

---

# To Teach What Jesus Taught: A Call to Fidelity

*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. Killing other human beings 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—to homicide in good Christian conscience!" In this strategy Jesus' teaching on the subject does not get a hearing, except to be haughtily 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-seven 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 curricular 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 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 firing a machine gun is not an authentic Christian icon (image) and that a follower of Jesus unleashing a barrage of bullets at human targets 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-five 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, at a distance, the easiest judgment to make on this man is that he is just a blatant hypocrite, posturing as an authoritative teacher of the Gospel when in fact he is intentionally withholding an important dimension of it. But, when seen close up he is a man of intelligence and of more than ordinary compassion. He simply does not see how he for his people—or a Pope and an 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 TO ME, “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 nongovernmental 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 writes:

*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. This is why the state is not an object of redemption in the New Testament. Power is the capacity to produce change. Jesus exercises 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

**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.  
HIS IS WHY THE STATE IS NOT AN  
OBJECT OF REDEMPTION IN THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.**

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 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 son 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 would declare 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."

[I]N 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 fear-induced utilitarianism of earthly self-interest, rhetorically ennobled as compassionate "realism" — "You just

[T]HE 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...

have to kill sometimes in this world to be a responsible Christian.” This Protestant bishop’s 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 “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (MT 28:20). The general tenor of these rationalizations is as follows:

*The only realistic 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 the organized, murderous barbarities of an overwhelmingly powerful Roman government. 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 EVANGELICAL STERILITY

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, AD 800 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 in order that 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 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.

ALL THAT IS KNOWN IS THAT  
CHRISTIAN FLUNKIES FOR THE  
EVER-VIOLENT CAESAR...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.

## 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 twentieth 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? FOX?

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.

## **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 event or Resurrection experience—a saving phenomenon of superabundant fruitfulness that is directly tied to trustful fidelity but which no human thought process could have ever foreseen. 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 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 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’s 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 women voting was so portrayed 150 years ago. This dismissive 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 (metanoia) on their part.

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 Christian-

ity 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 mainline Christianity does not understand the Jesus of the Gospel 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 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**

During the twentieth century, the century of Cain, Christians killed more people in war—including more fellow Christians—than in all other centuries combined. This 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 blood on the hands of Church leaders, indeed on the hands of all the followers of Christ, should be their own—not the blood of others.

THE BLOOD ON THE HANDS OF  
CHURCH LEADERS, INDEED ON  
THE HANDS OF ALL THE  
FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, SHOULD  
BE THEIR OWN—NOT THE  
BLOOD OF OTHERS.

#### **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. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in §1970 says, “The entire law of the Gospel is contained in the *new commandment* of Jesus, to love one another as he loved us,” and in §2822 states categorically, that Jesus’ *new 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 God Incarnate 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 to “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 of Jesus explicit, unequivocal teaching 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. Note the inordinate amount of ink and air time the issue of whether or not 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 raging or on the horizon. Could it be that this is precisely what the secular and ecclesiastical elites 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 in their communities growth in the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ by honestly and completely telling the entire story of Jesus to those placed in their care. Jesus’ story and Spirit then become 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 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§782) teaches that the Church “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 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 specifically relates 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 indisputable 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 Häring, 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

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?

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”?

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 bloodred extension of the self-deceived and obstinate 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.”

(REV.) EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

**CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN NONVIOLENCE**  
167 FAIRHILL DRIVE • WILMINGTON, DE 19808-4312  
PHONE: 302-235-2925 • FAX: 302-235-2926  
E-MAIL: JJCARMODY@COMCAST.NET  
WEBSITE: CENTERFORCHRISTIANNONVIOLENCE.ORG