

Christian Just War Theory: The Logic of Deceit

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Contents

Who Cares?	v
Dedication	vii
Prologue	ix
1 Vested Hokum: Christian Just War Theories	
The First Casualty of War	1.1
Overriding Jesus	1.4
The Obscenity of the Abstract	1.5
A Lethal Mirage	1.6
Follow Me	1.7
The Upside-Down Cross	1.8
2 Remember: August 6	
The Killing Chair	2.1
The Electrocution—The Smell of Burning Flesh	2.2
The War of the Currents	2.3
Remembering All the Victims and Executioners	2.3
Exorcising the Spirit of Cain from Our Presence	2.5
Transfiguring Consciousness	2.6
3 The King and I: Reality Reviewed and Redeemed	
Pure Logic	3.1
Realism	3.2
More Pure Logic and Realism	3.2
Self-Understanding	3.4
Nonviolent Monotheism as Threat	3.7
What Kind of God is God?	3.7
Jesus as Absolute Crisis	3.8
A Transfer of Allegiance	3.10
4 In a Nutshell: Unjust/Just War Theories—Homicide, Murder and Jesus	
The Canon of the Canon	4.2
Human Speculation	4.3
The Canon of Conscience	4.3

5	Is Natural Law Christian Just War Theory Soteriological Quicksand?	
	Theories of Justified Homicide	5.2
	Sustaining Utter Inconsistency	5.3
	The Protection of Being—Losing by Saving	5.5
	The Desire To Be Rather Than Not To Be	5.7
	The Way To Be Rather Than Not To Be	5.8
	The Burden of Proclaiming Nonviolence	5.9
	The Most Fundamental Truth of Natural Law	5.11
	Infidelity and Radical Irrationality	5.12
	The Survival of Love and the Beloved	5.13
	The Choice Between Nonviolence and Non-existence	5.14
6	How Unnatural Is Natural Law Christian Just War Theory?	
	The Moral Price of Making the Concrete Abstract	6.2
	Allowing the Eye to See and the Ear to Hear	6.4
	Is the Will to Kill Intrinsic to the Human Being?	6.5
	The Natural Order that God Forbids Us to Disturb	6.7
	Consequences of Conformity to the Just War Ethic	6.8
	Military Training: The Decisive Spiritual Death Blow	6.11
	The Premeditated Perversion of the Human Heart	6.13
	The Pandemic of Violence and the Just War Placebo	6.14
7	Violent Monotheism: Truth or Falsehood	
	Cannot Serve Two Masters	7.2
	The Martyr	7.3
	The Gospel	7.4
	When	7.5
	The Enemy	7.6
	Worship	7.7
	Other Divine Expectations	7.8
	Institutional Christianity	7.9
	Distrusting Jesus	7.11
	Hopping Christians	7.11
	“X” or Not “X”	7.12
8	Rorschach* Jesus: The Ignorant Messiah	
	What Is Necessary to Accomplish the Salvific Task?	8.2
	Jesus—Teacher of the Impractical Fantasies	8.3

	Jesus as Inkblot.	8.4
	A Crisis Moment—Allegiance to an Inkblot	8.6
9	The Wisdom of God: Nonviolent Love	
	THE Issue: Unequivocal Rejection of Homicidal Violence. . .	9.2
	Sanctioned Delusion.	9.4
	A New Ethic of Security and Peace	9.4
	Martyrdom—Ultimate Act of Social Responsibility.	9.7
	Gospel Nonviolence—The Will of God	9.8
	Abandoning Martyrdom and the Ethics of the Cross.	9.9
	Canon for Self-Ruin—Preparing to Destroy Others.	9.10
	Voices of Fear and Unbelief	9.11
	Reason—A Tool for Implementing Christ’s Teachings. . . .	9.11
	The Unity of Cross—Resurrection and Person—Message .	9.12
	Putting on the Mind of Christ.	9.13
	Metanoia—Change of Mind.	9.15
	A Mind Centered on Love	9.15
	Justified Homicidal Violence and Enmity.	9.16
	A People of Peace	9.18
10	The War in Iraq and The Requirement of Moral Certainty	
	Moral Certainty or Murder	10.3
	Moral Systems as the Guides to Moral Certainty	10.4
	Laxism and the War on Iraq.	10.4
	Laxism: Abandoning the Cross of Vocation.	10.5
	Catholic Moral Law Protects Equally <i>In Utero</i> & <i>Ex Utero</i>	
	Human Life	10.7
	A Vacuous “Moral Loophole”	10.9
	Planned Ambiguity and Consent-bestowing Silence. . . .	10.11
	Undermining Catholic Moral Authority and Moral Theology	10.12
	Unjustified Killing Is Not Open to <i>Ex Post Facto</i> Justification	10.13
	Blind Guides.	10.14
11	Christian Just War THEORY OR Christian Just War FANTASY	
	<i>Jus ad Bellum</i> and <i>Jus in Bello</i>	11.2
	A Strange Church and a Strained Form of Christianity. . .	11.3
	Which Do You Choose: Moral Fantasy or the Gospel Truth of	
	Nonviolent Love?.	11.4

12 BAFFLED

Laxism: Trashing the Just War Standards	12.1
Non-combatant Immunity.	12.1
Say ‘Yes’ if You Mean ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ if You Mean ‘No’	12.2
Rejecting Oaths and Violence	12.4
Nurturing Tranquil Defiance	12.5
Conquering Evil and Death	12.6
Nadia.	A.1
EPILOGUE	A.5
BIOGRAPHY.	A.7
A Christian Parent’s Pledge to All Mothers and Fathers. . . .	A.9

WHO CARES?

How many circles of ruined lives ripple out from the dreadful activity of a war? And who cares? Do the old men who start war care? Do those who make fortunes from war care? Do those who garner prestige, popularity or power from war care? Do the well-paid professional propagandists care? Do the Christian Just War theologians in their air-conditioned ivory towers or well-appointed think-tank offices care? Do the well-oiled mass media chatterers care? Do the collaborationist clergy—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox or Evangelical—care? Please! Such people have much more important things to care about than the ruined lives of anonymous, irrelevant nobodies—although they recognize that cultural etiquette requires that they publicly feign momentary care for the human beings they have sent to destruction.

Consider *The Hero* penned by Siegfried Sassoon during the war that was marketed to ordinary folks as “The War to Make the World Safe for Democracy.” Sassoon’s subtitle is, *A brother officer giving white-haired mother fictitious account of her cold-footed son’s death at the front:*

*“Jack fell as he’d have wished,” the Mother said,
And folded up the letter that she’d read.
“The Colonel writes so nicely.” Something broke
In the tired voice that quavered to a choke.
She half looked up. “We mothers are so proud
Of our dead soldiers.” Then her face was bowed.*

*Quietly the Brother Officer went out.
He’d told the poor old dear some gallant lies
That she would nourish all her days, no doubt.
For while he coughed and mumbled, her weak eyes
Had shone with gentle triumph, brimmed with joy,
Because he’d been so brave, her glorious boy.*

*He thought how “Jack,” cold-footed, useless swine,
Had panicked down the trench that night the mine
Went up at Wicked Corner; how he’d tried
To get sent home, and how, at last, he died,
Blown to small bits. And no one seemed to care
Except that lonely woman with white hair.*

A FATHER'S UNBEARABLE PAIN

HOLLYWOOD, FL [08/26/04]—A distraught father, Carlos Arredondo, 44, who had just been told his son, Marine Lance Corporal Alexander Arredondo, was killed in combat in Iraq, set himself on fire in a Marine Corp van.

Melida Arredondo, Alex's stepmother, fell in love with her husband-to-be the moment she saw him with his two sons. Carlos Arredondo's devotion to them was unwavering, she said. "Alex was too young. He was just so young."

"I understand the impulse," said Arthur MacDonald, when told of Carlos Arredondo's act. Arthur MacDonald buried his own son, Marine Lance Corporal Gregory MacDonald, fourteen months earlier after he was killed forty-five miles southwest of Baghdad. "There are 976 dead now," noted Arthur MacDonald. "Who will remember them?"

WOMAN DIES AFTER SON'S DEATH IN IRAQ

TUCSON, AZ [10/08/04]—A forty-five-year-old woman, Karen Unruh-Wahrer, collapsed and died days after learning her son, Army Specialist Robert Unruh, had been killed in Iraq, and just hours after seeing his body.

Her friends said she couldn't stop crying over losing her 25-year-old son who was killed near Baghdad on Sept. 25, 2004. Robert Unruh, a combat engineer, had been in Iraq less than a month. "Her grief was intense," said Cheryl Hamilton, a friend at University Medical Center, where Karen worked. Her husband said she died of a "broken heart."

IN FLANDERS FIELDS (1917)

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

Who cares?

DEDICATION



To those countless millions
of Christian men and women
who killed and were killed,
who maimed and were maimed
in war over the last 1700 years,
and who were denied knowledge of
the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel
and His Way of
Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies
by their bishops, priests and ministers.



To the hundreds of millions
of mothers, fathers and children
murdered and maimed
in soul, spirit and body
over the centuries
by Christian Just-Warists.



PROLOGUE

It has been this author's experience for over fifty years that any rigorous critique of the Gospel validity of Christian Just War Theories (CJWT), or any serious advocacy on behalf of the Nonviolent Jesus of the New Testament, is not only not respected in the Church but is actually pushed out of the picture by the powers-that-be in the Church.

All discussion of the possibly fundamental moral illegitimacy of CJWT or of the authoritative moral imperative of Jesus' Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is almost universally ignored by these same powers. The concerns addressed in this book are almost without exception continually and continuously glossed over as unworthy of dialogue or publication by those Christians who hold economic, political, and coercive power in the church—and of course in the state and in the corporate world.

Marginalization by trivialization is the standing order of the day, every day, where the incompatibility between following Jesus and engaging in war is the issue. However, you my reader, unlike the vast majority of Christians who have ever lived, can read. You can read what Jesus says and does. You can read one, or more than one, of the Just War Theories. You can read about what war really is as opposed to what the political and religious propagandists say it is. You can then ask yourself in the closet of your own conscience, where you stand alone before God, if what these Just War Theories demand and permit in human behavior—thought, word, and deed—is compatible with what Jesus demands and permits.

The secondary purpose of this book is to supply you with a grave critique of CJWT. Its primary purpose is to invalidate CJWT forever. You, my reader, after reading this book can decide for yourself where the truth of Jesus lies. But, please, do keep in mind as you evaluate CJWT in light of the Way of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament, that it is Jesus who is God, and not celebrity Christians or non-Christians from the past or present. Hence, the validity or invalidity of CJWT must be judged by what Jesus taught and not the other way around—that is, the validity of the teaching of Jesus is not to be judged by how well it fits or does not fit into CJWT. To replace the former standard by the latter would be an act of idolatry.

Just War Theories have been around for about 2000 years. However, they did not infect Christianity until more than three hundred years after Jesus' Resurrection. St. Ambrose and St. Augustine first brought them into the Church. In fairness it must be acknowledged that by the time these two politically powerful bishops released the perpetually-mutating moral virus of CJWT into the Christian community, the Church had, by its choices in favor of acquiring wealth and political power, lost just about all of the spiritual immune system that had protected it from the moral pathogen of "righteous" homicidal violence. Over the last 1700 years no effective method has been found to restore the Church's spiritual immune system against the disease of "holy" homicide. If anything, the Church's immune system against this spiritual Black Plague has, by this Third Millennium, completely collapsed. Today, no form of homicidal violence and no amount of homicidal violence is beyond the Church's ability to tolerate and justify.

The essays in this book are concerned with the phenomena of Christian Just War Theories, not with Just-Unjust War Theories in general. They are ordered with a logic that is the fruit of teaching this subject for fifty years. While each essay is understandable in itself, accepting the order in which they are presented should enhance the reader's understanding of each and all. While none of these reflections is more difficult to read than the editorial page of a newspaper, all should be read with a pencil or pen in hand. I hope it is not evidence of a deficiency in humility to suggest that this is a book where the old dictum, *Studium sine stilo somnium est*, "To study without a pencil is sleep," seems *à propos*.

The hope for this little publication is that it can serve as a partial but effective antidote for the catastrophic spiritual malaise of "divinely supported" homicidal violence that has metastasized throughout the entire Church, and indeed throughout the whole world. The only complete cure is for the Church to unreservedly embrace the truth of the message of the Nonviolent Jesus Christ and thereby show all humanity the power and wisdom and reality of its Lord, God and Savior. By the Grace of God, this work, by exposing the intellectual and moral vacuity of CJWT, will bring the hour of that embrace closer.

Vested Hokum: Christian Just War Theories

The thing about logic is that it works perfectly whether or not it has any relationship to reality outside the mind. For example, consider the following: *All apples are oranges. All oranges are poisonous. Therefore all apples are poisonous.* The logic is impeccable. However, it is the logic of non-reality.

Exquisite logic alone is not a test of moral authenticity. What logic can do is fashion an artificial aura of objectivity around a moral position. I say “artificial aura” because, while it may be maintained that the rules of logic are objective, the application of these rules to human reality is subjective. What this means in terms of just war theories is that a just war is just in the eyes of the beholder.

What is perceived as a just war from a sports bar in Chicago, or from the offices of the senior executives of a multi-national corporation in Dallas, may be viewed as an appalling evil from the eyes of a mother or father in Baghdad or Kabul, a mother or father whose child’s face has been grotesquely disfigured by metal from a supposedly errant smart-bomb. Cardinals, bishops, priests, ministers, and laity, on all sides, and in all wars, have disagreed with one another as to the justness of each and every war. This should be *prima facie* evidence leading any right-thinking Christian to conclude that Christian Just War Theories are logical shell games where “the fix is in” on behalf of the locals’ homicide—whoever the “locals” happen to be.

THE FIRST CASUALTY OF WAR

The late Catholic Biblical Scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie, describes the Christian Just War Theory as “a piece of phony morality.” Rarely do Christians who espouse it discuss publicly the gossamer presuppositions on which it is constructed. For example, if, as is universally

acknowledged, “Truth is the first casualty of war”; if politicians, government functionaries and military officials ceaselessly lie during a war; then how can a Christian determine what the facts are in order to properly apply the Just War Standards? How? How can he or she know if just means are being employed, if the cause is just, if continuance of the war is just, if the criterion of proportionality is being adhered to, if non-combatant immunity is being honored? How?

If “Truth is the first casualty of war,” then how can a person ever know if the war is justly instituted, a requirement of the Christian Just War Theory? The Tonkin Gulf resolution, the law that brought death to tens of thousands of Americans and millions of Vietnamese, as well as the physical and/or psychological maiming of millions of other human beings, was procured by a lie, told by Lyndon Johnson, about an event that never happened. In fact a history book, so large that the whole world could not contain it, could be written about wars initiated and justified (*jus ad bellum*), on the basis of non-events—lies.

If “Truth is the first casualty of war,” then the Christian Just War Theory is fatally flawed, because it is morally impossible to apply. It is *de facto* applying the theory to un-reality—to lies.

If “Truth is the first causality of war” the Christian Just War Theory is fatally flawed, because it is morally impossible to apply.

To contend that a presumption of veracity should be granted to a

government’s statements about its wars is to argue that “all apples are oranges.” It is to argue against the documented reality of interminable duplicity by power politicians and military leaders at war. It is to play the intellectual and moral ostrich in the face of murder. It is to ground a Christian moral theory of mass homicide in the flimflam of concocted falsehoods and unverifiable claims. It is to patently concede that the activities of war (*jus in bello*), cannot be continuously scrutinized and authentically monitored for their moral acceptability—a requirement of all Christian Just War Theories.

The fact is: Christian Just War Theory is now, and always has been, a fanciful theo-logical house of cards. It is, has always been, and will continue to be, blown down by every political wolf that huffs and puffs the mantras of erotic nationalism. What is tragic, and pathetic, is that Christian

leaders continue to make believe that the house of cards is built on spiritually solid rock.

This calculated inattention to reality, to mendacity, to glaring absurdity, to unwanted truth, is the hallmark of that form of Christianity that self-reverentially identifies itself as “realistic,” and as, therefore, morally authorized to adopt one form or another of a Just War Theory as a way of overriding the express teachings of the “unrealistic” Jesus.

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The immunity of non-combatants from being killed is an irremovable standard of the Just War Theory. Fifty-two million people died in World War II. Forty-eight percent of them were civilians. However, the American Catholic Hierarchy, the Japanese Catholic Hierarchy, the Italian Catholic Hierarchy, the English Catholic Hierarchy, the German Catholic Hierarchy, etc., missed it. And the “realistic” overseers of most other Churches experienced a similar failure of elementary perception during World War II, and during every other war of the 20th and 21st centuries.

This obliviousness to the obvious has been part and parcel of Just War Christianity for 1600 years. Christian Just War Theory is a ruse by which Christians, in the pulpit and in the pew, try to salve their consciences for not having enough faith in the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel to follow Him and His Way of Nonviolent Love. The Christian Just War Theory might better be designated the Christian Just War Cap, an artful dodge whereby Christians try to fool themselves—and the whole human community—by morally rubber-stamping homicide, in the name of Jesus, on behalf of their particular kingdoms.

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Christian Just War Theory is a “mental mirror-game,” where one baroque logical mirror is placed before another baroque logical mirror. The net result is a dazzling display of logic that appears to be clear and of infinite depth. The only catch is this: It is all done with mirrors, and they

reflect each other. The supposed depth of the Theory is illusory. It reflects almost nothing of the reality of war, and it reflects absolutely nothing of the Jesus of the Gospels.

OVERRIDING JESUS

What is extraordinary in all of this is that a moral theory originally composed by a pagan (Cicero, D. 43 BC) has always been able to trump Jesus' explicit teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies. Yet, this theory is based on nothing Jesus ever said or did, is wide open to indefinite interpretation, is built on a logical artifice blind to the actualities of war, and has no means to validate the truthfulness of the facts that its application demands.

It is mind-boggling that Christians could possibly think that Cicero's house of cards as "baptized" by Augustine could supplant or surpass the will of God as revealed by Jesus in the Gospels. One would think from this overriding of Jesus' teaching that Cicero and/or Augustine is "the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God" (MT 16:17). Is there not more than a hint of creeping idolatry in Christian Just War Theories—of a mere human understanding superseding the infallible teaching of God Incarnate? Is there not more than a whiff of Gnosticism here—of an *illuminati* who claim knowledge of a divine truth which overrides the expressed teachings of Jesus? St. Paul warns his fellow Christians: "Make sure that no one traps you and deprives you of your freedom by some secondhand, empty, rational philosophy based on the principles of this world, instead of on Christ" (COL 2:8). St. Paul's "beware" is at least as pertinent today as it was in AD 62.

Since the Catholic Bishops of the United States published their high-profile pastoral letter on war and peace, *The Challenge of Peace*, in May of 1983, the United States Government has been involved in—and Christians working for the U.S. Government have been involved in—six openly undeclared wars, and many more quasi-clandestine wars. Not one of these forays into mass homicidal violence has been declared unjust by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops according to its

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own published set of Just War Standards, let alone been prohibited to Catholics as self-evidently incompatible with following the Nonviolent Jesus. To the best of my knowledge, no other mainline or evangelical church in the U.S. has done much better during this period of time. It is precisely this procrustean quality of Christian Just War Theories—bring us your war and we’ll fit it to the theory, or the theory to it—that makes them so appealing to Christians. This same procrustean quality also makes them spiritually appalling moral bunko operations.

THE OBSCENITY OF THE ABSTRACT

There is something obscene about prelates of distinction, who live gilded lives, sitting around discussing, and voting on whether it is morally acceptable to drop bombs on other human beings. There is something more than unwholesome going on when these men present themselves as official teachers of what Jesus taught.

It is submitted that what is going on here is captured by the philosopher, Nikolai Berdyaev, when he observed at the beginning of the 20th century that, “The greatest sin of this age is making the concrete abstract.” What Berdyaev is alluding to is the phenomenon of psychic numbing—the adversary of empathy, since it involves the undermining of a sensitive capacity to feel. Psychic numbing stifles the complex interaction of cognition and affect critical to empathic responding, thereby diminishing the motivation toward caring behavior. It has been noted in several places that

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while Pope John Paul II always opposed abortion, his soul became a furnace of zeal in opposition to it when he saw the documentary, *The Silent Scream*, which shows a child, *in utero*, in the process of being legally and logically aborted. The child’s struggle for life—his efforts to protect himself from invasive forces, his responses to sharp, intense, unanticipated pain, his frantic attempts to live even as life is being ripped from him—is vividly illuminated for the eye to see, for the heart to know and for the mind to respond empathically.

If the religious aristocracy of institutional Christianity would only allow itself a comparable experience of empathy for those who suffer and die as

If the religious aristocracy of institutional Christianity would only allow itself a comparable experience of empathy for those who suffer and die as the result of its becoming a cog in the state's war machine, it might be able to throw off the chains of fear that bind it to that power represented by Just Homicide Theories.

the result of its becoming a cog in the state's war machine, it might be able to throw off the chains of fear that bind it to that power represented by Just Homicide Theories. I am sure the knowledge of truth acquired through empathy would compel almost all Christians to embark upon what

the Second Vatican Council rightly asked the Church and Church leaders to do forty years ago: "To undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude." Empathy, as opposed to mere detached abstract awareness, has an enormous capacity for catalyzing *metanoia*—a change of mind, "an entirely new attitude." This is why governments at war seek to eliminate or, at least, suppress avenues by which their own citizens might come to empathize with the agony and anguish of the men, women, and children on the "other side."

If Christian leaders and Christian congregations would enter into whatever "education in empathy" is necessary to achieve that level of awareness of all victims of war—military and civilian—that John Paul II achieved of the unborn by viewing *The Silent Scream*, then I am confident that their newly acquired knowledge of reality would "grace-fully" empower them to let go of the hokum of a never-ending array of spiritually impotent and morally farcical Christian Just War Theories. An "education in empathy" would unveil the truth hidden since Augustine: That the principal function (and effect) of these theories is actually to make the concrete abstract, by camouflaging unspeakable misery in the guise of objectively unbiased logic.

A LETHAL MIRAGE

Christian Just War Theories are an evasion of self-evident truth and reality, to say nothing of their being an evasion of the ethics of Calvary.

Christian Just Homicide Theories, in general, and Christian Just War Theories, in particular, are incurably infected with dishonesty. They are the products of a level

of disregard for knowable reality which, if adopted by General Motors or Microsoft, would have us all still riding in buggies and counting on our fingers. Christian Just War Theories are an evasion of self-evident truth and reality, to say nothing of their being an evasion of the ethics of Calvary.

Simple Christians are aware that Jesus' teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is easy to understand, although hard to live. They also know that Christ-God in His infinite mercy always forgives our failure to live according to His teaching, if we but ask. On the other hand, it takes sophisticated theological savvy to arrive at the conclusion that Jesus' teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is not only unclear, confusing, archaic, non-normative, and not what He really meant, but is actually supportive of homicidal violence! Such thinking is madness, clothed in the paraphernalia of scholarship.

Christian Just War Theories are today what they always have been—no more or less than one of the accoutrements of war. They are a normal part of the propaganda process, like martial music and contrived news stories, which nations employ in the process of prosecuting a war and persuading people to give their children, their money, and their lives to the reciprocal butchery of human beings. They are a lethal mirage of Messianic morality. General William Tecumseh Sherman speaks more truth about war than Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin combined when he says,

War is cruel and you cannot refine it...I am tired and sick of war. Its glory is moonshine. It is only those, who have never fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded, who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell.

FOLLOW ME

Does the Son of God come down from heaven so that His followers can create hell on earth with a clear conscience? Does it not take an elephantine indifference to the Divinity of Jesus to lead people in His name to a place Jesus never would have led them? When Jesus says, "Follow Me," He never, ever means, "Follow Me" into committing homicidal violence. Never!



Insignia of the United States Infantry Training School, Fort Benning, Georgia, worn by all military personnel assigned to the school, including Military Chaplains.

What does “Follow Me” mean, if it does not mean to teach what Jesus taught, to live what Jesus lived, to love as Jesus loved, and to die as Jesus died? If Jesus is nonviolent, then to follow Him is to live and die nonviolently. One does not follow Bonnie and Clyde by being nonviolent. So why would one think he or she is following Jesus by planning, engaging in, or justifying homicidal violence?

When Jesus says to His disciples, “Pick up your cross and follow Me” (MT 10:39; 16:34; MK 8:34; LK 9:23; JN 12:26), He is talking about picking up the cross as He picked up the cross—nonviolently; returning good for evil; praying for persecutors; loving enemies unto death—“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (LK 23:34). There is not an iota of support in the life or teaching of Jesus for suggesting that a Christian can follow Him by picking up the sword—“justly” or unjustly, legally or illegally, logically or illogically.

THE UPSIDE-DOWN CROSS

The sword is the cross turned upside down. There are many reasons given for turning the cross upside down. In fact, Christian Just War Theories, as well as Christian Just Capital Punishment Theories, Christian Just Inquisition Theories, and Christian Just Abortion Theories, are bottom-

The sword is the cross turned upside down. In fact, Christian Just War Theories...are bottomless wells of reasons for turning the cross upside down—“justly” inflicting suffering rather than enduring unjust suffering as Christ endured unjust suffering.

less wells of reasons for turning the cross upside down—for “justly” inflicting suffering rather than enduring unjust suffering as Christ endured unjust suffering. In the process, these Christian Just Homicide Theories turn the image

of God, as revealed by Jesus, upside down. They turn the image of Jesus upside down; the self-image of the Christian upside down; the image of the Christian community upside down; the image of humanity's relationship with God upside down; and humanity's image of itself upside down.

The upside-down cross of the Christian Just Homicide Theories is the primal and overarching calamity of the Pilgrim Church on earth. The upside-down cross is about piercing others. When Jesus commands, "Pick up your cross and follow Me," He is speaking about being pierced unjustly, not about piercing another—not even "justly."

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To follow Jesus and pick up the cross, a person must put down the sword. A right-side-up Church does not proclaim an upside-down cross. Only an upside-down Church proclaims an upside-down cross. Despite centuries of Church witness to the contrary, good vestments and good investments "secured" by a legion of upside-down crosses are no substitute for a right-side-up Church proclaiming a right-side-up cross by word and deed. Of course, given that truth is the first casualty of war, pure logic and cultural realism have no trouble "proving" that an upside-down cross is a right-side-up cross or that a right-side-up cross is just so much folly and claptrap.

Proverb:

*No matter how far you've gone
Down the wrong road, turn back.*

Remember: August 6

Throughout the world August 6 is rightfully remembered as the day that humanity entered into a never-before-seen form of homicidal violence—the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, August 6, 1945. Unlike the Fourth of July in the United States, Independence Day, or the Fourteenth of July in France, Bastille Day, August 6 is a planetary day of remembrance. What is done on that day in 1945 is utterly new in human history—death finds a new doorway into life. So we remember.

But, we forget. We forget that on August 6, 1890, another never-before-seen form of homicidal violence entered human history—death by the electric chair. On that day William Kemmler, age 30, an illiterate alcoholic from the slums of Buffalo, NY and a convicted murderer is executed by electricity at Auburn State Prison. Something utterly new enters human history—death finds a new doorway into life. But, we do not remember. Why?

THE KILLING CHAIR

Certainly the first use of the “killing chair,” as it was then called, is as much a story of horrifying violence and deceit, of giant intellects operating through moral dwarfs, of money and the callousness of big-time government officials, as is the first use of the atomic bomb. In 1890 Thomas Edison and George Westinghouse are in the middle of an economic-political fight that became known as the *War of the Currents*. Edison wants the country to adopt his system for electricity distribution, which is termed direct current (DC). Westinghouse sees that his interests require that the country adopt alternating current (AC). As the benefits of AC become apparent, e.g., easier and cheaper to transmit over long distances, Edison decides to discredit AC on the basis that it

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is extremely dangerous to use. To showcase this danger he electrocutes dogs, horses and calves in public with AC. Then he tells his audience how effective AC would be for a killing chair. He lobbies politicians and prison officials of the State of New York to use AC in order to produce “instantaneous death” in an electrified chair.

Westinghouse sees exactly what Edison is up to and refuses to sell his AC generators to New York State. Edison helps the State of New York procure a used Westinghouse AC generator from Brazil. Westinghouse counters by hiring a high-priced lawyer, W. Bourke Cockran, to appeal William Kemmler’s case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. The ground for this appeal is that the electric chair violates the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which prohibits the infliction of “cruel and unusual punishments.” However, the learned members of the Court decide that there is nothing cruel about this type of execution. They also decide it is not unusual—although it has never been done before. William Kemmler is sent off to be killed.

THE ELECTROCUTION—THE SMELL OF BURNING FLESH

On the morning of August 6, 1890, a lamp panel lights up on the Westinghouse generator at Auburn State Prison indicating that it has reached two thousand volts—which has been scientifically determined to be the optimal voltage for executing a human being. The switch is pulled by a man named Edwin Davis and electricity courses through William Kemmler for 17 seconds. When it is over Albert Southwick, a leader in the killing-chair movement, exclaims, “There is the culmination of ten years work and study.” The electric chair is a mini-Manhattan Project brought to successful completion!

However, a problem exists. William Kemmler is not dead. Government officials in a panic try to turn the Westinghouse generator back on, but cannot. It requires time to recharge itself to 2000 volts. Meanwhile, William Kemmler, who has turned bright red during his “electrocution,” is in agony, groaning and frantically gasping for breath. He has of course urinated and defecated all over himself, since it is not known at this time that those to be executed in this manner must wear diapers. The *New York Herald* describing this scene reports that “strong men fainted and fell on the floor.” When turned back on, the current is kept rushing through Kemmler’s body for over a minute. The next day newspaper stories tell

how smoke rose from Kemmler's head, the smell of burning flesh permeated the room, a curious crackling sound was heard by all witnesses and flames shot from his mouth. Although there is considerable public outcry, it does not move the legislature to repeal the electrocution law nor does it move the United States Supreme Court to see anything cruel and unusual in it.

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THE WAR OF THE CURRENTS

Edison now has a ghoulish public relations field day warning people of the clear and scientifically proven dangers of Westinghouse's alternating current, which has proved itself only good for "electricide." He cleverly embellishes his negative PR campaign against AC by suggesting that criminals condemned to death by electrocution should be said to be "westinghoused" or "condemned to the westinghouse."

In the War of the Currents Edison wins the battle of August 6, 1890, but Westinghouse wins the war. AC becomes the household standard. However, this is morally irrelevant. What is morally relevant is that Edison, like his counterparts 55 years later, on August 6, 1945, chooses to place a great gift of intellect at the service of homicidal violence. He has, in the self-excoriating words of Robert Oppenheimer, The Father of the Atomic Bomb, "become death, the destroyer of worlds."

REMEMBERING ALL THE VICTIMS AND EXECUTIONERS

Perhaps on each August 6 it would be appropriate, along with remembering the victims and executioners of August 6, 1945, to remember the victim and executioners of August 6, 1890. Perhaps it would be good to remember on each August 6 that the executioners of that day are not just the crew of the Enola Gay or the switch-puller Edwin Davis, but all—including some of the brightest people the world has ever produced—who intentionally participated in the long chain of choices without which August 6, 1945, and August 6, 1890, could not have entered history as they did. Finally, it may be spiritually sound and humanly helpful to specifically remember on that day, when two utterly new forms of

high-intelligence, high-tech homicidal violence tear into the human community, the individual human being, William Kemmler.

