

## The Spiritual Warfare of Jesus Christ

Jesus and his followers were a handful of people surrounded by the overwhelming power of an evil empire. But that empire went down into the dust while the Christians built a new society in the ruins. How did they do it? If you study what Jesus did as well as what he said, if you study what Jesus did and did not do--what he refused to do--if you try to answer the question as to what **method** Jesus used, you would have to say that he used **NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION**. And his followers, those who began to call themselves *Christians*, did the same.

He refused to use **military power** and he refused to accept **political power**. He refused to be the messiah king they wanted. He didn't try to get himself appointed high priest. He never sought access to the king or the governor. He didn't get invited to the White House. That is, he didn't get himself invited to the imperial palace or try to persuade the emperor to sponsor his new school of ethics in Jerusalem.

He did not establish His kingdom by war (John 18.33-36) but by spiritual warfare. (John 12.31, 14.30, 16.11) He refused to lead an armed rebellion to establish the independent kingdom of Israel that everyone wanted. He refused to let the sword be used on his behalf. Before, during and after his time, there were many patriotic Jewish rebels who roused up the people to overthrow the godless Romans, but Jesus refused to encourage an armed rebellion.

He did not rely upon money. Imagine sending out a bunch of organizers without any money--actually insisting that they take no money with them! NO MONEY?! The TV preachers can't even imagine that! He did not teach his followers to pursue political power. He taught the opposite and set the example of doing the opposite. He sought nothing through conventional politics and everything through unconventional politics--the new politics of the Kingdom of God. He did not work through the system. Instead he established His own system: turning his Holy Spirit loose to take over our lives and transform them.

### DO IT YOURSELF

He did directly attack the evil he saw. He did rely upon courageous **DIRECT ACTION** and upon **PERSONAL WITNESS**. He did trust entirely in the power of God to see him through. And he did this as a man living among us and setting an example to other men--to those of us who claim to be his followers by calling ourselves *Christians*.

Jesus shows us how to do it yourself. He wants us to fight the battle as he fought it: **a. in person**, with **b. the weapons of the spirit**, and on behalf of **c. the kingdom of God**. What secular Christians substitute for this is a battle fought **a. vicariously**, with **b. the weapons of the flesh**, and on behalf of **c. the nation**. He asks us to do something not *SUPPORT* something. We cannot buy our way out of that obligation with a small donation or even a large one. We must do it ourselves the way he showed us. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* (John 20.21)

With the advent of Jesus Christ, God has an entirely new way of working in the world. God become man is the central fact of the Christian faith. The empowerment of the individual by the indwelling Holy Spirit (John 20.22, Acts 1.8, 4.31, 6.3, 10.44 etc. ) is what defines a Christian--it determines whether or not you are one. If you don't grasp that and what it means, then Christianity has no real meaning for you--and that describes the secular so-called *Christians*. They worship a God of Power who does everything for us and asks nothing from us except to pray in the safety of the church. They have no notion of themselves ever wielding the power of the Holy Spirit. Instead they pray to God to use his Power to take care of it. God and the Government will take care of it. My role is to tell them what to do.

#### NO EXTRA TAXES

Secular Christians fight the same way the world fights--vicariously. They hire mercenaries or they draft the sons of the poor to fight for them. What they mean by *supporting the troops* is let someone else do the fighting while they wave flags and make patriotic speeches. They don't mean that they intend to pay extra taxes. They pay \$ 2 for a *SUPPORT THE TROOPS* bumper sticker. They look to the government to establish Christian morality. They have a childish dependency upon The President, and worship the power of the nation. They idolize AMERICA !

They are too weak and fearful to wield the weapons of the Spirit. Instead they trust to the power of money. They believe in the power of governments and political parties. They thank God for the invention of the latest infernal devices which can more efficiently maim and kill their enemies. They worship a god who inspires the invention of murder weapons and who encourages their use. Whatever we may call him, his real name is Satan. When the Prince of Peace was urged to drop bombs, Old Testament-style, *even as Elias did*, he didn't say: wait until I invent a smart bomb, he said: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* (Luke 9.54-56) There are two different spirits and the difference between them is as night and day to those who have the eyes to see it. But *the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.* (2 Corinthians 4.4) There are two different *weapons systems*. The one you choose shows which prince you serve and, foreordains what result you will achieve. Truth and love guarantee one result. Lies and violence guarantee the other.

With some help from their friend, they willfully deceive themselves and swallow the false propaganda which portrays the wars of the nation as the epic struggle between good and evil. But the "good" is the goods of this world--the wealth and power of **the nation**--and it is the "good" of the prince who is the ruler of this world. The kingdom of heaven is not established by armed men nor can it be defended by them. (John 18.36) It is the kingdoms of this world, which belong to the prince of this world, (Luke 4.5) that owe their existence to the army. If, as Saint Paul tells us, the kingdom of God means peace and doing right by everyone (Romans 14.17), how can we possibly interpret that to mean that the kingdom of God demands the universal wrong and bloodshed of war?

## ACTION AND PASSION

In the life and death of Jesus Christ we see both action and passion. They are two aspects of the same mission. No one is so bold, so aggressive as Jesus Christ. He challenges the ancient order of the world and overthrows it. And yet, in another way, no one is so submissive to suffering, as unresisting as a lamb led to slaughter.

He is both a warrior king and a paschal lamb. There is a strange and eternal irony, more than they ever intended, in this spectacle of the *King of the Jews* nailed to a cross like the lowest of criminals. He is indeed a king. In fact he is the king of kings. Even while, in his death, he has become lower than the most common of commoners.

The passion and death of Jesus depend upon his faith. Most of his followers see only that he has been arrested, humiliated and executed. He sees something entirely different. Without faith, we too can only believe in visible victories and worldly success. But the real battle is a spiritual battle that is invisible except to the eyes of faith.

By his action and by his passion Jesus triumphs over the powers of darkness that rule this world. By the power of the cross, he overcomes the power of the sword. He wins and he shows us how to win. He is the first *martyr* and the first *witness*--it is the same word--because only by blood was the truth made manifest. It is BY THE CROSS that we BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH.

## NONVIOLENCE: LOVE AND COURAGE

He triumphs by the power of love. Because of that love he refuses to kill. (Luke 9.54-56) Because of that love he is willing to die. (John 15.13) The willingness to die for something, not the willingness to kill for it decides who wins. The one who loves the most wins the final victory, not the one who hates the most. Love is the stronger passion.

Jesus shows us how to fight and win a spiritual war. It is the strangest lesson that the world has ever received--has ever refused to receive: you achieve victory by suffering defeat. You overcome the Evil One by letting evil men overcome you. You reject all the forms of worldly power: money, political position, military power; and thereby arrive at the spiritual power which destroys evil. Jesus takes the miracle of Gideon's army the next logical step--I will win, without any soldiers at all, by the power of God alone.

