and his advisers would have to have known, that his statement would be interpreted by most people according to whatever consciousness, cognitive and affective, they had hardwired into their brains from their Christian cradle days on forward. All connected with composing the Pope statement would have been well aware that Catholics and people in general would necessarily be evaluating the his statement through the intentionally blurred lenses of that always referred to, never taught and never implemented, moral blank check called the Christian Just War Theory.

How blurred are the lenses of the CJWT, how morally wide-open is the CJWT through which most Christians would be interpreting Francis’ words on intervention against “unjust aggressors?” The following is an excerpt from a Commencement address given in May 2014 at Thomas Aquinas College, a Catholic college in California, by Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, a former Catholic military chaplain and the former Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of the US Military for ten years before being named a Cardinal.

“One of my greatest challenges and responsibilities was persuading 19-year-old Catholics, who instinctively feel that there is some conflict between the Catholic faith and bearing arms, that they need not feel that way. I use the example of the Good Samaritan. The story is of a fellow who is beaten half to death, left dying. Two pass by, and they are big shots in the religious organizations of the time, and the third is a stranger, a Samaritan, who stops and pours oil on and bandages the wounded man. We all know the story well. Well, I say, ‘What would have happened a half hour before, if that Samaritan saw that this man was being pummeled half to death?’



ONE OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF IRAQI CHILDREN BEING LOVED BY US MILITARY GOOD SAMARITANS (2005)

Would he have a right to step back and say, ‘I will become a Samaritan about a half hour after this is over,’ or would he not have a right and obligation to step in and do what he had to do—and only what had to be done—to bring about justice there? That is what the military is.

Military service is a Christian vocation, if only our people were conscious of the potential to adopt it as a Christian vocation. That is the role of the Church, to remind them that there need be no conflict, and that the Church considers—and always has considered—military service to be a lofty call: an act of love. Christ defined Himself as one who came to serve and not to be served. ‘No greater love than this, to give one’s life for a friend.’ Our kids are giving their lives for perfect strangers. Peace I leave you.”

Now, whatever one may think of Cardinal O'Brien's statement of the truth of the Gospel, this is what he has been presenting for over forty years as the truth of the Gospel, as a US Catholic military chaplain in Vietnam, as a chaplain at West Point, as a Rector of the premier Catholic seminary in the world, the North American College in Rome, as a Rector of the major seminary of the Diocese of New York, as Archbishop of the US Military Diocese, as Archbishop of the Diocese of Baltimore. All this was well known before he was honored by the power players within the institutional Catholic Church with the red hat (zucchetto and biretta) of a Cardinal.

So to be clear, Cardinal O'Brien is not the problem. He is only a little contemporary symbol and witness to a problem as immense as the institutional Church that has legions of symbols and witnesses such as he is, that go back 1700 years. He did not make himself a priest, bishop or cardinal. Those who understand the Church to be the birth place and incubator of a never ending supply of violent Rambo "Good Samaritans" made Edwin O'Brien what he is today, and what over a billion and a half other Catholics are today and for 1700 years of yesterdays.

Edwin O'Brien, however, is a master at creating and spouting, via the institutional Catholic Church's channels of communication, the needed Orwellianization of the teachings of Jesus to keep the Catholic kids (his word) from acting on their Christian instinct (his word) that is telling them that "there is some conflict between the Catholic faith and bearing arms." He thereby enables and empowers Catholic kids to come with religious zeal to join the US Military and be Johnson's, Ford's, Reagan's, Bush's, Clinton's, Bush's and Obama's "Good Samaritans" to the world—a world in which 150 of the 196 countries on the planet have the US military deployed in them.

Half of the propaganda battle in convincing people that untruth is truth, that evil is good, is to get them to ask the wrong questions and thereby get them to fight the wrong fight. The secondary question that O'Brien artificially presents as the primary one in order to persuade the kids to join the US military and not be worried about the instinctive religious conflict they feel in becoming paid, competent killer for those who control governments is not what some, many or most members of the institutional Catholic Church say non-infallibly e.g., slavery is in conformity with the teaching of the Catholic Church, burning Jews and heretics at the stake is in conformity with the teaching of the Catholic faith, Crusades against Muslim to recapture the Holy Land are in conformity with the Catholic Church, torture is in conformity with the Catholic Church. The primary question is what Jesus—who is the Incarnation of God, who does not lie and who can only communicate infallible truth—says. The question is whether the non-infallible teaching of the Church is in logical conformity with the infallible teaching, communicated by the words and deeds of Jesus in the Gospels. By all means detour the kids away from considering this question as the primary one when they are trying to resolve an instinctive moral conflict within themselves whether they as Christians can become agents of homicide for any one or any group. Manipulate the kids or the adults so that they ask the wrong question and they will fight the wrong fight.

So, is the institutional Catholic Church's profession of faith—indeed is the profession of faith of most of Christians and most Churches of Christianity—of a Rambo Good Samaritan Jesus? Is a violent Good Samaritan as a Way of following the Jesus of the Gospels a truth or a falsehood, a leading of people into good or into evil? Is Pope Francis' planned and ambiguous statement on intervention against "unjust aggressors"—which is wide open to supporting Cardinal O'Brien

theology—and which was spoken to a Constantinian Church rife with a history, past and present, of Catholics, and Christians in general, participating in and supporting violence on all sides of every issue from abortion to atomic war, worthy of the Successor of Peter? A different question, however, is this, “Why was Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio elected to the office?”

Let me conclude Part Four of this reflection on Pope Francis’ statement on intervention against “unjust aggressors” with a thought from a fellow Jesuit, who was ordained the year Jorge Bergoglio was born, the late Bernard Lonergan, S.J., Generally speaking, Lonergan was a philosopher and theologian of consciousness. His magna opera are *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding and Method in Theology*. TIME magazine wrote that he was “considered by many intellectuals to be the finest philosophic thinker of the Twentieth Century.” In *Insight* he says, “When human activity settles down into routines of partial, vague or ambiguous truths, unconcerned with concrete specifics, then initiative becomes the privilege of violence.” Quite an indictment of planned ambiguity and its most destructive Christian offspring, the 1700-year-old vague and ambiguous Christian Just War Theory and its recent expansion.

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