I make this last observation because in the end homicidal violence cuts into life one unique, fragile, pain-absorbing person at a time—even when hundreds of thousands are killed on a battlefield. “One death is a tragedy; a million is a statistic,” says Stalin. True enough. But this is so because of the mechanisms that society and its institutions—including religious institutions—employ to nurture psychic numbing and indifference to the mass killing of human beings by governments and successful violent revolutions. But, whether on the blood-drenched fields of Gettysburg, or in the vermin-infested trenches on the Somme, or inside a burning tank in Baghdad, each person dies his or her own private death—every bit as

It should be an imperative of truth and morality to always and everywhere acknowledge and emphasize this fact [each person dies his or her own personal death], and thereby foster the growth of a deep intellectual and emotional certainty regarding the intrinsic perniciousness of homicidal violence.

much as did William Kemmler. It should be an imperative of truth and morality to always and everywhere acknowledge and emphasize this fact, and thereby foster the growth of a deep intellectual and emotional certainty regarding the intrinsic perniciousness of homicidal violence.

If the spirit of homicidal violence had but one victim in human history, it would be no less monstrous, grotesque and perverted. The satanic is not fundamentally discerned by statistics. Indeed, statistics can dull empathic sensibilities that expose critical truths. Exclusive focus on quantity can be a decoy of the demonic, whereby the actual concrete reality of an irreplaceable person being mutilated or burned to death is rendered all but invisible by fixating on the numerical abstractions of competing body counts. And of course, once a reality can no longer be apprehended cognitively and affectively, it is no longer subject to accurate moral evaluation. Once the screams of the individual person are silenced beneath the clatter and chatter of statistics and justifying philosophies or theologies, then homicide ceases to be experienced as the phenomena it in fact is. Homicidal violence without a unique and irreplaceable face as its victim does not exist in reality—and hence we see, part of the importance of William Kemmler to August 6.

EXORCISING THE SPIRIT OF CAIN FROM OUR PRESENCE

Each who dies on August 6, 1945, in Hiroshima dies as William Kemmler dies on August 6, 1890, in Auburn, New York. Each dies his or her own, very painful and very personal death at the hands of other human beings. The common denominator between the two August 6 events is that both are the enfleshment of exactly the same wicked spirit. The spirit that kills William Kemmler on August 6, 1890, and the spirit that kills tens of thousands of human beings on August 6, 1945, is precisely the same spirit that possesses Cain, kills Jesus and is acting through every person who has ever intentionally participated in the destruction of the life of another or played at destroying the life of another. August 6 should be the day when the world community examines its conscience and consciousness, and unequivocally commits or re-commits to exorcising this spirit from its presence.

To this end a practical step might be to employ the reality and the symbol of August 6 to honestly view what the putrid spirit of that day subjects humanity to, once a human being allows his or her body to be its instrument on earth. “Knowledge is in the detail,” as the saying goes. Certainly there is a knowledge of the repulsiveness of the spirit of homicidal violence in awareness of the quantitative extent of its destructive power. But, there is an equally important knowledge to be acquired by seeing this spirit at the very instant of its actual entrance into human life. This is the knowledge which governments, militaries, violent revolutionaries and their propagandists systematically keep from the public. This is the knowledge that mass media and scholarship refuse to access, study and communicate, as only they can. William Kemmler offers an opening onto this avenue of perception, not only in terms of himself but also on behalf of every person broken and destroyed when this unholy spirit has been given flesh by human choice.

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Yearly, August 6 holds out the opportunity to view homicidal violence fully—in all its macro and micro viperous ugliness. August 6 presents to planetary humanity a universally recognizable symbol—rooted indelibly

in that day's history—by which to examine not only its conscience regarding homicidal violence, but also its consciousness of homicidal violence. There are powerful and well-financed people throughout the world who have a vested interest in systematically hiding from humanity the realities of homicidal violence, of promoting a consciousness of faceless homicide. They forever want to have at their disposal the humanly created situation of which the 19th Century robber baron, Jay Gould, spoke when he bragged, “I can hire half the poor to kill the other half.” Such hiring would be made as socially and as personally noxious as incest if the poor—and the middle class—really knew what the spirit of homicidal violence looks like—and unleashes—at the moment it actually enters human existence.

TRANSFIGURING CONSCIOUSNESS

August 6 is a day for planetary enlightenment. It is a day for transfiguring consciousness by stripping away all the theologies, all the philosophies,

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all the rituals and all the medals that camouflage the truth about what the spirit of homicidal violence does to both victim and executioner at the hour of its incarnational eruption—and for untold time thereafter. August 6, like Good Friday, is a day pregnant

with remembrance, with sorrow, with truths and with lessons for the whole world. Remembered accurately, it can be an essential ingredient of the glue that re-members a humanity that has torn itself to pieces by giving legitimacy—even Christic legitimacy—to the spirit that spawned the accursed events of that day in 1890 and 1945.

The King and I: Reality Reviewed and Redeemed

No one wants a Nonviolent God. No one wants a God of Nonviolent Love of all people without exception and without condition and without end. Nonviolent monotheism is the black sheep in the family of religions. From the very highest levels of institutional monotheism humanity has heard repeated, almost without ceasing, “I am not a follower of a God who rejects all homicidal violence.” The spiritual and political leaders of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are a single choir chanting one refrain perpetually: “Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Armies (Sabaoth, Host). Hosanna (“Save, we ask”)! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the God of Armies! Save, we ask.”

PURE LOGIC

Recently, the God of Nonviolent Love of all people has taken a beating in the press. From coast to coast newspaper columnists, TV commentators and radio talk show orchestrators are nailing the Nonviolent God to a journalistic cross of ridicule and scorn, as well as anyone who would dare publicly follow such a Deity. Kathleen Parker of the *Orlando Sentinel* is typical of this mocking mentality when she begins her column with the sentence: “The nice thing about pacifists is that there are so few of them.” Michael Kelly, writing in the prestigious *Washington Post* under the derogatory heading “Pacifist Claptrap,” is a tad more stern with a Nonviolent God and the people who obey such a Divinity. He opens his article on the same note as Ms. Parker: “Pacifists are not serious people although they devotedly believe they are.” From this beginning Mr. Kelly descends a few octaves to, “Pacifism is inescapably and profoundly immoral.” Lower still, he makes his own the thought that, “Pacifism is objectively pro-Fascist.” Finally, he fine-tunes his argument, against a Nonviolent God and His disciples, down to its base conclusion: “The American pacifists, therefore, are on the side of future mass murders of Americans. They are objectively

pro-terrorist.” *Newsweek* columnist Jonathan Alter urges pacifists to shut up because “it’s kill or be killed.” This brings us full circle back to Kathleen Parker, who after mocking the idea of “20,000 pacifists squatting in the city of Washington, DC” and calling pacifists a “terrorist’s dream team” concludes, “Fighting back in this case is an act of pure logic: kill or be killed. It doesn’t get any clearer than that.”

REALISM

On the religious front the PR crucifixion of a Nonviolent God and His followers was equally visible. In two recent syndicated columns by Richard McBrien, a liberal Catholic priest and a professor of theology of the University of Notre Dame, nonviolent Christianity was vigorously tarred and feathered. In Rome, Richard Neuhaus, a conservative American Catholic priest with an academic ambience, raised his voice in warning against nonviolence, insisting that the Church must not join, “the chorus of those who say, ‘Let’s go out and hug a terrorist because he feels unloved.’” The American Catholic Bishops as a body announced

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publicly that they voted overwhelmingly (167-4) against a God of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies and for the war in Afghanistan. A goodly number also gave personal public witness to the same position by such statements as, “God is with us in this

mission,” and “I respect nonviolence and pacifism but we must have a certain moral realism.” So also spoke just about every other institutional leader in Christianity from Billy Graham on down. Most of the heads of the other monotheistic religions in the U.S. did equally well in not mincing words about their rejection of a Nonviolent God and their desire to give spiritual aid and conscience-comfort to the American war effort.

MORE PURE LOGIC AND REALISM

What is stunning about the latest bombardment of anti-pacifist’s journalism and religious PR is the blatant lack of understanding of the subject exhibited by those doing the pillorying. A pacific theist is a person who understands God to be a God who rejects homicidal violence toward any person. He or she also understands that in a moral universe

conformity to the Creator's will is the creature's only way to fulfill the destiny for which he or she is created and the only way to unity

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with the Holy, that is, to holiness. The theistic pacifist is therefore equally confronted with an imperative of pure logic when the option of homicide is his or hers: try to save your life in this world by homicidal violence and lose eternal life, or risk losing your life in this world in the process of fidelity to God's nonviolent will toward all, and save your life in the next. (Eternal life here does not mean simply personal salvation but the eternal salvation of all humanity.) The current media presentations of nonviolence whether made by bishops, priests, ministers or non-clergy journalists should be rejected out of hand because they are ill-informed communications on a primal form of evil and on an elementary source of human misery—homicidal violence. Unfortunately, they will not be rejected because people are not allowed access, through the ordinary means of mass communication, to the information necessary to discern the spiritual superficiality behind clever rhetoric.

President John F. Kennedy says, "War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today." Kennedy like all his predecessors and successors in the office of the Presidency has no qualms about killing people. Yet, he knows, that it is only by comprehending the depth and the importance of the awesome realities which the pacifist mind brings to explicit consciousness, that the warrior consciousness can be modified to extinction. War, like capital punishment, like abortion, like inquisitions, like incest, like economic oppression, etc., originates in the human mind and there it must be combated if it is to be eliminated from the human situation, as slavery and human sacrifice have been eradicated as morally justifiable activities.

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I am not fully convinced that the following quote is genuinely the work of the person to whom it is usually attributed, Nazi leader, Hermann Goering. But it does speak a truth:

The people can always be brought to do the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism.

The previously mentioned Ms. Parker is correct when she writes about pacifists, “there are so few of them.” However, if there are so few people, who reject homicidal violence as compatible with the will of the Creator and therefore as morally abhorrent, then why worry about them? Why are Mr. Goering, Mr. Kelly, Ms. Parker, Mr. Alter, the Reverends McBrien and Neuhaus, et al., so concerned about so few?

SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Thomas Merton, a year before his strange death in Bangkok in 1968, published a gem of a book on nonviolence entitled *Faith and Violence*. In it he asks the above question and answers it with words that are as on target in 2017 as they were during the heyday of the Vietnam War:

Even though in fact the number of people who are interested enough in nonviolence to dedicate their lives to it is infinitesimally small, they are regarded as a serious and mysterious potential threat to the nation in so far as they bear witness to a radically different way of looking at life...

There exists in the American mind today an image of nonviolence which is largely negative and completely inadequate. Nonviolence is represented at best as an unhealthy kind of idealism, which implicitly becomes subversion and treason by virtue of its effects. This myth is systematically kept in existence by mass media because nonviolence is based on principles which call into question the popular self-understanding of the society in which we live...

The mass media generally assumes in the reader a particular mode of self-understanding which would be too complex to analyze here. Suffice it to say that this mode of self-understanding is a myth rather than a philosophy, a global secular faith which is assumed without question to be the right view of life and of political and social actuality. It is a positivist, pragmatic, fundamentally amoral view of things, completely confident of its own logic, its own superiority (proved by power and affluence), its own mission to judge and direct the rest of the world and to do so by the cheerful assertion of unlimited power. If necessary this world view appeals to a few semi-Christian slogans, as if to point out, in a modest, off-handed way, that the possession of this superiority, this power and this manifest destiny is a warrant of divine and messianic

vocation. Any other way of self-understanding is dismissed as heretical. Non-violence is based on radically different principles which bring it into head-on collision with this mode of self-understanding...

Here we come to the heart of the myth. While nonviolence is regarded as somehow sinister, vicious and evil, violence has manifold acceptable forms in which it is not only tolerated but approved...The most curious thing about this myth and its acceptance is that nonviolence, which is the one political philosophy today that appeals directly to the Gospel, should be regarded as unchristian while reliance on force and cooperation with massive programs of violence is sometimes seen as an obvious and elementary Christian duty.

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“Self-understanding,” there is the crux of the matter! At all cost, the powers of the kingdoms of the world must not permit a self-understanding to seriously arise in the consciousness of the citizenry that would acutely call into question the ways and means of their agenda. Self-understanding necessarily includes God-understanding, non-human reality understanding, other-human reality understanding. A new self-understanding would inevitably lead to a new understanding of these other dimensions of human consciousness. Indeed, a new understanding in any one of these areas, for example, a new God-understanding, i.e., a Nonviolent God, would alter the understanding of all the others.

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In the musical, *The King and I*, Anna, the British teacher of the king's fifty-eight children, shows her students a map of the world and points out the location of their country, Siam. The children instantly become defensive (“We are not that small.”), angry, scornful of their teacher and fighting mad. They then proceed to show Anna the map of Siam that they have known from the cradle and that the whole country knows is

the true representation of Siam's geographical place in the world. On their culturally accepted map, Siam occupies about half of the content area, with the rest of the countries of the world having to make-do with the remaining half of the planet. The axial issue here, the issue that engenders anger and scorn toward the teacher, is not geography; it is self-understanding and meaning being undermined by new truth.

The climax of the play is reached when the King himself is confronted with a new truth, namely, that it is wrong for a King to kill a re-captured runaway slave. He finds it impossible to integrate this new truth into his old self-understanding of what he is and what a slave is. Because of his personal integrity he can neither deny nor ignore the new truth, but neither will he die to his old nurtured self. The old man and the new truth cannot live in the same person. The tragic conclusion of the play is that the King perishes because he will not relinquish the old self-understanding that has been invalidated by a new awareness.

So, it is not so strange that secular and religious leaders feel so threatened by nonviolent monotheism that they sense the need to mount formidable and clever attacks against it and, if necessary, punish those who espouse it. As noted in the beginning of these reflections, "No one wants a Nonviolent God." Kathleen Parker's, "The nice thing about pacifists is that there are so few of them" is a correct quantitative evaluation of the human situation. The lowly position that nonviolent monotheism holds in the polls is the fruit of hard work on behalf of violent monotheism by religious, political, economic, media and educational leaders. It is they who are primarily responsible for consciousness formation and conscience formation in every one of the kingdoms of this world.

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In nations created by homicidal violence and/or sustained by homicidal violence, it is as normal as breathing for the elites of such societies to rigorously believe in and to zealously propagate throughout the citizenry a God who endorses

homicidal violence. After all without homicidal violence the elites would cease to be elites, the privileged would cease to be privileged, and this is certainly not what the Deity desires! Therefore violent monotheism must be true and must be incessantly proclaimed by hook or by crook from the

cradle to the grave. The citizenry of each kingdom must be so hard-wired into violent monotheism and its logical implications that they can never imagine questioning it. Violent monotheism with its eye for eye, life for life, collateral damage for collateral damage is then experienced as “pure logic” in groups founded upon and maintained by homicidal violence.

NONVIOLENT MONOTHEISM AS THREAT

So, again, no wonder there are so few pacifists and no wonder this is considered a “nice thing” in the media and popular mind. Of what use to a nation-state is a God of Nonviolent Love? Such a God is the last thing, which a nation-state or any religious or secular subdivision thereof, would be interested in promoting. If God were nonviolent, the entire map of human reality would have to be redrawn. The present self-understandings of the violent monotheist, whether patriot or revolutionary, would be as absurd as Siam being half the size of the earth. The values, attitudes, perspectives, ideas of right and wrong, etc., of our violent monotheistic forefathers would have to be jettisoned to make way for the new truth.

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Religious, political, economic, media and intellectual elites are no more ready and willing to die to old self-understandings than is the King of Siam. Likewise, the average Joe or Jane is equally unenthusiastic about putting off the old man in order to accept a new truth and to put on a new self-understanding. The fact that there are so few pacifists, so few who believe in a Nonviolent God, is not surprising on a planet where every speck of dirt is controlled by one or another of the 194 violence-based clusters of people called States. That the vast majority of human beings nurtured in such a situation should reject a Nonviolent God for a violent God is to be expected. Statistically there are “few pacifists.” But statistics are irrelevant to religious truth. Whether this or that particular statistic is a “nice thing” or a “good thing” or an “evil thing” depends upon realities beyond the statistical.

WHAT KIND OF GOD IS GOD?

There is absolutely no intrinsic relationship between majority opinion and objective truth. Democracy is merely a method of group decision-making.

It has no necessary relationship to truth. The whole world could vote that the earth is flat, as it would have voted 4,000 years ago, but this would not mean the earth is flat. As the late Bishop Fulton J. Sheen says, “Right is right even if no one is right, and wrong is wrong even if everyone is wrong.” Whether “a few pacifists” is a “nice thing” depends on the answer to the question, “What kind of God is God and what does God expect of people?”

If God is a violent God then it is a “nice thing” that there are so few people who believe in a Nonviolent God. It is a “nice thing” because “the fewer the better” who believe in a non-reality, an illusion. However, if God is a Nonviolent God, then the paucity of human beings adoring Him, petitioning Him, trying to live by His will and asking pardon of Him when they fail, would not be a very “nice thing” at all—would it? In such a situation much of what is considered Holy would in fact be evil, much of what is perceived as worship would be blasphemy.

If God is the kind of God that is nurtured by the 195 nations and their religious affiliates, i.e., a violent God, then our prayer should be, “Thank God” for the “nice thing” of so few pacifists. But, if the Nonviolent Jesus, who teaches as God’s will a Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies, is “the image of the invisible God” (COL 1:15), then Jesus being

...if the Nonviolent Jesus...is “the image of the invisible God,” (COL 1:15) then Jesus being crucified by state-nurtured and religiously-endorsed homicidal violence on Calvary is the microcosm of humanity being crucified...

crucified by state-nurtured and religiously-endorsed homicidal violence on Calvary is the microcosm of humanity being crucified worldwide by state-nurtured and religiously-endorsed homicidal violence. Under these circumstances

the prayer that must be raised to God in union with Christ on the cross is either, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (LK 23:34) or else, “*mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.*”

JESUS AS ABSOLUTE CRISIS

Jesus, the Christ, is the incarnation of nonviolent monotheism *par excellence*. Therefore, Jesus is an absolute crisis in the idea of God. The renowned Jewish Biblical Scholar, Joseph Klausner, communicates this as succinctly as anyone when he writes in 1921: “There was yet another element in Jesus’ idea of God which Judaism could not accept. Jesus tells His disciples to love their enemies, as well as their friends since their Father

in heaven makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends his rain upon the righteous and the ungodly...With this Jesus introduces something new into the idea of God...As a sole and self-sufficient national code of teaching, Judaism could by no means agree with it...and such has been the case with Christianity from the time of Constantine to this present day." Jesus is the fork in the road for a humanity pilgrimaging through time and space. Once encountered, Jesus demands a decision for or against Him because He proclaims a God incompatible with the reigning deity of monotheism and of the world.

Humanity, since evolving from the non-ethical (no knowledge of good and evil,) non-God-aware consciousness of its animal ancestors, has with only a few isolated exceptions worshiped, served, placated and been terrorized by a God or gods of homicidal violence. Why this is so is not known. Perhaps the transition from a fully animal consciousness to a fully human consciousness is as yet incomplete. Perhaps the approximately 10,000 generations that have passed since *Homo sapiens* came on stage are not enough time for this relatively new species to get beyond imitating and nurturing the violent survival techniques of its pre-human past. Perhaps this inability fosters in a God-aware creature the need to create God in the image and likeness of what the creature is seemingly hermetically trapped in at the moment. Perhaps this inability to thus far break the cycle of imitative violence motivates an ethically conscious creature to call the destruction of its own species good. But again, it is not at all clear how humanity became almost universally committed to a violent theism. What is clear is that Jesus confronts this idea of God head-on and rejects it as emphatically as is humanly possible: He proclaims its opposite unequivocally: "Love your enemies." He refuses to live according to its demands: "Put up your sword." He enters into death not with fangs bared but with love for those with fangs bared: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

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Jesus, the Christ, is the mystery within the mystery of existence which offers to the human being and to humanity a choice to imitate its violent animal ancestors or a choice to imitate its Nonviolent Divine Ancestor.

The mystery called Jesus also offers humanity the reason for following Him. Since the individual person and humanity in general cannot serve contradictory Masters, Jesus inherently compels a decision from those who meet Him.

A TRANSFER OF ALLEGIANCE

Non-Christians in the first generation of Christianity see this and do not like it. In the Acts of the Apostles (17:6-7) Christians are dragged before the city council with their accusers shouting: “These people who have been turning the whole world upside down have come here now. They have broken every one of Caesar’s edicts by claiming that there is another king, Jesus.” These alarmed accusers, whatever else they may be, are people who know an earnest attack on the reigning “mode of self-understanding” when they see it.

Caesar is Tyrannosaurus Rex “made flesh.” Christ the King, who is truly human as well as truly Divine, rejects imitating the lethal violence of His animal ancestors. Instead Jesus lives so completely the life of the Father of all (EP 4:6), who lets His sun shine on the good and on the evil and His rain fall upon the righteous and the ungodly (MT 5:45), that He can say, “Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father” (JN 14:9) and “I and the Father are one” (JN 10:30). Original Christianity in transferring its

Original Christianity in transferring its allegiance from Caesar to Christ simultaneously transfers its allegiance from a God whose will is the human imitation and extension of lethal animal violence, to a God who presents to humanity, through His Nonviolent “Word made flesh,” the possibility of imitating Divinity...

allegiance from Caesar to Christ simultaneously transfers its allegiance from a God—whose will is the human imitation and extension of lethal animal violence—to a God who presents to humanity, through His Nonviolent “Word made flesh,” the possibility of imitating Divinity, indeed who presents to humanity the exquisite

option of participating in the very life of the Holy One at this moment and forever. This would certainly seem to be a “nice thing” in which more than a “few” might like to participate, if they but knew. At any rate, at least this much should be clear: no person need worry about becoming “pro-Fascist” or “pro-terrorist” if he or she chooses to follow the Nonviolent Jesus through life and through death into Eternity.

In a Nutshell: Unjust/Just War Theories— Homicide, Murder and Jesus

Homicide is the killing of one human being by another human being. A homicide may be intentional, or it may be accidental. If it is truly accidental, no moral culpability accrues to the person who killed another. If the act of homicide is intentional, then a further question must be asked: Is this homicide justified, or is it unjustified? If it is justified, then again no moral culpability accrues to the person who did the killing. However, if the intentional homicide is unjustified, then it is, morally, murder—which is intrinsically gravely evil and therefore forbidden, morally, under all circumstances.

Categories of criminal offenses such as first, second, or third degree murder (sometimes called manslaughter or negligent homicide), are not pertinent to this discussion, since they speak only to the degree of legal culpability involved in a homicide, and not to whether the killing of this particular human being is morally justified. For example, a person who intentionally kills a prison guard, after years of being taunted and tormented by him or her, may be less legally culpable than a person who kills another in a random, drive-by shooting. However, in each case, the killing is unjustified and is, therefore, morally, murder—regardless of how it might be judged under the criminal law.

Now, since unjustified homicide is murder, the question must be raised: What standard determines whether a person is justified in killing a fellow human being, and by what authority is it validated?

THE CANON OF THE CANON

The term “canon” derives from a Greek word that means “measuring rod.” It designates a standard and, in Christianity, it designates a collection of writings that are the standard or rule of faith and life for Christians. In the canonical New Testament and, within it, in the canonical Gospels, Jesus, who is the “Canon of the Canon,” rejects **all**

Jesus, who is the “Canon of the Canon,” rejects intentional homicidal violence by His words and deeds. Nothing in His person or message offers any standard that can be used to justify the intentional destruction of human life.

intentional homicidal violence by His words and deeds.¹ Nothing in His person or message offers Christians any standard that can be used to justify the intentional destruction of human life.

Jesus’ position on homicidal violence is the fruit of His consciousness of His Eternal Father, who loves each person and all people infinitely, and who is a “God of perfect peace, in whom violence and cruelty can have no part.”² Jesus and His disciples, indeed all human beings, exist in time and space to do the Father’s Will on earth as it is done in heaven. Since violence and cruelty have no part in God then it should be self-evident to the follower of Jesus that human beings, made in the image and likeness of God and desiring to do the Father’s will on earth as it is done in heaven, can have no justification for engaging in homicidal violence.

Jesus’ proclamation of the truth about God, and the Way of God, in relation to homicide is validated, communicated, accentuated, and boldly underlined by Jesus’ own life, and by His death-resurrection. That Jesus, as the Incarnation of God, explicitly rejects the option of homicidal violence, in choosing to be its victim on the cross rather than its apologist or justifier, should be obvious to all who desire to follow Him as their God, their Way, and their Truth. It is the clearest of the moral imperatives of discipleship. Jesus, the Word of God (*Logos*), speaks no more clearly and no more definitively on any other issue than He does on homicidal violence. He says unequivocally that it is not of God, nor is it of the Will of God, which is to be “done on earth as it is in heaven.” No justification in heaven or on earth can be found for intentional homicide in the person or teachings of Jesus.

HUMAN SPECULATION

Most human beings, however, have developed or accepted some standard that can justify intentional homicide under some circumstances. It is their understanding that, when their standards for justifying homicidal violence are met, the homicidal act is not unjustified, and hence is not murder. The standards, or reasons, that human beings have found for justifying homicide are so numerous as to be literally uncountable. They range from the simple “God commands it,” or “The parliament orders it,” to lists so long and so ambiguous as to be operationally inapplicable.³ The validating source for these various standards for justifying homicidal violence may be revelation—e.g.,

The standards or reasons that human beings have come up with for justifying homicide are so numerous as to be literally uncountable...The validating source for these various standards for justifying homicidal violence can be...application of logic to some subjective perception of reality...to get as much personal “gusto” as possible out of one short moment on earth.

the Hebrew Scriptures, the Koran. It may instead be the application of logic to some subjective perception of reality—e.g., there is no existence for me beyond death; therefore I have a right to kill when faced with being killed—or, perhaps, that I even have a right to kill when it is required to get as much personal “gusto” as I can out of my short moment on earth. Whatever standards for justifying the destruction of a human being might be employed, if they are met, then the person employing them sees himself or herself as justified in intentionally putting an end to the life of another. He or she does not believe this act of homicide is murder.

THE CANON OF CONSCIENCE

For the Christian who uses as a canon of conscience one just war theory or another, rather than the teaching of Jesus (which is as far from any just war theory as existence is from nothingness), the question on which eternal life or death hangs in the balance is this: Can a humanly limited, subjective perception of existence—even when subject to the most complete and rigorous exercise of logic—ever assume a higher position in the Christian’s moral life than the explicit and unequivocal moral teaching of God Incarnate?

Christians profess to believe that the Jesus of the New Testament is the ultimate and definitive Communicator of God’s Truth, Will, and Way.

He is the measuring rod, the ruler, the canon, the standard by which good and evil are discerned. For the literate Christian of today—as for the literate and illiterate Christians of the first three centuries—there can

For the literate Christian there is no question that the Jesus of the New Testament rejects homicidal violence and enmity. So the only question that remains is whether a Christian has the moral right to modify the teaching of God as revealed by the Word of God, Jesus.

be no question that the Jesus of the New Testament rejects homicidal violence and enmity. The only question that remains is whether a Christian has the moral right to alter the teaching of God, as revealed by Jesus, with respect to homicidal violence, and to teach instead that

the Divine Will justifies the intentional destruction of human beings—thereby denying what Jesus explicitly and consistently taught, in word and deed.

Some of us do not see how such an alteration of Christ’s moral compass is justified ethically, spiritually, or theologically. Aristotle notes that “The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousandfold.” If the measuring rod says there are twelve inches in a foot, some of us shiver at the thought of the long-range catastrophe that must ensue when we hear teachers teach that a foot is five inches long.

Some of us do not see how fidelity to the Nonviolent Jesus of the canonical New Testament, and the apostolic kerygma that pre-dates the Canon—can possibly allow Christians to assign a higher moral priority to mere human conjecture regarding the rightness and wrongness of homicidal violence than to the Will of God as expressly communicated by this same Jesus.

Some of us are bewildered at literate Christians, including literate Church leaders, who elevate human speculations about the morality of violence and enmity above the unambiguous teachings of Jesus regarding violence and enmity. Even more startling is the effort that follows to fabricate evidence that the Jesus of the Gospels supports these speculative moral justifications of homicide and enmity.

Indeed, for some of us who believe that Jesus teaches the Way to eternal life for one and all, this re-prioritizing activity by Christians who profess

that “Jesus is Lord!” is not even sane. It is blatant moral, spiritual, and theological madness, in reason’s mask.

Endnotes:

1. It is probably pertinent to point out here what the Second Vatican Council taught in relation to this subject in one of only two *dogmatic* documents it approved, *The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (§18,19):

It is common knowledge that among all the Scriptures, even those of the New Testament, the Gospels have a special pre-eminence and rightly so, for they are the principle witness of the life and teaching of the incarnate Word, our Savior.

The Church has always and everywhere held and continues to hold that the four Gospels are of apostolic origin. For what the apostles preached in fulfillment of the commission of Christ, afterwards they themselves and apostolic men, under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, handed on to us in writing: the foundation of faith, namely, the fourfold Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The Church has firmly and with absolute consistency held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day he was taken up into heaven.

2. Opening Prayer, Mass for Peace, *The Sacramentary* (Roman Catholic).
3. For example, in Christian Just War Theories today some of the common standards that have to be met if the killing in war is not to be found unjustified and hence murder are the following:
 - A. The war must be justly instituted.
 - B. The cause must be just.
 - C. The means must be just.
 - D. The war must be a defensive war.
 - E. Offensive war, pre-emptive war or war in pursuit of some national self-interest beyond protection from immediate lethal attack is forbidden.

- F. The evil done by war must be less than the evil that would have taken place if the war were not engaged in.
- G. Noncombatants are immune from lethal attack.
- H. One party to the conflict must cease killing if the other party is willing to stop killing and negotiate a resolution.
- I. The war itself and no act of war can issue from the spirits of revenge or hatred of enemies.
- J. All justifying standards must be interpreted strictly, since the destruction of countless human beings is at stake.
- K. If any one of the standards is not met—then the killing is unjust and the war is murder.

Is Natural Law Christian Just War Theory Soteriological Quicksand?

Belief in a universal natural moral law—applicable to the lives of all people, in all places, and at all times—has persisted across millennia of recorded human consciousness, and across a multiplicity of cultures. People generally arrive at the idea through a process like this: Human beings, because they are rational creatures, perceive that there is an order in nature—a “natural law.” That perception generally extends to a belief that humanity and its conduct are subject to a similar order, an analogous “natural law.” The Source (God) of the order of nature is also perceived to be the Source of humanity, as well as the Source of the order of moral conduct in human beings. Natural law then is seen as the eternal law, implanted by the One “by whom all things are made,” in beings endowed with reason and free will. Human beings, to the extent they are free, may participate or refuse to participate in this divinely created order of existence. Different consequences, temporal and eternal, follow—for self and community—depending upon the choices they make.

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A good example of natural law thinking can be found in the opening lines of the Confucian classic, *The Unvarying Means*, written hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus: “What is ordained in Heaven is called the essential nature of the human being; the following of this essential nature is called the natural law.” St. Thomas Aquinas, writing more than a millennium and a half later, says that “natural law is nothing other than

the participation of the eternal law in rational creatures.” Confucius and Aquinas represent just two moments in the history of a notion that spans more than twenty-five centuries.

THEORIES OF JUSTIFIED HOMICIDE

More Christian Churches than are probably willing to admit it base their justification for participating in, or for supporting, war and other forms of killing, on some version of natural law philosophy. They refer to it as the Just War Theory, or as the moral right to homicidal violence in the name self-defense, self-interest or social responsibility. In so doing, they ignore, or contrive to forget, to ask themselves the essential question: Are these notions of the natural law, and just war theories derived from them, consistent with the teachings of Jesus—the One “through whom all things were made,” (JN 1:1)? The answer to this question is clearly “no.”