Spiritual warfare demands the **courage** that goes with **love**. It is the belief in the power of Love, the belief in the power of the God who Is Love, that gives you the courage to face the enemy without fear and without hatred. It is easier said than done. How much can we take before **fear** gets hold of us? And the other side of fear is **hatred**--they are two sides of one coin, as love and courage are two sides of the other coin.

If you feel weak in relation to your enemy, you feel fear. When you feel powerful, when you out-number them, when you are well-armed with guns or money or lawyers, then the coin flips, and the fear becomes hatred, a desire to destroy those who have made us so afraid. But Love casts out fear. So spiritual courage is one sure sign that Jesus is in my heart. (And moral cowardice, that he isn't.)

When Peter lost faith in Jesus he 1) grabbed a sword 2) ran away 3) denied Jesus. Fear made him lose confidence in Jesus and instead trust to the weapon of violence. When he recovered his faith and his courage at Pentecost, he went out fearlessly to bear witness, disarmed of the metal sword by Jesus, and now armed only with *THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT*. (Ephesians 6.17) What erodes the Spirit is the loss of faith. Jesus warns the disciples that when they lose faith in Him, they will have to put their trust **in the purse** and **in the sword** like other men do. (Luke 22:31-38) And so it happened. And that describes "Christians" who have no real faith in Jesus.

#### PRECISE AIM: DESTROYING THE EVIL ONE

The nonviolence that Jesus shows us doesn't mean trying to like nasty people, or letting them bully you. It means that we sight in our hatred accurately. We hate the sin, not the sinner.

Jesus targets the Evil One precisely, and won't hurt the ear of his human enemy. In a literal way, the high priest's servant, who grabs Jesus, is an evil one who is responsible for the death of Jesus. But for Jesus he is only one of the men who are doing the work of the Evil One that night. His real enemy isn't the men, it is the evil spirit which has power over them and over his own men. (Luke 22:31)

Satan's weapon is the hatred he infuses into the men who crucify Jesus, and the fear he infuses into the disciples. If that **spirit of fear and hatred** had entered into Jesus also, the devil would have triumphed, but Jesus remained steadfast to the end, in the **Spirit of Love and Courage**. When his disciples found their courage again at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit entered into them and drove out the devil of fear. That was the real enemy, not the sometimes hostile men whom they now had to face. The enemy isn't the evil people nor the evil system. The enemy is an evil spirit that shows up on both sides of the fence. Because the enemy is a spirit, we must use spiritual weapons. You cannot kill a spirit with carnal weapons. When we pick up the weapons of the enemy, a predictable thing happens: more and more, the spirit in us mirrors the spirit of our enemies.

We win, not by what we can do, nor by what God does while we watch from a safe distance, admiring his power. God must do it, but he does it through us. That is why prayer is a fraud when we ask God to do it without us, instead of offering ourselves as his soldiers. Or we want him to work through us in a way that we can appreciate by giving us political power, money and weapons so that we can use God's power to win a worldly victory. Is that how Jesus used the power of God that was given to him? You know he didn't, or you don't know Jesus.

Nonviolent direct action is war without weapons. Rather, it is a spiritual warfare that relies upon spiritual weapons. It is a serious and sustained effort to destroy the strongholds of the evil one, and it follows the example of Jesus Christ and it relies upon the power of his Spirit. Saint Paul emphasizes that we must fight a spiritual battle using spiritual weapons: (2 Corinthians 10.3-4) *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.*

#### WEAPONS NOT CARNAL

In Ephesians he describes the arms and the armor of the Christian Warrior and defines the enemy: (Ephesians 6.10-18) *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, which is THE WORD OF GOD.*

Winning by the power of God alone is foreshadowed by many episodes in the history of God's chosen people. In the great deliverance and salvation of the Hebrew nation, when Moses leads them out of Egypt, God fights the battle for them.

Gideon starts out with an army of 32,000 men against an army of Midianites that number 120,000. Long odds already but The Lord means to make them longer. (The story is told in Judges 7.1-25, 8.10 etc). He tells Gideon to send the faint-hearted home and 22,000 turn back. So now Gideon has only 10,000 men, but his army is still too many for God to show his power. So Gideon is instructed to take only those who drink a certain way when they come to the water. This final cut leaves Gideon with 300 men against the entire army of the Midianites !

By the Lord's instructions Gideon's 300 men come down in the night on the camp of the Midianites. They shout: **THE SWORD OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON!** But, strangely, a sword is the one weapon they don't use ! What they have instead is, each man: 1) a pitcher 2) a lamp 3) a trumpet. They break the pitcher to make a noise and then advance upon the Midianites with a lamp in the left hand and a trumpet in the right. The lamp symbolizes the light of God's word and the trumpet announces the presence of God. (Exodus 19.9; Revelations 1.10) And so they win the victory by the power of God. We also must trust to the power of God, and not to *the power of the people* that is, to the power of numbers. The silly assumption that Christian morality can be established by majority opinion is the modern version of this false faith in The People.

Gideon's victory foreshadows the spiritual warfare that Jesus Christ shows us, when one man, with the Spirit of Truth, will take on the armies of the world and win. One man with **THE SWORD OF THE LORD** will be more than a match for the most powerful empire the world has ever seen. The sword of Jesus Christ is described in Ephesians 6.17: *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* And again in Hebrews 4.12: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.* And again in Revelation 19.13: *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses clothed in fine linen white and clean 15 And OUT OF HIS MOUTH GOETH A SHARP SWORD, that with it he should smite the nations.*

In the prophecy of Isaiah, the weapon of Jesus Christ is described not as a sword but as a rod: *2 And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. . . . 4 and he shall smite the earth with THE ROD OF HIS MOUTH, and with THE BREATH OF HIS LIPS shall he slay the wicked.* (Isaiah 11.2-4) It is the word of Jesus, his very BREATH that will *SLAY THE WICKED*. His breath is the true word and it is also the Spirit of Truth and Love that he breathed into his followers: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* (John 20.22) If we have that Spirit within us, we also can wield **THE SWORD OF THE LORD**, we also can *SLAY THE WICKED*.

#### THE SWORD OF THE LORD

In the long history of warfare, many kinds of swords were invented, stabbing swords and hacking swords, one-handed swords and two-handed swords. But it is only in this book that we find a sword designed to be held in the mouth. A little awkward, what? How does the commander give orders while he has a mouth full of sword handle? Well, of course, it is a spiritual sword, not a metal sword.

Jesus Christ is the world's greatest warrior. He has the quickest draw and the most fantastic marksmanship. There is a kind of complete identity between Jesus and his weapon. The Word of God wields the word of God. His weapon is the truth and Jesus is the Truth and dwells within us as the Spirit of Truth.

