

Berrigan, S.J. and Drinan, S.J.:
The Grand Betrayal in Microcosm

The ethics of the state are the ethics of survival. The state lives in a moral jungle. Retaliation justifies anything. The supreme good of the state is that it continues to exist; and no other good can be maintained if that good threatens survival. The New Testament sees no redemption of the state. It must disappear with Sin and Death, which make it possible for the state to exist. One man who is assured of no lasting achievement is the statesman.

THE POWER AND THE WISDOM: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Robert Schroth, S.J. authored a biography on Robert Drinan, S.J., the priest who ran for and was elected to Congress for several terms (1971–1981). Schroth spoke with Joshua McElwee of the *National Catholic Reporter* about the moment Dan Berrigan, S.J. met fellow Jesuit priest Robert Drinan for the first time in 1972. Berrigan proceeded to immediately question Drinan about his run for a U.S. Congressional seat. Berrigan told Drinan that while he appreciated his opposition to the Vietnam War, “*by running for office you involve yourself in the power structure in a way that inevitably is going to compromise you*” (NCR, 12/8/10). And compromised him it did—big time.

At a talk in Boston in the 1970s, Berrigan was asked why he did not do what fellow Jesuit, Robert Drinan, did, and piggyback on his national name recognition and popularity by making a run for the U.S. Senate in New York, instead of engaging in these trite and useless acts of civil disobedience? Berrigan began his answer by saying something like, *God help me if I were to ever think that the changes that are needed could take place by my becoming a Senator!* The follow-up question was inevitable: “Well, what about Fr. Drinan? Do you believe a priest has any place in electoral politics?” Berrigan responded this way: “*I would not want to limit my answer to this question to priests. I would like to talk about Christians having any place in electoral politics. Any Christian who thinks he or she can morally engage in electoral politics in this society, either does not know what electoral politics is, or does not know what Christianity is!*” In an interview with the editors of *Commonweal Magazine* on the types of ministry available to a priest, Berrigan remarked: “*A pure political solution in electoral politics is a dead end. It suffocates the independence of the Gospel. The political priest is the one I would have the least patience with.*”

Merely a Tactical Disagreement?

Are the differences between Berrigan, S.J. and Drinan, S.J. merely a disagreement over the tactics to be used to bring about authentic change for the good in the lives of individuals and in society? Or do the different choices of Berrigan and Drinan represent antithetical options, i.e., choices that are totally incompatible with one another?

Perhaps the words of another Jesuit from 1966, a world-renowned Biblical scholar in his day, the late John L. McKenzie, S.J., might help clarify matters. About the temptations of Jesus in the desert, he writes this:

Matthew and Luke have the story of the three temptations. The order of the three temptations differs in the two Gospels. The offer of power over the kingdoms of the world is placed third by Matthew and second by Luke. Jesus rejects the offer with a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:13 in which it is commanded that worship be given to Yahweh alone. Certainly the story means that secular power is not to be acquired at the price of the worship of Satan. But do we grasp the full import of the story if we think that the only thing wrong with the offer of secular power is that it comes from Satan? In the New Testament, "the world" in the pejorative sense is under the power and the authority of Satan; the reign of God, which Jesus announces, is opposed to this power and the struggle between the two reigns is constant and deadly. St. Ignatius Loyola made this the theme of the meditation on the Two Standards in the SPIRITUAL EXERCISES. Like most Christian interpreters from early times, St. Ignatius, did not question the implicit assertion in the temptation narrative that secular power is Satan's to give. The offer is not rejected by Jesus because Satan is unable to deliver what he promises. It is rejected because secular power is altogether inept for the mission of Jesus, indeed because the use of secular power is hostile to the mission of Jesus.

Drinan, Albright, Rice

Therein lies the root of the Drinan, S.J./Berrigan, S.J. confrontation and the institutional Church's grand betrayal of Jesus in all its irreconcilable starkness: "...*the use of secular power is hostile to the mission of Jesus.*" Therein also lies the inability of the Constantinian Church to effectively and fully proclaim what Jesus proclaims in the Gospels. The Jesuit Order is of course a major, worldwide, hundred billion dollar Constantinian fiefdom within a worldwide Constantinian Church of wealth untold. Its underlying *modus operandi* and default position are in the model of secular power, i.e. justified violence, as is the case with all the Constantinian Churches in general. U.S. Congressman Robert Drinan, S.J., like Madeleine Albright, pulling down a high six-figure salary from Georgetown University, S. J., and like Condoleezza Rice receiving a honorary degree from Boston College, S.J., is but a logical extension of a Christianity and an of an Order delivered over to secular power and its source—that is, delivered over to what is both utterly *inept for carrying out the mission of Jesus* and actively *hostile to the mission of Jesus* as recorded in the Gospels.