So, let us first be honest about the relationship between Jesus and all justified homicide theories. These theories, including just war theories, owe nothing to anything Jesus ever taught or did. Jesus taught a way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies—period.

Let us first be honest about the relationship between Jesus and all justified homicide theories. These theories, including just war theories, cannot be founded in or justified by anything Jesus ever taught or did. Jesus taught a way

of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies—period. Nor can the tenets of the Just War Theory be found in the Old Testament. The justification for homicide in the Old Testament is that God supposedly commands it, either by direct communication, e.g., ordering the genocide of the Amalekites (1 SM 15:1-3), or by communication through the Torah, e.g., the stoning to death of a stubborn and rebellious son (DT 21:20-21). The theory of the just war, with its criteria of just institution, just cause, just means, proportionality, last resort, non-combatant immunity, etc., is the work of philosophical speculation, not revelation. It first finds earnest expression in the writings of pagan natural law philosophers such as Cicero, and later is adopted by Christian natural law philosophers. It is a work of human reason, of philosophy. Parenthetically, it should be stated forthrightly that Jesus does not commission His Church to teach philosophy. His great commission is, “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey all the commands I gave you” (MT 28:20).

But what a work of human reason are natural law Christian just war theories! There are many of them, and they are all literally amazing. Taking care to avoid the self-evident verifiable axiom, that “truth is the first casualty of war,” step by step they intellectually walk Christians through a logical maze, that has little or no relationship to objective reality. This contorted reasoning where logic is given moral precedent over empirically demonstrable reality allows the Baptized to arrive at the conclusion that they can do in good conscience what Jesus refused to do, and what He taught his disciples to refuse to do. Whether it be the Catholic Thomas Aquinas or the Protestant Paul Ramsey, the power of mind behind each theory and application thereof is breathtaking. The problem with just war ethics, in words of John Courtney Murray, S.J., is that they are “trying to make rational what is fundamentally irrational.” Or, as the late biblical scholar John L. McKenzie expresses it, “Behind all just war ethics one sees the cornered rat with its fangs bared. Did Christ come so we could act like cornered rats?”

It seems to me that, at least for the Christian, the debate about whether a disciple of Christ can engage in mass homicide under some philosophical theory of a just war would be closed. Surely the evidence is incontrovertible that Christ, in fact, did not come so that His followers “could act like cornered rats with fangs bared.” The picture of Jesus blazing away at other human beings with His semiautomatic Colt AR-15 rifle—it being no more than a technological extension of bared fangs—is so ludicrous that no one could seriously entertain such an image. Yet, if one is to believe the talk heard from pulpit and pew, at least ninety-five percent of Christians today believe they can kill in war and still be faithful to Jesus. How is such a bold contradiction between the Master’s teaching and the disciples’ practice morally possible? How in good conscience is it sustainable?

It seems to me that just war moralists defend the Christian’s audacity in overriding Jesus’ expressed teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies by appealing to the following operating principle of natural law: “Survival is the first law of nature.”

SUSTAINING UTTER INCONSISTENCY

One way the utter inconsistency between the Jesus of the New Testament and the justification of Christian participation in war is propagated and

sustained is by ignorance. Christians—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Evangelical—are not taught the truth about the phenomenon of war by their moral leaders. If a person thinks cocaine is no more destructive than sugar, then he or she will have no problem developing an ethic that justifies the sale of cocaine to children. Church leaders who have espoused just war theories have refused to expose the realities of war to their people. They

Church leaders who have espoused just war theories have refused to expose the realities of war to their people. They have, thereby, kept their congregations ignorant and desensitized to the brutal logical, psychological, emotional and spiritual contradictions between The Way Jesus taught and the simplest act of war...

have thereby kept their congregations ignorant and desensitized to the brutal logical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual contradictions between The Way Jesus taught and the simplest act of war, e.g., slicing a person's head in half with a battle-axe or incinerating them with napalm.

Another way the inconsistency between Jesus and natural law just war theory is obfuscated, and the theory thereby sustained in conscience, is through the apparent discovery of certain principles of natural law that are deemed equal to, or superior to, the explicit teaching of Jesus. On the surface, it would seem self-evident that if Jesus is God incarnate, the definitive revelation of God's will, the self-revelation of God "by whom all things are made" (JN 1:3), then there could be no incompatibility between what Jesus taught and the imprint of God's providential plan on the natural reason of people, to use Thomas Aquinas' understanding of natural

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law. However, it would also seem self-evident or, at least, unquestionably reasonable, that if the Christian discovered natural law principles inconsistent with Jesus' teachings, then he or she, as creature before Creator, should bow to the wisdom of God incarnate and accept that his or her own reasoning was flawed.

But alas, such is not the case where natural law Christian Just War Theory is concerned. Here the Christian mind, saddled as all minds are with a minuscule perception of reality, with a history of participation in sin, with

disordered desires, with concupiscence, etc., asserts itself and its interpretation of the will of God as superior to the mind of Christ and to the will of God as revealed by Jesus in the Gospels. Then, based on its interpretation of natural law, a Christian is morally permitted in the name of God to do what God incarnate refused to do when He walked on earth—namely, kill other human beings. For the gun, the knife, the bomb, and all other weapons do not move themselves. Permission or justification for the use of these, and every other weapon, begins in the mind.

THE PROTECTION OF BEING—LOSING BY SAVING

It seems to me that Just War moralists defend the Christian's audacity in overriding Jesus' expressed teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies by appealing to the following operating principle of natural law: "Survival is the first law of nature." Stated other words: "The protection of being is a the law of being." "The will to survive is built into the very core of being."

It is obvious, for example, that if a rat's survival is threatened, then the rat will do all it needs to do, with bared fangs, to ensure that it continues to exist. The natural law just warist claims that God has placed this same desire to survive, to protect being, to continue to be rather than not to be, in humans as well as in rats. Therefore, the argument continues that the human being by divine design is granted the same rights under the natural law as the rat—namely, to do whatever he or she must do to survive. The right to self-defense, that arguably derives from this fundamental and putatively God-given desire to survive, thus generates or at least justifies a rule of conduct that proceeds from human nature as created by God. The logical conclusion is that to live according to this rule and, if necessary to kill according to it, is to act according to God's plan, that is, according to the natural law.

The just war theory, i.e., the right to lethal self-defense, is simply a set of logical standards derived from this basic principle, and used to determine when survival is actually threatened, and what lethal means of protecting it are in conformity with God's will. For example, how much collateral damage, that is, how much killing of non-combatants, is proper in God's eyes in a particular case? Once again, the deep-seated principle from which all the logical gymnastics of all the Christian Just War Theories operationally spring is that survival is the first law of nature.

It is essential to note that this principle carries within it a great deal of logical “elasticity.” Without breaking an intellectual sweat, scholars can extend it to apply to a legion of states deemed necessary for human survival, e.g., survival of low gasoline prices, survival of ethnic or national honor, survival of an economic system, survival of some ruling class system, survival of a political system, survival in positions of power and prestige, survival of comfort, survival of the standard of oppression to which one has become habituated, survival of geographic, racial, religious, or economic dominance. Whatever the particulars may be, behind

...behind all just war theories lies the desire to survive, and the belief, conscious or unconscious, that God has ordained that we have the right to do whatever we need to do to survive.

all just war theories lies the desire to survive, and the belief, conscious or unconscious, that God has ordained that we have the right to do whatever we need to do to survive. When survival is threatened,

what otherwise would be blatantly evil (and commonly vilified, excoriated, and punished, in our society and in others; homicide or arson, for example) is called good by natural law just war theory. In other words, vice is “virtuized.” The diabolical is divinized. And yet...

Jesus says:

For anyone who wants to save his or her life will lose it; but anyone who loses his or her life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it (MK 8:35, MT 16:25, LK 9:24, JN 12:25).

What a statement! What natural law just war philosopher or theologian could believe it? It totally contradicts the just war interpretation of the principle “Survival is the first law of nature.” It says that if you try to save yourself by acting like a rat with its fangs bared, if you start destroying others to save your piece of the pie, you will lose everything. It says that not survival but destruction comes from the bared fangs and from the barrel of a gun. It says that to witness to the truth of Jesus and His Gospel of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is the way to save one’s life—even if it costs one’s life. Who can believe it? Few have! And yet...

What just war theorists fail to recognize or contrive to ignore is that even if survival is the first law of nature, survival is precisely what nature cannot deliver—ever. Regardless of how sharp the rat’s fangs are, regardless of how vicious it is in defending its hole or its garbage, is it not true that

it will eventually be destroyed? The rat will disintegrate along with the sun, the planet Earth, the North Star, the galaxies, the cockroaches, and each and every human being. Survival may be the first law of nature, but there is no possibility of survival within nature. Therefore, the rat with its fangs bared, and the just warist are engaged in a rodently impossible and humanly impossible task—survival. They may, with fang-baring or machine-gunning, add a cubit of time to their lives—and thereby add an extra day or two for the rat to forage at the garbage can or for a person to shop at Wal-Mart. But the United States, France, Russia, China, as well as all their citizens will go the way of the dinosaurs, the galaxies and Babylon. And yet...

THE DESIRE TO BE RATHER THAN NOT TO BE

The desire to survive, to be rather than not to be, lies deep within human beings. It can be destroyed, but in the beginning it is there. About forty years ago, in his Pulitzer-prize-winning book *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker threw the spotlight of intellect on the dynamic of survival in the human situation. He revealed, as few others have, the pressure on the individual and the community that this desire exerts. The average mind is a computer, ceaselessly calculating the probabilities of some form of survival or another in one situation after another. For example, surplus, the hoarding of more than one needs in a world where thousands perish daily because they cannot get the raw necessities of life, is driven by the desire to survive—even if being a survivor means others do not survive. The accumulation of surplus comes from basically the same place in the psyche as does the willingness to pull the trigger, that is, from the desire to survive. And yet...

Jesus told this parable:

There was once a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself, "What am I to do? I have not enough room to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time." But God said to him, "Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul..." (LK 12:16-20).

Despite what professional economists proclaim, economics is a spiritual reality before all else. Before the mathematics, statistics, and formulas of economics have been applied, decisions have already been made concerning the reality of God, the meaning of existence, the nature of human beings, as well as who is to get what, when, where, and why. However, regardless of the economic system, its ability to bestow survival is as non-existent for those who succeed within it as for those who do not. The grave is not simply the great leveler of princes and paupers. It is the great attestation that nature cannot fulfill its own supposed first law. The screeching and clamoring on the floor of the stock market, and the screeching and clamoring on the battlefield are equally the sound and the fury signifying nothing in the end. And yet...

THE WAY TO BE RATHER THAN NOT TO BE

“To be or not to be” is indeed still the question. Is there a way to be? Is there a way not to be? Is there a way for us to survive individually and

communally? Patently, there is no survival to be found in fang-baring just war interpretations of the natural law. But, could it be that if we follow Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love of both friends and enemies as enunciated in the Gospel, our lives would be saved, even if it appeared...we were losing them?

communally? Patently, there is no survival to be found in fang-baring just war interpretations of the natural law. But, could it be that if we follow Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love of both friends and enemies as enunciated in the

Gospel, our lives would be saved, even if it appeared to our time-bound eyes at the moment that we were losing them? Could it be that our fidelity to Jesus and His Gospel, even in the face of the bared fangs of others, might be a piece of the leaven by which the whole human dough is raised up—saved?

If Jesus is who the Church says He is, then these are precisely the consequences of a Christian choosing to follow the Resurrected Jesus and His Gospel teaching of Nonviolent Love rather than following the way of seeking mere animal longevity. As said earlier, the grave is the testimony that natural law just war survival ethics is a defective interpretation of natural law. On the other hand, the open grave of Easter Sunday is incontrovertible proof, to those who have been called to faith in Jesus Christ, that fidelity to His Gospel Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies leads to true survival, and that this remains so even when the bared

fangs of some theory of justified homicide seem omnipotent—as they did on the Friday before the Day of the Empty Tomb.

Natural law Christian Just War Theory validates its existence by claiming that the desire to save one's life in this world is divinely ordained, and that one is therefore supposedly divinely entitled to employ means that are 180 degrees opposite those taught by Jesus, the *Logos*, during His public life and employed by Him when His own survival was threatened in Gethsemane and on Calvary. Isn't it time for Churches to candidly confess that just war theory is not a means of survival at all, but is rather the means by which one loses his or her life? Isn't the moment ripe to teach that he or she who lives by just war theory will perish by just war theory? Isn't it time for Christian leaders and laity to summon the courage to proclaim to the world that it is the Risen Jesus Christ who teaches us how to survive, and not Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, or any lesser philosophical, religious, or political light?

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THE BURDEN OF PROCLAIMING NONVIOLENCE

Of course, if the Churches—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—were to proclaim what Christ proclaimed, they would have to become the first proof of their own proclamation. They would have to withdraw their fangs, cease their support of violence as well as their violence, stop justifying homicide for their membership—all their members—regardless of their status in the secular community. They would have to rely totally on the faith that God honors fidelity to His way, and that His way is revealed by the *Nonviolent Jesus*. Is it possible that Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant leadership and Churches do not teach what Jesus taught about violence and enmity because, if they did, the world would demand that they live in the furnace of their own teaching? And is it further possible that this demand might reveal—not communities and leaders trusting in the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—but rather communities and leaders living out of black holes of atheism and agnosticism masquerading as natural law just war theology?

If Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Churches and their leaders believe that Jesus is Lord, what do they have to lose by giving up interpretations

If the Churches follow Jesus and do not “survive”...then Jesus is wrong: He does not embody and proclaim the will of God or teach us how to live accordingly, and Christian Churches have neither a reason nor the right to exist.

of natural law hostile to the way of Christ as revealed in the New Testament? If the Churches follow Jesus and do not “survive”—i.e., if they do not flourish—then Jesus is wrong: He does not embody and proclaim the will of God or teach

us how to live accordingly, and Christian Churches have neither a reason nor the right to exist.

But, if they follow Jesus and survive, indeed if they flourish, then the world will receive the witness it needs and the motivation it requires

But, if they follow Jesus and survive, indeed if they flourish, then the world will have received the witness it needs and the motivation it requires to embrace Jesus and His Way.

to embrace Jesus and His Way. Nonviolence is the missing but indispensable ingredient of genuinely authentic and maximally effective evangelization of the world by the Churches. However,

if the Churches instead continue to spend their time, talent, and treasure trying to survive in this world, and abandon Jesus and His teachings whenever their own little bailiwicks seem threatened, how can the world possibly accept that Jesus is Lord? And that He knows what He is talking about when it comes to the true, eternal survival of the individual and humanity? I would ask Christian leaders and laity to give Jesus a chance. Trust in Jesus by trusting that He would not lie to us, and that He knows the way of God.

Stop hiding bared fangs behind holy pictures, prayer groups, sermons, public cult, stained glass windows, liturgical garb, pious phraseology, “Christian” politics, and just war interpretations of the natural law. You were given eyes to see. Well, see! See that natural law Christian Just War Theory and natural law Christian Just Capital Punishment Theory are as much “the tragic triumph of misperception and misunderstanding” as were natural law Christian Just Slavery Theory and natural law Christian Just Inquisition Theory. Have the perceptual courage to see through the eyes of the Messiah, rather than through the fear-filled rat’s eyes, “the law imprinted on the hearts of people.”

THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH OF NATURAL LAW

You have been given a mind to understand. Well, understand! Understand that the most fundamental truth that the human mind by right reason can derive from natural law is this: “When the will of the Creator (God) is known, it must be followed by the creature.”

This is the moral essence of what it is to be a human being. This is the supreme prescript of the eternal law imprinted in rational beings. No natural law principle, whether it be “survival” or “do good and avoid evil,” can assume priority over obedience to the will of the Creator, when that will is known. The natural law, which Divine Reason itself implanted in human beings, never morally permits a person or community to act contrary to the will of God, when that will is known. This is an absolutely exceptionless principle according to the dictates of rationality.

The natural law, which Divine Reason itself implanted in human beings, never permits a person or community to act contrary to the will of God when that will is known. This is an absolutely exceptionless principle according to the dictates of rationality.

Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels is a precise presentation of this supreme prescript of natural law:

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Jesus teaches this unsurpassable principle of the eternal law—not just by word, but by deed—when, in the hour of extreme crisis, Gethsemane, He lives, “Your will be done, not mine.” Furthermore, beyond teaching that “when the will of God is known it must be followed,” Jesus explicitly teaches His disciples and through His disciples communicates to the world what the will of the Creator is, namely, it is the will that rejects homicide, retaliation, revenge and enmity. It is a will that calls for a Nonviolent Love of both friends and enemies, modeled on the example set by Jesus Himself (JN 13:34, 15:22; GA 5:1,2).

For the Christian then, natural law points immediately to the revelatory. The primal truth, “When the will of the Creator is known it must be followed,” leads the Christian rationally to the moral imperativeness of God’s will as revealed by Jesus and His teachings. It is not that reason has no place in the Christian life. It is rather that the function of reason in the Christian life is to figure out how to implement the teachings of Jesus, not how to modify them or render them inoperative—as inoperative as they are rendered in war, whether it is called just or unjust. For the Christian

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to interpret logical concoctions of the human mind that are blatantly contrary to the teachings of Jesus as being superior to those teachings is to defy the most fundamental truth and principle of natural law: When the will of the Creator is known it must be followed.

INFIDELITY AND RADICAL IRRATIONALITY

Let us be clear why, in the end, Christian interpretations of natural law that justify homicide are not only inconsistent with fidelity to the primal prescript of natural law, but also why they are radically irrational. Jesus of Nazareth is the *Logos* (JN 1:1) which, translated from Greek, means the Word, Divine Reason, Divine Rationality, “through whom all things have been made” and who “became flesh” (JN 1:1-14). He is the Author of natural law. More, He is the eternal law incarnate. He is the natural law made visible in the flesh. He is the ultimate witness to what it means to live in history according to the eternal law of God. There cannot be a contradiction between the teachings of Jesus and the prescriptions of natural law, which He created. The Word of God, Jesus, does not teach in the Gospel something that contradicts the natural law as to the will of God. If a Christian, or a Christian community, or anyone else perceives a contradiction between the precepts of natural law and the nonviolent teaching of the Nonviolent Jesus in the Gospel, the problem lies in human perceptions

It is the depth of irrationality to suggest that there is a contradiction between “the imprint of God’s providential plan on natural reason” and the teachings and life and choices of the Nonviolent One who made that imprint, Jesus of Nazareth, the *Logos*.

and interpretations, clouded and colored as they are by egoism, fear, sin, and selfishness, rather than in any inconsistencies in the teaching of the Word of God, the *Logos*, Jesus. The author of the natural law is the author of the Sermon on the

Mount. It is the depth of irrationality to suggest that there is a contradiction between “the imprint of God’s providential plan on natural reason” and the teachings and life and choices of the Nonviolent One who made that imprint, Jesus of Nazareth, the *Logos*.

It is in God's will, that is, in His Nonviolent Word and His Nonviolent Way, that the path to salvation lies. "[T]he world, with all it craves for, passes away; but anyone who does the will of God remains forever" (1 JN 2:17). It is not in any just homicide interpretation of natural law that Christians will encounter the Resurrection and Life. The promise is: "Anyone who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live" (JN 11:25).

But doesn't a person have to believe Him in order to believe in Him? "I believe in You, Jesus, but I don't believe You" is theological and spiritual absurdity. It is more than absurdity; it is toying with ultimate tragedy—the rejection of the salvific mercy of God offered through Jesus Christ. Ponder for a moment what follows.

THE SURVIVAL OF LOVE AND THE BELOVED

It has been said that Johnny Carson was the most viewed person in the history of television. His program, *The Tonight Show*, appeared on American network television for at least an hour a night, five nights a week, fifty-two weeks a year for thirty consecutive years. During this entire period he had by far the highest audience rating of any program in his time slot. When Johnny Carson announced he was going to retire, much was made of it in the media. (Carson was by this time an extraordinarily rich and powerful man.) During the last two weeks of his show the greats of the entertainment world came to visit him and to publicly acclaim his talent. At the very end of the final telecast a heartrending event occurred. After Johnny had left the stage for the last time, after all the credits for producers, lighting director, etc., had rolled by, after the music stopped, with only ten seconds of time remaining, a name was silently written on the television screen—"Rick Carson." Rick Carson was Johnny Carson's son who had died about a year earlier.

That night, only seconds after the name appeared and the show went off the air, I recalled a little newspaper memorial I had come across years before written by someone obviously not in Johnny Carson's class, but by someone nevertheless in Johnny Carson's pain. It read:

A BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE
TO MY LOVING SON, RICHARD.

*To those of you
who have a son,*

*Treasure him with care.
You will never know
what agony is
until he is
no longer there.*

*Until then,
Love, Ma*

No one reading this essay can fail to understand the longing, the sorrow, the heartache, and the love that lie behind Johnny Carson concluding thirty years of television by having the name of his deceased son be the final image, or behind Ma writing in a little local newspaper, “Until Then.” The renowned rabbi, Abraham Heschel, says that, “Concern for immortality arises out of concern over what has happened to those whom we love who have gone before, [and] what will happen to those whom we love who we leave behind.” The issue of survival is not exclusively about mere personal perpetual duration. It is about the survival of love and the beloved. It is about eternal communion with the Source of love for all who have loved, all who were loved, and all who have been created out of love.

It is about Johnny Carson being able to cry out “Rick” and Ma being about to cry out “Richard” in that spirit of superabundant joy and exultation in which Mary Magdalene cried out, “Rabboni” upon seeing the Risen Jesus outside the empty tomb. The issue of survival is about the deepest hope and the greatest fear that reside at the heart of the human heart.

THE CHOICE BETWEEN NONVIOLENCE AND NON-EXISTENCE

What is at stake in Christian “accommodationist” justifications of homicidal violence, in the face of Jesus’ rejection of homicidal violence? In a word, what is at stake is salvation—life eternal in its fullness for one and all. The various Churches’ leaders may believe they cannot afford to jeopardize the survival of their particular Church’s power, prestige, property rights, political influence, etc., by proclaiming and by following the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel and His nonviolent way. They may believe they cannot afford to antagonize their Christian congregations by telling them about violence what Jesus told His disciples about violence

two thousand years ago. They may believe, as did Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, that ordinary "pew-dwellers" have enough problems without burdening them further with this culturally unacceptable and therefore difficult teaching of Jesus.

However, attitudes of this sort serve only to corrupt the morality of the Church as a whole since they encourage doubt about everything the Gospels tell us Jesus taught. The renowned Catholic biblical scholar, the late Rev. John L. McKenzie, says that, "If we cannot know from the New Testament that Jesus rejected violence, then we can know nothing of His person or message. It is the clearest of teachings." The task is to again see clearly what was once seen clearly. What a Christian or a pastor or a Church or a theologian cannot do is make his or her own weakness, fear, or disobedience the criterion of truth about the person or teaching of Jesus.

As one drop of arsenic can totally contaminate a glass of the finest spring water, so also one self-servingly bizarre interpretation of Jesus' teachings can totally contaminate the credibility of the most revered interpreter. The patent moral and spiritual grotesqueness of "justified" Christian war, "justified" Christian capital punishment, and "justified" Christian abortion is perniciously and relentlessly undermining the perception of the Church as a trustworthy teacher of the way of Jesus, of the way of holiness, of the way to eternal life. Given all that is at stake, it is critical for Christians and their leaders to refuse to diminish the saving teaching of Jesus. A return to the obvious is imperative.

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The desire to be rather than not to be lies deep within all of us. The question is: how to be? What means actually lead to life in all its fullness when the few days of one's temporal existence must be lived within a planetary furnace of evil and agony? Amidst the enormity of the incomprehensibility of the mystery of life and death, of time and eternity, the Risen Jesus, who is the Word of God and the very ground of being, tells us how to live today, tomorrow, and forever.

Most of the non-Christian world, overtly, and most of the Christian world, covertly, reject His Way as naïve, utopian, unrealistic, simplistic, or absurd. However, what must also be said, emphatically, is that Jesus understands Himself as teaching The Way of holiness, The Way to eternal life—and that this Way does not include homicidal violence, whether that homicidal violence be considered by others legal or illegal, romantic or sordid, justified or unjustified.

Redemptive homicidal violence—that is homicidal violence as God’s will and as a way to eternal survival—is a catastrophic illusion, if Jesus and His teachings are authentic revelation. Christian natural law just homicide theories are soteriological quicksand if Jesus knows of what He

Natural law Christian just homicide theories are soteriological quicksand if Jesus knows of what He speaks when He speaks of the will of God—if Jesus is who the New Testament says He is when it calls Him Logos and Lord.

speaks, when He speaks of the will of God—if Jesus is who the New Testament says He is when it calls Him *Logos* and Lord.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.’s well-known reflection, “Today

the choice is not between violence and nonviolence. Today the choice is between nonviolence and non-existence,” is but a paraphrase of the non-violent teaching of Jesus. Said in the words of the most eminent moral theologian in the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, Reverend Bernard Häring: “Nonviolence belongs to the mystery of the Redeemer and redemption. The test is whether one shares in that mystery...Christ has shown that nonviolence is strength. The effectiveness of nonviolence is ultimately the open tomb.”

“RABBONI!” “RICK!” “RICHARD!”

How Unnatural Is Natural Law Christian Just War Theory?

In the depths of his conscience man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can, when necessary, speak to his heart more specifically: 'do this, shun that.' For man has in his heart a law written by God.

VATICAN II—PASTORAL CONSTITUTION ON THE
CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD, 16

In the previous chapter, *Is Natural Law Christian Just War Theory Soteriological Quicksand?* I wrote, “Step by step they [Christian Just War Theories] walk Christians through a logical maze that may or may not have any relationship to reality, until the Baptized, with blinding logical clarity, arrive at the incontestable conclusion that they can do in good conscience what Jesus refused to do and what He taught His disciples to refuse to do.” Further on, I noted that, “One way the utter inconsistency between the Jesus of the New Testament and the justification of Christian participation in war is propagated and sustained is by ignorance. Christians (Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and Evangelicals) are not taught the truth about the realities of war by their spiritual leadership.”

Lest it be thought that I was being glib about the *modus operandi* of just war theologians, or unfairly severe about the process of nurtured ignorance indulged in by Christian leaders, I was not. The late biblical scholar, Reverend John L. McKenzie, a genuine intellectual, made the point several years before his death that “Scholars have not studied war in the way that scholars can.” If scholars have been remiss in this area,

Church leaders, whom Christian communities rely upon for proper moral guidance, have been grossly negligent. In Christianity, cultivated lack of awareness, intentionally fostered through ecclesiastical and civil structures, is the *sine qua non* of Natural Law Christian Just War Theory and its application. Let me elaborate.

THE MORAL PRICE OF MAKING THE CONCRETE ABSTRACT

Almost forty years ago anti-abortion advocates released a short film, *The Silent Scream*, which showed the torment to which the child in the womb is subjected when he or she is being aborted. Those who justify abortion cried foul. They vigorously protested: “This is emotionalism, not truth!”

The presupposition on which such a protest rests is that there is something intrinsically contradictory between emotionally-based empathy and cognitive truth. Granted, emotions can distort but so can logic. However, emotions also have the capacity to enhance the human being’s understanding of what is true and what is false. Empathy is derived from the Greek word, *empathia*, which combines “em” (in) with *pathos* (suffering). It is vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts and attitudes of another. “Empathy,” as the philosopher-saint, Edith Stein, notes, “is a way of knowing.”

In the early part of the twentieth century, the Russian philosopher, Nikolai Berdyaev, proclaimed that “The greatest sin of the age is making the concrete abstract.” In other words, he argued that there was something evil

about abstractions, when abstractions were experienced as the last word on truth, while they simultaneously hid the fierce suffering of humanity behind statistics and syllogisms. Howard Zinn, in his superb book, *The Politics of History*, addresses this issue:

“The greatest sin of the age is making the concrete abstract.”...there was something evil about abstractions when they were experienced as the last word on truth, while simultaneously they were hiding the fierce suffering of humanity behind statistics and syllogisms.

If one of the functions of the scholar is accurate description, then it is impossible to describe a war both unemotionally and accurately at the same time. And if the special competence of the mind is in enabling us to perceive what is outside our own limited experience, that competence is furthered, that perception sharpened, by emotion. A large dose of “emotionalism” in

the description of slavery would merely begin to convey accurately to a white college student what slavery was like for the black man.

Thus, exactly from the standpoint of what intellect is supposed to do for us—extend the boundaries of our understanding—the ‘cool, rational, un-emotional’ approach fails... War and violence, divested of their brutality by the prosaic quality of the printed page, became tolerable to the young. Reason, to be accurate, must be supplemented by emotion...

It is precisely at this point where those responsible for moral leadership in the various Christian Churches have failed. They have used human emotions, not to disclose truth, but to camouflage it. The Church, harkening to the call of its benefactor nation-states has, with respect to war, almost universally directed the emotions of the Baptized, not to the concrete sufferings of the victims of war, nor to the irreparable harm that the perpetrators of war do to themselves, but rather to such abstract “glories” as nationalism and ethnocentrism.

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A typical example of this clever emotional misdirection by Church leaders—misdirection which in the end is falsehood masquerading as religious truth—can be found in the 1944 Lenten Pastoral of Franz Josef Rarkowski, then Catholic Military Bishop of Germany:

One must be clear about what this phrase means: to serve God. It would be completely wrong to interpret it as a turning away from the world. In order to serve God and to be able to do everything for God, there is certainly no need to flee from the world. Service to God is performed there, wherever one stands, wherever one has his job to do. It is a matter of seeing God’s will and a God-given task in whatever burden is placed upon one and the mastering of that task. In that all of us today, on the battlefield and in the Heimat [home], do our very best in this hour of critical need in the service of our Volk [people]; that each of us serving his Vaterland [fatherland] dedicates his heart, his thoughts, his every power to the service of his Volk; that the soldier loyally and bravely follows the path set before him—therein lies the realization of the principle: “I wish to serve God.”... They [the military chaplains] will

distribute the Bread of Life among you, and I am certain that the power of the Lord will come over you and will give you the strength to give your best as soldiers of the German army for Führer, Volk, and Vaterland.

Such talk, universally present in mainline and evangelical Christianity to this very hour, and in many other religions as well, is Novocain for the mind and heroin for the soul. Its purpose and its effects are to undermine the faculty of all-inclusive empathy, to short-circuit identification with the concrete misery being perpetrated—to muffle the cries of suffering humanity. Once this level of emotional deafness has been achieved in the Church then Natural Law Christian Just War Theory becomes “self-evidently” natural, rational and Christian. The billions of acts of concrete brutality and horror executed and endured in war no longer “exist.” All that “exists” are the feelings of religious patriotism and a scoreboard of abstract statistics on “hits,” “kills” and “body counts.” This is the sand of empathy-drained untruth on which Natural Law Christian Just War Theory is built today, as it was the sand of empathy-drained untruth on which Natural Law Christian Just Slavery Theory was built yesterday.

ALLOWING THE EYE TO SEE AND THE EAR TO HEAR

Suppose that bishops, ministers, priests, moral theologians, and ordinary Christians of every ilk divested themselves of their empathic blinders and earplugs. What realities would they see and hear? Would those realities not lead them to reject Natural Law Christian Just War Theory as an authentic expression of “the imprint of God’s providential plan on man’s natural reason,” and to reject it as an authentic expression of Natural Law?