That is why Jesus in explaining his kingship to Pilate, tells him: *thou sayest that I am a king To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.* (John 18.37). What connection is there between a "witness to truth" and a "king"? It is only the kingdom of God that is established by the sword of truth. And there is no other way to establish it.

#### THE SWORD OF TRUTH

The sword that Jesus Christ wields is described in Revelations 2.16 as *the sword of my mouth* (cf rev 1.16, 2.12, 19.15, 19.21., Isaiah 11.4) And what it is, is the power of the truth, the Spirit of Truth. (John 14.17) And He makes it clear that we are to imitate Him, and follow Him--not just admire Him from a safe distance. We are to take up that Sword of Truth that He has given us.

That sword of truth that Jesus relied upon wasn't a matter of sermons only. It was the witness of his life and death that manifested the truth of his words. They never understood Him or believed Him until he laid down his life to seal the truth of what he had said.

The power of truth requires something more than being factually correct. If the Truth really does possess your mind, then it creates the sincere passion of the spirit that drives your feet to walk forward into the battle. Throwing words at people or hitting them over the head with the facts is useless without that Spirit of Truth which is also the Spirit of Love and Courage.

People in the pro life movement keep asking *why don't they believe us ?* when we say that abortion is murder. But the answer is simple: you don't believe it yourself ! You are saying the words but where is the evidence that you believe your own words ? You can convince people of something that is false just because you really believe it yourself. A salesman can unload all sorts of merchandise if he can put on the sincere conviction of an actor. The converse is that you won't convince people of what is true if you don't seem to believe it yourself, if your actions--your lack of actions--believe your words.

But when you do believe it, when you put your life on the line to manifest the faith you have in your heart, then it generates that Power of Truth and Love that is an irresistible force. It is the spirit of abortion, not the abortionist, that we need to kill. It is the sword of Jesus Christ that will enable us to do it.

#### THE WAY OF THE CROSS

There are great mysteries in purely human warfare. But the warfare of Jesus Christ is a much greater mystery. That is why it is so hard for us to comprehend it. In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy describes Prince Andre's brigade at Borodino. All day they are held in reserve in a place where shells and grenades are constantly falling, and they suffer many casualties. All day long they stand there quietly and die without once getting the chance to attack the enemy. And when the battle is over, the Russians leave the field. But it is all the same the great defeat of Napoleon. Even though he has once again prevailed in a physical way, he is defeated in a moral way by the stronger will of the Russians.

The idea that suffering is not necessarily a punishment for sin, that it comes upon good men, not just bad men appears in the book of Job as a mystery they try to solve. The faith that suffering generates spiritual power and that it serves an essential purpose in God's plan is a basic doctrine of the New Covenant. The witness of the martyrs from Saint Stephen to modern times is the renewal of the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul even says ***I COMPLETE WHAT IS LACKING IN CHRIST'S AFFLICTIONS.*** (Colossians 1.24 RSV ) Stephen's martyrdom leads to Paul's conversion.

Every other kingdom was established by the sword. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ was established by the cross. The Romans said to the would be emperor: *if you refuse the sword, you must refuse the crown.* The ruler of red China gave the same testimony: *all political power grows from the barrel of a gun.*

But the Son of the all powerful God establishes his Kingdom by the way of suffering and submission. By passively accepting the kind of death that was inflicted upon the lowest of criminals. In this kingdom it is the cross which leads to the crown.

It is the central mystery of Christianity, and it is a mystery. We have trouble seeing even the external form of it. And the inner heart of it puzzles even the mystic to whom the secrets of God are revealed.

It isn't just his suffering and death that perplex us, it is his humiliation and defeat. He lost the election. He lost the battle. His plans came to nothing. He fell into the hands of his enemies and he was at their mercy. He never again walked through the temple or preached in the market place. They got rid of him. They suppressed his rebellion. What sort of a king or hero can this be ?

How can a beaten and defeated man be victorious? How can a dead man become the king ? What happened to Jesus and what he claimed to have happened appear to our eyes to be two opposite things. What happened to him is that he was the victim of a plot by the local religious authorities with the acquiescence of the local official, in one small corner of the great Roman empire. What he claims is a victory over the world, over the prince of this world.

The symbolism of the paschal lamb gives one idea by which to explain it. The Jews were delivered from Egyptian bondage by the power of the Lord. The blood of the lamb was somehow a part of that deliverance. So we are delivered from bondage by the power of God. And the blood of the Lamb of God is somehow necessary to that deliverance.

#### THE OTHER DIMENSION

But we still are left with the raw facts of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. His defeat and failure in the way that we understand. To see his victory we have to look into another dimension that seems not real to us; that is governed by an entirely different set of rules; where earthly defeat means spiritual victory.

The realm of the spiritual. How can you believe in that which you cannot see ? In most of the old testament, the spiritual is only recognized when it appears in a material way. God's power is shown by events that are visible to everyone. Bread falls from heaven ! The mighty army is swallowed up by the sea !

But now we are asked to see what cannot be seen with our eyes. We have to see an invisible battle. An invisible victory. We have to see a chain of events that are belied by our own experience.



The passion of Jesus Christ--the suffering and death of Jesus Christ--becomes more comprehensible when we see it written out over the centuries in the deaths of his faithful followers. They did somehow overcome by the cross. The early Christians believed it as we do not. They understood it in a simple practical way. We see them going to their deaths with calmness, with joy even, as witnesses and martyrs to the truth of the passion of Jesus Christ. Thousands of them suffered and died for the sake of the cross of Jesus Christ. And the empire was overthrown by these spiritual warriors who suffered blows instead of inflicting blows. The nonviolent Christian revolutionaries defeated the great empire which crushed the violent Jewish rebels.

In the Old Testament, The Lord delivers them in a magnificent way while they watch awe-struck. They are the passive recipients of salvation. In the New Testament The Lord is a great failure who shares our failure with us. And then we in turn shoulder the work of salvation with him. We are saved not so much by what Jesus once did but by what he does now. My sufferings and failures belong to him and his power belongs to me.

Putting down the sword and taking up the Cross--that was the way Jesus showed us. When you put down the cross and pick up the gun, you become **an enemy of the cross**. When you put the cross on the battle flag, you mock what it stands for.

#### THE GOD WHO IS ONE OF US

Christians still do not comprehend Immanuel, *God with us*, the God who has become one of us, who is human and vulnerable. They turn away to a God who is powerful and wealthy, who crushes our enemies for us and drops dollars in our laps, like **Super Santa Claus**. The God they believe in is a lucky number to win the lottery, not a vulnerable and unlucky God who is the victim of evil men; who overcomes evil by suffering and dying.