Daniel Berrigan, S.J., like all Jesuits, although physically living from the accumulated fruits of Jesuit secular power for almost seventy years, nevertheless refused to become jesuitical and justify the secular power operations of the Jesuit Order. To the contrary, he was challenging and outspoken in his critique and denunciation of the anti-Gospel reality and the anti-Gospel consequences of violent secular power and its justification in the Jesuits and in the Church. With his remarkable literary skills, he did not hesitate to reveal its corrupting effects on those who latched onto it and onto the institutional Churches that lived by it.

Let me reiterate: The differences embodied in the life choices of Drinan, S.J., and Berrigan, S.J., in relation to the matter of secular power being employed by Christians as a means of following Jesus are radically incompatible at their core: if one is the will of God as revealed by Jesus, then the other is not. It's that unambiguous.

Essential Discordance

It is important to note that the essential discordance between what Drinan enfolded and what Berrigan embodied was known both in the Jesuit Order and in the larger Church. In 1970, Donald Gelpi, S.J., S.T.L., Ph.D., of the faculty of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley wrote a book titled *DISCERNING THE SPIRIT*. In it, he also discusses the temptations of Jesus in the desert:

The temptation in which Jesus is offered “all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, if you will worship me” is the most direct of all. It is the temptation to abdicate utterly the way of service and to choose in its place the way of temporal power and dominion. Jesus’ reply is direct and unequivocal, “Be off, Satan! For Scripture says, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve Him alone.’”

Thus, of the three temptations, this is the most crucial for a Christian understanding of service. In it Jesus is presented with two clear options: either to continue on the way of service He has begun, with a clear understanding of the risk and suffering involved therein, or to seek the way of political and temporal power. The two ways are incompatible: to choose one is to abdicate the other; and Jesus’ resolution of the problem is pointedly clear and unambiguous. He must abdicate the way of temporal power. For to do otherwise would be nothing else than to place Himself under the dominion of those very forces of evil and chaos which he had come out to the desert to conquer.

What Jesus saw clearly in this final temptation, then, is that the renunciation of coercive power over people is inseparable from the sense of purpose that motivated His mission as Son and Messiah. That is to say, as the wisdom of God incarnate, He was aware that were He to yield to this final temptation and choose the path of power as a means of accomplishing His Messianic mission, He would be effectively abdicating His very Sonship and abandoning the salvific mission he had received from His Father.

An Effete Illusion

Bob Drinan, S.J. and Dan Berrigan, S.J. both of whom I knew personally, were living by and proclaiming contradictory understandings of the same text. This would be of limited import if the texts being interpreted, i.e., the teaching of Jesus by word and deed in the Gospels, were merely human philosophical speculation. But, they are not. They are the definitive revelation of God’s Truth, of God’s Will and of God’s Way of eternal communion with Him. Since Berrigan’s, and Drinan’s interpretations are contradictory, both cannot be true. Nor can both be chosen in the same moral moment. To choose one is to renounce the other. *The two ways are incompatible.* Either Drinan, S.J. or Berrigan, S.J. is living and preaching an effete illusion.

But how can this possibly be the case? Both spoke out on behalf of the poor, against the Vietnam War and for peace. Both believed in Jesus, both were Baptized, both were Jesuits, both were lionized by the same liberal-to-left Christian and non-Christian people and publications. True enough; however, the means by which a person or group plans to accomplish an end are every bit as important as the end itself. As Aquinas points out, “Means that cannot achieve their ends are illusions.” And as Gandhi points out, “The means are the ends in embryo, as one chooses his means he gets his ends. That is the iron laws of the moral universe.” Or, as Saint Paul states it, “*Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. A person reaps what he or she sows*” (GAL 6:7).

A person may sow corn or violence and if he or she does they will reap corn or violence. They may PR and brainwash the public into believing and calling corn ‘wheat’ and violence ‘peace,’ but the product and fruits of sowing corn will be corn, of sowing violence—whether it be labeled legal or illegal, legitimate or illegitimate, romantic or sordid—will be violence. The Eternal Kingdom (Reign) of God, which “*does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb*” (Rv 21:23), can only enter or be entered into by the means of the Kingdom of God, which are the means of the Lamb of God, not the Imperial Lion

AMDG?