With blinders and earplugs discarded, the first act to be observed and heard empathically would of necessity be the primeval act of war: the killing of one human being by another. One could object that in this day

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of mass media every adult has seen homicide and graphic simulation of homicide thousands of times. After all, war documentaries and war movies, blood red with realism, abound. Fair enough. But

when the blinders and earplugs are discarded, and all the instruments of comprehension God has given humanity are employed, new and essential truths about homicide would be brought to consciousness—awarenesses

that the most vivid documentaries and the most realistic movies do not normally evoke—truths that demand a rejection of Natural Law Christian Just War Theory. Let me speak of one such awareness, one that reveals this theory to be as morally bankrupt as two former Natural Law Christian moral theories: Natural Law Just Inquisition Theory and Natural Law Just Slavery Theory.

IS THE WILL TO KILL INTRINSIC TO THE HUMAN BEING?

General S.L.A. Marshall was a U.S. Army historian during World War II. He and a team of historians and other personnel interviewed thousands of American soldiers in more than four hundred infantry companies in Europe and the Pacific, immediately after they had been in close combat with either German or Japanese troops. Military personnel who could not see those whom they were called upon to kill, i.e., military personnel engaged in aerial, naval, or artillery bombardment operations, were not part of the study.

The soldiers who had been in close combat were asked what they actually did in those battles. Their answers were consistent, whether the question was asked in the European or the Pacific theatre—and it was startling. Out of every hundred men along the firing line during actual close-range homicidal conflict, an average of only fifteen to twenty responded that they “would take any part with their weapons.” This was true whether the battle lasted only a few hours or extended over several days. Regardless of the duration of close combat, eighty to eighty-five percent of the soldiers refused to kill! These same eighty to eighty-five percent did not, however, run or hide from the battle. In many instances, they risked their lives to save others, to deliver messages, etc.—but they simply would not fire their guns at enemy soldiers.

Out of every hundred men along the firing line during actual close-range homicidal conflict, an average of only fifteen to twenty “would take any part with their weapons.” ...85% refused to kill.

This mass refusal by soldiers to kill other human beings when they could actually see them, even under the immediate threat of death, and even after having their consciences all but anesthetized by nationalistic and militaristic propaganda, was not exclusively an American phenomenon.

The Germans and the Japanese kept very precise battle records, including records of munitions expenditure. Gwynne Dyer, writing about the S.L.A.

Marshall report in his book, *War*, concluded that if “a higher proportion of Japanese and Germans had been willing to kill, then the volume of fire they actually managed to produce would have been three, four or five times greater than a similar number of Americans—and it wasn’t.”

Indeed, there was ample evidence that Marshall’s discovery, namely that most soldiers have a powerful inner resistance to firing their weapons in combat if they can actually see the person they are supposed to kill, was not only true of soldiers on both sides during World War II but had been documented throughout military history. As Lt. Col. Dave Grossman relates in his work, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*:

There is ample supporting evidence to indicate that Marshall’s observations are applicable not only to U.S. soldiers or even to the soldiers on all sides in World War II. Indeed, there are compelling data that indicate that this singular lack of enthusiasm for killing one’s fellow man has existed throughout military history.

One example of that evidence lies in a 1986 study by the British Defense Operational Analysis Establishment, which analyzed one hundred battles fought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to determine why the actual historical casualty rate was far below the reasonably expected kill-potential in these circumstances. Its conclusion was that the “unwillingness to take part [in active combat]” was “the main factor.” Secretly, quietly, at the moment of decision, the evidence seems clear that

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an overwhelming majority of soldiers find themselves unable to kill a fellow human being if they can see him, in direct contradiction to what is so often portrayed on television and in the movies.

The fact that all soldiers, before they reach the battlefield, must undergo a nationalistic and militaristic indoctrination process of military training, makes this finding—this eighty to eighty-five percent figure—a momentous moral discovery. It reveals the presence of a God-created, natural, innate homicide-inhibitor of such enormous power that the threat of death itself can not override it in the vast majority of human beings. As General Marshall concludes in his book *Men Against Fire*:

It is therefore reasonable to believe that the average and healthy individual—the man who can endure the mental and physical stresses of combat—still has such an inner and usually unrealized resistance towards killing a fellow man that he will not of his own volition take life if it is possible to turn away from that responsibility....At this vital point he becomes a conscientious objector.

THE NATURAL ORDER THAT GOD FORBIDS US TO DISTURB

One would think that such stunning findings would require Christian Church leaders and moral theologians who espouse Natural Law Christian Just War Theory to acknowledge their errors of perception and interpretation of reality—i.e., the notion that the will to terrestrial survival is a primary principle of Christian Natural Law. One would think that such findings would lead them instead to accept the nonviolent teachings of the Nonviolent Jesus, the *Logos*, as being utterly consistent with Christian Natural Law—“the law placed by God in the heart of each person.”

St. Augustine defines Natural Law as “the reason or the will of God who commands us to respect the natural order and forbids us to disturb it.” Marshall’s studies and many corroborating studies highlight clearly the natural order that is to be respected—the natural order that God forbids us to disturb. The Marshall disclosures point directly to nonviolence being “the eternal law implanted in beings endowed with reason and free will.” It is contrary to the evidence to claim that the homicide of war is in conformity with Natural Law.

Again, St. Augustine says that the Natural Law “commands us to respect the natural order.” This is precisely what Jesus, the nonviolent disciples of Jesus, and conscientious objectors do. This is precisely what the just warists do not do! Augustine states that the Natural Law “forbids us to disturb” the natural order. This is precisely what the just warists do. This is precisely what Jesus, the nonviolent disciples of Jesus, and conscientious objectors do not do. How, in light of the S.L.A. Marshall research, is it possible to continue to reasonably contend that justified homicide is consistent with “the imprint of God’s providential plan on man’s natural reason”?

Marshall’s studies and the many follow-up studies show that God in His providence has programmed an inhibitor to homicide into human beings. Those who espouse Natural Law Christian Just War Theory argue that it is natural for people to kill other people in order to defend

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themselves, their property, their political system, their economic system, etc. They are empirically, psychologically, and spiritually wrong. Human beings have been endowed with a neurobiological infrastructure designed specifically to guard against intraspecies predation—the killing of other

human beings. The Marshall studies teach us that there is probably no human activity more unnatural—more inconsistent with the *Logos*—than killing another human being.

CONSEQUENCES OF CONFORMITY TO THE JUST WAR ETHIC

Anyone who kills face-to-face in war reaps a bitter harvest. Writer William Manchester was a Marine in World War II. Writing about the moments after he first killed a Japanese soldier, he says, “I can remember whispering foolishly, ‘I’m sorry,’ and then just throwing up. I threw up all over myself. It was a betrayal of what I’ve been taught since a child.”

Movies and television virtually universally communicate that a person can kill without serious negative consequences, if he or she has “justice” on his or her side (and doesn’t everyone think they have “justice” on their side?) But it is radically untrue! Manchester’s experience of vomiting after the first time he killed a human being is common. Human slaughter is something so unnatural and so disruptive to normal physiologic function that the body itself is traumatized by it. Although vomiting is sometimes the most visibly apparent effect, it is the least pernicious of consequences. It involves the short-term activation of areas of the brain that initiate the reflex, seemingly in response to the intuitive certainty that something horribly aversive has occurred—that a line has been crossed that should never be crossed. More significantly, and much more devastating, however, is the psychological trauma—the mangling of neural networks that occurs in response to participation in the unnaturalness of killing. These aberrations, which for some are irreversible, can reshape the way in which the mind is organized and functions. Years later, veterans still have nightmares and flashbacks in which old battles still rage. They still watch for threats and stand poised for danger. Their

neural networks respond to everyday situations as though they are vicious attacks and to people in ordinary relationships as though they are long-gone comrades or enemies. The fact that the majority of casualties in war are psychological leaves little room for doubt that something grossly unnatural takes place when a human being kills another human being.

Intentional homicide is neither a natural act nor a morally neutral act that becomes unnatural or immoral depending on circumstances. The spilling of human blood is an intrinsically unnatural act, blatantly contrary to “the imprint of God’s providential plan on man’s natural reason.” There is no way that anyone can purposely destroy a human life without destroying his or her own life. The inhibition against homicide is so forcefully woven by God into the human being that, if it is overridden, something terrible happens within the person. The horror of having killed a fellow human being, of having breached a primal taboo, is a horror to which Just War Church leaders and Just War theologians, who deal with war only as an unemotional syllogistic abstraction, seem to be conceptually and empathically oblivious. Hence, it is a horror about which they do not inform those in their spiritual care.

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After Marshall’s research, the U.S. military decided it was not getting enough “bang for its buck,” and proceeded to rethink and retool its entire military training operation. (Every major military organization on the planet eventually followed suit, implicitly acknowledging the validity of Marshall’s results.) Pavlovian and Skinnerian methods of desensitization and deprogramming were introduced into military programs. The result was an increase to fifty-five percent of those who were willing to kill in close combat in the Korean War, and to ninety percent in the Vietnam War.

Nevertheless, lest it be thought that the God-implanted inhibition to killing humans can be subverted with impunity, consider but one fact: Approximately fifty-six thousand American military personnel died during the Vietnam War. However, more than that number of Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since the end of that war.

Even after intensified methods of deprogramming and desensitization are employed to break down the natural inhibition to kill, the psychiatric casualty rate of those who kill in face-to-face combat is staggering—and always has been.

Now, Jesus may be, as so many Church leaders and Christian moral theologians seem to believe, an unsophisticated Galilean peasant whose moral insights are not up to the complexity of the modern world. However, I would bet that the tens upon tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans who, after the war, took their lives by their own hands, would have appreciated coming in contact, before they enlisted or were drafted, with a bishop, priest, minister, or Church that would have told them the truth behind the Unsophisticated Galilean's warning: "He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword."

I bet they would have been grateful to hear of Marshall's work and its implications. But such bishops, priests, ministers, and Churches were few. So, perish the Vietnam veterans did. Their Christian religious leaders let them walk into, indeed in many instances encouraged them to walk into, a system, namely the military, whose explicit purpose it was to sabotage the program God had placed in their hearts.

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So, without knowing what was happening to them, they were intentionally deprogrammed from the way of God's Natural Law, and intentionally reprogrammed into the way of justified, emotion-

ally detached, non-empathic homicide. And, all the while, the Franz Joseph Rarkowskis of this world told them that they were "serving God," were following God's law, by obeying orders to kill "Commie gooks." Tragically, they learned by bitter experience that the Rarkowskis of the Church did not know of what they spoke—that, in truth, they had helped to defile them.

Hundreds of years before Jesus, Aesop unearthed the truth of the Natural Law's intrinsic rejection of homicide in his fable of *Jupiter and the Bee*:

Long, long ago there was an industrious bee who had stored her combs with a bountiful harvest. One day she decided to fly up to heaven to present an

offering of honey to Jupiter. The god was so delighted with the bee's gift that he promised her she should have whatever her heart desired.

"Oh, great Jupiter, my creator and my master, I beg of thee, give thy servant a sting, so that when anyone approaches my hive to take the honey, I may kill him on the spot."

Jupiter was surprised to hear such a bloodthirsty request from such a humble creature. He responded: "Your prayer shall be granted but not exactly in the way you wish. The sting you ask for, you shall have. When anyone comes to take away your honey and you attack him, the wound shall be fatal. However, it shall be fatal to you also, for your life shall go with your sting."

"He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword" is a truth of the Gospel and a truth of Natural Law. However, to perish does not necessarily mean that one will suddenly be physically annihilated. There are those who may continue to have physical life, but live in such a hellish psychological world that they long for death. They have life, but they have no life. They have perished, but they have not stopped breathing yet.

Put the stinger into another and you perish! General Marshall's work tells us that the soul knows, even if it has never been told, or even if it has been told the contrary, that there is no way to take another's life without taking one's own life—even if the killer is protecting her or his honey. Why won't the spiritual leaders of the mainline and evangelical Churches explain this to those who rely on them for spiritual truth?

MILITARY TRAINING: THE DECISIVE SPIRITUAL DEATH BLOW

But, there is more. It is a fact of life that if you do not first have a sword in your heart you will never have one in your hands. Military training is a well-planned set of social and psychological controls meant to corrupt the heart God implanted in the human being—the heart that is intrinsically repulsed by homicide. Military training is the unacknowledged requirement, the unspeakable immoral secret, at the center of Natural Law Christian Just War Theory. It is a system of psychological and sociological techniques whose explicit purpose it is to break down God's implanted barrier to homicide, and to place a sword where God never intended a sword to be placed—in the human heart. "The history of warfare," Lt. Col. Grossman says in his book, *On Killing*, "can be seen as a

history of increasingly more effective mechanisms for enabling and conditioning men to overcome their innate resistance to killing their fellow human beings.” Military training gives men and women what God does not want them to have, and did not give them—a heart for homicide. Military training is the debased and debasing conditioning

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In the interest of exposing camouflaged truth, time should be taken to point out that the divinely implanted curb against human

bloodletting is not only violated by the act of homicide and by military training, but is also undermined by anything else that fosters the desire or willingness to engage in homicidal violence. Movies, television programs, and literature that glorify homicidal heroism, as well as blood-and-gore, intensely-violent, homicide-stimulating Nintendo video games (e.g., *Call to Duty: Modern Warfare*), and toys explicitly made so that children can play at homicide are also contrary to Natural Law since they are “killing-enabling” agents, whose use weakens innate inhibitions against destroying other humans.

To those who say there is no evidence of this, and to those who are so brazen as to maintain that playing homicide prevents homicide, I say only this: Then give your children or grandchildren movies that glorify incest, Nintendo-like video games that simulate incest, and toys that encourage them to play make-believe incest. Case closed!

Movies, games, etc., that exalt homicidal violence are as contrary to Natural Law as games, movies, etc., that extol incest—and you don’t toy with the unnatural. In fairness to the military, it should be said that by the time it gets its hands on a recruit, his or her parents, Church, and culture have already done a great deal to erase the imprint of God’s providential design on his or her heart. They have softened up the child and, as a result, the military may more effectively, efficiently and economically administer the decisive spiritual death blow: the inculcation of a willingness and readiness to actually do the unnatural, to breach the divinely instilled constraints against human bloodletting.

The unconscionable silence of bishops, priests, and ministers on the anti-Gospel and anti-Natural Law dimensions of military training and homicide playing is so pervasive that it has become as normal and as invisible as the air. A rare bishop or priest or minister might say a negative word or two about his or her country's current war or military budget, but those who speak Gospel truth and the truth of Natural Law about the realities of military training and juvenile homicide playing are almost non-existent.

The 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace by the American Catholic bishops—three years in the making, costing millions of dollars—speaks not a word to these subjects. Yet, without the sword in the heart, the sword in the hand will never be. The source of the difference between the open hand of hospitality and the closed fist of hostility is not found in the five fingers, but in the heart; in the mind; in the human psyche.

Military training and its preconditioning program of juvenile homicide-playing are the *sine qua non* of war. The more effective such activity is at unraveling the primal Natural Law prohibition against homicide that God placed in the human heart, the more efficient the military will be at killing, and hence, the more certain it will be of a glorious victory for the home-team homicide gang. After all, it is the side that kills and maims most efficiently that wins the war.

THE PREMEDITATED PERVERSION OF THE HUMAN HEART

So from this day forward, never forget that before the battle-axe splits the skull, before the flamethrower burns off the face, before the machine gun tears the bowels apart and splatters the brains, the battle-axe, the flamethrower, the machine gun have to be unnaturally placed in the human mind and the human heart.

People are not born with a will to kill other people. A battle-axe, a flamethrower, and a machine gun are no more lethal than a broomstick, without the will to kill, without the sword in the heart. But, with the will to kill, a broomstick can be lethal. Military training is the final and decisive step in the process of placing a sword in the heart, of creating a heart for homicide, of overriding the Natural Law aversion to killing which God places in the human heart. It is an intentional effort to replace the heart that God put into human beings with its opposite.

Military training is the premeditated perversion of the eternal law placed by God in each person—or, at least, an attempt to do so.

Without military training, without the intentional corrupting of the human heart of the younger generation by the older generation, war is impossible. The Marshall studies are overwhelming evidence that military training represents an obstinate refusal “to respect the natural order,” represents an idolatrous effort to disturb what God “forbids us to disturb.” Of course an honest reading and application of Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament inevitably lead to the same conclusion.

THE PANDEMIC OF VIOLENCE AND THE JUST WAR PLACEBO

In this world, the pandemic of justified homicide is treated with theological placebos. Let us try to fathom, by use of an analogy, the gravity, the “unnaturalness,” and the impossibility of trying to cure or arrest this disease by prescribing that particular placebo known as the Natural Law Christian Just War Theory.

We have all seen large propellers on an airplane rotating so rapidly that the human eye cannot detect that they are present. If the number of revolutions per minute is great enough, the circumference of the area through which the propellers are passing, thousands of times per minute, appears empty and transparent. This is, of course, a deadly illusion. If one walks into this area, one is ripped to pieces. A legion of people could argue that there is no reason to worry since it is perfectly clear that there is nothing present that could cause injury. However, the concrete reality of individuals being torn apart, one after another, would invalidate all abstract thinking on the subject. What level of self-deception, what level of callous self-righteous folly, what level of atrophied empathy to human misery would be required to allow one *to continue* to insist upon the truth of one’s abstract conclusion, that “there is nothing present,” when person after person walks into the area and is sliced to pieces? This is precisely what Church leaders do when they continue to ignore the fact that something blatantly contrary to Natural Law and to the teachings of Jesus—the *Logos*—is required by so-called Natural Law Christian Just War Theory.

To actually participate in a war, whether it is called just or unjust, one has to destroy divinely implanted constraints that are at least as innately powerful as the divinely implanted constraints against incest. However, no one

and no society overrides inherent Natural Law blocks against incest or human bloodletting without being torn to shreds by the invisible propeller of evil from which these constraints are meant to protect people.

The theological sugar pill of Natural Law Christian Just War Theory is powerless to combat or to heal the consequences of going where God forbids us to go. If anything, its illusionary spiritual assurances promote the very pandemic it claims to be trying to prevent and cure. A belief that Natural Law Christian Just War Theory is a morally appropriate response to the problem of war is morally equivalent to a belief that aspirin is a medically appropriate response to AIDS. Erroneous moral thought and erroneous medical thought can be a cause of evil or disease, when the erroneous is lived by.

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Susan O'Neill is a registered nurse and a Vietnam veteran. Writing in the November, 2002, issue of the *American Journal of Nursing*, she vividly portrays, in language that the simplest soul can comprehend, the physical and metaphysical unnaturalness of war:

I am reminded lately of the old 1960's slogan of Another Mother for Peace, "War is not healthy for children or other living things." That mantra from a past generation still, to this day, is a no-brainer...

Guns, bombs, landmines, chemical and biological weapons—well, duh, these are obviously unhealthy. I shoot; he dies. We bomb; they go up in smoke. The actual battlefields create casualties; but even after the guns and bombs are quiet there is more suffering. He planted a landmine; 20 years later you step on it and blow up. We defoliated; 10 years later he dies of cancer, and she has a stillborn baby. Clearly unhealthy. And still more: she works in a combat hospital operating room in 1970; now she's awaiting liver transplantation because of hepatitis C.

Not only does war wound our body, it wounds our mind. Let us not forget posttraumatic stress disorder. Definitely unhealthy. Last November, in Washington, DC, I attended a dance for Vietnam veterans and found myself in a huge convention center full of ghosts. Men and women gathered

around and told me of nightmares, alcoholism, drug addiction, failed relationships, unresolved rage and guilt, all born in that surreal time spent more than 30 years ago in a combat zone.

“The ultimate deception of evil,” says the renowned Jewish theologian, Martin Buber, “is that it leads people to believe that they can control it [evil] once they have chosen it.” Nowhere is this more true than when a person and, by extension, when a society chooses homicide.

Marshall’s studies make visible a powerful restraint mechanism that communicates to the individual, even under crisis conditions, the warning, “Do not inflict death.” Jesus explicitly places an equally chilling caveat before humanity: “Put up your sword; for the one who lives by the sword will perish by the sword.” The artistic mind of Aesop unmasked the same truth in his fable, *Jupiter and the Bee*.

Both Natural Law and the Gospel raise a red flag that reads, “Do not kill another human being.” They raise it because homicide, being “contrary to the Eternal Law implanted in the human heart,” always leads individuals and societies into unexpected, uncontrollable, and often irreversible realms of spiritual, psychological, and social contamination and defilement. In short, it is an iron law of the moral universe that evil,

In short, it is an iron law of the moral universe that evil, once let loose, has its own propagating energy. Hence, as sure as a farmer must reap corn if he sows corn, the unnatural will beget the unnatural, will beget the unnatural, *ad nauseam*—and possibly *ad infinitum*.

once let loose, has its own propagating energy. Hence, as sure as a farmer must reap corn if he sows corn, the unnatural will beget the unnatural, will beget the *unnatural, ad nauseam*—and possibly *ad infinitum*.

The history of Christian homicidal violence, if examined empathically and studied rigorously “in the way that scholars can study” such matters, will bring to light a plethora of savage and ruthless behaviors so antagonistic and so contrary to the life envisioned by the Gospel, that only an intrinsically distorted understanding of reality could have produced them. Participation in that perverted and perverting reality is what Natural Law Christian Just War Theory condones, spreads, and tries to pass off as holy.

Violent Monotheism: Truth or Falsehood

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are monotheistic religions that teach a number of moral absolutes, rooted in an understanding of the nature and will of God, as revealed by their founders—Moses, Jesus, Mohammed. Monotheism organically calls forth a “whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength” commitment from the creature once the nature and will of the Creator is known.

In revelatory monotheism—regardless of whether God’s revelation or Word is spoken through Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Zoroaster, or through a designed order initiated in the first nanosecond of the Big Bang—it is of supreme importance to be sure that the Word attributed to God is, in reality, the Word of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. If these founders of faiths discern this Word incorrectly, then their followers logically end up making a “whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, whole strength” commitment to falsehood and unreality and therefore to idolatry, perhaps even to evil. Being wrong about this primal issue results in a person living his or her one and only life according to the spiritual delusions of another human being.

In Mark Twain’s literary classic, *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck spends a great deal of time traveling down the Mississippi River with a black slave named Jim. They come to know each other quite well. Indeed, the quality of Jim’s character, his kindness and generosity, impress and somewhat confuse Huck, since Jim is a slave. At one moment in their travels, Huck encounters a group of white men hunting escaped slaves, of whom Jim is one. Since childhood, his culture has indelibly hammered into Huck’s mind and onto his conscience that any white person who protects a runaway slave will be sent to hell by God. What is Huck to do? He has come to know Jim as a human being rather than as a slave. However, he also has been taught what God’s Will is, and that Huck Finn will be consigned

to hell if he does not obey it. It is a terrible thing to fall for a word of God that is not the true word of God.

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

CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS

It is a matter of logic: Either Jesus, or Mohammed and Moses are proclaiming a false revelation about God on an issue of primal importance. Either Jesus, or Mohammed and Moses are teaching as the will of God something that is not the will of God. The clarity of the revelations of each of the three is beyond dispute. Equally beyond dispute is the fact

Equally beyond dispute is the fact that the revelations of Moses and Mohammed are contrary to the revelation of Jesus on this matter (homicidal violence)...*The one says that there is nothing of God or God's will or God's way in homicidal violence, the other two say that homicidal violence can be consistent with God, his will and his way.

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The one says that there is nothing of God or God's will or God's way in homicidal violence; the other two say that homicidal violence can be consistent with God, His will, and His way. One says

homicidal violence is objectively evil. The others say it can be objectively good. Whose image of God is consistent with the Reality? Whose is erroneous on a grand scale? Whose "revelation" is, in fact, revelation? Whose is just an illusionary, humanly-generated idea of the Deity?

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

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

However, to assert in monotheism that God is both violent and non-violent is to declare that God is violent—that is the necessary logical conclusion. It is analogous to an individual saying “I am nonviolent but...” The “but” is the place where violence is chosen and is justified. Nonviolence means there is no “but.” Divine Nonviolence means that in the nature, will, and way of God there is no “but.”

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Hence, for any morality based on serving God by doing His will on earth as it is done in heaven, it makes all the difference in heaven and on earth whether there is a “but” in the reality and will of the Holy One. In monotheism there cannot be two ultimate moral Masters, nor can a person serve two contradictory Divine truths. In the moment of choice he or she must follow one and abandon the other—a person cannot serve both a Nonviolent God and a violent God.

THE MARTYR

The crowning service a person can perform for his or her Divine Master is to be a martyr in obedience to his or her Master’s will. The English word “martyr” is derived etymologically from the Greek word “*martys*” which means witness. A martyr, then, is a witness even unto his or her own death to the true God and His Will. A person can be a martyr on behalf of a God of violence or on behalf of a God of nonviolence. But one cannot serve as a witness for both. To die while killing another human being, believing it to be God’s Will, is martyrdom in submission to a certain kind of God. To die while refusing to kill another because homicide is contrary to the Will of God is also martyrdom, but martyrdom in obedience to another kind of God.

By logical necessity, one of these forms of martyrdom is objectively not martyrdom at all, but is instead, a waste of life on behalf of an idolatrous illusion. It is pseudo-martyrdom, subjective good intentions in the service of objective untruth and the unholy. The other of these forms of martyrdom is objectively truth and sanctity incarnate. Martyrdom is the triumph of life over death. Pseudo-martyrdom is the triumph of death over life. Which is one and which is the other depends on the kind of God in fact God is.

Something of towering temporal and eternal magnitude is at stake here. Those who try to conceal this issue, or muddle it, or avoid it, or deni-

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grate its significance perform no service for God or for humanity. Moreover, Moses and Mohammed and Jesus are straight-forward in their respective revelations concerning God and His Will *vis-à-vis* violence. They are crystalline—and they radically disagree. The theological, spiritual, moral, and practical importance of this incongruity cannot be overstressed, because God is the heart of the matter regardless of what the matter is. An erroneous apprehension of His Reality and Will would have consequences so catastrophic that they would reverberate through the galaxies to the threshold of eternity—and possibly beyond.

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THE GOSPEL

The Gospel proclaims that Jesus is not only a great teacher, the Prophet, the Messiah and the Suffering Servant, but is also the Lord, the Alpha

It is also Gospel truth that in all of Jesus' suffering, as in all of his life and ministry, He refuses to defend himself or others with violence let alone use homicidal violence to punish others, pursue his cause, promote his self-interest or to seek retribution.

and the Omega, the pre-existent Word through whom all things were made, the definitive revelation of God, the self-revelation of God, the incarnation of God, God! It is also Gospel truth that in all of Jesus' suffering, as in all of His life and ministry, He refuses to defend

himself or others with violence, let alone use violence to punish others, pursue His cause, promote His self-interest, or seek retribution.

The previously cited eminent biblical scholar, Rev. John L. McKenzie, states: “No reader of the New Testament, simple or sophisticated, can retain any doubt of Jesus’ position toward violence directed to persons, individual or collective, organized or free enterprise: he rejected it totally.” Why is Jesus nonviolent? The answer to this axial question of Christic morality is precisely stated in the words of the most renowned Catholic moral theologian of the twentieth century, Rev. Bernard Häring: “Jesus is nonviolent because God is nonviolent.” God acts as God is: “I and the Father are one” (JN 10:30); “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (JN 14:9); “Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God” (COL 1:15; 2 COR 4:4).

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

WHEN

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

But if God is nonviolent, then returning death for death, collateral damage for collateral damage, is morally impossible. If God never smiles on human slaughter, if God never smites the enemy, if true monotheism is

If God is nonviolent, then homicidal violence is as absent as incest from the moral will of the Divinity, since God, His Will and His Way are absolutely one, absolutely simple, absolutely without division.

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

THE ENEMY

Does the omniscient and omnipotent God place anyone on this planet with the right to kill another person? Can the enemy of a state, tribe, religion, economic system or person objectively be the enemy of God? Can it ever be the objective will of God to kill the enemy of a state, tribe, religion, economic system or person? For the kind of God who is violent

For the kind of God who is violent and therefore has a moral will which contains the possibility of justified violence, the answer is “Yes.” For the kind of God revealed by the Nonviolent Jesus, for the Nonviolent God, who communicates by word and deed a love of enemies even unto one’s own death, the answer is “No.”

and therefore has a moral will which contains the possibility of justified violence, the answer is “Yes.” For the kind of God revealed by the Nonviolent Jesus, for the Nonviolent God, who communicates by word and deed a love of enemies even unto one’s own death, the answer is “No.” In such

a Divinity the enemy of a state, religion, etc., is never the enemy of God but is always a daughter or son of Abba—a daughter or son who is to be loved as “God made flesh” reveals that she or he should be loved—now and always.

In the world of violent monotheism, regardless of the institutional or theological architecture it assumes, it is inevitable that one person’s dream will be another person’s nightmare, that one person’s collateral

damage will be another person's beloved daughter or son or spouse or parent or friend, that one person's freedom fighter will be another person's terrorist, that one person's military hero will be another person's mass murderer, that one person's God will be another person's fiend. In the world of nonviolent monotheism such humanly contrived divisions and linguistic delineations are literally non-realities and non-thoughts. Because the Nonviolent God made visible in Jesus and with whom Jesus is one (JN 10:30; JN 14:9), i.e., Abba, "makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust" (MT 5:45), He can never be experienced as any human being's Nightmare. Therefore, He can never be conscripted to justify the creation of nightmares for any of His sons and daughters.

WORSHIP

Do all the monotheistic religions worship the true God? Most Jews and Muslims believe that the worship of Jesus as God is objectively a serious religious error and is displeasing to God. To worship Jesus as the incarnate God is to commit the cardinal theological sin of Judaism—foreign worship, and of Islam—idolatry. "It is the formal recognition and worship as God of an entity that is in fact not God," as Rabbi David Berger, states.

Now, suppose a monotheist believes that God approves of, or even demands, that His creatures practice incest—what would follow from this for a Jew, Muslim, or Christian? If a Jew, Muslim, or Christian were to pray with him, would they be praying with someone who believes in the same God that they do? Could a Jew, Muslim, or Christian pray with this man without denying his or her own truth, faith, and God? Could a Jew, Muslim, or Christian bow down and worship a God who was the kind of God who justifies or requires incest? Would they be worshipping as God an entity that in fact was not God? Human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, strive to imitate the Divinity they worship—for in the imitation of the Holy One lies the Way of holiness. Is incest on this Way? Is violence on this Way? Worship of the unholy is idolatry. Imitation of the unholy is evil.

Concerning God, is the only truth necessary to avoid idolatrous worship acceptance that God is One—i.e., that there is only one God? Concerning the worship of God, is it acceptable to worship in any spirit—provided only that it is the One God who is being worshipped? Jesus gives

Christians concrete direction here. While not condemning all past efforts of human beings to fulfill their innate desire to worship God, He states: “But the hour will come—in fact it is here already—when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth” (JN 4:23,24). The Spirit Jesus is speaking of here is His Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Holy, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit with whom He is consubstantial.

After Jesus, is not authentic worship for the Christian worship in the Nonviolent Spirit and the Nonviolent Truth of the Nonviolent Jesus? After Jesus, can a Christian pray:

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

PSALM 137:8,9

or after Jesus, can a Christian:

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

KORAN, SURA IX:5

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

OTHER DIVINE EXPECTATIONS

To avoid any confusion of mind, it should be candidly stated that God expects more of people than engaging in violence or not engaging in

violence. However, other expectations of God, based on the kind of God God is and His revelation, are beyond the scope of this essay, which is concerned solely and specifically with whether monotheism is violent or nonviolent. Judaism, Christianity and/or Islam might see mercy as the supreme attribute of the Deity. This would mean that God would expect that people created in His image and likeness would make a supreme effort to be merciful. Whether God is violent or nonviolent would be considered in relation to the extent that this attribute reveals (or denies) the true nature of Divine Mercy. Can Divine Mercy ever come from the barrel of a gun or can it never come from the barrel of a gun? Can or cannot the God of Mercy ever be glorified by homicidal violence? The fundamental Divine expectation here is mercy, but in order for it to be a moral good it must be ordered to the Nature and Will of the one true God—whatever He may be, violent or nonviolent. Mercy-killing, whether the killing is directed toward self or others, could be morally acceptable if God is a violent God. If he is not, mercy-killing is always forbidden.