But Immanuel is the God who has become a man like us. He works as a man. He sets us an **example** ! He says: see, do it like this, and, with the help of my Spirit, you can do it all. Don't wait for the lightning bolt to do it for you. I don't work that way any more.

He isn't even a man of wealth and power--just the opposite ! It isn't just his teaching that condemns our worship of wealth and power, it is the example of his entire life. We want a God who is richer than Croesus, more powerful than the Emperor. We are given instead God as a ragged man of no social standing whose power comes solely from the spirit of truth and love he manifests. He has no style! No class! Not in the way we see it.

Jesus enters Jerusalem: on a young donkey with his mother trotting alongside. What a pathetic farce! As if to mock all triumphal processions ! If you or I had a hand in it, we would never have done it that way ! What suits such an event as the Son of God entering Jerusalem in triumph, for the final act of his great drama ? Jesus, in a white glitter suit, wearing a silver sword. A matched team of white horses pulling a

gold chariot ornamented with red rubies and green emeralds--at the very least ! the Devil chained to his chariot wheel, snarling and lashing his forked tail; decorated floats commemorating his mighty miracles; marching bands, and pretty girls twirling batons; thousands of men in uniform, legions of Roman soldiers; temple priests in long robes and beards; the mayor of Jerusalem presenting him with the key to the city . . . Instead, you have these **undignified donkeys** and this ragged little impromptu procession. Instead, you have the unmistakable style of Jesus Christ. *Behold the man !* Behold the King of Peace !

That is how he does things. That is how he works. That is how he expects us to work. He works through the poor and the powerless, not through the wealthy and the powerful. He works through the spirit, not through the flesh. He works through *the body of Christ*--through the **church**--not through the army, not through the nation.

#### BODY AND SPIRIT

We are stuck with a God who became a man like us. Who is still present among us through his "body" and through his Spirit. How else will God work then except through that body, that is, through the church ? The nation is not the body of Christ. The Republican party is not the body of Christ. Only the church is the body of Christ--it should be anyway. Where else will we find the Holy Spirit? And how shall we do battle with the world unless we are *full of the Holy Spirit* ? (Acts 7.55)

It was through a man, Jesus Christ, that God manifested himself to us. It was the church that Jesus trusted to carry on his mission--his battle with the evil one, and his work of salvation in this world. We have no right to change that or depart from it--not if we choose to call ourselves Christians. The state church of the 4th century had no right to sell its mission to the Roman Empire, to pass on its mission to the Roman soldiers, who converted the world at the point of a sword. We have no right to pass on our mission to the American nation.

Why did God do it that way ? Why did he put his own Son through that ? Why didn't he just **Wield Power** in a majestic way ? Why did God send us our salvation through a man ? Through a suffering man. Through a defeated man. And this by way of **example** to us as well as by way of accomplishment for us. That is, each one of us has to work out his own salvation on the same road of suffering and worldly defeat and so follow the example of Jesus. The condition of our salvation is that we take up the burden of the mission of salvation that Jesus began. It is a battle to be fought; it is a great work to be done; it is a harvest to be gathered.

It is the price we pay to become the Sons of God. He put His own Son through it and so he puts us through it. He gives us the same Spirit to see us through. You must bear the cross before you can wear the crown. The heresy of the modern church is that you can follow the broad and easy road to get there. But it doesn't go there ! What the modern Christian hustler wants is the crown the world gives to those who can raise the money and put together an organization.

Why did God do it that way? To give us freedom. But most people do not want their freedom. They are afraid of it. They have been slaves too long. To make us full partners in the great drama of salvation. It remains a great mystery but it is the central mystery of our Christian faith. If you don't believe it, if you aren't living it, you aren't a Christian, no matter how much time you spend in church, no matter how much you read the bible.

We destroy that Christian faith when we substitute for it the pre-Christian, Old Testament idea of a remote God who works through the wrath of nations, who effects his will through war and worldly power. We **throw away our own role** in the salvation of the world. Instead of relying upon the Spirit that is in us, we turn to superstitious invocations of Power. When Jesus Christ won't do it for us, we turn to the ruler of this world who will do it our way. When we pray to *the god of this world* (2 Corinthians 4.4), when we pray for wealth and power, we really invoke Satan, and, in his own way, he answers such prayers.

#### THE GOD WITH NO MONEY

Immanuel is a God who has no money. He has few friends among the powerful. They drag him off to jail just like they would one of us. Here is God being dragged off to jail by a rabble. Nor does he escape like the hero always does in the movies. The next day he is still a prisoner and they execute him in the most degrading and painful way--taking off his clothes to shame him in public, sticking him up to a kind of clothes line post and daring him to do anything about it. And he doesn't. He just dies.

And yet he thinks he has won a famous victory! By way of a complete defeat, as the world reckons it, he has won a spiritual victory--the overthrow of the Evil One, *the prince of this world*. (John 12:31)

In order to win the victory, Jesus had to accept wounds and death, just as a soldier has to accept wounds and death. There was no bloodless and easy way to do it. But, unlike the soldier, Jesus inflicted no wounds, nor did he try to kill anyone. In fact, he immediately healed the only wound that was inflicted on his behalf by one of his followers. That shows the fundamental similarity and also the fundamental difference between war, as this world fights it, and nonviolent, spiritual war as Jesus fought it.

His victory does not come through the weapons of this world. He won't use the sword. He refuses political power. He tells us to put our trust in God, not in money. Putting your trust in money is the first article of faith among today's Christians. They know they are right with God when the money rolls in. It is the one sure sign of secular Christian righteousness. The god of this world has prospered their enterprises.

Not only does Jesus use good to overcome evil, he brings good out of evil. There is a spiritual alchemy in it, like turning garbage into gold. It is a kind of moral ju jitsu where your opponent defeats himself when he deploys his evil power to the maximum. Saul the persecutor becomes Paul the Apostle.

It is by the power of God that we overcome the power of Satan. That is why we return good for evil. We confront that which comes from the devil with that which comes from God. *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.* (Matthew 5.44-45) Saint Paul says: *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* (Romans 12.21)

#### OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

And so say the martyrs. In 110 a.d., while a prisoner on his way to martyrdom in Rome, Saint Ignatius of Antioch testifies to Christian nonviolence: *Keep on praying for others too, for there is a chance of their being converted and getting to God. Let them then learn from you at least by your actions. Return their bad temper with gentleness; their boasts with humility; their abuse with prayer. In the face of their error, be steadfast in the faith. Return their violence with mildness and do not be intent on getting your own back. By our patience let us show we are their brothers, intent on imitating the Lord, seeing which of us can be the more wronged, robbed, and despised. Thus no devil's weed will be found among you. But thoroughly pure and self-controlled, you will remain body and soul united to Jesus Christ.* (Ephesians 10)

*Do not be intent on getting your own back but be intent on imitating the Lord.* How little the terms of the spiritual battle have changed in these 19 centuries since Ignatius traveled the road of Christian martyrdom !

Bishop Polycarp, writes a similar message to the Philippians: *He who raised Him from the dead will raise us also, if we do his will and follow his commandments, and love what he loved, refraining from all wrongdoing, avarice, love of money, slander and false witness; not returning evil for evil, or abuse for abuse, or blow for blow, or curse for curse.* Bishop Polycarp and his companions were martyred in the arena at Smyrna in 155 A.D.

#### THE FUTILITY OF VIOLENCE

Most of what Jesus said about violence stressed the morality of violence. But what he said to Peter, that *all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword*, speaks to the practical uselessness of violence, the self-defeating character of it--its **futility**. (Matthew 26.52, Revelation 13.10) It wasn't an offhand remark. It was a prophecy of the terrible doom of the Jewish nation and of every other nation that relies upon violence. It foretold the doom of the Roman Empire and the doom of all empires, including the American empire. The weapons we use against them are the weapons they will use against us.

The Jews believed in the kingdom of Israel and they couldn't believe in the kingdom of God that Jesus preached to them. What use was the kingdom of God to them, if it didn't give them the worldly power they wanted? (cf. Matthew 20.21) They wanted freedom from Roman rule, not freedom from sin. They wanted worldly power, not the power of the Spirit.

Having crucified the nonviolent messiah they didn't want, the Jews followed warrior messiahs who led them into a great rebellion against Roman rule in 66 A.D., only 36 years after the death of Jesus. The war was a success at first. They expelled the Romans from Jerusalem and took a long-awaited revenge upon the captured soldiers. But, in the end, Israel was no match for the military might of the Roman empire. The final long siege created a terrible famine in Jerusalem. Josephus describes parents fighting with children over scraps of food. He tells of a woman who butchered her own infant for food. (*War 6.201*) The rival factions among the Jews continued to kill each other to the very end. Amidst such scenes as these, Jerusalem was leveled and the great Temple destroyed.

Then the natural fortress of **Masada** was the last stronghold in Jewish hands. A change in the wind brought the flames of the Roman siege fires against the last wooden defenses. Seeing themselves to be abandoned by God, the defenders resolved to kill themselves and their families rather than see their wives made into Roman concubines and their children turned into slaves. So they died by their own swords after first killing their own mothers and wives and children. Altogether more than a million Jews died in a war that destroyed their nation, and the Jews that survived were driven into exile to be strangers in many lands for many long centuries thereafter.

#### NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

There is a remarkable contrast in the *images of Caesar* episode, recorded by Josephus, which happened about 26 A.D. and which I referred to in an earlier chapter. When Roman soldiers brought their military ensigns into Jerusalem, the Jews confronted Pilate at Caesarea with a demand that the images be removed from Jerusalem. His reply was to surround them by a triple ring of Roman soldiers with drawn swords who threatened to kill all of them if they did not disperse. *Hereupon the Jews, as it were at one signal, fell down in vast numbers together, and exposed their necks bare, and cried out that they were sooner ready to be slain, than that their law should be transgressed. Hereupon Pilate was greatly surprised at their prodigious superstition, and gave order that the ensigns should be presently carried out of Jerusalem. (War 2 .173)*

That is one of the earliest examples on record of the successful use of nonviolence and it displays the essential characteristics of a way of fighting for what is right that relies upon moral power rather than upon military power: 1) the willingness to personally face death because of a fearlessness born of faith in God. 2) the absence of any return threat of violence sufficient to provoke and justify the violence against

them and thereby to turn the moral contest into a military contest. 3) the spiritual power generated by this courageous witness, which wins a grudging respect from a worldly and powerful man who more than once ordered the slaughter of rebellious Jews. 4) both sides win. Instead of murdering your enemy--or getting yourself murdered in the attempt--you turn him around. 5) when you aim at a spiritual goal, in a direct and simple way, without trying to use it as the entering wedge for a hidden political agenda, you achieve it.

It foreshadows the triumph of the Christians over the Romans who earnestly tried to exterminate them. The Roman empire, with all its wealth and all its awesome military power, went down into the dust of history. The pacifist Christian church grew until it passed far beyond the furthest frontiers that the Roman empire ever held at its zenith. The empire that was created by the sword, perished by the sword, as the Jewish nation had before it. The spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ is still growing 2000 years later. The nations that the Romans conquered were conscripted, trained and armed to continue the work of conquest. But then they returned as marauders. The empire perished by its own swords ! The destruction of their nation forced the Jews to turn away from visions of national pride and power and to renew the spiritual character of their relationship with God and that is how they found the strength to survive the centuries of persecution and exile.

#### TOLSTOY AND GANDHI REDISCOVER SPIRITUAL WARFARE

I was recruited for the Freedom Ride in May, 1961 by a tall black Christian from Louisiana, fresh out of jail, who gave an eloquent presentation of what was happening in the Civil Rights movement in the South. He testified to his belief in Jesus Christ and to his confidence in the method of *NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION* that Martin Luther King and other Christian ministers had copied from Gandhi. (They learned it more directly from American Christian radicals in the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Congress on Racial Equality.)

In South Africa in the 1890's, and in India in the 1920's, Gandhi pioneered the method of social change through nonviolent direct action that we still use today. But Gandhi considered himself to be a follower of the radical Christianity of Leo Tolstoy. Through Tolstoy and through his own study of the gospels, Gandhi arrived at an appreciation of the *SPIRITUAL WARFARE* of Jesus Christ that still eludes most so-called Christians.

Gandhi didn't invent it. He learned it first from Tolstoy's book: *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. No more did Tolstoy invent it. No more did the American Abolitionists invent it--the Quakers or William Lloyd Garrison. They were some of those that Tolstoy learned from. They all got it from the same source: the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as it is found in the New Testament.

Gandhi once said that it was better to resist evil by violence than not to resist it at all. He never intended for nonviolence to be used as an excuse for avoiding the fight. But it was Gandhi who showed us a better way than violent rebellion to resist the

imperial yoke. And he aimed at far more than national independence. He saw clearly that British rule was only one of India's problems. He tried to find a way to build a good society by good means. It was his substantial success in doing this that inspired the American Civil Rights Movement. It was this tradition that the American Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960s drew upon in the crusade against racial segregation in America.

Martin Luther King was the media-ordained *leader* and figure head of the American Civil Rights Movement which was actually built over many long years by the dedication and self-sacrifice of obscure individuals who rarely made the newspapers. Many of them had an integrity in their personal lives and in their commitment to the movement that King did not have. But his name has come to represent all of them--it is the only name that most people know. In lieu of a true history of the Civil Rights Movement, I use his name in that sense.

Although Gandhi described himself as a Christian, he never joined the church for several good reasons. He could not accept the imperial Christianity of that British empire which had imposed itself upon his homeland by military conquest. In fact the Tolstoyan brand of Christianity which he did accept was a thoroughly anti imperial form of Christianity--Tolstoy emphatically renounced the state church of the Russian empire.

The American Civil Rights Movement borrowed from Gandhi, but, long before that, Gandhi borrowed the idea of *civil disobedience* from Henry David Thoreau's *Essay on Civil Disobedience* written when Thoreau went to jail to protest government sanction of slavery and the war against Mexico. He and William Lloyd Garrison represent an early American tradition of Christian radicals who went to jail to witness against great social evils--against slavery and war. They belonged to that Abolitionist movement which tried to abolish slavery by nonviolent direct action in the years before the Civil War.

#### THE POWER OF TRUTH AND LOVE

Gandhi's *nonviolence* and Tolstoy's *nonresistance to evil* are taken from the **CENTRAL TEACHING** of Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-5:48). *Resist not evil* (Matthew 5:39) teaches us that we must overcome evil by the power of good instead of by resorting to a greater and more powerful evil. Instead of baptizing violence, as so many Christians have done, Gandhi followed the teaching and the example of Jesus Christ in aiming a spiritual weapon at the evil which is in men, instead of a physical weapon at the men themselves. Instead of using a sword to end the life of an evil man, you use the power of the Holy Spirit to end the evil which is in him. *Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you; return good for evil; turn the other cheek.* These admonitions call us to a spiritual battle that can only be won by spiritual weapons. This is the origin of Gandhi's nonviolence, which rests upon the wisdom of Jesus that the battle against the evil one cannot be won by the weapons of this world--by money, by the sword, by hatred and political trickery, by soldiers, police, judges, lawyers and powerful politicians--but by the weapons of the spirit only.

**NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION** is a secularized translation--or rather a verbal description--of Gandhi's central concept and belief which he expressed by a Hindu word *satyagraha*--a word he had to invent to convey something that was missing from the religion of his homeland. It means **SOUL FORCE** *the power which is born of truth and love*. What it represents, is his attempt to translate the central teaching of Jesus Christ into the language and beliefs of his countrymen. But we already have exact equivalents of Gandhi's concept, for the simple reason that he got it from the New Testament. ***The Power of the Holy Spirit***. Acts 1.8 *The Spirit of Truth*. John 16.13 That indwelling Spirit of Love and Truth and Courage is what gives real Christians the power to do battle with the ***world*** (John 14.17, 15.26, 16.13, 17.6-20) and with ***the prince of this world***. (John 12.31, 14.30, 16.11) The followers of Jesus prevail ***by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God*** (2 Corinthians 6.6-7).

#### DIRECT ACTION

**NONVIOLENT** says: we don't intend an armed rebellion. **DIRECT ACTION** says: we don't try to work through the system, we don't waste our resources on the conventional political process. Being wishy-washy and ambivalent on these basic principles is fatal to a nonviolent direct action movement. You wind up with an amorphous and unprincipled movement where most of your so-called supporters are trying to become Senators, or build up their organizations and their revenues. Meanwhile some of the boys and girls are making bombs or sniping at the police. 99 percent of the time, money and energy gets flushed down the toilet of conventional politics, gets thrown away on the vain and foolish ambitions of those who fancy themselves senators. The violence scares off most of your potential support and you are left with a handful of hit and run crazies who spend ten years in hiding and then surrender to the police. The spiritual power has gone out of the movement and you have become another chapter that no one wants to read in the long history of Secular Christian failures. That, in sum, is the history of the late 1960s.

Despite their considerable political success--because of it really--Gandhi's movement in India and the American Civil Rights movement both ended in spiritual and moral failure. They failed because of the false premise that the power of the Spirit can be effectively wielded by a mass movement--by everybody and his brother, whether he has the Spirit or not--through a kind of external nonviolent discipline. They failed because the pursuit of political power inevitably corrupted the moral and spiritual purposes of the movement. And they failed because it is not possible to sustain a movement which requires the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ if it is not built upon a truly Christian community which adheres to Christian faith and morals. The Secular Christianity upon which the Civil Rights Movement was built was a foundation of sand. And the same has proven to be true of later movements like the Pro Life *Rescue* movement which came and went in 1988 and 1989. For similar reasons, today's so-called Peace Movement has become spiritually impotent and morally irrelevant.



Uncompromised *NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION* is absolutely essential, but *Nonviolent direct action* is a defective term. That is why movements based only upon nonviolent direct action always fail. It is defective because it gives you only two negatives. It doesn't give you the positive which is absolutely essential.

It tells you not to rely upon the power of the army. It tells you not to rely upon political power or the power of money which is basic to winning political contests. It doesn't tell you what **power** you do rely upon. That is its defect. You have to be a sincere follower of Jesus, as Gandhi was, whether you call yourself a *Christian* or not, to understand the fundamental and necessary spirit of nonviolent direct action.

#### STRESSING THE NEGATIVES

Nevertheless those negatives are important. It is like saying *avoid sin, do not steal, do not commit adultery*. It isn't enough to tell people to avoid sin. You have to tell them to love God and to love your neighbor or the proscriptions against sin lose their force. But you have also to insist that you cannot love God and believe in Him if you steal and if you commit adultery. You are fooling yourself when you do not recognize that, if you love God, you must keep His commandments. So also we must emphasize what Jesus did not do, what He refused to do, if we are to see clearly what He did do.

If you look at the negatives in the method of Jesus Christ--what He didn't do, the kind of power that He refused to use--it points up the kind of power that He did use: the power of the Spirit--the **Spirit of Truth and Love**. Was that valid for Him but not for us? Are we supposed to admire Him only? Would it be foolish of us to try and imitate Him ?

That in fact is a common attitude among Christians even though they don't state it so plainly: I am no Jesus. Far be it from me to try and do what He did. I haven't got His magical powers. If I am to do anything I need a gun, and/or a bank account. I need to rely upon the power of the government, the power of the police and the army, the power of the mass media. I need to raise more money than my opponents so I can buy more of that kind of power than they have--hire better lawyers than they can afford.

In fact, there is nothing plainer in the gospel than this: ridiculous as it seems, **we are supposed to do what Jesus did !** Not stand back and admire him. Not put him up on a pedestal. Not imitate Jacob and Samson and David instead. We are supposed to *imitate Jesus*, we are supposed to live by his words and by his example--by his life as he lived it ! We are supposed to put Jesus on like a coat, like a new skin even ! ( Romans 13.14; Galatians 3.27) We are supposed to let his Spirit enter into us and somehow take us over. If Jesus lives in us, how can we live and act differently from the way that he lived? (2 Corinthians 13.5) (2 Corinthians 5.17)

Jesus Christ said that we must not return evil for evil. The sophistry of the secular church has given us 101 ways to get around that teaching. Returning evil for evil is the heart of the old law: *an eye for an eye*. It is the basic principle of the law and order that worldly Christians have substituted for the teachings of Jesus. It is the way of the world.

There is that other way, the way Jesus illustrated. Taking personal responsibility for the moral condition of his society. Putting his life on the line. Doing what he did openly and fearlessly without deception or evasion.

Jesus Christ never killed anyone. That is an obvious fact about his life, that Christians have taught themselves to ignore. But he did lay down his life, like a soldier in battle.

#### LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE

It is that belief in the spiritual power of laying down your life that is so basic to Christian belief and so conspicuously missing from false Christianity. If you don't believe in martyrdom, then you do not believe in Jesus Christ, Saint Stephen, Saint Paul, Saint Peter. You don't believe in what they did and what they taught. To the world it is foolishness. To the false Christian it is foolishness. They believe in the success you get by killing the other fellow.

A martyr is a witness. It means someone who actually stakes his life as the wager which proves the truth of what he says. That personal witness by courageous speech and action is the essential characteristic of a Christian. You are one if you do it. You aren't one if you don't.

Some of us will die for this cause. But meantime we must live for it. You can lay down your life a day at a time. You can work at it day after day, patiently and tirelessly. That is what most of us are called to do. God doesn't often call us to throw our lives away in one grand gesture. He wants us to live them out in His Service.

That doesn't mean busy work, the sham commitment that is carried on to justify the fund raising. It means serving the cause in a dedicated and self-sacrificing way, not using the cause to achieve a personal ambition.

#### PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Jesus took personal responsibility for the moral condition of the society he lived in. He didn't appeal to the emperor for a new set of laws. He appealed to all of his hearers as individuals to put on a new nature. You must begin to live differently from the past. You must be born again into a new life. You must take the moral law into your own hands. Morality must be engraved on our hearts, not written by legislators who rewrite it whenever the political wind changes.

He called upon them to accept personal responsibility just as He did. What is characteristic of us, is our refusal to accept personal responsibility for the moral condition of our society. It is due to sinister forces beyond our control. The plots of the New World Order are to blame. It cannot be that we Christians are to blame that our society is not Christian. Don't we say the right words at least once a week ? Don't we send in the check regularly ?

The abnegation of responsibility is typical of the false Christian. I am not responsible for the moral condition of society. Only the government can change it. Only the political party can change the government. Ultimately, this personal irresponsibility creates Hitler.

The moral condition of society now depends only upon the government, especially the national government, and mainly upon the one man at the top of the government. Every time you criticize that man for the moral condition of society, you add to his power because you lay down the principle that he is responsible and you are not. The rest of us are not to blame because none of us have any serious responsibility. The more we depend upon the man at the top the more we add to his power. The more dependent we become.

Only Hitler is guilty. Millions are murdered because of the evil will of one man. That is, because all the other men no longer have a will, have resigned their wills to his. All the Christians of Germany somehow disappeared. No moral agent was left but Hitler. All the others were morally an extension of him, they were his servants. They were spiritually joined to him instead of to Jesus Christ. They did his will. They shared his spirit. And we are on the same road. Most American Christians long ago disappeared. They belong to **the church of the chameleon**, the church which has become morally invisible by its conformity to the world around it. If we do not now take personal responsibility, as we have not in the past, we are going down that same old road all the way to the end. Those are really the only alternatives we have.

#### OPENNESS

Like other Americans, secular Christians are mentally saturated with trash entertainment; with the lying history of our wars; with the tales of detectives and spies in which success comes to those who are sneakier and more violent than their opponents. Their ideas about how to fight the battle come from trash television, not from the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and the actions of his followers as they are described in the New Testament.

There is a Christian way of doing battle with evil that is entirely contrary to the way the world tells us to fight. It demands openness and honesty, the fearlessness that is born from the Spirit of Truth. You see it in the way that the disciples throw open the doors and confront the Passover crowd after the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

The Spirit of God within us is love and courage. Love casts out hatred and courage casts out fear. We see it in the acts of Jesus Christ who shows us what it means to *love your enemies* and to face them without fear. Saint Peter and Saint Paul show us the same spirit. They go forth to battle for the Kingdom of God and they rely upon spiritual weapons. It is as if the bravest hero of fiction were to discard his sword and then walk into battle without it. Jesus has taken the one sword away from him and given him another in its place, the same sword that He used.

Jesus was a fighter, not a politician or a lobbyist. He wasn't someone who tried to get along with everybody, who never raised his voice. In fact he declared war on the evil of the society that he lived in.

The spiritual war must be fought from house to house. It must be fought out between mother and daughter, between father and son. If we were only up to fighting and winning that war, we wouldn't need to fight any other.

When you bear personal witness to the truth you desert the ranks of secular Christians who spend their lives conforming to the world for the sake of a pay check instead of serving the Lord in all sincerity and truth. You enlist as a soldier in the army of Jesus Christ, instead of being an arm chair patriot who supports the battle from a safe distance.

**The nonviolent warfare of Jesus Christ** is a way of taking precise aim at evil. It is like a moral laser beam that destroys only the cancer without damaging any of the healthy tissue. It is the only truly accurate weapon there is. That is why we have to use it and shun every kind of violence.

#### OBEY GOD, NOT MEN

The practice of Civil Disobedience which appeared in the American Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s was inspired by Gandhi's use of it on a large scale in India. But the classic example and argument for it comes from the 19th century American abolitionist Henry David Thoreau whose *Essay on Civil Disobedience* influenced Gandhi. Saint Peter stated the basic principle of Christian civil disobedience in Acts 5.29: *We ought to obey God rather than men.*

[ See **THE CHURCH OF THE EMPIRE**, CHAPTER XI, *Augustine and the Manufacture of Scripture*, for historical evidence that Romans 13.1-7 was a later interpolation by Augustine used to justify the Imperial Church establishment and its persecution of the nonconforming Christians. web site: [www.radicalchristianpress.org](http://www.radicalchristianpress.org) ]

There is an ancient tradition of disobedience to secular authority which is found in the earliest books of the Old Testament. The Hebrews who were faithful to God had to disobey man because of it. In Exodus 1.17 we are told how the midwives disobeyed the decree of Pharaoh that male infants must be killed at birth--*But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.*

In Daniel chapter 3 there is the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who are put into a fiery furnace when they refuse the king's command to worship his golden image: *we will not serve thy gods*. But God saves them from the furnace. Daniel himself survives the lion's den where he is put when he prays to God in defiance of the king's decree. (Daniel 6)

We who call ourselves *Christians*, we who take a solemn pledge to follow Jesus in the way of the cross, have to remember that they put Jesus in jail and that this has always been part of the way of the cross. Like Jesus himself, his first followers were often in trouble with the secular authorities. It was their common experience as described in Acts 4.3, 5.17, 8.3 and 12.6 etc. Saint Paul's epistles were often written in jail.

Under the Roman persecutions that went on intermittently over the next three centuries, many thousands of lesser known *saints* calmly and even cheerfully faced death for refusing to go to war and for refusing to bow down to Caesar.

Down through the centuries Christians who were faithful to Jesus Christ have been imprisoned by the authorities of the secular state and by the patriotic "Christians" who join the state in its persecutions. To be a real Christian in our time means that we must be ready to face prison like the real Christians of every age. How closely are you following Jesus Christ if you never get put in jail? Secular Christians follow Jesus from a safe distance. They need binoculars to see Him.

Secular Christians can *SUPPORT* any violent action so long as the government sponsors it and those who do it wear the proper uniforms. But they can't justify nonviolent action, or even personal witness, when they are called upon to take the risk. Dropping a bomb on a city is compatible with their Christian ethics. Sitting in at a segregated lunch counter, a military base, or an abortion clinic and getting yourself arrested is not Christian. Calling out to abortion customers is not Christian. Is not compatible with church decorum and middle class respectability. With a kind of Christianity that must be 100 per cent safe and legal, even if the Nazis are making the laws, even if the laws allow child murder. Hiroshima wasn't horrible, but speaking out against abortion at the place where abortions are done, instead of at a pro life banquet or some other respectable forum--that is a horrible thing to do. It is entirely incompatible with their secular Christian ethics. It is righteous to use any degree of violence to rescue a hypothetical little girl. But when a real little girl or boy is about to be dismembered, all you can do is pray and leave it up to God. And the god they believe in is powerless to do anything about it.

#### THE BATTLE WE MUST FIGHT AGAINST THE WORLD

His kingdom is *not of this world*, that is why his followers do not take up military weapons. (John 18.36) The world *hates him because I testify of it that its works are evil*. (John 7.7) Its works are evil and Satan is *the prince of this world*. (John 14.30, Luke 4.6) The world also hates those who follow Jesus because they do not belong to the world. (John 15.18 1 John 3.13). *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil*. (John 17.15)

And there they are--in the world, but not of the world. How are they to do it ? Christians must rely upon the wisdom of God and *not the wisdom of the princes of this world*. (1 Corinthians 2.6, 3.19) They must be non-conformists ! They must conform to Jesus and stop conforming to the world ! (Romans 8:29, 12:2) **Get rid of that suit and tie !** Stop imitating bankers and brokers and start imitating Saint Paul and Jesus ! (1 Corinthians 11.1) The external conformity to the world is the sign of the internal conformity to the world.

It is the Holy Spirit that makes you a Christian and, at the same time, an enemy of the world and the prince who rules it. It is the *Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you*. (John 14.17) The **world** lives by lies. They are the foundation of war; of conventional politics; of business and commerce; of the abortion industry. They are the characteristic sign of the way the world does business, but we are so accustomed to it, so de-sensitized to it, that we hardly notice it. The *truth* is the world's bane, its nemesis, and it naturally hates the man or woman who is animated by this **spirit of truth**. **Truth is the first casualty in war**, as it is well said. It is the first thing to be put on the shelf when you launch a political campaign.

#### THE POWER OF TRUTH

That is why truth is such a powerful weapon, such an essential weapon. That is why we have to avoid jamming it with any kind of falsehood. The indwelling Spirit of truth (John 14.17) is the one who gives us the strength to overcome the world. (1 John 4.4) The **power of the true word** is the weapon that Jesus Christ gives us: *he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked*. (Isaiah 11.4, cf. Revelation 2.16)

Jesus belongs to us, not to the **world**. (John 14.19-27) He came to *deliver us from this present evil world*, not to show us how to get along with it. (Galatians 1.4) He *manifests* himself to us and *dwells* with us; he gives us a *peace* which the restless world lacks. *The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me*. (John 14.30) So, if Jesus dwells with us, how often should we entertain the prince of this world as a visitor ? How much, besides *nothing*, can we afford to have of that which belongs to the prince of this world ? What is he the prince of ? Of war, surely, just as Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Of wealth, surely. Why else does Jesus warn us again and again about money ? *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*. (Matthew 6.24, Luke 16.13, 16.19-25) Of power, surely--what else can he mean when he rebukes their competitions for place and power by showing them that they must be like children, like servants. What sort of a prince is it that washed their feet for them ? (John 13.4-15) No prince of this world ever did such a thing.

What is it we crave when we crave power as this world gives it? We crave to be the center of attention, the star of the show, to have all eyes upon us, to be loved and applauded by all. But Jesus tells us that the world will hate us, not love us, if we accept the call of Jesus. (John 15.18-19) When the world applauds us, as it applauds wars and the heroes who fight them, it is a clear sign that we have chosen the love of this world over the love of Jesus.

There has to be a **fundamental antagonism** between the follower of Jesus and the world. *The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world* says Saint Paul. (Galatians 6.14) He exhorts us to live *blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.* (Philippians 2.15) *Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* (James 4.4) *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* (1 John 2.15) *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* (1 John 3.13) *And we know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* (1 John 5.19)

#### THE PRINCE OF PEACE

When he left us, he sent us his Holy Spirit who brings comfort to us and *judgment* upon the *prince of this world*. (John 16.8-11) It is well to be very sure whose side you are on and which prince you are serving. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9.6

Jesus begins his public life with a campaign against the devils. (Mark 1.25, 1.34, Matthew 4.24, etc.) He gives his followers the power to do the same and sends them out to do it. A major burden of his preaching is the condemnation of the evil religious establishment of the nation of Israel. (Matthew 15.3-9, 16.12, 23.13-35) That evil religious establishment re-appeared in the official church of the Roman Empire and it is with us today in its many successors.

The supreme act of his life is the one on one spiritual battle with the evil one himself, *the prince of this world*. (John 12.31, 14.30, 16.11) But then He calls us to carry on that battle by means of the power of His Spirit inside us. (John 15.16-20, 16.7-13) This battle isn't against the natural world but it is against the world of evil men and the prince they serve--*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* (Ephesians 6.12)

Is this battle over and done? No it has only begun! And it is up to us to fight it ! *The spirit of anti-Christ is already in the world*, John tells us, *but greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* (1 John 4.3,4) *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.* (1 John 5.4) But the prince of this world is still a long way from giving up the battle ! Jesus is the alpha and the omega of the battle, it is His Spirit, the Spirit of truth and love and courage that fights the battle, but He fights the battle through us !

*Terry Sullivan*