The means chosen by Drinan, S.J., i.e., legalized violence, and the means chosen by Berrigan, S.J., Gospel nonviolence, are contradictory of each other and therefore both cannot be “*ad maiorem Dei gloriam inque hominum salute*”—“for the greater glory of God and the salvation of humanity”—which is not only the motto composed by Saint Ignatius Loyola, S.J., but also the ultimate purpose and end for everything that the Jesuit Order is to be about. It is the *raison d'être* for its existence. Of course, if a Jesuit or a Christian can work for the “greater glory of God and the salvation of humanity” by doing the direct opposite of what Jesus, the Incarnate Word (*Logos*) of God (Jn 1:1ff) and the “glory of God the Father” (PHIL 2:11; HEB 1:3; 2 COR 4:4), reveals by word and deed is the Way to glorify God by our lives and the to Way Eternal Life, then there is no problem with employing means contradictory to His as the Way to work for “*ad maiorem Dei gloriam inque hominum salute*.” But there is nothing in the person or teaching of Jesus in the Gospels that even hints that such an option is open to His chosen disciples as a Way to glorify God or to participate in the salvation of humanity. Indeed, it is the opposite that is communicated. He is *the* Way not *a* Way to peace among human beings and to eternal communion with God.

Remember: Both Drinan and Berrigan belonged to the Society of Jesus. Can any society, a religious order or otherwise, be truthfully called a “society of Jesus” if it is not following, in word and deed, the revelation/teaching of Jesus via His words and deeds about God and God’s Will and God’s Way as unveiled in the Gospels? Of course, canonically or in the public press a group can be designated “society of Jesus”, but that is just an institutional Church or secular media designation. The incarnational *sine qua non* of any society that desires to be an authentic society of Jesus is its unconditional commitment and effort to live Jesus’ “*new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.”* This commandment, the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH declares, “contains the entire Law of the Gospel” (§1970) and “summarizes all the other commandments and expresses His entire will” (§2822). This means that if a Christian or a society of Christians wishes to burn witches in good conscience, all he, she or they have to do is show that Jesus would have burned witches, that is, that burning witches is “loving as I have loved you.” I would add, parenthetically, that he, she or they must provide evidence for the validity of this perception of Jesus and this interpretation of His “new commandment” rising to the degree of moral certainty demanded before any Christian can burn witches or intentionally destroy a human being under any conditions for any reason.

Following Jesus by Not Following Him

Now if as Donald Gelpi, S.J. states, “[Jesus] *must abdicate the way of temporal power. For to do otherwise would be nothing else than to place Himself under the dominion of those very forces of*

evil and chaos, which he had come out to the desert to conquer,” then must not those who desire to be His disciples and follow Him, who wish to build a society that is the extension of Him, His Way, and His salvific mission in time and space, that wishes to glorify God, have to refuse “to place [themselves] under the dominion of those very forces of evil and chaos, which Jesus had come out to the desert to conquer,” namely, “the path of temporal power as a means?” Must not those who desire to be His disciples and follow Him, who aspire to build a society, e.g., a religious order or an institutional Church, that is the extension of Him, His Way, and His salvific mission in time and space, have to, in the words of the late John L. McKenzie, S.J., “reject secular power not only because it is altogether inept for the mission of Jesus, but also because the use of secular power is hostile to the mission of Jesus?”

The world, again in the pejorative sense, runs on dominative power, secular power, the power of coercive violence. Nations and states, by definition and by structure, are totally perishable human organizations suffused in violence. Leo Tolstoy cuts through the murky mythological deceit in which all states brainwash those born within their jurisdiction, and straightforwardly and incontrovertibly describes the default *modus operandi* of every state:

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

Is this true or false for the United States, England, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, Japan, Sweden, China, Vietnam, Italy, Argentina, Israel, Poland, Russia, Spain, India, Romania, Greece, etc., today? Yesterday? When Drinan, S.J. ran for Congress? Was he not in Congress to exercise that type of power by wrangling to get that type of power as the enforcement mechanism for his ideas?

Is the type of power Tolstoy describes the type of power that Jesus sought or employed in the Gospels? If not, what is a Jesuit, a Catholic priest or any Christian, doing seeking to get his or her “mitts” on the levers that control that type of violent power in order to force people to conform to his or her ideas?

“Get Behind Me, Satan!”

Placing Oneself Under Satan’s Power by Using Satan’s Power.