INSTITUTIONAL CHRISTIANITY

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

Since the fourth century, Christian leadership has turned the Nonviolent Jesus and His teachings upside down, in order that the God of institutional Christianity could take His place alongside the other warrior Gods of monotheism, who approve, require, permit, and sometimes even assist their faithful in homicidal victories. Christian rulers—secular and ecclesial—accomplished this by the creation of the Christian Just War Theory.

More generally, the method for standing the Nonviolent God, made visible in Jesus, on His head can be called the Christian Just Homicidal Violence Theory when it is expanded to include not simply the radical

More generally, the method for standing the Nonviolent God, made visible in Jesus, on His head can be called the Christian Just Homicidal Violence Theory when it is expanded to include not simply the radical un-Christ-like activities of war, but also the equally radical un-Christ-like activities of capital punishment, or other homicidal acts committed in the name of personal self-interest and self-defense, such as violent revolution and abortion.

un-Christ-like activities of war, but also the equally radical un-Christ-like activities of capital punishment, or other homicidal acts committed in the name of personal self-interest and self-defense, such as violent revolution and abortion. Thus, over the last 1700 years, almost every species of violence has been religiously legitimized in the name of the God of institutional Christianity. This theology of God-based, justi-

fied violence has permitted the institutional Churches of Christianity to obtain by violence, and to maintain by violence, vast amounts of wealth, in order to worship their God and serve His interests—and possibly, the interest others, including their own.

Today, and for the past seventeen centuries, institutional Christianity operationally has offered, and continues to offer, to humanity a God who ratifies what Jesus unambiguously rejected—homicidal violence. It dares to teach what Jesus never taught by word or deed, Justified Homicidal Violence Theories, and it teaches them even in the face of the fact that Jesus explicitly commissioned His Church “to teach them to obey all that I have commanded you” (MT 28:20).

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in “God-is-with-us” religious rhetoric on behalf of the home team’s homicide. Whether the God that institutional Christianity claims to be following is the God that it is following when it operates out of the ethos, ethic, theology, spir-

ituality, energy, and spirit of violent monotheism is a non-question in Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical Churches. Violent monotheism is simply the taken-for-granted truth, the unexamined conclusive presumption of these institutions. Perhaps the manner of life

adopted and invested in by Rome, Constantinople, Canterbury, Geneva, and all subdivisions and affiliates thereof does not permit them to ask those questions that would reveal the discordance between their violent monotheism and Jesus' nonviolent monotheism.

DISTRUSTING JESUS

So, today, structures built and sustained by violent monotheism are all that humanity possesses as the features and fruits of institutional monotheism. The God of the Nonviolent Jesus, the God who is the Nonviolent Jesus has no structure for human association built and sustained according to His Nonviolent Design. Nonviolent monotheism remains unincarnated in the mainline and evangelical churches of Christianity—even the struggle to incarnate it is chronically minimalist.

It is as if these institutions want the person of Jesus, but want Him without His revolutionary truth concerning the kind of God God is and what God expects. It is as if they desire Jesus, but without His God because, like Jews and Muslims, these ecclesiastical institutions do not believe Jesus knows what He is talking about on the matter of the relationship of Divinity to violence. Christian institutions, their leaders and members, simply do not trust that Jesus knows God's Plan for conquering the spirit of Cain that roams through time, relentlessly seeking people and groups of people to possess and souls to devour.

How Jesus can be God, yet not know God's Plan; or how the teaching of the Source of Reality can be considered unrealistic or ineffective, I shall leave for others to explicate. But since Christians and Christian leaders think Jesus' teachings on the rejection of violence are fatuous, fanciful, utopian, idealist, silly, impractical, and an embarrassment, this effectively guarantees that Christian leaders and their followers will never attempt to implement them. This in turn assures that structures built on and sustained by nonviolent monotheism will never arise and give witness to the power and wisdom of the invisible God of whom the Nonviolent Jesus Christ is the visible image (COL 1:15).

HOPPING CHRISTIANS

A primal truth and a foundational falsehood are in direct and irreconcilable conflict here. Each seeks from humanity that level of allegiance due to God alone. Maybe it is time for people of all religions and, most

especially, for the religious aristocracy in each religious institution, to take to heart that moment on Mt. Carmel (1 K^G 18:18^{FF}) when Elijah gathers the Israelites and cries out to them: “How long do you mean to hop, first on one leg and then on the other? If Yahweh is God follow him; if Baal, follow him.”

Christians, and most especially Christian leaders, you must become spiritually serious. If you believe that Jesus is wrong about God and His Way,

If you believe that Jesus is wrong about God and His Way, do not follow Him—follow Moses or Mohammed or some other person or philosophy that teaches a violent monotheism. But if you believe that Jesus is correct about what kind of God God is and what He expects of people, then follow Him without apology and with zeal.

do not follow Him—follow Moses or Mohammed or some other person or philosophy that teaches a violent monotheism. But if you believe that Jesus is correct about what kind of God God is and what He expects of people, then follow Him without apology and with zeal. Be adults with bona fide integrity! If the Nonviolent Jesus is mistaken

about the nature of God and the will of God, then He is self-evidently not who the Gospel says He is: the Christ, the Lord, the Word, etc. If, however, He is accurate in His revelation about the nature and will of God, then embrace Him as your Lord, Savior, and Teacher, and unreservedly affirm His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies as the will of the All Holy One, Abba. For the sake of humanity, and for the sake of your own integrity, stop hopping between truth and falsehood.

“X” OR NOT “X”

Nonviolent monotheism or violent monotheism: Which is the truth about God? Which is the falsehood about God? Between two meaningful propositions, “X” and not “X,” there is no middle ground. If one is true, the other is false. To say this should not offend a rational person who believes there is only one God, regardless of his or her denominational association. Elijah does not say and could never say, “If you cannot believe in Yahweh and follow him, at least believe in Baal and follow him.”

In the end, there is no ecumenically delicate way to finesse this stark choice between violent and nonviolent monotheism, as there is no ecumenically dainty way to water down the radical, inherent *disaccord* in dogma between Christianity, which proclaims Jesus is God, and Judaism and Islam

which say that Jesus is not God. The plain fact is that while Christianity teaches that Jesus is to be worshipped, Judaism and Islam say that worship of him is idolatry. Should Christians deny the divinity of Jesus and cease worshipping Him in order not to offend the religious sensibilities of Jews and Muslims?

In the end...there is no ecumenically dainty way to water down the radical, inherent *disaccord* in dogma between Christianity, which proclaims Jesus is God, and Judaism and Islam which say that Jesus is not God. The plain fact is that while Christianity teaches that Jesus is to be worshipped, Judaism and Islam say that worship of Him is idolatry.

Should Christians expect Jews and Muslims to proclaim that Jesus is God and worship Him in order to humor their religious sensitivities?

Or, should Jews and Muslims and Christians simply agree to teach that Moses and Mohammed are also God as Jesus is God? Of course not!

The foundation document of Christianity, the New Testament, clearly presents Jesus as Lord, *Logos*, God from all eternity, through whom all things were made. The foundation documents of Judaism and Islam, the Hebrew Scriptures and the Koran, do not present Moses or Mohammed as God. So also, these foundation documents do not present Moses and Mohammed as having the same understanding of God and God's will in relation to violence and enmity as does Jesus. Someone

Someone is right and someone is wrong as to whether the worship of Jesus is idolatry. Likewise, someone is right and someone is wrong as to whether God, His Will and His Way are nonviolent.

is right and someone is wrong as to whether the worship of Jesus is idolatry. Likewise, someone is right and someone is wrong as to whether God, His Will and His Way are nonviolent.

To those who wish to be excessively politically correct in matters religious, it must be pointed out that chronic evasion of the hard questions of religious consciousness is a solemn offense against truth, reason, integrity, meaning, and God. As the Dalai Lama notes in his *Ethics for the New Millennium*, "[A]s we advance along the path of one tradition or another, we are compelled at some point to acknowledge fundamental differences."

The central issue being raised in this essay is not, I repeat NOT, institutional affiliation. The issue is truth—Divine truth and truth about the Divine; true worship and worship of the true God. It is quite possible for

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a Jew and Muslim to believe in and follow a Nonviolent God, although to do so they would have to part company with explicit teachings of Moses or Mohammed. Likewise, it is possible for a Christian to believe

in and follow a violent warrior God. However, to do so he or she would have to part company with the explicit and consistent teachings of Jesus.

An individual's particular religious affiliation is not the problem here. What kind of God God is, and what God expects of human beings with regard to violence is the sole concern, and the soul's concern: "X" or not "X".

Serve the Truth.

Rorschach* Jesus: The Ignorant Messiah

Could Jesus have been wrong—in particular about the Nature, Way, and Will of God—and still have been the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Savior of the world? If Jesus is “like us in all things except sin” (PHIL 2:7; HEB 4:15; ROM 8:3), then does it not follow that He was fallible, since humans are universally fallible? After all, non-culpable ignorance, making innocent mistakes or speaking untruth believing it to be truth may be many things, but it is not sin.

How else is it possible to explain that the vast majority of Christians today who claim to believe that Jesus is Lord simultaneously, vigorously and even vociferously repudiate His teaching on the rejection of violence and enmity? How else is it possible for Christians of all ranks, and from Churches of every denomination, to enshrine as God’s Will teachings—Christian Just War Theory, Christian Just Capital Punishment Theory, Christian Just Inquisition Theory, to name but a few—that directly contradict what Jesus explicitly taught. The only explanation there can be for setting aside Jesus’ teachings is that Christians believe He is in error when He teaches, by word and deed, the Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies as God’s Will for His disciples, indeed for all God’s creatures.

Of course, Jesus does not explicitly address every conceivable moral problem in the Gospels. He does explicitly address some, which He considers of critical importance in His mission as Messiah bringing the Kingdom of God, e.g., violence, enmity, oath-taking, adultery. With respect to

*The Rorschach inkblot test is a projective test which relies on an individual’s perception of inkblots to determine his or her personality. The person is asked to describe what he or she sees in each of the inkblots. So, in the same inkblot one person might see a cat climbing a tree, another might see a hurricane knocking over a building, while a third would see a fat man at a table.

those He does address there can be no doubt about God's Will, unless Messiahship and Divinity permit Jesus to be in ignorance of God's Will, and to unknowingly teach untruth about God's Will to His followers.

WHAT IS NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH THE SALVIFIC TASK?

Couldn't Messiahship and Lordship be defined in a manner that permits an erroneously naïve understanding of reality to be presented as truth? Again, ignorance is not a sin. Maybe the fact that Jesus desires to do God's will in all He does is all that is necessary for Messiahship. Maybe His believing that He is doing God's will in all He does and teaches is the key ingredient for the salvation of the world. If so, then the content of His teachings would be irrelevant, and could even be wrong, since it would be the desire to will what God wills that would be the central dynamic of Messiahship and Lordship, and hence discipleship.

Or, perhaps Jesus' teachings about God's will could be in error, and yet He could still be the Christ, if nothing more is needed for the salvation of the world than the Incarnation, God becoming human. Here, Jesus' physical conception in the womb of Mary would be sufficient to accomplish the salvific task, and His teachings would not be important at all.

Jesus does indeed teach, at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, that "It is not those who say 'Lord, Lord,' who enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father" (MT 7:21). But He could be in error here as well. "Do" is the verb most often used by Jesus in the Gospels. The "do" usually refers to doing the Will of the Father on earth as it is done in heaven. The Will of the Father is precisely what Jesus thinks He is communicating by His words and deeds to those who believe in Him. (But again, if the God-man in His human fallibility and frailty is in a state of non-culpable error, it would not be sin. He would just be participating in the common lot of humanity's ignorance and confusion about reality, truth, and God.)

Since Jesus' rejection of violence and enmity is so clear and predominant in the Gospel, there can be only one possible reason for Christians justifying violence of any kind—going to war, engaging in capital punishment, burning Jews and Christian "heretics" at the stake, gossiping and backbiting, hurting others emotionally, psychologically, socially, or economically, and on and on—while simultaneously calling themselves good

Christians: Christians must really believe in their hearts that Jesus' teachings are not true, and/or are not relevant to salvation, however much they might protest to the contrary with their lips.

Since Jesus' rejection of violence and enmity is so clear and predominant in the Gospel, the only possible reason for Christians justifying going to war, engaging in capital punishment...and on and on, while simultaneously calling themselves good Christians, is that Jesus' teachings are not true and/or are not relevant to salvation.

Human integrity really does demand that Christians and Churches be honest with the world

and with themselves, and say plainly either that they think Jesus is in error and does not know what He is talking about regarding the rejection of violence and love of enemies, or else come clean and confess that they believe His teachings need not be followed for they are not integral nor necessary to salvation or to God's Will.

Of course, a third option is for such Christians and Churches to admit that Jesus' teachings are the Will of the Father, and to repent for refusing to follow them. However, consideration of this option seems to be beyond the scope of what most Christians and most Churches want to undertake. Why that is so is beyond the scope of this essay, which in no way is meant to imply that it is other than the gravest of matters.

JESUS—TEACHER OF THE IMPRACTICAL FANTASIES

For Christians to continue trying to reconcile Jesus' teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies with their participation in violence, either through an appeal to the Just War Theory (which, of course, is never actually applied—just appealed to), or through the use of such stupidities as “Jesus never said anything about not going to war,” is merely to continue to play the spiritual phony before the world. Virtually everyone—except Christians—recognizes and acknowledges that Jesus teaches that the Nature, Will, and Way of God is the complete rejection of all violence. How can one possibly be a combatant in war, or burn people up in an electric chair, or at the stake, without engaging in what Jesus rejected? Can one run a brothel without participating in lust? The fact is that most of Christianity, from top to bottom and from East to West for the last 1700 years has thought and continues to think that Jesus' teachings on violence and enmity are dead wrong—and most Christians of every rank

have said so privately, notwithstanding their public claims to believe in Jesus as Lord, as God.

Practically all Christians, regardless of their ecclesiastical or secular status, think that Jesus' teachings of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies are absurd, unrealistic, idealistic, impractical fantasies. They believe His teachings do not correspond to "how the world works" nor do they respond to it sanely. Why then don't we hear them, and their Churches, proclaim loudly and clearly, "Jesus is wrong about what the Will of God is!"? Let's hear shouted from every steeple: "Following Jesus does not mean one has to follow His teachings!"

JESUS AS INKBLOT

For most Christians today, and for many yesterdays, Jesus is a Rorschach inkblot. You may read into the Jesus of the Gospels what you wish! If you want to engage in homicidal violence and kill people in war, in revolution or in the electric chair; if you want to hurt or destroy people through emotional, political, psychological or economic violence, Rorschach Jesus is there as your transcendental justifier. If you want to kill people in order to recapture Golgotha from Muslims, or to free the world of Jews who won't convert to Christianity, or get elected to office Rorschach Jesus is available to support your endeavors.

Indeed, there is no place where Rorschach Jesus cannot fit. Christians can even tear one another to pieces, and Rorschach Jesus will be there,

If following Jesus' teachings is not intrinsic to the call to discipleship, or if His teachings are erroneous, fanciful, or unrealistic, or if Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is just a stupid idea for running a life and running a Church, then Rorschach Jesus is the only Jesus there is.

giving His moral support and divine assistance to all parties on all sides. If following Jesus' teachings is not intrinsic to the call to discipleship, or if His teachings are erroneous, fanciful, or unrealistic, or if Nonviolent Love of friends

and enemies is just a stupid idea for running a life and running a Church, then Rorschach Jesus is the only Jesus there is.

If Jesus had wanted to do so, He did possess the verbal competency to teach the following:

There are two ways to do God's will and follow me: You can either hate your enemies or love your enemies. You can either kill your enemies or die for your enemies. You can either follow the way of redemptive homicidal violence against others or you can follow the way of redemptive Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies. You can either justify, as being in conformity with God's will, what is done by people to people in war and in peace or you can reject becoming part of the lie that the infliction of mass death and other kinds of misery are ever the Father's Will for any of His sons and daughters.

Jesus could have said this. He could have given these options to those He called. But He did not! There is no “option” for violence and enmity in the teachings of Jesus. As John L. McKenzie emphatically states:

No reader of the New Testament, simple or sophisticated, can retain any doubt of Jesus' position toward violence directed to persons, individual or collective, organized or free enterprise: He rejected it.

McKenzie is saying here that the very structure of human language and human consciousness does not permit any reader of the Gospels to deny that Jesus objectively, in fact, rejects violence. Now, to reject this teaching of Jesus as false, but to assert that other teachings of Jesus are true, is simply to say, “Here is a Messiah who, according to my understanding of existence, doesn’t know what He is talking about some of the time.” However, an ignorant Messiah, whether totally ignorant or partially ignorant, leaves us with nothing more than a Rorschach Jesus, a Jesus we subjectively create, as we subjectively decide which standards we will employ to determine which of His teachings are true and which of His teachings are false.

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WWJD—an acronym used for applying Jesus’ new commandment: “*Love one another as I have loved you.*” (JN 13:34)—is meaningless in the world of Rorschach Jesuses. In such a world, WWJD really means WDIWTD: “What do I want to do?” In such a world, Rorschach Jesuses will always be available to justify any and all forms of violence and enmity, from abortion, to spousal abuse, to child abuse, to state violence, to

revolutionary violence, to capital punishment, to war, to economic oppression, to life-destroying gossip—as self-interest dictates.

A CRISIS MOMENT—ALLEGIANCE TO AN INKBLOT

And so, we arrive at a crisis moment, a moment of judgment: Do I follow a content-devoid Rorschach Jesus, who is the moral equivalent of “revelation via inkblot interpretation”? Do I give my allegiance to a

Do I follow an content-devoid Rorschach Jesus, who is the moral equivalent of “revelation via inkblot interpretation”?

Rorschach Jesus whose moral content is constructed on the

basis of my earthly needs, and validated or invalidated on the basis of subjective understandings garnered from Cicero, Rev. Ike, George (“I’ll hunt bin Laden down and kill him.”) Bush, John (“I’ll hunt bin Laden down and kill him.”) Kerry, Torquemada, Billy Graham, Bishop Rarkowski (Catholic Military Bishop for the Nazi military), etc., *ad nauseam*?

Or do I accept, in faith, that Jesus—as the Christ, as Lord, God, and Savior—requires that I believe He teaches the Will of the Father, and that I, as a Christian, am called to obey that teaching, that Will? No Christian, regardless of his or her status in the Church, can have it both ways. To choose one is to eliminate the other. To accept Jesus’ teachings of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies as the Will of the Father is to reject Rorschach Jesus. To bypass or change an explicit teaching of Jesus in the Gospels, and then to say that these self-created, altered teachings are Jesus’ teachings, is to follow a Rorschach Messiah, a content-less Jesus.

No Christian can obey two masters: In the moment of moral choice, he or she will choose to reject the first and love the second, or be devoted to the first and despise the second. No one can serve both Rorschach Jesus and the Jesus of the New Testament, Who—according to the controlling rules of grammar, rhetoric, logic and literary interpretation—objectively embodies, en-fleshes, and teaches unto death the Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies as the Will of the Father that is to “be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Wisdom of God: Nonviolent Love

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

ACTS 26:19

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

Jesus explicitly teaches His followers to “observe all that I have commanded you” (MT 28:20). Two things He clearly commands are to “Love one another as I have loved you” (JN 13:34, 15:12), and to “Love your enemies” (MT 5:44; LK 6:27-35). The sentence In the Gospels, “Love your enemies” is always found in the imperative and in the plural. It knows no exceptions.

Love of enemies, with Jesus as the model, is, of course, the opposite of secular morality—sophisticated or unsophisticated. Yet, it can be said with the greatest certainty available to scripture scholarship, that this command comes from Jesus Himself. It can also be said, again with the greatest certainty available to historical scholarship, that this sentence is the most-quoted saying of Jesus during the first two centuries

of Christianity. Surely then, it is self-evident that the love which is incarnate in Jesus Christ, and which Christians are called to participate in

Surely then, it is self-evident that the love which is incarnated in Jesus Christ, and which Christians are called to participate in and imitate is a Nonviolent Love towards all—even enemies.

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If Jesus Christ is the definitive norm for Christian conduct—and if He is not, it is difficult to imagine

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

THE ISSUE: UNEQUIVOCAL REJECTION OF HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE

I would like to insist, with the urgency with which a mother warns her child that he or she is about to step on a landmine, that THE issue for the Church today is not war, or pedophilia, or even the disunity among the Churches. THE issue for the Church today is the total and unequivocal

THE issue for the Church today is the total and unequivocal rejection, in theory and in practice, of all violence and enmity.

rejection, in theory and in practice, of all violence and enmity. There is nothing in the life or teaching of Jesus that would suggest that it is

illegitimate to incinerate people with a nuclear warhead but legitimate to incinerate people in an electric chair or with napalm.

Let's get it straight. Violence is the issue for the Christian, not simply the form of it called war. An anti-war morality is a necessary dimension of Christian conscience but it is not a sufficient Christian conscience. "Putting on the mind of Christ" demands more. The danger is real that, in exclusively condemning war, or nuclear war, a Christian might thereby give implied moral approval to other forms of violence.

The morality of the balance of terror, on a large or small scale, is a morality that Christ never taught. The ethical justification of human butchery cannot be found in the teaching of Jesus. In just homicide ethics, Jesus Christ—Who is supposed to be all in the Christian life—is nothing. He might as well have never existed. In just homicide ethics, no appeal is made to Him or His teaching, because no appeal can be made to Him or His teaching, for neither He nor His teaching envisions His followers engaging in human bloodshed.

In just homicide ethics, Jesus Christ—Who is supposed to be all in the Christian life—is nothing. He might as well never have existed.

Therefore, neither He nor His teaching establishes standards Christians must meet to determine what level of homicidal violence is acceptable, or how many rocks may be stored up in preparation for savaging an enemy.

Parenthetically, it probably should be stated here that I offer no apology for my severe rhetorical presentation of homicide, since any rhetoric about homicidal violence can never match its grotesque reality. In fact, one of the great impediments to seeing the necessity and the truth of the nonviolent teaching of Jesus is that people, including scholars, clergy persons, and politicians, lack the perceptual courage to look at and actually see the realities of homicidal violence. If one submits to a consciousness that sees heroin as more or less the chemical equivalent of sugar, then one is going to be able to devise a Christian ethic that justifies merchandising heroin to children.

In fact, one of the great impediments to seeing the necessity and the truth of the nonviolent teaching of Jesus is that people, including scholars, clergy persons, and politicians, lack the perceptual courage to look at and actually see the realities of homicidal violence.

The history of Christian justification of homicidal violence and enmity is a parade of euphemisms in which human blood-letting is called “force,” setting people on fire is referred to as a “protective reaction,” poisoning people strapped down on a metal table is called “justice,” etc. The refusal to describe the humanly repulsive as humanly repulsive is required to make violence morally, spiritually, psychologically, socially, and politically palatable and thus, ultimately justifiable. The Christian should consider what role the Father of Lies plays in justifying violence when it is described through euphemism or, at best, mildly disagreeable terminology.

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

SANCTIONED DELUSION

There are those in the Church who prefer to have Christ's teaching on Nonviolent Love appear naïve and ridiculous to the mind of the average Christian. For reasons and from motivations beyond the scope of this reflection, they teach and act as if it is theologically unsophisticated, rationally absurd, pragmatically impossible, spiritually unsubstantial, even morally irresponsible, to believe and to try to live in imitation of the Nonviolent Jesus, according to Jesus' teaching of Nonviolent Love of friend and enemy.

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Jesus' teaching of Nonviolent Love of friend and enemy. For the most part, Christians with this view dominate most Christian Churches, and occupy their organizations' leadership positions. Authentic Christic nonviolence is therefore seldom communicated or made available to the Christian community at large. When an occasional reflection on Jesus' Nonviolent Love does take place in a Christian church or school or seminary, it is usually so shallow and vapid as to ensure that no one, including Christ Himself, could take such a position seriously.

A NEW ETHIC OF SECURITY AND PEACE

Yet, in apostolic Christianity the Church understood Christ and His teachings as nonviolent. It must be remembered that the Church taught this ethic in the face of at least three serious attempts by the state to liquidate her. This was a Church, subject to ongoing humiliation,

discrimination, torture, and death, that taught unequivocally an ethic of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies. If ever there was an occasion for an ethic of justified retaliation and defensive homicide, whether in the form of a just war ethic or a just violent revolution ethic, this was it. But the Church taught no such ethic, because Christ taught no such thing.

The economic and political elite of the Roman state and their military backup had turned the citizens of the state against Christians, and had embarked on a murderous public policy of extermination of the Christian community. Nevertheless, the Church, in the face of heinous crimes committed against its members, insisted without reservation that when Christ disarmed Peter, He disarmed all Christians, for all time and in all circumstances. Christians continued to believe that Christ was, to use the words from the *Kiss of Peace* of an ancient liturgy, their “fortress, refuge, and strength,” and that if Christ was all they needed for security and defense, then Christ was all they should have. Indeed, this represented an entirely new ethic of security. Christians understood that if they would only follow Christ and His teachings, their eternal survival was assured. When opportunities were given for Christians to appease the state by joining the fighting Roman army they were rejected, because the apostolic Church saw a complete and obvious incompatibility between loving as Christ loves, loving one’s enemies, and killing people.

When opportunities were given for Christians to appease the state by joining the fighting Roman army they were rejected, because the apostolic Church saw a complete and obvious incompatibility between loving as Christ loves, loving one’s enemies, and killing people.

It is true, of course, that Christians, even in the apostolic age, did sometimes act violently. Christians then, as Christians now, were not perfect. They sinned. The difference is this: Then, violence was recognized as a sin by Christians and by the Church, and a Christian who committed it asked forgiveness. Since the time of Constantine, a Christian who commits an act of violence is just as likely to call that evil “good,” and to be part of a Church that does the same.

Christ, not Caesar, was the Lord of the apostolic Christian community (ACTS 17:6-7). Therefore, it was Christ, not Caesar, who determined how a Christian used his or her time, mind, money and life. It was Christ, not Caesar, who gave security and peace. And during the 300 years following

And during the 300 years following Christ's resurrection, the Church continues to grow, indeed she flourishes. She survives without recourse to war and violence. She survives because the living Christ had guaranteed her survival.

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Some might argue that if surviv-

al, growth, and "flourishing" are signs of following Christ's teachings, then arguably the Church has and continues to follow Jesus, because it has "survived"; it has "grown"; and it has "flourished." Those same people would also have to acknowledge the 1700-year history of atrocities

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and patent evils for which that same Church is clearly responsible—from the Crusades and the Inquisition to the Holocaust. No single identifiable group in histo-

ry over the last 1700 years is responsible for more terror, violence, and bloodshed than that group that calls itself Christian.

Such people might also do well to remember two stories: The first, from Acts 3:6, where Peter and John come across the man who had been a cripple all of his life. He begged alms from them, and Peter replied, "Silver and gold have I none, but I will give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk." The second occurs some eleven centuries later. Standing on the steps of the old Vatican with the current pope, watching caravans of gold and silver and other riches being delivered to the Vatican as tribute, the pope said, "No longer does Peter have to say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" To which Thomas Aquinas replied: "And no longer can Peter say, 'Rise and walk.'"

Has the Church, in fact, survived, grown, and flourished? "Yes," it has survived, grown and flourished institutionally, economically and politically. But has the Church survived, grown, and flourished spiritually? On the whole do Christians today more closely imitate Christ than they did 500 years ago or a 1000 years ago or 2000 years ago? Do Christians today know the Father more intimately, love him more deeply, trust him more thoroughly, serve him more faithfully than Christians did 2000 years ago? Is "survived, grown, and flourished" to be measured primarily or exclusively by the number of pieces of paper that say people have been

baptized? Despite a billion baptismal certificates is the Church “growing and flourishing” when Christians with a clear conscience are firebombing fellow Christians in Dresden and atomizing fellow Christians in Nagasaki—and when with clear conscience they have been engaging in such homicidal and fratricidal destruction unceasingly for the last 1700 years? Could the use of the words “grown and flourished” in this context be nothing more than propaganda devised to camouflage evil in the veneer of something good?

Despite a billion baptismal certificates is the Church “growing and flourishing” when Christians with a clear conscience are firebombing fellow Christians in Dresden and atomizing fellow Christians in Nagasaki...

The only ones who perceive Christ’s teachings of Nonviolent Love to be theologically unsophisticated, rationally absurd, pragmatically impossible, spiritually unsubstantial, or morally irresponsible are either those who worship a violent god or gods, or those who do not believe that Christ is the Way and the Truth unto Eternal Life, and therefore knows what he is talking about.

MARTYRDOM—ULTIMATE ACT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

But let us be clear: Neither Jesus nor anyone in the early, nonviolent Church ever taught that Christians were to ignore evil, or to let it run rampant. As part of her very identity, the Church knew that she must live in a life and death struggle against evil. Jesus’ entire life was consumed by this battle. The Christian, therefore, in imitation of Christ, was also to fight vigorously against evil. But she or he, again in imitation of Christ, was to overcome evil with good and, if necessary, give his or her life, as Christ did, in this fight. To “give” his or her life does not mean to “take” another’s life, except in that world of political and theological double-speak where “servant” means “ruler” and love is compatible with hatred.

In other words, for the early Church, martyrdom was a taken-for-granted spiritual and social activity. To lay down one’s life—not to kill another—in responding to evil with good is seen at this time as an act of social responsibility.

To “lay down one’s life”—not kill another—in responding to evil with good is seen as the ultimate act of social responsibility... Readiness to suffer what must be suffered in order to love as Christ loved is understood as a condition without which there could be no Christian life.

Christians recognize that one of the most effective ways to be involved positively in society is to refuse to collaborate with social evil, e.g., war. To these early Christians, it is self-evidently not enough for a disciple of Christ to merely say that he or she is opposed to evil. Readiness to suffer what must be suffered in order to love as Christ loved is understood as a condition without which there could be no Christian life. Then, as now, serious social responsibility requires more than saying “I am against merchandising cocaine to children,” or “I am against war.”

By itself, oral opposition to evil is low-voltage social responsibility and discipleship. The early Church understands that genuine social responsibility means refusing to participate in the evil being condemned by word. This early Christian spirituality of social responsibility, a spirituality of speaking up clearly and paying up personally, is light-years from an ethic of social responsibility that justifies speaking out ambiguously about evil, and then participating in it until all others agree not to participate in it.

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

GOSPEL NONVIOLENCE—THE WILL OF GOD

Gospel nonviolence therefore cannot be intelligently dismissed as nonsensical by condescending references to it as philosophical idealism or utopianism. It is neither. Gospel nonviolence is either the Will of God as

Gospel nonviolence is either the Will of God as revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the Word, the *Logos*, of God—or else it is gross imprudence bordering on grave culpable negligence.

revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the Word, the *Logos*, of God—or else it is gross imprudence bordering on grave culpable negligence. Utopias are human fantasies to which no serious person

can give allegiance. The teaching of Jesus is a Divine Mandate to which all Christians must commit their total allegiance. When God speaks,

unconditional obedience is the only response, for God's Word is Truth, Reality, and Power—the only Truth, Reality, and Power that has eternal significance, and that can effectively conquer evil and save each and every human being who has ever lived, who lives now, or who will ever live.

To obey God's Will is to be a realist, and a pragmatist, and a prudent person. To refuse to obey God's Word and Will, once they are known, is what is truly nonsensical, is what is imprudent in the extreme. The individual human being and all humanity are brought out of the silence of nothingness by God, and are kept out of the abyss of nothingness by God, and God alone. For the creature to refuse to obey the Creator's Word is more than irrational. It is madness, chaos, and evil. To try to proclaim the Gospel, by continually abandoning the Gospel as naïve, is just preposterous Christianity—regardless of how many adherents such a form of Christianity has. Numbers of participants do not validate the truth of a proposition. To publicly adore Christ, while secretly believing His teaching of Nonviolent Love to be half-baked, quixotic, utopian, nonsensical fantasies is preposterous.

ABANDONING MARTYRDOM AND THE ETHICS OF THE CROSS

There are those Christians who, for all practical purposes, say that Jesus needs to be corrected by them, because He simply does not understand the realities of violence and enmity, or the “kind of world we live in.” They appear to be the same Christians who feel that martyrdom as a socially and spiritually responsible activity is only valid if one cannot get one's hands on the appropriate instruments of human destruction. “If you can kill your enemy, who needs martyrs?” looks to be the operational dynamic of the ethical and spiritual life of that form of Christianity that justifies homicide.

“If you can kill your enemy, who needs martyrs?” appears to be the operational dynamic of the ethical and spiritual life of that form of Christianity that justifies homicide.

By contrast, to the Christians closest in time and space to Jesus, who of course are rejected today as theological bumpkins, to fight homicide with homicide or enmity with enmity amounts to engagement in, and enlargement of, the very evil one is trying to eliminate. In other words, it is clear to these so-called theological lightweights of the first three centuries that there is no other choice but to spread the Kingdom of God by

the methods of the Kingdom of God, and that violence and enmity are not consistent with those methods.

In light of all this, one has to ask whether that which is once called “the seed of Christianity,” martyrdom, has been rendered obsolete as responsible activity in the mainline Churches? Put another way, has the cross, which Jesus says His followers are to pick up daily (MT 10:38, 16:24; MK 8:34; LK 9:23, 14:27), and of which preachers never tire of speaking, been operationally downgraded—while the gun has been operationally upgraded?

CANON FOR SELF-RUIN—PREPARING TO DESTROY OTHERS

Today, Christians are ruining themselves and others by preparing to take part in tomorrow’s demented butcheries of raging nations. Christians are allowing people to die of starvation and curable diseases today, in order to prepare to destroy people tomorrow. Fortunately, today, due to the cleansing effect of the whip of biblical scholarship, few are any longer pontificating on JOHN 2, MARK 12, or ROMANS 13 in order to justify Christian participation in homicidal violence and enmity. But it is not so long ago that these isolated, so-called “proof texts” were employed to justify Christian involvement in the extermination of tens of millions.

Yet it is obvious to the first three centuries of Christians, who heard and read these “proof text” passages in their original Greek, that they did not establish, were never intended to, and could not legitimately

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ly be employed as a justification for Christians engaging in violence and enmity. This should be equally obvious to us today. Jesus commissions no one to proclaim His teaching of Nonviolent Love “inoperative truth” for the time being. Justification for Christian

homicidal violence and enmity cannot be found within the four corners of the New Testament.¹ Postponing today’s works of mercy in order to do today’s works of war, or in order to prepare for tomorrow’s works of war, is a choice that cannot be justified by the life and teaching of Jesus. On the contrary, Jesus tells us that such is a choice which results in the severest form of judgment imaginable (MT 25: 31-46; LK 16: 19-31).

VOICES OF FEAR AND UNBELIEF

What is actually speaking, when logic is strained and argumentation twisted in order to find justifications for homicidal violence and enmity in Christ's teachings? Are these embarrassingly shiftily interpretations the voice of Truth? Or are they the voices of fear and unbelief? One must wonder aloud if those who are so willing to abandon the unambiguous in the New Testament, in their search for a Christian justification for homicidal violence, would be equally willing to desert the unambiguous if the Gospels said the opposite of what they, objectively and in fact, do say.

Suppose, for example, that the Gospels pictured Jesus as armed, urging His followers to kill, and to hate their enemies, encouraging retaliation and revenge, ordering Peter to "get the other ear," and being killed on Golgotha while slitting the throats of Roman soldiers and calling upon God to pour out the wrath of hell upon those who are destroying Him. If this was the image of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, mediated to us through the New Testament, would the pastors and theologians, who now say that Jesus taught a way of justified homicidal violence, then say that Jesus taught a way of nonviolence? Of course not, because in both cases, their interpretations of the stated facts are equally untenable.²

REASON—A TOOL FOR IMPLEMENTING CHRIST'S TEACHINGS

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

THE UNITY OF CROSS—RESURRECTION AND PERSON—MESSAGE

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

The Christian and his or her Community should be about the task of converting people to faith in the Person of the Risen Jesus Christ and His Message. Without this conversion to belief in the Person first, belief in the Way He teaches is unreasonable. It is the Person of Jesus that

It is the Person of Jesus that validates the veracity of His teachings. Without the Resurrection of the Person, faith in His Cross of Nonviolent Love is in vain... Cross and Resurrection are one. Person and Message are one.

validates the veracity of His teachings. Without the Resurrection of the Person, faith in His Cross of Nonviolent Love is in vain. But, if Christ is risen, then indeed this Cross of Nonviolent Love is the Way and the Truth. Cross and

Resurrection are one. Person and Message are one. To proclaim one without the other is just so much spiritual mush—regardless of the ecclesiastical rank or the academic credentials of the proclaimer. Indeed, to proclaim Person without Message, Resurrection without Cross, or vice versa, is simply to try to manipulate religious concepts in order to make people believe that one’s own little view of existence is God’s view of existence. In fact, partial proclamation is more than likely just another way of trying to deny one’s sinfulness, fears, or agnosticism.

Christians have no business insisting that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ live in the Way He taught. The Church, it would seem, would have her hands full and would contribute enormously to the welfare of the world, if she would just see to it that her own people are faithfully following Christ and His teachings. If she would attend diligently to this

task, and simultaneously try to bring all others to believe in the Risen Christ and His Way, she would be fulfilling her destiny.

But what Christians cannot be about is telling others or forcing others to live the teachings of a Person they do not believe is the Messiah, the Lord and the Savior of the world. In the end, one senses that the ease with which some Christians distort or ignore Christ's teaching of Nonviolent Love is more a result of their own distrust of the Person of Jesus than it is a result of any lack of clarity in His teaching. Is not distrust of one's God a manifestation of disbelief in the divinity of one's God? Partial trust in God may be humanly understandable, but it is theological absurdity. Is the teaching and practice of justified Christian violence a witness to faith in Christ; or is it a witness to an absence of faith in Christ?

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF CHRIST

Most people on earth do not believe in, and do not want to follow Jesus Christ, as He has so far been presented to the world by the Churches. Eighty-two percent of this planet's population is not Christian. Only God knows the purpose each person and all people play in the cosmic drama. How Christian and non-Christian destinies relate in God's plan is beyond fathoming. But Christians do have a part to play, even if it is only a little part, the size of a mustard seed. Followers of Christ have a role in the universe and in God's plan—a yeast-like role according to Jesus. Others have other roles to play. The task of the Christian cannot be the task of non-Christian.

It is not the Christian's lot to judge others, since obviously all are not given the same gifts and options by their Creator and no Christian knows precisely what gifts and options are given to anyone. But neither is it the Christian's task to imitate the non-Christian. The truth is this: The follower of Christ is called upon to play his or her role in conformity with the Teaching, Life, and Spirit of Jesus. The Christian is asked to live according to the truth of the revelation that she or he has received from Christ. It is for this that God brought the Christian out of nothingness, and bestowed on him or her the gift of faith in Jesus, as Christ, Lord and Savior. To give up on the struggle to live according to this Christ-centered revelation is to that degree an abdication by the Christian of his or her role in the history of humanity's struggle against the forces of evil and death. The Christian is not a Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, atheist or agnostic. Why

some are Christian and some are not is a mystery. But for the Christian to be what he or she is created to be, he or she must live by Christ's vision of truth. This can only be done by putting on the mind of Christ

...for the Christian to be what he or she is created to be, he or she must live by Christ's vision of truth. This can only be done by putting on the mind of Christ and being obedient to its vision of the means required to build a new world—internally and externally, for everyone and forever.

and being obedient to its vision of the means required to build a new world—internally and externally, for everyone and forever.

I would respectfully submit that all available evidence indicates that the mind of Christ knows that it is

a spiritual and ethical absurdity to believe that violence and enmity can put an end to violence and enmity, and thereby advance the coming of this new world—the Kingdom of God. The evidence is that the mind of Christ knows that, in this fatal pattern of human history, there is not the slightest hope that the various forms of violence will cancel each other out. The mind of Christ is acutely aware that evil cannot conquer evil, that the devil will not drive out the devil.

The mind of Christ is laser-like in its understanding that the means chosen are the ends in embryo. One cannot build a truthful self or a truthful

The mind of Christ is laser-like in its understanding that the means chosen are the ends in embryo. One cannot build a truthful self or a truthful community by lying. One cannot build a nonviolent self or a nonviolent community by doing violence.

community by lying. One cannot build a nonviolent self or a nonviolent community by doing violence. The mind of Christ is fully aware that a person must gather what she or he sows. One cannot get corn if one sows wheat. The “mind of

Christ” recognizes that, as sure as night follows day, the person or community that sows the seeds of violence and enmity will reap a harvest of violence and enmity.

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

METANOIA—CHANGE OF MIND

The first word out of Jesus' mouth at the beginning of His public ministry is "Repent" (MT 4:17). The Greek word for "repent" is metanoia, which means "change of mind." The Christian is to put off the "old mind" and put on the new "mind of Christ." The ethical seriousness of this change of mind lies in the fact that a person becomes what he or she thinks and desires. If a person thinks lustful thoughts, she or he becomes a lustful person. If a person thinks resentful and jealous thoughts, she or he becomes a resentful and jealous person. If one thinks violent, hostile, and hateful thoughts, then one becomes a violent, hostile, and hateful person. A person's moral or immoral life-style is the direct consequence of a person's moral or immoral mind-style. Thought precedes action in the domain of morality as in any other. Patterns of thought precede patterns of action. Therefore, to put on the mind of Christ is the condition without which a Christ-like life is impossible. Imitation of Christ is, in the first instance, imitation of the mind of Christ.

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

A MIND CENTERED ON LOVE

The mind of Christ is not primarily a mind centered on the rejection of violence and enmity; it is primarily a mind centered on Love. The center of that Love is the Community of Love that dwells within us, namely,

The “mind of Christ” is...primarily a mind centered on Love. The center of that Love is the Community of Love that dwells within us, namely, the Trinity.

the Trinity. To put on the mind of Christ is to live in the conscious presence of the God Who is Love, of God Who is the Father/Mother/Parent, of God Who is Son, of God

Who is Holy Spirit. The spirituality that is Christian is a spirituality that leads to an ever-increasing awareness of the total envelopment of the person and of all creation by this Community of Love, the Nonviolent Trinity. A mind and soul participating in this awareness are not a mind and soul filled with thoughts of violence and enmity. It is implausible that someone who is working at “putting on the mind of Christ,” who is trying to be unceasingly attentive to the presence of the all-encompassing God Who is Love, would seriously think of trying to justify, let alone participate in, homicidal violence. A “Christian” just violence ethic is an attempt to justify, as morally permissible, the Christian’s refusal to “put on the mind of Christ.” The mind that flows from the Trinitarian God of nonviolent monotheism is separated by an infinity from the mind that flows from the various gods of violent monotheism or violent polytheism. To identify the latter with the former is for Christians a form of idolatry—a form of idolatry that will continue to spread its chaos and tragedy throughout creation and the Christian Churches until it is unequivocally rejected!

The choice is between putting on the mind of Christ and putting on some other mind. Neutrality is impossible. To put on the mind of Christ—to

To put on the mind of Christ—to repent and change one’s mind—is not easy, in a world committed to and nurtured in violent monotheism or violent polytheism.

repent and change one’s mind—is not easy, in a world committed to and nurtured in violent monotheism or violent polytheism. It requires the hidden martyrdom of

unceasing prayer to the God of nonviolent monotheism in order to stay conscious of His perpetual presence and love. This is the cost of peace on earth. But if one does not want to pay the price of peace, then one will pay the price of unpeace.

JUSTIFIED HOMICIDAL VIOLENCE AND ENMITY

The issue for the Church is not exclusively nuclear war. The issue is justified violence and enmity. For 1700 years the People of God—that is, all

people—have been torn to pieces by members of Christian Churches, because these Churches justified and promoted the abomination called homicide. However, Christian participation in the savageries of human slaughter is an incarnational denial of the Truth of the Gospel and a betrayal of what Jesus taught until His last breath. If Christians fear each other or fear non-Christians, then this is a spiritual and pastoral problem of great magnitude.

Christian participation in the savageries of human slaughter is an incarnational denial of the Truth of the Gospel and a betrayal of what Jesus taught until His last breath... Abandonment to Christ includes abandonment to the means of Christ.

Where such a spiritual malaise exists, the Church should at once begin to invest all of its resources to heal it. But, what the Church must not do is justify grotesque misrepresentations of Christ and his teachings in order to allow its members forms of “fear-full” behavior that contradict Christ’s clearest teachings, e.g., the rejection of violence and enmity.

Nowhere does Christ say that His followers are relieved from following Him because they fear the consequences of doing so. Fidelity to Christ includes fidelity to the means of Christ during times of crisis, as well as during times of ordinary affairs. Abandonment to Christ includes abandonment to the means of Christ. Jesus calls no one to be a part-time disciple. Baptism, which in Greek means “total immersion” is a 24/7/365 commitment. The Way of Christ is the Way of the cross, and the Way of the cross is the Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies moment to moment to moment—with no “time-outs.”

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

It should perhaps also be noted here, toward the conclusion of this reflection on the Wisdom of God made manifest in Nonviolent Love, that the Nonviolent Lamb of God is the primary and central symbol and reality in the primary and central prayer of the Church—the Eucharist. In this unsurpassable prayer, the Nonviolent Lamb of God is explicitly

...the Nonviolent Lamb of God is the primary and central symbol and reality in the primary and central prayer of the Church—the Eucharist.

the One who offers and is offered, is explicitly the One who is broken, distributed, and consumed. The living Community of the Nonviolent Lamb of God is en-

lightened and empowered by its Eucharistic encounter with the living Nonviolent Lamb of God.

St. Augustine, commenting on the worthy reception of Communion states: “If you receive well, you are what you receive...[therefore] be what you see and receive what you are.” Who and what specifically are Christians receiving in the Eucharist? Since at least the seventh century, in the Western Church, the invitation to Communion has been with the words “*Ecce Agnus Dei*,” “Behold the Lamb of God” who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to the banquet of the Lamb” (*ad cenam Agni*). In the Eastern Church, the designation of the sanctified bread as the Lamb goes back at least this far.

So it is the Nonviolent Lamb of God that the Christian is seeing, adoring, and consuming, and therefore it is the Nonviolent Lamb of God that he or she should desire wholeheartedly to be, to become, and to imitate. Reception in Communion of the Nonviolent Lamb of God is the grace, the Gift, that makes the living of a Lamb-like human life possible in a world where lions, snakes and wolves are driven into the human mind before a child ever knows what is happening to him or her. However, the Eucharistic Nonviolent Lamb of God and the Eucharistic Community of the Nonviolent Lamb of God has within it “the power and the wisdom of God” (1 COR 1:24) to drive these sub-human, unpeaceful, bestial spirits out of the pre-eminent temple of God on earth—the human person.

A PEOPLE OF PEACE

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

this world, love as defined by Christ or love as defined by someone else, nonviolent monotheism or violent monotheism. We must choose.

We are to be “peace-full” witnesses to the Good News of the Resurrection by being happy to pray ceaselessly, to love Christically, and to disappear willingly from time. No more is expected of us. No more is needed from us.

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

NOTES

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

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

Parenthetically, one can only wonder if the great anti-evangelical scandal of the Church, a house divided against itself, could exist as it does if Constantinian Christianity had accepted the Temple presentation for what it is—a prophetic sign, rooted in Jesus’ Messianic authority, warning against commercialized religion, and a clear statement on the essential unity of the People of God—instead of as a sham “proof-text” for homicidal violence. And one further wonders whether Catholic, Orthodox,

and Protestant Churches will ever be able to achieve anything but the most shallow forms of ecumenical unity until they collectively take the “Cleansing of the Temple” seriously, by asking themselves of what was it cleansed, and why.

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

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

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

How does something, about which Jesus said nothing, become more of a moral imperative than something about which Jesus explicitly and imperatively spoke again and again and again? Would an imperative anti-artificial birth-control statement by Jesus, like the one above, really be considered only a non-binding “counsel of perfection” by Catholic popes and bishops today?

The War in Iraq and The Requirement of Moral Certainty

[The] judgment of conscience also has an imperative character: man must act in accordance with it. If man acts against this judgment or, in a case where he lacks certainty about the rightness and goodness of a determined act, still performs that act, he stands condemned by his own conscience, the proximate norm of personal morality. [Emphasis added.]

POPE JOHN PAUL II
VERITATIS SPLENDOR
AUGUST 6, 1993

The Holy Father's judgment is also convincing from a rational point of view. There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq.

JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER
PREFECT
CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, MAY 2, 2003

There are some Christians who have renounced the god of war, but more of our church leaders just remain silent. Is there any act of violence that our government could do which would cause church leaders who profess their love for the teaching of Jesus to make bold statements of love? There is torture and they remain silent, there is imprisonment without charges and they remain silent. There are anal probes and sexual humiliation and they remain silent. There are children and women taken hostages, and they remain silent. There is the use of depleted uranium weapons which cause heinous birth defects and they remain silent, there are bomblets which children think are toys but which blow off limbs and kill them and the Christian leaders remain silent. There is the hell fire use of white phosphorous and they remain silent. There are proud boastful leaders who use Jesus'

name while committing acts of extortion, thievery and domination. Yet, most church leaders remain silent.

KAREN HORST-COBB

DIVINE MUSHROOM CLOUD: A CALL TO WORSHIP

*Lost sheep, such were my people;
their shepherds led them astray,
left them wandering in the mountains
forgetful of their fold,
whoever came across them devoured them.*

JER 50:6,7

If there is any absolute moral law in Christianity, in Catholicism or in Natural Law Morality, it is “Thou shalt not murder.” In moral law, murder is the intentional unjust killing of a human being(s). Two Popes have said that the war by the United States Government on Iraq is unjust. Killing in an unjust war is unjust killing—murder. Yet, every bishop, archbishop and cardinal who is an Ordinary of a diocese in the United States—save one—believes, to the point of *strict moral certainty*, that the killing in this war is just. With *moral certainty* each has chosen in the midst of a most grave moral matter, intimately connected with the sanctity of human life and the recognition of the sanctity of human life, as well as with the explicit moral issue of possible large scale murder, to form his conscience consistent with George Bush’s interpretation of reality and the moral will of God rather than with Pope John Paul II’s and Pope Benedict XVI’s—or Jesus’. Each also has countenanced those souls placed in his spiritual care doing the same.

Now, subsequent analysis cannot alter the moral quality of an act already performed. Subsequent analysis, however, can help determine whether the required certainty of which Pope John Paul II speaks—which must be present for an act not to be sinful—is now present in a person’s conscience. Subsequent analysis, therefore, can assess an act already performed in order to determine whether a person is morally permitted to continue participating in this act, or whether such a choice would be morally permissible for a person in the future. An act which is even partially sinful is, of course, morally impossible. Is the following affirmation, which must be considered anew with dire seriousness by the Shepherds of the Catholic Church a falsehood or a truth: All the “rigorous conditions”

for the “rightness and goodness” of a war according to Catholic just war theory have been and are being met with that degree of probability that Catholic moral theory requires for *moral certainty* where the intentional destruction of human life is involved?

Although seldom taught or discussed publicly, it is a morally binding presupposition of Catholic just-unjust war theory that, before a person can justifiably kill another human being in war, he or she must be *morally certain* that each and every one of the Catholic standards for determining a just war has been met.¹ Not only met, but strictly met (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2309). They must be strictly met before the war begins (*jus ad bellum*). Furthermore, they must be strictly met in conducting the war (CCC, §2312) moment to moment during the entire course of the war (*jus in bello*). The Catholic just war theory is most definitely not a moral *carte blanche* for Catholic participation in wars supported by local politicians—although this is how it has often been interpreted and applied.

MORAL CERTAINTY OR MURDER

Evil does not become good simply because one is doing it with a group of people or because a person with secular authority orders it. A Catholic, whether bishop or layperson, is morally prohibited from leaving his or her conscience or the Church’s moral teachings on the doorstep of a battlefield. A declaration of war is not an open-ended moral license authorizing the Catholic to kill other human beings. It is but one of the conditions that must be *strictly* adhered to if the killing in a war is not to be murder.² If there is unresolved moral doubt whether the just war standards are being *strictly* followed, the person is morally forbidden to kill or to support killing in this instance, regardless of the secular declaration of war.

The Catholic Church places high regard on the sanctity of human life and its belief that each human being—without exception—is made in the image and likeness of God and is an infinitely loved son or daughter of the “Father of all” (EPH 4:1–6). Because of the sanctity, the holiness, of human life *per se*, the Catholic Church’s just war theory starts from “a strong moral presumption against war which is binding on all.”³ This presumption can only be overcome by a strict application of the Catholic just war theory. Otherwise the killing in a war is unjust, that is, it is the evil of murder. Strict moral certainty in the application of the norms of the just war

theory is the standard to which all Catholics are held when trying to overcome this “strong presumption against war” that is intrinsic to Catholic moral theology as taught by the Magisterium of the Church.

MORAL SYSTEMS AS THE GUIDES TO MORAL CERTAINTY

In Catholic moral theology there are accepted moral systems whose purpose is to guide a person to a state of *moral certainty* when there is practical doubt whether an act is good or evil.⁴ One of the methods that human consciousness can envision to achieve moral certainty, where moral doubt exists concerning which is the moral course of action to choose, is designated laxism. Laxism as a way of engaging in moral discernment for the purpose of achieving moral certainty has been condemned by the Catholic Church (Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, §§2101–2165, especially §2103). This condemnation means that specious moral arguments, those that are possibly logically precise but which the evidence shows are highly improbable in reality, may not be employed to justify a moral position before God. Self-evidently then, borderline tenable moral arguments are forbidden where moral law must be strictly observed, specifically when related to the morality of killing another human being. To repeat, laxism can never be used in any situation as a moral system to achieve the *moral certainty* necessary to act in good faith before God (RM 14:23)—and this self-evidently must include those moral situations where strict interpretation of the moral law is obligatory. In their various moral theologies the vast majority of Churches in Christianity would agree with this understanding in principle, although each one’s expression of it might differ.⁵

LAXISM AND THE WAR ON IRAQ

For example, let us look at the Iraqi War, where human life is presently being destroyed daily. Given what is known about the war’s inception and its conduct, rationally there can be no *moral certainty* that the just war norms of the Catholic Church have been strictly met or are presently being strictly met, *jus ad bellum* or *jus in bello*—unless the moral system of laxism is employed to interpret the evidence and to apply the just war standards. Consider but two facts among many: How is the Catholic just war standard of non-combatant immunity being strictly met when over 650,000 Iraqi civilians are dead and hundreds of thousands more maimed?⁶ How is the Catholic just war standard of a “last resort defensive

war” strictly met, when the war was clearly not the “last resort,” since the government itself called it a “preventive” war, and since the reasons given by the government for starting this war were and have been shown to be incontestably false and fraudulent. Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction which were aimed at the United States and capable of imminent deployment. Iraq had no intention of attacking the United States in the immediate future. Only a formally laxist interpretation of the evidence in the light of the Catholic just war theory with its strong moral presumption against war could arrive at or sustain a *morally certain* conclusion that this first-strike offensive war on Iraq, which has left hundreds of thousands of non-combatants dead and maimed, is morally just—*jus ad bellum* or *jus in bello*.

According to Catholic just war norms, which only have validity for Catholics within the acceptable moral systems of Catholic moral theology, if there is not strict moral certitude that a war is just and is being conducted justly—then the killing in it is unjust. In Catholic moral theology, intentional unjust killing is always intrinsically and gravely evil—it is always murder. It is never morally permissible. A laxist interpretation of the standards of Catholic just war theory employed in order to achieve a pseudo moral certainty that supports the unjust destruction of human life is itself a grave evil, which if participated in at any stage with full knowledge and full consent is mortal sin.

LAXISM: ABANDONING THE CROSS OF VOCATION

Laxism cannot be the moral system applied in interpreting the word “intentional” where the destruction of human life is the issue. When over 650,000 civilians have been killed and hundreds of thousands more have been maimed, spinning such indiscriminate destruction as mere “accidental” or “unintentional” collateral damage is a self-evident, morally-debased and morally-debasing falsehood, orchestrated by “the Father of Lies who was a murderer from the beginning” (JN 8:44). It makes no moral difference whether an unjust, intentional killing is being done by a private individual or by an agent of government—if the killing is unjust, it is totally forbidden because it is morally murder and murder is gravely intrinsically evil without exception. Only a moral position arrived at through the moral system of laxism could conclude with *moral certainty* that this present war in Iraq adheres to the norms of the Catholic just war

theory, e.g., that killing over 650,000 civilians and maiming hundreds of thousands more is a strict application of the noncombatant immunity standard of Catholic just war theory within the larger context of Catholic moral theology.

But, as noted above, it is forbidden in the Catholic Church to apply laxism in any situation, let alone as a moral system for morally justifying homicide—regardless of the individual Catholic’s rank in the Church, e.g., foot soldier or bishop. This being the case, why then are there tens of thousands of Catholics actively engaged in this war? Why then are all the bishops of all the dioceses of the U.S.—except one—justifying participation in it by those in their spiritual care? Why are the Catholic bishops by silence permitting those who rely on them for moral guidance to go to this war as if they, the bishops, were *morally certain*, within the structures and strictures of Catholic moral theology, that it is a just war in its inception and in its conduct? If a person knows that the killing which is taking place is murder (unjustified homicide), would he not communicate this in no uncertain terms, especially if he were a spiritual leader on whom people relied for their proper discernment of good and evil? After all, since murder is gravely intrinsically evil, it is morally forbidden to cooperate with it—even by calculated silence—in order to attain some other goal, regardless of how noble the goal appears to be. Intrinsically evil means, such as murder or abortion, cannot be used to achieve even the best of good ends—nor can intentional silence concerning such means be so used. Those who know that murder is taking place are called by God to be the voice of its victims, not the moral support team for its perpetrators.

Something is awfully spiritually amiss in the United States Catholic Episcopacy—as spiritually derelict as when the most powerful Catholic Churchman in the country, Francis Cardinal Spellman stood up during the Vietnam War and proclaimed, “My country right or wrong!” For American naval officer Stephen Decatur, who first used this immoral patriotic expression in 1815, to speak this way is understandable, since it but reflects an individual’s philosophy. For a Cardinal of the Catholic Church to publicly endorse that which is contrary to the Prophets of Hebrew Scripture, to the Natural Law Morality of the Catholic Church and to the very teachings of Jesus is evil. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) permitted Spellman’s statement to publicly stand unchallenged, knowing that innumerable Catholics and others within his

canonical jurisdiction and beyond would assume it to be in conformity with the will of God as taught by the Catholic Church and would support and participate in the war because of it. At a bare minimum, was this chosen stance by the NCCB not that form of material cooperation with evil so common to the person(s) that William H. Whyte fifty years ago identified as “the organization man?”

And, today? At what point, in the process of justifying by silence the unjustified destruction of human life, does silence become dereliction of a Divine duty, even if said silence is mandated by institutional loyalty? At what point do individual bishops or an entire episcopacy cease to be incarnationally Jesus’ disciples and become Pilate’s deputies, washing their hands of any responsibility for the *Agonia* of bloodletting in Iraq? At what point does the tactic of ignoring murder by myopically focusing one’s attention on diocesan finances, liturgical music, corporate legal strategies and the minutiae of ritual become outright evil? Cannot evil manifest itself as silence, a silence that is the consequence of moral laxism? Cannot silence about unspeakable evil—by those whom people look upon as their authoritative moral leaders—make the unspeakable respectable and acceptable? Is what has been done and is presently being done by the U.S. Government to human beings in Iraq not unspeakable evil? In diocese after diocese in the U.S. are not Catholics being left as “sheep without a shepherd”? (NM 27:17; 1 KGS 22:17; EZ 34:5; MT 9:36; MK 6:34). Are they not being left by their shepherds to “wander aimlessly” (JER 23:2; 50:6,7), oblivious to the cunning wolves of war who seek to devour them spiritually and to use them to devour others physically? Or worst yet, are not their shepherds providing the powerful wolves, whom they fear or admire, with sheep’s clothing so that they can more facilely prey upon the flock?

CATHOLIC MORAL LAW PROTECTS EQUALLY IN UTERO & EX UTERO HUMAN LIFE

Again, to emphasize what can never be too strongly emphasized when dealing with the matter of the sanctity of human life as it relates to the destruction of human life: the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly states that the just war standards are to be applied *strictly* in order to achieve *moral certainty*. This is the requirement in every instance where the sanctity of human life and the possibility for the destruction of

human life converge. If this were not the case the Catholic Church's moral stance against abortion would collapse, because it is morally grounded in *strictly* using the highest level of probability in Catholic moral law in favor of the presence of a human person when the life *in utero* is subject to possible destruction. But as noted above, this requirement of applying the highest standard in Catholic moral theology in order to obtain *moral certainty*, where the presence and sanctity of human life and the possibility of its destruction intersect, is not limited to human life *in utero*. *Ex utero* human life is every bit as much within the protection and domain of this moral tenet. That is an indisputable teaching of Catholic moral theology—regardless of who does or does not employ it, or who employs it only in a “cafeteria” style, that is when it does not interfere with other personal or institutional interests.

Parenthetically, it should always be made abundantly clear that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is explicit in teaching that a government permitting or ordering someone to take a human life does not relieve that person of his or her moral responsibility before God. That person is required to evaluate strictly whether killing a human being in a particular war, or any act of killing a human being, is moral or immoral under the application of Catholic moral theology as it relates to all homicide:

The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. Refusing obedience [emphasis in original] to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. “Rendering therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” “We must obey God rather than men.”

So states the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§2242). The “defense” that “The king (or the parliament) ordered me to do it,” is no moral defense to unjustified homicide, murder. Such a justification results from employing laxist moral thinking where strict interpretation of the moral law is obligatory for overcoming the strong and morally binding presumption against war. Laxism, as a moral system for interpreting just war theory in order to morally validate one's obedience to the laws of a state or to the directives of governmental authorities, is as far removed

from strict as hell is from heaven. For Catholics the state is never the final arbiter of morality.

The conclusion from all this is that the U.S. Catholic Bishops as a public entity, whose moral responsibility it is to correctly inform the consciences of the people in their respective dioceses on moral matters, are presently engaged in employing the forbidden moral system of laxism to justify the mass destruction of human beings in this war on Iraq, as well as, to justify their silence regarding that destruction. Whether any bishop is sinning in doing this (RM 14:23), no one can judge outside the individual bishop and God, since only he and God know his subjective awareness of the evil which he is engaged in, which he is “morally” supporting, and which he is leading others to “morally” support and engage. But what can be said with certainty is that this watered-down, laxist episcopal use of Catholic just war theory is having a trickle-down effect into the parish pulpits and through them a corrosive moral effect on the immortal souls in the parish pews. A piously silent episcopacy has created an equally piously silent clergy which has in its turn nurtured a piously silent laity. And all this, while tens of thousands of their fellow Catholics go off to kill and maim other human beings 6,000 miles away in a war that does not even have a remote probability of meeting with *strict moral certainty* the required standards of the Catholic just war theory. But in the end the silence that flows from episcopal chair to pulpit to pew is nothing more or less than a disciplined organizational *quietist* witness to the same erroneous and laxist interpretation of Catholic just war theory that Cardinal Spellman advocated with reckless flamboyance forty years earlier.

A VACUOUS “MORAL LOOPHOLE”

In case what I have just said be less than fully understood, let it be clarified instantly, and thereby close a potential moral “loophole”—a moral “loophole” that practically every just warist who has supported a war runs for, when the real reasons for the war and what really went on during it are discovered and publicly revealed. No Catholic bishop, nor anyone else for that matter, can use the self-exonerating excuse of invincible, non-culpable ignorance in a matter of morality related to homicide, unless he genuinely desired to know—and actively sought to know—the factual truth of the matter at the time of his decision:

“Are there or are there not more than 650,000 Iraqi civilians dead and hundreds of thousands more maimed with the numbers increasing daily?”

“How did this happen?”

“How is it happening, if Catholic just war principles are being strictly adhered to by the U.S. government and properly taught to the Catholic soldiers by their Catholic chaplains?”

“Was the use of depleted uranium planned as part of the war’s strategy and could this have been known or reasonably assumed before the war began?”

“Did or did not Saddam Hussein have weapons of mass destruction?”

“Did he or did he not have the technical capability and the intention of using them against the United States in the immediate future?””

In Catholic moral theology, a person may not claim invincible ignorance, and hence non-culpability for his or her choices, if that person is playing the moral ostrich and sticking his or her head into the sand of government lies and propaganda in order to avoid seeing what one knows is there to be seen, but does not want to see—for some reason. The intentional flight from awareness of facts and truths, which if known would alter a person’s moral position, is itself immoral. When it results in participating in or supporting the destruction of human life it is gravely immoral, and one cannot then employ the alibi, “I didn’t know,” as an escape from moral culpability.

However, personal ignorance—culpable or non-culpable—does not preclude others from seeing and naming, with eternal life and eternal death seriousness, the moral catastrophe that has befallen the U.S. Catholic Church and many other U.S. Christian Churches. Moral laxism, *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, has been the *de facto* moral system chosen by the U.S. Catholic bishops, and most U.S. Catholics and other Christians, for justifying the killing and maiming of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and for morally permitting tens of thousands of American Catholics and other Christians to go off and do this killing. If the Catholic bishops had adopted the same laxist moral system to attain *moral certainty* with regards to the possible destruction of a person via abortion, no one would be able to ascertain whether they were for or against abortion. However, whether a

person lives in the womb or in Fallujah, laxism, as the chosen moral system for deciding if a life can be justly destroyed, is an anti-witness to belief in “the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.”

PLANNED AMBIGUITY AND CONSENT-BESTOWING SILENCE

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and each bishop who is a member of it must immediately cease and desist from engaging in this most grave evil. The Conference and each bishop must unambiguously inform those for whom they are morally responsible that Catholics must not support or participate in this war. The bishops must be as unequivocally straightforward in their condemnation of unjustified killing in Iraq as they are with their condemnation of unjustified killing in the womb. They must insist that Catholics must neither support nor participate in this killing because this killing is murder, according to the required *strict* application of Catholic just war theory standards within the context of Catholic moral theology and moral systems.

There is no other morally acceptable alternative. When confronted with murder, silence serves the murders and those who profit from murder, never the victims. Silence is a choice and therefore is subject to discernment as to whether it is in conformity with the call of the moral will of God as revealed by Jesus. The Bishops’ calculated witness of planned ambiguity and consent-bestowing silence—not to mention the jingoism that they are passively permitting to pass as Catholic moral theology—is cooperation with and complicity in unjustified killing. To justify a grave evil is to promote that grave evil. Silence gives consent, especially where a serious moral matter is concerned and where the silent person is understood to be an official moral leader.

For bishops to remain silent in the face of a grave evil, knowing their silence will be interpreted and used as a sign of moral acceptability, is to bestow upon evil a nonverbal, body language “*imprimatur*.” This then allows people to engage in the evil with a clear conscience because the “*imprimatur*” communicates loudly and clearly that:

“We bishops may disagree with the policies, practices and politics relating to this war. But, there is nothing about them that would undermine our moral certainty that the strong moral presumption against war has been

overcome by the strict application of Catholic just war theory. Therefore you may take part in this war and support it if you wish."

To confer upon a person a clear conscience in relation to a form of homicide is to remove a major barrier to engaging in that activity. It is also to supply a significant tool by which others can recruit people for the activity. Such an "*imprimatur*" in a capitalist society or in a communist society is worth its weight in gold. To a government planning to go to war or at war, it is worth more than ten regiments or ten battleships or ten television networks. A silent, nonverbal, body language "*imprimatur*," however, can also be cooperation with unjustified intentional homicide. In the case of the present war in Iraq it pointedly appears to be that—despite its enormous value in the secular domain.⁸

UNDERMINING CATHOLIC MORAL AUTHORITY AND MORAL THEOLOGY

The present episcopal witness is also publicly undermining the entire structure of the Catholic Church's moral theology and moral authority in the United States and beyond. A moral authority that authorizes by public witness a laxist system of moral discernment regarding mass homicide has, thereby, concretely morally validated every possible choice of human behavior. The semblance of a justification can be found for any act—especially where some desire, pleasure or self-interest of the actor is at stake. If the official moral leaders and teachers of the U.S. Catholic Church can employ a laxist interpretation of Catholic moral principles *vis à vis* the mass homicide of war, rather than interpreting just war standards *strictly* as required by the Church's own teaching, then why cannot every Catholic in every situation use the same laxist interpretive paradigm? If the episcopal teachers of moral theology validate by their public witness an Orwellian doublespeak inversion of meaning then the word *lax* would be permitted to masquerade as *strict*. This would allow *laxism* to appear to be an acceptable moral system when doubt exists as to whether an activity is mass murder or not. Moral consistency would dictate that the same Orwellian charade of moral discernment be available to all Catholics in all moral matters.

Laxism would thereby become an acceptable moral system of interpretation in relationship to all human behavior as serious as, or less serious than, mass murder—albeit under cover of the nomenclature of a newly

defined meaning for *strict*. Lest it be perceived as absurd that such an Orwellian inversion of meaning could take place in the Church, consider the moral logic that has been used to render nugatory in Christian moral theology Jesus' teaching, "Love your enemies." Burning Jews, heretics and witches at the stake, torture, wars, abortions, political oppression, shaming, violent revolutions, slavery, indeed practically every form of inhumanity and cruelty imaginable, has been interpreted by the Christian Churches at one time or another to be morally consistent with following Jesus' command to "Love your enemies." Where the moral will of some god other than the God revealed in and by Jesus becomes the standard by which Christians make their decisions, history shows that it takes almost no effort to logically, theo-logically and emotionally "see" hate as love, fear as freedom, evil as good, domination as service and lax as strict.

The time has come for the Catholic bishops of the United States to publicly repent, to publicly change their minds and their behavior regarding this matter of human slaughter in Iraq. As their silence has given consent to mass murder, as well as, consent to the use of a condemned moral system (laxism), so now let them reclaim their moral tradition and moral authority by saying, with one voice, in language that the simplest soul can comprehend: "This war is unjust and killing in it is murder according to Catholic moral theology. Therefore, our Catholic men and women can no longer participate in it or support it."

UNJUSTIFIED KILLING IS NOT OPEN TO EX POST FACTO JUSTIFICATION

Finally, while it is not precisely on the topic of this essay, let there be no belated, contorted, retroactive duck-and-cover efforts at self-justification. It is morally unacceptable to maintain that,

"While we started the killing unjustly, we cannot now stop killing since we are there killing. We will only stop killing the other side when the other side, whom we have unjustly attacked, stops killing us and those who have aligned themselves with us."

Unjustified killing does not become justified when the party, that the unjust lethal aggressor intends to kill, defends itself from the lethal aggressor. In Catholic just war theory, an international United Nations

peacekeeping operation may be morally acceptable in Iraq to restore order to a society which the United States has ravaged. But the unjust, lethal aggressor responsible for initiating the carnage and chaos has no moral right to any longer be present in that society under the phony auspices of being a concerned and benign peacekeeper. It is absurd to make the child abuser the person in charge of the rehabilitation of the abused. Nonetheless, an unjust lethal aggressor does have the moral obligation, as does the child abuser, to finance the restoration of what is destroyed—which of course can never include quenching the soul-searing pain it has caused by the loss of life, limb, love, sanity and family for hundreds of thousands of human beings in Iraq and in the United States.

BLIND GUIDES

The Catholic bishops of the United States today are doing great harm to the Church Universal, to the U.S. Catholic Church, to the people of Iraq, and to the American people. By their chosen silence they have become moral accessories to unjustified woe, waste and desolation in human life. Accessories are enablers. The bishops by continuing to project, via their silence, an aura of strict moral certainty with respect to this war on Iraq are a significant moral support apparatus for recruiting for it, for voting for it, for electing representatives who endorse it and for continuing to kill and maim people in it. The U.S. bishops, however, by taking this morally laxist position are acting in lockstep with a seventeen-hundred-year-old *modus operandi* made visible in all the Churches of Christianity—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. Theirs is but the contemporary Americanized meme of the old Constantinian pastoral practice of pious and politically street-smart “blind guides” (MT 15:14) leading those they have kept blind down the primrose path of holy homicide on behalf of the local power brokers, economic elites and lords of war—instead of leading their flocks along the Way that the Lamb of God teaches by word and deed.⁹

It is time to stop! A laxist moral system of interpretation is forbidden because it undermines all obedience to morality. The *de facto* witnessing to its validity is a most grave episcopal failure—especially when applied where a *strict* interpretation is obligatory. Such a witness is the public camouflaging of evil under the veneer of good and beneath the trappings of Christian religiosity. It is giving a false, misleading, Orwellian

doublethink witness concerning the Way of Eternal Life. It is placing “is” where “is not” belongs. A bishop’s supreme obligation, as a bishop, before God and to his people is the salvation of souls. Being a CEO administering and protecting the assets of a corporation is a secondary episcopal occupation, if that. When the latter of these tasks controls the interpretation of the former, rather than the former controlling the operations of the latter, then an about-face is the only way back to being faithful to the vocation to which one has been called by Christ-God. This is a vocation to shepherd along the Way of Eternal Salvation those whom God has entrusted to you. It is a commission to protect His lambs, His *anawim*, from the craft of the wolves of evil and to feed His sheep with the teachings of Jesus and with Jesus.

*Everyone will readily agree that it is of the
highest importance to know whether
we are not being duped by morality.*

EMMANUEL LEVINAS
TOTALITY AND INFINITY

ENDNOTES:

1. “In a case where he (a person) lacks certainty about the rightness and goodness of a determined act, still performs that act, he stands condemned by his own conscience.” *The Splendor of Truth (Veritatis Splendor)*: Encyclical Letter addressed by the Supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II to all the bishops of the Catholic Church regarding certain fundamental questions of the Church’s moral teachings (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, Vatican Translation), §60.

“Practical doubt is equivalent to a verdict of conscience forbidding the act until the doubt has been cleared up practically. This principle, with its profound insight into truth, is held and taught by all teachers in the Church.” Bernard Häring, “Basic Principle Regarding Doubt,” in *The Law of Christ*, Vol I (Paramus, NJ: The Newman Press, 1966), 171.

2. The generally accepted Catholic just war theory standards are as follows:
 - a) Just institution: the war must be declared by the legitimate authority authorized to declare war;

- b) Just cause: only a defensive war can be morally just, offensive war of any kind is not morally justifiable;
- c) Just intention: vengeance, hate, the unjust confiscation of the wealth or the property rights of others, their labor force or their markets are morally forbidden intentions;
- d) Last resort;
- e) Success is probable;
- f) Just means: the means chosen must be indispensable for accomplishing the end;
- g) Civilian or non-combatant immunity from attack;
- h) Proportionality: the harm done to a people by a war cannot be greater than the harm that would have occurred if the war did not take place. No defensive strategy, *jus ad bellum* or *jus in bello*, that exceeds the limits of proportionality is morally permissible.

For further elucidation of these standards see the following:

- ❑ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), §§2307–2317. [ISBN 0-89243-565-8]
- ❑ *Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response, A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (National Catholic News Service, 1984), §§80–110. [ISBN 1-55586-863-0]
- ❑ *Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, A Reflection of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (Washington, DC: Office of Social Development & World Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 1993), 9–11. [<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/harvest.htm>]
- ❑ John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984). [ISBN 0-80662-077-3]
- ❑ Ronald G. Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition* (New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1986). [ISBN 0-88344-263-9]

3. *Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response, A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (National Catholic News Service, 1984), §§66–78. [ISBN 1-55586-863-0]
4. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Moral Systems* in *Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 1985), 318–319.

Moral Systems:

By this term Catholic theology means not the various philosophical or theological systems of morality, law, etc., as a whole, but the various theories as to how one is morally bound to act where there is a serious doubt whether a [moral] law exists or whether it applies to the case in hand and this doubt cannot be directly resolved by closer study, etc. This question does not arise in a case where a specific end must be achieved without fail (for instance, for the validity of a sacrament: D 2101) [D, Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, edited by Adolf Schömnitzer, Friburg i, Br., 32nd ed., 1963] therefore the best means to that end must be used. In other cases the question is answered as follows:

- a) *absolute tutiorism*: one must always decide in favor of the [moral] law, even when its existence is doubtful, so long as any doubt at all remains of one's freedom from the law; this is a rigoristic view which is impossible in practice, misunderstands the moral nature of freedom as such and is rejected by the Church (D 2303);
- b) *probabiliorism*: a person may decide in favor of freedom only if the reasons against the existence of the [moral] law are substantially sounder and more probable. To this it can be objected that a [moral] law only binds if its existence is certain and that there is a presumption in favor of freedom, a moral value willed by God. But the Church allows this opinion (D 2175FF.);
- c) *equiprobabilism*: freedom may be chosen if the grounds for it are as good as those for believing that the [moral] law exists;
- d) *pure probabilism*: the presumption is in favor of freedom if there are serious reasons in its favor and the claim of the [moral] law is not certain. Probabilism and equiprobabilism in practice usually lead to the same conclusion since it is no easy task to weigh the

reasons pro and con and the matter is always left to some extent to one's prudent estimation. Together they represent the most common view and if they are presupposed, then room is left in these doubtful cases for other considerations;

- e) *laxism*: the merest trace of a right to freedom justifies one in deciding against the [moral] law. Since we are normally concerned with a certainty that is only moral—not physical or metaphysical—and therefore some semblance of an argument against the [moral] law can generally be found, laxism would undermine all obedience to [moral] law and general norms of conduct. It is condemned by the Church (D 2101–2165, ESPECIALLY 2103).

See also:

- ❑ F. J. Connell, “Systems of Morality,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Thomson Gale, 2002), 876–880. [ISBN 0-7876-7694-2]
 - ❑ Bernard Häring, “The True Basis of Morality,” in *The Law of Christ, Vol I* (Paramus, NJ: The Newman Press, 1966), 175–189.
5. Because of the structure of human consciousness the possibility of doubt is cognitively impossible to completely escape in this world. Therefore, all human beings and by extension all Churches, religions, theologies and philosophies have to work with approximately the same set of moral systems elucidated above. How they work with them and how they name them may or may not be consistent with Catholic moral theology, but work with them they must since practical moral doubt is a universal phenomenon. Yet choices concerning what is good and what is evil have to be made in the face of it. Even if a person's governing law of conscience is not a precisely written panoply of moral rules and regulations but something as simple and as straightforward as “To do God's will” or “To love as Jesus loves,” or “To be a good person,” there is no escaping the possibility of moral doubt arising in a particular situation. Hence there is no way to avoid utilizing one or the other of the moral systems in order to resolve “What is God's will here?” or “What does it mean to love as Jesus loves in this situation?” or “What does being a good person call for here?”. Likewise there is no way to avoid one or the other of the moral systems in applying concretely a highly detailed moral code, if that is one's norm or law of

conscience. So while this essay is written through the lens of Catholic just-unjust war moral theology, the moral realities it deals with are not only Catholic, they are also catholic.

6. *Lancet* (2006). Mortality After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-Sectional Cluster Sample Survey. 368:9545;1421–1428.

According to a study published in the October 14, 2006, edition of the peer-reviewed scientific journal, *The Lancet*, as many as 654,965 more Iraqis may have died since hostilities began in Iraq in March 2003 than would have been expected under pre-war conditions. The survey was conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad. The deaths from all causes—violent and non-violent—are over and above the estimated 143,000 deaths per year that occurred from all causes prior to the March 2003 invasion.

“To put these numbers in context, deaths are occurring in Iraq now at a rate more than three times that from before the invasion of March 2003,” said Gilbert Burnham, MD, PhD, lead author of the study and co-director of the Bloomberg School’s Center for Refugee and Disaster Response.

As found in the 2004 survey, the majority of deaths in Iraq were due to violence—although there was a small increase in deaths from non-violent causes, such as heart disease, cancer and chronic illness. Gunshots were the primary cause of violent deaths. “Our total estimate is much higher than other mortality estimates because we used a population based, active method for collecting mortality information rather than passive methods that depend on counting bodies or tabulated media reports of violent deaths.

NOTE: *The Lancet*, published in Great Britain, is one of the premier peer-reviewed medical journals in the world, normally read only by people who possess the expertise to comprehend the highly detailed medical, scientific and mathematical concepts with which findings are arrived at and presented. However, the results of this particular research project, as did those of the 2004 study, made their way into popular mass media world-wide. The study is available on *The Lancet* website ([www/thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com)) and also on the M.I.T. website (http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/human_cost_of_war.pdf). [M.I.T.

sponsored the study and has added additional APPENDICES not in the original publication.]

7. The following is from an interview given by John F. Donoghue, Catholic Archbishop of Atlanta, GA, a few days after the beginning (3/19/03) of the war on Iraq and published in the *Georgia Bulletin* (3/27/03), a Catholic diocesan weekly:

The Pope and other leaders had said we have to use diplomacy. We've tried that and you constantly get the same answer back from Saddam...I think Saddam does have weapons of mass destruction. I think eventually he would make a preemptive strike on us...[President Bush] has the right and the obligation to protect the citizens of this country when he thinks all avenues have been exhausted...I think diplomacy has run its course. How much proof do you need...I don't know where else we could go. He (Saddam) could have killed thousands of people with a preemptive strike. I think he eventually would make a preemptive strike on us...I don't think human life means anything to him...Do you have to wait until Saddam makes a first strike before you can go to war? I don't think so."

It is nearly impossible to rationally fathom how an intelligent man—seeing scores of millions of people around the world publicly demonstrating against the need for a war on Iraq, against the Bush administration's and the U.S. media's claims that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction—could with *strict moral certainty* come to the above moral conclusion. It is even more difficult to understand how *strict moral certainty* is achieved when the two top weapons inspectors and evaluators of Iraq's weapons programs for the United Nations, Hans Blix and Maj. Scott Ritter, USMC, were continually and publicly saying there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, nor any capability of producing such weapons in the foreseeable future. The Archbishop's ability to achieve *strict moral certainty* with regard to morally endorsing the war on Iraq becomes even more strange once it is recognized that he had direct access to one of the best intelligence gathering operations on the planet, the Vatican's Secretary of States Office, and either did not consult it or did not believe it, since this Office opposed the war as morally not justifiable.

How can an Archbishop overcome with *moral certainty* the Catholic Church's morally binding strong presumption against war by the

strict application of the Catholic just war theory when the Vatican itself is telling him the conditions for a just war under Catholic moral teaching are not met here? Could he possibly be unaware of Cicero's historical validated *caveat* that, "The first casualty of war is truth."? Does he not know that the renowned Catholic moral theologian, Rev. Bernard Häring, says that: "the first rule of prudence is *factum non praesumitur, sed probari debet*, a fact, an act or action, may not legally be 'presumed' to exist or have taken place, but must be demonstrated." In order for Catholic just war theory—or any just war theory—to properly function it depends on factual accuracy. Therefore *strict moral certainty* in regard to the facts one is employing to justify killing other human beings is mandatory, if the strong moral presumption against war is to be overcome. How then, in the face of all of the above, does a highly educated man rationally arrive with *strict moral certainty* at the conclusion that going to Iraq and killing people is morally justified, and then publicly communicate that conclusion to those immortal souls who rely on him for authentic moral guidance in discerning good from the snares and deceptions of the Evil One?

8. On March 19, 2003, the day that the war on Iraq began, Bishop Wilton Gregory, then the President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a formal statement concerning the war on behalf of the U.S. Catholic bishops. The statement contained many good and noble moral and spiritual thoughts. But the critical sentence in the entire statement is: "We support those who accepted the call to serve their country in a conscientious way in the armed forces." By any rational interpretation of that sentence, it has to mean that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is *morally certain* that the strong moral presumption against this war has been overcome by the strict application of the standards of the Catholic just war theory. Otherwise no bishop could make such a public statement, because he would then be in a state of moral doubt concerning whether the killing and maiming of people that was to take place was justified. But as noted earlier, in Catholic moral theology it is not permitted to act in a state of moral doubt. One must only act with *moral certainty*—and in those events where human life is subject to possible destruction or where the validity of a sacrament is at stake, moral doubt can be resolved and moral certainty attained only by a *strict* application of the law. The moral

maxim or reflex principle that can normally be employed to achieve moral certainty, namely, “In doubt the possessor is to be favored,” is not morally available where the destruction of human life is the issue of conscience. It goes without saying that the moral system of laxism is also completely out of the question as a means of achieving *moral certainty* where doubt exists regarding whether it is morally justified to kill a person. Again to repeat what has been said before but cannot be repeated too often because of a systemic operational malformation of conscience throughout not only the Catholic Church, but also, if truth be told, throughout most of the Churches of Christianity: Because killing a person is legally justified, this does not mean that in this particular instance (war or capital punishment) it is morally justified. Likewise, because Catholic moral theology, in the justified homicide tradition, accepts that it is sometimes possible to morally kill a person, this does not mean that in this particular case the conditions that Catholic moral theology demands in order to acquire the obligatory *strict moral certainty* have been met.

It is not that Bishop Gregory as the spokesperson for the U.S. bishops does not know how to explicitly and unequivocally declare that something is morally unjustified and therefore prohibited as an option. At one point he states, “Any decision to defend against Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction by using our weapons of mass destruction would be clearly unjustified.” So here at least, in this one aspect related to the war on Iraq, he is *morally certain* that the strict application of Catholic just war theory would not allow for a particular tactic.

Consider depleted uranium (DU) weapons as intrinsically evil weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction:

- ❑ An unavoidable moral query in terms of Catholic just war theory and the above moral declaration by the President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is critically pertinent here: Are not, armor-piercing bullets, shells, bombs and missiles made with depleted uranium (DU), weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction? Why? The extremely dense DU munitions burn on impact. The fire releases microscopic, radioactive and toxic dust particles of uranium oxide that travel with the wind and can be inhaled or ingested. They also spread contamination by seeping into the land and water. In the human body, DU causes harm to

internal organs due both to its chemical toxicity as a heavy metal and its release of radiation (alpha and beta rays). Because of its pervasive and indiscriminate effects, DU is has been classified as an *omnicidal* weapon—one that causes the death of all life. In this sense, depleted uranium is a war on life itself and on all that supports life—air, water and soil. DU remains radioactive well beyond its half-life of 4.5 billion years.

- ❑ It should be noted that a recent European Parliament Report, European Committee on Radiation Risk 2003 (ECRR 2003) concludes that Atomic Bomb studies from 1945 onward underestimate the radiation risk by more than 1000 times and failed to consider the internal exposure and diseases caused by *alpha* and *beta* rays. They did not consider a classified memo (October 30, 1943) of the Manhattan Project that, in case the Manhattan Project objective of producing plutonium fission and hence an atomic bomb did not succeed, depleted uranium (DU) munitions would be deployed towards the attainment of the same objective. Therefore, as early as 1943 it was known what DU could and would do as a weapon. This means, contrary to propaganda, the government was well aware of its indiscriminate lethal effects long before its use in the first Gulf War.

Consider the following legal, scientific, medical and historical facts:

- ❑ In 1991, in Gulf War I, the U.S. broke a 60-year taboo and introduced DU to the battleground, a radiological weapon which is truly a weapon of indiscriminate killing and mass destruction. What is worse: the flash annihilation from an atomic bomb or the slow, ceaseless, multigenerational mutilation caused by DU weapons?
- ❑ Radiological weapons (including target-guided, DU-containing bombs and missiles) currently being used by the U.S. in Iraq are forbidden under Articles 35 & 55 of the 1st Protocol additional to the Geneva Convention. In Catholic just war theory and in Catholic moral theory as it relates to the destruction of human life does premeditative and continual use of forms of violence and agents of violence that are explicitly illegal under the major international law treaty governing war render the war unjust?

- ❑ The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) condemns the use of DU weapons and supports the calls for a ban on their use. “A basic principle in radiation protection is that all exposures should be justified; that is, the benefit for those exposed should exceed the risk. This is the standard for medical radiography. The military utility of DU weapons for the users does not justify any added health risk for non-combatants, no matter how small. The precautionary principle states that in the absence of convincing proof that a substance or process is harmless, the presumption must be risk. This principle applies clearly to the use of DU weapons.”
- ❑ According to the IPPNW, “DU weapons indiscriminately contaminate the places in which they are used, and the contamination persists long after the conclusion of hostilities, adding to the radioactive and toxic burden imposed upon civilians, wildlife, and ecosystems. From this perspective, DU weapons should be considered a form of ecological warfare prohibited by the Geneva Conventions.”
- ❑ The U.S. left 300–800 tons of depleted uranium in Iraq after the first Gulf War.
- ❑ In Gulf War II, “1900 tons (3,800,000 pounds) of DU was used in 2003, equivalent to nearly 250,000 Nagasaki bombs.”
- ❑ Prior to that war the American military did an in-depth analysis of DU weapons and warned that the radiation and heavy metal released by them under battlefield conditions could cause kidney, lung and liver damage, chromosomal damage, neurocognitive disorders and a variety of cancers.
- ❑ The American Gulf War Veterans Association reports that of the 697,000 military personnel sent to Iraq for Gulf War I half have reported serious illnesses and more than 30 percent are chronically ill and are receiving disability benefits from the Veterans Administration—most are in their mid-thirties at a time in their lives when they should be in the prime of health (such a high occurrence of various symptoms has led to the illnesses being named Gulf War Syndrome).

- ❑ DU, uranium 238 (^{238}U), is a potent radioactive carcinogen. Aerosolized particles, released from exploded munitions, enter lungs, open wounds, the food chain and water. Once taken into the human body it can produce cancer of the lungs, bones, blood or kidneys.
- ❑ A child playing with a spent DU shell for one hour has received in that hour twice as much radiation exposure as he or she would have normally received in a whole year.
- ❑ Tons of radioactive waste are polluting major Iraqi urban centers. Spent DU shells litter the ground. Millions of DU rounds have been poured into Iraq by U.S. and British military operations.
- ❑ Children are 10 to 20 times more sensitive to radiation exposure than are adults.
- ❑ After Gulf War I pediatricians reported a six to twelve times increase in children in Basra with childhood leukemia.
- ❑ The Iraqi National Ministry of Health has produced for international health conferences detailed epidemiological reports and statistical studies showing a six-fold increase in breast cancer, a five-fold increase in lung cancer and a 16-fold increase in ovarian cancer.
- ❑ Dr. Huda Ammash dedicated herself to scientifically documenting and reporting on the alarming rise of cancers and birth defects in Iraq after Gulf War I. Two month after Gulf War II began she was arrested by the U.S. Military and imprisoned. She was charged with building weapons of mass destruction.
- ❑ A thorough understanding of the power of DU weapons, to be weapons of indiscriminate destruction of people and of large areas of land into the indefinite future, was completely available in the public domain on a worldwide basis at least since 1995. Also available was the fact the United States had employed such weapons on a significant scale in Gulf War I.
- ❑ Dr. Helen Caldicott, a pediatrician, wrote in an editorial in the Baltimore Sun on October 6, 2002: "Do President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul

Wolfowitz, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld understand the medical consequences of the 1991 War and the likely health effects of the next one they are planning? If they don't, their ignorance is breathtaking. Even more incredible, though, and much more likely, is that they do understand but don't care."

Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter on Catholic Moral Theology, *Veritatis Splendor*, states that: "Certainly, in order to have a 'good conscience' (1 TIM 1:5), man must seek the truth and must make judgments in accordance with that same truth." Bernard Häring in his eminent treatise on moral theology, *The Law of Christ*, Vol. 1, says: "The effort one is obliged to make in order to acquire certainty is to be measured by the importance of the action itself and the consequences which are anticipated." How, in light of all that has been said above, is it even conceivable that a person *strictly* interpreting Catholic just war theory could rationally arrive at a state of *moral certainty* that such weapons were morally permissible? If they are not morally permissible then Catholic soldiers, pilots, etc., would be morally forbidden from using them because their use would be unjustified, that is, the moral equivalent of murder or of attempted murder. Consider: If a child dies from a cancerous brain tumor which was initiated by exposure to the radioactive and toxic dust released by the explosion of a DU weapon, who is her killer? George Bush? Richard Cheney? Donald Rumsfeld? Condoleezza Rice? The U.S. Catholic Bishops? The soldier in Iraq who is using this type of munition to kill the enemy? God? No one?

Is not Iraq today saturated with uranium contamination from these DU munitions and is their toxicity not at this very hour indiscriminately initiating and feeding the lethal destruction of people's internal biochemical milieu (neurological, reproductive, genetic, respiratory, digestive, excretory, immunological), and will this not continue into the indefinite future? How does a Catholic bishop rationally arrive with *strict morally certainty* at the conclusion that DU weapons are NOT morally unjustified weapons of indiscriminate mass destruction? How does he arrive at *strict moral certitude* that a war that has every intention of employing such weapons on a large scale is a just war according to the stringent standards of the Catholic Just War Theory? How does he arrive with *strict moral certainty* at the decision to remain

silent as members of the Body of Christ who are in his spiritual care go off to kill and contaminate and to be killed and to be contaminated by this heinous instrument of indiscriminate destruction? What does respect for life, reverence for life and the sanctity of human life mean when this is what is included in it?

9. One of countless examples of the American Hierarchy acting as “blind guides” leading Catholics into war, Catholics whom they have kept as morally blind as themselves, occurs on April 18, 1917. Cardinal James Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore, writes in a letter to President Woodrow Wilson, that is signed not only by him but also by the other U.S. Archbishops, “We are all true Americans...Our people, as ever, will rise as one man to serve the nation.” Cardinal Gibbons on the threshold of the U.S. entrance into the demented hellhole of WWI also writes, that when war is declared “the duty of a citizen [is] absolute and unreserved obedience to his country’s call.”

A second illustration of this terrible ongoing problem in which many of the American Catholic Hierarchy are ensnared can be found fifty years later in regard to yet another war of the U.S. Government. In moral defense of a war—that the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, referred to in 1966 as “an overwhelming atrocity,” that was taking place in a country that in 1967 Daniel Berrigan, S.J., called “the land of the burning children”—Cardinal John O’Connor, then Military Chaplain O’Connor, wrote a 256-page book in 1968 entitled, *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam*. The Forward of the book is by the Republican Leader of the U.S. Senate, Senator Everett Dirksen. Vice-President Hubert Humphrey gives the book a wholehearted endorsement on its front and back flaps. The back cover notes that “Commander John J. O’Connor...holds [an] M.A. degree in Advanced Ethics.” The book received extensive positive coverage in the secular and the Catholic press and soon became a moral and a morale handbook for military chaplains. It also became an apologetics primer for bishops, priests and ministers who were morally approving of members of their flocks going to Vietnam to kill people on behalf of the American cause. Indeed, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (General Leonard F. Chapman), acting as “top brass,” issued an official bulletin touting the book to officers in his chain of command and stating that it provides “a reassurance for the serviceman that his participation in Vietnam is

just, and that he is fulfilling an obligation to his country.” [See APPENDIX for an exact replica of this order.]

It is telling, however, that nowhere in the 256 pages of this Catholic Military Chaplain’s book is Jesus mentioned, let alone quoted, even once, to morally justify a position that is taken. The book could have been written exactly as it is if the incarnation, life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus never happened. Any secular moral philosopher could have written it.

So why use the title, *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam*, since Jesus Christ has nothing to do with the presentation of the contents? Why should a Christian Chaplain write and publish a book that any philosopher or political scientist could have written word for word? Why were so many major secular supporters of the war so zealous in their desire to get this utterly unoriginal defense of the war widely distributed? The answer, of course, is that the medium of a message is as much a part of a message as the words. *Chaplain* O’Connor brings to the verbal message the loud and clear unwritten, nonverbal message that the U.S. war in Vietnam is in conformity with the will of God as revealed by Jesus, or at least as understood by the Church. Therefore no Christian need have any qualms of conscience about going to Vietnam and killing Vietnamese as President Johnson and his military staff so order.

Ordination to the priesthood is here conscripted as a public relations tool to place the war—for political, recruiting and combat morale purposes—under the canopy of Divine approval, thereby allowing every Christian symbol to be enlisted to sell it, to recruit for it and to prosecute it. Chaplain is what “baptizes” the war. *Chaplain* is what makes the war and makes participation in the killing and mayhem of the war a legitimate Christian activity in the minds and hearts of most everyday Christians. The same book written by Mr. John J. O’Connor, a Vietnam veteran, would be very unlikely to make it even to publication, let alone be the subject of the marketing blitz generated by *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam*.

Now, after being morally dead wrong on the most catastrophic American moral breakdown up to that time, John O’Connor has bestowed on him Cardinal Spellman’s former episcopal chair, Cardinal-Archbishop of the most prestigious Catholic diocese in the

United States, New York! In fairness to Cardinal O'Connor it must be stated that when he belatedly recognized that he was wrong about the Vietnam War, he had the moral rectitude to do what few high public figures or ecclesiastical officers would have the courage to do, unless caught: he freely said he was wrong. In an article entitled *The Cardinal, Gays and Lesbians*, Nat Hentoff writes, "O'Connor had enough integrity to confess his error unequivocally. During the Vietnam War he wrote a book, *A Chaplain Looks at Vietnam*. It was as he wrote "a justification, moral and legal, for the American intervention in Vietnam." "That's a bad book," he told me during one of our first conversations. "I regret having published it."

However, the problem addressed in this endnote is not simply the problem of two U.S. Cardinals, fifty years apart, whose religious work on behalf of ventures in nationalistic militarism has resulted in untold numbers of simple Christians killing and being killed, maiming and being maimed, driving others mad and being driven mad. These two members of the professional religious elite of their Church are but two magnifying lenses through which to view the consequences of the morally-blinding pathogen that has invaded the U.S. Hierarchy and through it infected the entire U.S. Catholic Church. But, this moral virus did not arise *sui generis* in the American Catholic Church or in any other American Church. It was transmitted here as a highly-virulent strain by European Christians from all their mainline Churches—Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. For every American bishop, priest or minister morally blinded in mind and heart by nationalistic militarism under the cloaking device of Christian rhetoric and ritual, there are ten thousand European predecessors who have carried this moral disease across 1700 years. Cardinal Gibbons and Cardinal O'Connor are but momentary vectors of a long-standing moral malaise in the Church, which can perhaps be made somewhat more visible meditating on the words of the Prophet Jeremiah:

*Those who administer the Law have no knowledge of me.
The shepherds have rebelled against me,
following things that have no power in them.*

JER 2:8

Betrayal by the religious ruling class—in order to curry favor with powers which they admire and lust after but which are in fact devoid of any power to do what God wants done for humanity—is obviously not a problem that first appears on the scene with the bishops of the United States in the twenty-first century or even with the Constantinianization of the Church in the fourth century. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and others are well aware of the problem hundreds of years before Jesus.

The lust for powers that God does not want his religious leaders to have—because these powers are impotent in bringing about, or even hostile to bringing about, His divine design for the eternal well-being of humanity—seem to be the primeval temptation to betrayal and to evil that presents itself to people of heightened religious consciousness. Jesus Himself at the very beginning of His public ministry has to vigorously fight against this temptation in the desert. Some Biblical interpreters see His battle against this temptation in the desert—to choose the use of power other than that power which is of God—to actually be the beginning of a lifelong struggle with the desire to confront and conquer evil with something other than the power of the one He knows Himself to be since the moment of His baptism: The Suffering Servant (IS 42:1FF.). The power of the Servant is the power of self-sacrificial, nonviolent, forgiving, suffering love toward all, friends and enemies. The temptation to conquer evil and death by substituting the powers of the world for the power of the Servant is only forever vanquished by Jesus, according to these interpreters, when in Gethsemane He commands Peter to “Put up your sword,” and when on Golgotha He prays, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do,” and willing accepts the consequences. One of these consequences turns out to be death. The other turns out to be what every human being longs for at the very root of his or her being: Resurrection unto Eternal Life with God—who is Father/Mother/Parent/Love.

Christian Just War THEORY

OR

Christian Just War FANTASY

We must be clear from the start: the existence of the so-called Christian Just War Theory (CJWT) owes nothing to anything that Jesus—the Word (*Logos*) of God incarnate—ever hinted at, let alone said or did. But even before a Christian may attempt to employ this particular moral theory (a theory that not only cannot be found in the teachings of Jesus, but directly, logically contradicts Jesus’ explicit teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies), he or she must first demonstrate that what is being presented is, in reality, a moral theory, and not just a mental construct with no more objective existence outside the mind than has a unicorn.

A theory is an idea, supported by a wealth of observable facts, which purports to describe and predict certain conditions or aspects of reality, an idea which may then become the basis of action. The theory of relativity, the theory of gravity, quantum theory, cell theory—all are examples of such an idea. A fantasy is an idea that is the work of the imagination, but one which has no verifiable basis of support in observation or experimentation outside of the mind. It may be quite intricate and logically elaborate but, when called to task by external reality, it shows itself to be whimsical, illusionary, and incapable of providing a truthful (in the strict sense of truth: the conformity of mind to reality) basis for action.

Thus when the Christian Just War “Theory” is unmasked: it is no more than the Christian Just War “Fantasy,” for no war in the history of Christianity has ever met the “Theory’s” own standards. The “theory” has never been instantiated nor has it ever described or predicted the real conditions or the real nature of an authentic war—not from the time it

was first concocted by Christians as a substitute for following Jesus' Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies—not ever. How can it then be called a “theory?” Since no Christian community, nor any national hierarchy—from the beginning and to this very day—has ever declared the war of its own state or nation unjust while the war was taking place, what does this say about the logical or moral validity of calling this so-called theory a “theory?”

JUS AD BELLUM AND JUS IN BELLO

CJWT posits that only one side in a war—the defensive side—can be engaged in a just war. “Offensive just war,” being a contradiction in terms, does not exist. What, then, can be said about the moral validity of calling this so-called theory a “theory,” when all parties, to all sides, of all wars in which Christians have been killers, have thought themselves to be engaged in a just war? CJWT, by its own tenets, always requires

CJWT, by its own tenets, always requires that the entire war must meet certain standards (*jus ad bellum*) in order to be “just.” Furthermore, CJWT also demands that every individual act of war within the war meet these standards (*jus in bello*). The reality is, of course, that no nation on earth trains its military personnel to continuously and conscientiously weigh what they are commanded to do in war according to these standards.

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Moreover, no nation constructs its military strategy with a view to being reasonably certain that it conforms to CJWT norms. So what does all this say about calling this so-called theory a “theory”—let alone obeying those who employ it to validate orders to kill human beings? How much time must pass before an idea—such as the idea that the earth is flat—ceases to be regarded as a theory and becomes self-evidently a fantasy?

Is not “Christian Just War Fantasy” the accurate and truthful name properly attached to this concept? And is it not a grave evil for Christians—bishops, priests, ministers, and laity—to use a fantasy to evaluate whether the mass destruction of human beings is morally justifiable in the eyes

of Jesus? Is it not a morally abominable state of affairs for a Church or a Christian to substitute a moral fantasy for the explicit teaching of the One whom it or he or she purports to worship as the incarnation of God? Is not the very teaching of CJWT as a norm for Christian conduct the intentional creation of an occasion of sin for others?

A STRANGE CHURCH AND A STRAINED FORM OF CHRISTIANITY

What a strange Church and strained form of Christianity it is that tells its people that Jesus' command to "Follow Me" can be obeyed by following a moral fantasy, which is in direct logical contradiction to what He explicitly taught. What a horrifying Church and grotesque form of Christianity it is that—using all the paraphernalia of Christianity at its disposal—relentlessly nurtures its people from the cradle on forward into a consciousness and conscience that unquestioningly accepts, as Gospel truth (or as a valid substitute for Gospel truth), a moral fantasy that justifies the mass slaughter of human beings.

In the early 1990s, when Bosnian Christian Serbs in the former Yugoslavia were engaged in the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims, Metropolitan Archbishop Nikolai, the highest-ranking Serbian Orthodox Church official in Bosnia, publicly endorsed the architects and managers of this slaughter. He called them the followers of the "hard road of Christ." Serbian priests openly blessed Serbian Orthodox parishioners returning from "kill-and-plunder expeditions." During the war, the Feast Day of St. Sava—founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church—was celebrated one year by people burning down the 300-year-old mosque at Trebinje and massacring the town's Muslims. Anyone who thinks that this has not been the ceaseless history of the Catholic and Protestant Churches, as well as the Orthodox Churches, since the Christian Just War Moral Fantasy (in one form or another) was incorporated into Christianity 1700 years ago, is himself or herself living in a consciousness of historical fantasy—a consciousness which each Church also carefully cultivates about itself with all the unholy zeal with which it cultivates the Christian Just War Fantasy.

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WHICH DO YOU CHOOSE: MORAL FANTASY OR THE GOSPEL TRUTH OF NONVIOLENT LOVE?

Which do you, my Christian brother and sister, choose? The Christian moral fantasy? Or its opposite, the Gospel truth of Jesus' Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies? You cannot choose both. To choose one way is to abdicate the other. Which do you choose to follow? Which is the Way of Eternal Life? Which is the truth of the Lord's Command to "Follow Me"? You cannot rely on someone with Metropolitan Archbishop Nikolai's history to tell you the Gospel truth in this matter, because truth—most especially Gospel truth—is not only

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historically the first casualty of war for government officials, it is also historically the first casualty of war for Church officials. He will lead you astray. He will lead you away from following Jesus and

the destiny for which Jesus created you and for which He gave you the gift of faith in Him as your Resurrected Lord, God and Savior.

BAFFLED

I am baffled, just plain baffled. War has ravaged Iraq. The prior justifications for the war being pre-emptively started have been proven to be fraudulent. There were no weapons of mass destruction being stockpiled. There was no imminent danger of Iraq attacking the U.S. with such weapons. Beyond this, 1,455,590 Iraqi deaths (mostly civilian) have been attributed to the U.S. invasion and millions more Iraqis and Americans have been maimed in body and/or mind.

LAXISM: TRASHING THE JUST WAR STANDARDS

I am baffled as to why the spiritual and moral leadership of my Church (Catholic) and other Churches in the U.S. are not screaming “bloody murder.” The only possible way this war could not have been bloody mass murder is if it met the standards of the Christian Just War Theory. (It is certainly in direct contradiction to Jesus’ teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies which is the only other ethical option available to Christians.) But, it does not come close to meeting Christian Just War standards either in the *jus ad bellum* or the *jus in bello* dimension of the so-called Christian Just War Theory. Beyond any reasonable doubt, it did not! Yet, silence, deadly silence was the stance of the episcopal caste in the U.S. Churches. Is not this chosen silence defiance of the Will of God by those chosen to spiritually and morally protect and nurture Christ’s flock? Is it not gross episcopal moral negligence? How is it not laxism in the strict moral sense of that word?

NON-COMBATANT IMMUNITY

The Christian Just War Theory has always insisted upon non-combatant immunity from lethal force. The rationale behind this is that if one is not being lethally attacked by another, that other cannot be destroyed. There are over 1,000,000 Iraqi civilians dead! Yet, silence—dead silence. Baffling in the extreme!

In Christian Just War Theory if a non-combatant runs into the line of fire between two combatants, the one whose side is engaged in a defensive war—only those fighting a defensive war can be justly killing people under Christian Just War Theory—is free from sin if he or she accidentally kills the haphazard interloper. This form of homicide is today euphemistically “spun” as collateral damage—the same terminology that is employed for the inadvertent destruction of a TV tower. But using the designation collateral damage to justify the destruction of over 1,000,000 civilians, under the auspices of killing some combatants, is a theological farce—it is phony Christian morality.

The term “collateral damage” has become the catchword by which contemporary Church leaders Novocain their empathic faculties and camouflage their murder-endorsing silence. Wherever the moral line is drawn between the person who inadvertently gets in the line of fire and the outside limits of collateral damage, that line is crossed long, long before 1,000,000 civilians are torn to pieces. The slaughter of 1,000,000

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civilians in a population of twenty-five million (the equivalent of killing over 12 million Americans out of the present U.S. population) is by Christian Just War standards mass murder—and no “fair and balanced” state propa-

ganda machine or “kept” corporate news commentators can change that moral fact of Christian life. Yet, silence was the order of the day for the U.S. Catholic bishops and for most of the top leadership of most of the American Christian Churches (85% of the U.S. population claims Christian affiliation).

SAY ‘YES’ IF YOU MEAN ‘YES’ AND ‘NO’ IF YOU MEAN ‘NO’

Consider the following, although for the moment it may appear to be off the point. The Apostolic Constitution, *Universi Dominici Gregis*, is the document that lays down the absolute, unchangeable rules for the conduct of the conclave at which the next pope will be elected. The rules explicitly included the instructions that each cardinal before entering the conclave must swear an oath. The specific words of the oath are:

We, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, of the Order of Bishops, of Priests and of Deacons, promise, pledge and swear, as a body and individually, to observe exactly and faithfully all the norms contained in the Apostolic Constitution Universi Dominici Gregis of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, and to maintain rigorous secrecy with regard to all matters in any way related to the election of the Roman Pontiff or those which, by their very nature, during the vacancy of the Apostolic See, call for the same secrecy. And I, N. Cardinal N., so promise, pledge and swear. So help me God and these Holy Gospels which I now touch with my hand.

Yet in his Encyclical on Catholic moral theology, *Veritatis Splendor*, the Pope himself states emphatically, “[T]he negative commandments oblige always and under all circumstances...The Church has always taught that one may never choose kinds of behavior prohibited by the moral commandments expressed in negative form in the Old and New Testaments.” Now, does not Jesus expressly command His followers not to swear oaths?

“Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.’ But I say this to you: do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God’s throne; or by the earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great king. Do not swear by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. All you need say is ‘Yes’ if you mean yes, ‘No’ if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one” (MT. 5:33-37).

I am baffled! To elect the next Vicar of Christ one must do what Christ said not to do!

Please someone explain this! Please also explain how 1,000,000 civilian dead and hundreds of thousand more civilians maimed in body and/or mind is in moral correspondence with the non-combatant immunity standard of the Christian Just War Theory? How does requiring Christians, who wish to vote for the next Pope, to do what Jesus explicitly told them not to do make spiritual sense? How is the killing of 1,000,000 civilians in accord with Jesus’ rejection of violence and His love of even lethal enemies? Is any of this proper Christian behavior or witness? I am baffled. What is going on? Is there any other name for what is taking place here other than obstinate defiance—“I will not obey.”?

How is the killing of 1,000,000 civilians in accord with Jesus’ rejection of violence and His love of even lethal enemies?

I suppose I should also be confused as to why the highest ranking group of spiritual leaders in the Church, Cardinals, cannot be trusted to follow Jesus' teaching and let "their 'Yes' be yes and their 'No' be no." Why is it they have to be psychologically and spiritually chained in exactly the manner Jesus overtly repudiates, when they are the ones who are to lead the rest of the Church into freely following Jesus' Way? These men are the most visible official Catholic Church witnesses to others concerning the Person and Way of Jesus—and they must be bound by a method Jesus says is from the Evil One! I'm baffled. That each and every Cardinal willingly does what Jesus says not to do—"swear an oath"—so he can have the privilege of choosing one among them to be the next infallible Vicar of Christ is as baffling as the existence of the rule itself. That no Cardinal has even publicly expressed having the slightest qualm of conscience with the requirement is a third level of bafflement!

REJECTING OATHS AND VIOLENCE

Now, regardless of whether the issue is Jesus' rejection of oaths or violence or enmity, it is not the absence of clarity on Jesus' part or on the part of the authors of the Gospels that is the problem. The problem lies somewhere else. Wherever that somewhere else is, it is from *there* that the capacity exists for U.S. Christian leaders, and the average U.S. Christian, to live in silent equanimity as 1,000,000 civilians are killed—killed mostly by Christians from Churches in the United States. It is from *there*, that killing national enemies has been morally raised to an operational position in the Church superior to Jesus' teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies. Where is that *there*, from which all this calm defiance comes? Heaven?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (§1970) tells us that "the entire Law of the Gospel is contained in the *new commandment* of Jesus: 'love one another as He has loved us.'" It says, while discussing the Lord's Prayer (§2822), that the new commandment "summarizes all the others and expresses the entire will of the Father."

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to continually and honestly struggle to figure out how to love one another as Christ loves us in given situations, perhaps having in the end to rely on principles of probabiliorism or probabilism to achieve moral certitude. But, it is quite another thing to make a rule that Church leaders must refuse to follow a negative command of Jesus in order to fulfill their function. It is quite another thing to make-believe that Jesus would be silent as His disciples went off and killed 1,000,000 civilians and brutalized hundreds of thousands more.

I am baffled. But, I know something is profoundly and pervasively out of place in the theory and practice of Catholic moral thinking in particular and in Christian moral thinking in general.

My institutional Church (Catholic) has put a great deal of effort and money into publicly and unambiguously teaching that the use of artificial contraception or the intentional missing of Mass on Sunday are grave moral evils that condemn a person to hell forever if he or she does not repent of them before death. At the same time, it remained silent about 1,000,000 civilians killed and hundreds of thousands more maimed in a war that is now known to have been justified by blatant lies. This would be Marx Brothers' bizarre if it were not scandal, false witness and a moral abomination. Most Protestant and Orthodox Churches and their leadership in the U.S. are riding out the waves of homicidal nationalism in similar moral boats. Their scandalous false witness is a spiritual abomination of equal proportions. I'm baffled—baffled not only at Church leaders' bold and public defiance of Divinity Incarnate but baffled also by the serenity with which they engage in their rebellion against the Will of the "Father of all" (EP 4:6) as revealed by Jesus.

NURTURING TRANQUIL DEFIANCE

I'm baffled, but maybe I should not be. Seventeen hundred years of systematically and systemically nurturing tranquil defiance of the most obvious teachings of Jesus must have its destructive consequences in the spiritual and moral life of the Church, e.g., producing a lineage of shepherds who thoroughly believe that Jesus' teachings on oaths, violence and enmity are utopian, unrealistic, impractical and fanciful standards to adhere to in conducting the life of the Church. Most U.S. Catholic bishops and most U.S. Christian leaders—along with most of their congregations—have been aggressively hardwired from the cradle to live

in peace with the idea that a faithful follower of Jesus can in good conscience praise the Lord, while passing the ammunition that is meant to dismember, disembowel, decapitate, incinerate or drive mad another human being—another infinitely valued and loved son or daughter of our Father. Indeed, most Christians have been thoroughly brainwashed from infancy to placidly swear an oath to obey the command of another to do what no sane person could ever believe Jesus would do or tell His disciples to do, e.g., split the head of a fellow human being in half with the slash of a halberd or a burst of fire from a machine gun!

It is baffling but not surprising that in the face of more than 1,000,000 civilian deaths silence reigns among Bishops. It is baffling but not surprising since not even 2,000,000 civilians deaths in Vietnam, not even 25,000,000 civilians deaths in World War II, could move the Bishops to speak up clearly and pay up personally in order to stop those in their spiritual care from swearing and killing—and from swearing to kill on command! Do they not realize that their silence has had, is having and will continue to have horrifying consequences here in the U.S. and abroad? Evidently not.

CONQUERING EVIL AND DEATH

Baffling! However, simply because the choices of human beings are baffling does not mean they cannot be recognized as evil, that is, in radical contradiction to the will of God as revealed by the Word (*Logos*) of God incarnate—Jesus. “Baffled,” then, is used in this present reflection as a benign locution to gently, yet vigorously, highlight an unfathomably tragic possibility, namely, that the leadership and membership of the Churches—by adamantly insisting that they have the right to teach, as consistent with what Jesus taught, that which is contradictory to what Jesus taught—are short-circuiting the power and the wisdom that the Father desires to release into the human situation through Jesus Christ and through those He chooses to follow Him. When it is remembered *why* the Father wants to release this grace into the human condition, i.e., to conquer evil and death in all their manifestations for all human beings, then harnessing the Churches, to teach by word and deed something as God’s will that Jesus rejected by word and deed as God’s will, approaches Edenic and Golgothian evil—the chosen ones trashing of a Divine Gift of infinite and unimaginable worth through obstinate disobedience.

NADIA

THE SADDEST STORY OF ALL

"I looked at her [my sister Nadia]. The missile, something big and unexploded, had come through her chest and her heart. She was covered in blood, unconscious...We all knew it was too late." Her heart lay on her chest, ripped from her body by a missile...Najem [her father] says, "My daughter had just completed her Ph.D. in Psychology and was waiting for her first job." He holds out his dead daughter's identity card for us to see.

His fingers are covered in her blood.



SLAUGHTERED: Najem Khalaf weeps at the sight of his dead daughter Nadia, killed by a missile. [MIKE MOORE, MIRROR.CO.UK]

Baghdad. An old man cries over the coffin of his daughter. His wife and younger daughter sit in the dirt outside the mortuary in shock and abject sadness. It is only an hour and 20 minutes since Nadia Khalaf died, too early for total grief to set in. But time enough to know their lives have been shattered forever. We discovered them during a random visit to Al Kindhi Hospital in North East Baghdad at 1 PM. The doctors did not know we were coming—we had an official guide and we were free to choose which hospital. Nadia was lying on a stretcher beside the stone mortuary slab. Her heart lay on her chest, ripped from her body by a missile which smashed through the bedroom window of the family's flat nearby in Palestine Street.

Her father Najem Khalaf stood beside her corpse. And I shall try to write what he and his family said in exactly the order they said it. I shall try because I hope it will better convey the bewilderment and horror that broke on one Iraqi household yesterday. “A shell came down into the room as she was standing by the dressing-table,” Najem says. “My daughter had just completed her Ph.D. in Psychology and was waiting for her first job. She was born in 1970. She was 33. She was very clever.” Everyone said I have a fabulous daughter. She spent all her time studying. Her head buried in books. She didn’t have a care about going out enjoying herself. My other daughter is the same. She has a Master’s degree in English and teaches at the university. Me? I’m just a lorry driver. A simple man.” He holds out his dead daughter’s identity card for us to see. His fingers are covered in her blood. I go to offer my condolence to his other daughter Alia, who is 35. “I don’t know what humanity Bush is calling for,” she says in English, “Is this the humanity which lost my sister?” We are a working class family which made two academics. It was never easy for my parents or for us. We struggled to get where we are. Our flat is rented, not owned. I receive 75,000 dinars a month as a university teacher, my main subject Shakespeare. The flat costs 35,000 monthly—about \$12. We were hoping to get ourselves a proper home when Nadia started working. Now look.” Her mother Fawzia raises her hand as if beseeching me. But words fail her and she begins to sob again. “We have been looking only for peace and security,” Alia says, “We were not interested in collecting money, buying costly clothes. We didn’t care about dresses. Just peace and security. Not this.”

On Friday morning, April 4th, both women were still in their night-clothes, dressing gowns loose around them. They said they had risen late because of all the shelling overnight. Like everyone else, they were talking about the electricity being cut off on Thursday night. Nadia was joking about going for a shower. Alia told her she’d probably be away for three hours...just waiting for some water. They were laughing. “I didn’t hear any sound,” Alia says, “Suddenly a shell or bomb or something came through the room. I fell to the floor. My mouth was full of dust. I was swallowing dust. Then I looked at her. The missile, something big and unexploded, had come through her chest and her heart. She was covered in blood, unconscious. I ran down to the street, Daddy and Mummy behind me, screaming for an ambulance. There wasn’t any. A neighbor said

he would drive us here to the hospital. “We all knew it was too late. But we hoped, we hoped.” I tell her that the International Red Cross have said that the majority of civilian casualties have been caused by falling anti-aircraft shells. “I don’t know. I don’t know. But it is war which has done this. And that war was started by Bush,” she says, “Believe me. We have no enmity for foreign people. We never will. We just want to live our lives.” A group of men help to put the corpse in a simple wooden coffin. Najem weeps as he kneels before his daughter. His wife and daughter climb into the back of the blue car. The other men place the coffin on the roof rack, put on the lid and secure it with bindings. Alia asks that I send her a copy of this story and I promise somehow to do so. It seems to give her some consolation. The only sort, apart from the spoken word, which I can offer.

And so they leave. Three people driven by a neighbor with their precious daughter strapped to the roof. Our guide says they will now wash her body, drape it in white and before dusk lay her in the ground. It has been one of the saddest episodes I have ever witnessed in my 26 years reporting for this newspaper.

ANTON ANTONOWICZ IN BAGHDAD, DAILY MIRROR.CO.UK,
PICTURE BY MIKE MOORE

EPILOGUE

Each of the following titles was considered for this book. None was set aside because it did not contain an important truth about Christian Just War Theory (CJWT). They are presented here at the conclusion of this work as saws—summarizing sayings that can be easily accessed. They are meant to be of assistance to the Christian trying to clear the forest of obfuscations that conceals the intellectual charlatanism and spiritual booby-traps that lie behind all Christian Just War Theories. According to one's temperament, he or she may ponder them, laugh at them, cry at them, memorize them, act on them, teach them, discuss them or pray over them. But, be assured, that it was not without due deliberation that these 31 saws, many of which possess sharp two-edged teeth, were granted the status of being the last word on the subject of Christian Just War Theory: The Logic of Deceit.

CJWT: Moral Laxism as Moral Certainty

CJWT: Autoimmune Pathology in the Mystical Body

CJWT: A Theology of Smoke and Mirrors

CJWT: Christianity's Trump Card Against Jesus' Teachings

CJWT: The Well of Loopholes

CJWT: How to Justify Any War

CJWT: Dodging Truth, Ennobling Infidelity

CJWT: *Dominus Flevit* (The Lord Weeps)

CJWT: The Bishops Have No Clothes On

CJWT: Christianity Without Jesus

CJWT: Have Theory, Will Travel

CJWT: The Teaching Jesus Forgot to Give

CJWT: Tongue-in-Cheek Moral Theology

CJWT: Who Needs It? Who Uses It? Who Cares?

CJWT: A Primer for Heavenly Homicide

CJWT: Theology with a Wink

CJWT: Total Commitment to Illusion

CJWT: A Smokescreen for Agnosticism

CJWT: Jesus Reduced to Poster Boy

CJWT: Bamboozling the Flock

CJWT: Wolf Ethics in Sheepskins

CJWT: Keeping the Body of Christ Off the Cross

CJWT: Christic Truth or Anti-Christic Falsehood

CJWT: An Illusion Within an Illusion Wrapped in an Illusion

CJWT: A Sly Theology

CJWT: Gobblygook, Bunkum and Flapdoodle Canonized

CJWT: The Three-Dollar Bill of Christian Moral Theology

CJWT: Moral Chameleonism

CJWT: Obeying Augustine Rather Than His Boss

CJWT: Reality Disdained

CJWT: Martyrdom Abandoned

BIOGRAPHY

(REV.) EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

Rev. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy is a priest of the Eastern Rite (Byzantine-Melkite) of the Catholic Church in communion with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. He was ordained on August 9, 1981, in Damascus, Syria, by Patriarch Maximos V. He has served as Spiritual Director and Rector of St. Gregory the Theologian Byzantine-Melkite Catholic Seminary and is presently a Retreat Director. Formerly a lawyer and a university educator, he is the founder and the original director of The Program for the Study and Practice of Nonviolent Conflict Resolution at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, USA. He is also co-founder, along with Dorothy Day, Gordon Zahn and others of Pax Christi-USA.

For over fifty years he has directed retreats and spoken throughout the world on the issue of the relationship of faith and violence, and the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies. In 1983 he began *The Annual Forty Day Fast for the Truth of Gospel Nonviolence*, (July 1 to August 9), whose purpose is to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus to bestow on the Churches of Christianity whatever extraordinary graces are needed so that they, individually and collectively, will turn from justifying violence and enmity in the name of Jesus and begin to teach about violence and enmity what Jesus taught about violence and enmity. This yearly time of prayer and fasting continues uninterrupted to this very year with people from across the planet having participated in it over the decades. In 1990 he initiated the *July 16 Twenty-Four Hours Day of Prayer for Forgiveness and Protection with Our Lady of Mount Carmel* at Trinity Site in the New Mexico desert. July 16 is the feast day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, as well as, the day in 1945 when the first atomic bomb was detonated at Trinity Site. This yearly time of prayer also continues uninterrupted to this very year.

He was the keynote speaker at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, for the 25th anniversary memorial of the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. at that spot. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and is author of several books, including ALL THINGS

FLEE THEE FOR THOU FLEEST ME: A CRY TO THE CHURCHES AND THEIR LEADERS TO RETURN TO THE NONVIOLENT JESUS AND HIS NONVIOLENT WAY, CHRISTIAN JUST WAR THEORY: THE LOGIC OF DECEIT, AUGUST 9 AND THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS OF NONVIOLENT LOVE. He has written innumerable popular articles and theological essays on the subject of violence, religion and the Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies that the Jesus of the Gospels teaches by His words and by His deeds. His CD/DVD series, BEHOLD THE LAMB, is almost universally considered to be the most spiritually profound presentation on **Gospel Nonviolence** available in those formats.

Much of his thought in written or audio formats is available *gratis* at the website CENTERFORCHRISTIANNONVIOLENCE.ORG, or at the website EMMANUELCHARLESMCCARTHY.ORG (video material available).

**A CHRISTIAN PARENT'S PLEDGE
TO ALL MOTHERS AND FATHERS**

I will not raise my precious child to kill your precious child.

*And if it is within my power, I will
not hand over my beloved child to others
to kill your beloved child, or
to learn how to kill the one you cherish.*