The difference between Drinan, S.J. and Berrigan, S.J. is not a superficial disagreement over tactics and strategies on how to do the Lord’s work. It is as fundamental as this: One is doing the Lord’s work and the other is doing what is “*hostile to the mission of Jesus.*” One is doing the work given to him by God Incarnate; the other is “*placing himself under the dominion of those very forces of evil and chaos, which Jesus had come out to the desert to conquer.*” One is going “*the way of political and temporal power.*” The other, like Jesus, is “*abdicating the way of temporal power.*” For one it is the Way of conversion to the truth of the Gospel by witnessing to it, even if it means being crucified by the political and religious powerhouses of the day. For the other, it is the way of coercing, via state violence and by the threat of state violence, human beings to conform to ideas they do not see as true. Both claim they are following Jesus! Beyond

that, both have large numbers of mutual Christian admirers, i.e., Constantinian Justice and Peace liberals and radicals, who do not see that the way one of these men is following and proclaiming as Gospel truth is essentially a negation of the way the other is following and proclaiming as Gospel truth.

Most of the men of the Society of Jesus I have encountered seem to evince an obliviousness or bland indifference to the ominous and far-reaching seriousness of communicating to people by word and witness that diametrically opposing ways are both in conformity with the will of God as revealed in the Gospels by Jesus for His disciples. The spiritual and moral absurdity of giving active, public, intellectual support to the notion that both “X” and “not X” can be the truth taught by Jesus, the Word (*Logos*) of God “made flesh” in the Gospels, seems to phase Jesuits no more than it phases Bishops. If “X” is true then “not X” is false. Drinan, S.J. and Berrigan, S.J. cannot *both* be authentically living and witnessing to the truth of the Gospel as presented by Jesus in the Gospels.

It may be a witness to Christian love that the Order took care of Dan Berrigan and Bob Drinan equally well until their deaths. But it is not a witness to the truth of Jesus in the Gospels that the Society of Jesus espouses and promotes as the truth of Jesus for the Baptized disciples of Jesus, both Drinan’s use of violent coercive power over people backed by the military and police operations of the state and Berrigan’s rejection of Christians employing violent coercive power over people. Chronic Jesuitical flip-flopping and hopping by a Christian between “X” as the truth of Jesus and “not X” as the truth of Jesus is anti-evangelical and false witness. If “X” is the Way of Jesus, then the Society of Jesus, as well as the institutional Church, should follow it. If “not X” is the Way of Jesus, then the Society of Jesus and the institutional Church should follow it. But, frenetically and inveterately hopping between “X” and “not X,” between “*Yeah, Bob!*” and “*Yeah, Dan!*” as the truth of Jesus in the Gospels cannot be a valid, tenable or believable witness to the Person and message of Jesus in the Gospels.

Self-blinding

What is so difficult about seeing the intrinsic, unbridgeable spiritual and theological abyss between the power essential to the state and the power essential to the Gospel, between the power of the Caesars and the power of the Christ? Between Drinan, S.J. and Berrigan, S.J.? Is Tolstoy wrong? Perhaps men as highly educated as the Jesuits need to hear what Tolstoy said, embellished with a little bit of ivy. Carl J. Friedrich, Eaton Professor of Government at Harvard University, states, with a clarity equal to that of Tolstoy, on the final page of his 400-page book, *THE PATHOLOGY OF POWER*: “*Our analysis has, I hope, shown that politics needs all these dubious practices; it cannot be managed without violence, deceit, betrayal, corruption, and propaganda.*” Why can’t your run-of-the-mill S.J., possessing an education that only the Rockefellers could afford, not see this cauldron of evil without which governmental politics cannot exist? Why can’t the S.J. Order see it? Why can’t bishops and cardinals and popes see it? Why can’t they see that participation in such organized, institutionalized, and systematized evil is antithetical to anything Jesus even did or could do, and therefore must be antithetical to His chosen disciples lives, if their desire is to faithfully follow Him? Why?

It is a truism, applicable about eighty percent of the time, that romantic love can make one blind, that is, it can make invisible what the whole world sees clearly about the object of one’s amorous affection. What is also a truism, applicable almost one hundred percent of the time, is that great

wealth can make a person or persons blind. Both romantic love and great wealth make a person or persons blind, not by plucking out his or her or their eyes, but rather by motivating a person to not see what can easily be seen, because, if seen, it would expose unwanted truth. Jesus' parable of the Rich Man (DIVES) and Lazarus makes precisely this point. The Society of Jesus, in contradistinction to Jesus, possesses not simply wealth, but immense wealth. Could such a situation-in-life produce a blind spot in one's vision of the Jesus of the Gospels and His teaching, and/or could it artificially color and distort one's interpretation of what McKenzie, S.J. denominates as Jesus' "*unambiguous teaching*"—the rejection of violence?

Kudos and Monuments For the Dead Prophet, Not *Metanoia*

The most pronounced example of the blinding capabilities of wealth and secular power in history is probably the institutional Church and what it became after the pagan Emperor Constantine began bestowing his largesse upon it, thereby grounding the Church of Jesus Christ in the things of Caesar. It first of all became an organization that had to defend the things of Caesar in the only manner in which they could be defended, namely as Caesar did, with the brutality and homicidal violence of secular power of every imaginable category. As William Langland wrote long ago (c. AD 1377) in one of the magnificent pieces of English Christian literature, THE VISION OF PIERS PLOWMAN,

*When the kindness of Constantine gave Holy Church endowments
In lands and leases, lordships and servants,
The Romans heard an angel cry on high above them
'This day dos ecclesiae has drunk venom
And all who have Peter's power are poisoned forever.*

One of the methods by which the Jesuits and the institutional Church get away with supporting contradictory interpretations of Jesus' teaching as both being valid is to employ spin and to label Berrigan, S.J., and Christians like him, a "prophet." The designation is accurate Biblically, since prophecy discloses the nature and character of God and the implications of the divine nature and character for human thought and action. It is insight into the moral will of God and the reality of sin. Prophecy places the integrity of the one God above any national or patriotic consideration. But, publicly it places him in some hazy Biblical/secular Christian/humanistic compartment. It suggests that he is something other than an ordinary Christian Baptized as a prophet who, by the very design of his or her being, must live under a prior moral obligation to seek the truth and adhere to it if found. The word "prophet" as the designation for Berrigan, S.J., as is the case with the word "saint" as a designation for Dorothy Day, should be laid to rest, because it so easily can be employed as an excuse to evade personal moral responsibility and Gospel truth.

Berrigan, S.J. is a human being and Baptized Christian who, first and foremost, is a truth-teller, and the truth he tells is the truth of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies as being the revelation and the manifestation of "the nature and character of God and the implications of the divine nature and character for human thought and action." If this is so, then Drinan, S.J. is a truth-twister, and the twist he gives to the truth of the Gospels turns it upside-down, making the cross into a sword. Such is the case with the overwhelming majority of Jesuits and Bishops, Religious Order and Diocesan priests I have met. They are Drinanesque dyed-in-the-lamb's wool truth-twisters on the issue of "*abdicating temporal power*" as Jesus did. They refuse to see or cannot see that "*to seek the way of political and temporal power would be nothing else than to place [themselves] under the dominion of*

those very forces of evil and chaos, which he had come out to the desert to conquer.” And, they find meaning in blinding others with their own blindness. Berrigan, S.J., however, is an eye opener to the moral will of God as revealed by Jesus and to evil passing-off itself as normalized good.

Is Jesus Credible and Trustworthy as the Communicator of the Truth of God?

Yet it is as impossible to fully explain the mystery of a person or group deciding not to see the glaringly obvious as it is impossible to fully explain the mystery of iniquity. Hopping between the contradictory ideas of truth espoused by two Masters, serving one, then the other—regardless how well it is choreographed for purposes of personal peace of conscience and public consumption—is nevertheless evil. It may not be sin, if the hopping is done in non-culpable ignorance of the truth. But choosing to commit to an untruth, whether knowingly or unknowingly, always places the existence of a human being in the presence of unbeknownst jeopardy.

Berrigan, S.J. was a truth-teller. Drinan, S.J. was a truth-twister. What makes the stakes so high in their truth-telling and truth-twisting is that they are high profile public Catholic, Christian, Jesuit media-attractors announcing opposing and contradictory Ways for the human being and for humanity, as the Way of Jesus, as the Way to follow Jesus, as the Way to do God’s will as revealed by the Word (*Logos*) of God Incarnate, as the Way to overcome evil, sin, and death, and to enter into the Mystery of the Resurrection and Eternal Communion with God. These are the most dangerous issues in human existence to toy with and to misdirect people about—Christian or non-Christian. A person, an Order or a Church that teaches and promotes both “X” and “not-X,” violence and nonviolence as the truth of God as revealed by Jesus in the Gospels is a person or Order or Church that is *de facto* undermining the credibility of and trust in Jesus, His person, His spiritual and moral Divine authority and His teaching. That’s fact, not opinion!

As another Jesuit has written: “*Anyone who really believes in God must set God, and the truth of God, above all other considerations.*”
(JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY, S.J.)

—EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY