

Turning the Other Cheek

One of the most outrageous things Jesus ever said was: *WHOSOEVER SHALL SMITE THEE ON THY RIGHT CHEEK, TURN TO HIM THE OTHER ALSO*. It isn't just that people reject this teaching--including almost all nominal *Christians*--but they define themselves by their vehement rejection of this advice. Their very justification for themselves is that they do just the opposite. Although they avoid spelling out that they are in fact rejecting a teaching of Jesus and one which is found quite conspicuously in **The Sermon on the Mount**, the major public teaching of Jesus.

Was Jesus joking ? You might very well conclude that. If you ask the average Christian what Jesus meant by *Turn the Other Cheek* he will respond by telling you a joke which his pastor told him. But before we conclude that **Jesus Did Not Mean It ! He was only joking**, those of us who call ourselves *Christians* would do well to study what he said in the context in which he said it--

Matthew 5.38-44 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but WHOSOEVER SHALL SMITE THEE ON THY RIGHT CHEEK, TURN TO HIM THE OTHER ALSO. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. 41 AND WHOSOEVER SHALL COMPEL THEE TO GO A MILE, GO WITH HIM TWAIN. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, 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 ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [From **The Sermon on the Mount** old King James]*

Of course, everyone knows what you have to do if someone hits you. You must hit him right back. Even give him 2 for 1, or a hard hit for a soft hit, to let him know at once that it is not safe for him to hit you. This is WISDOM, is it not ? This is right thinking. We all see it. The children in the back seat know it, quite naturally, without being taught. *She Hit Me First !* Why couldn't Jesus see it ? Why was he so far astray in his thinking ?

versus the Old Testament

The *Turn the Other Cheek* admonition of 5.39 directly follows the *eye for an eye* citation in 5.38 and teaches contrary to it. *An Eye For An Eye and A Tooth For A Tooth* is a basic teaching of the old Jewish **Law** which is found in several places: Exodus 21.24, Leviticus 24.20, Deuteronomy 19.21. Exodus chapters 21, 22 and 23 was known as the Book of the Covenant, the old covenant of the circumcision. And it displays that vengeful spirit which permeates the historical books of the Old Testament, like *The Lord's* instructions to Saul in 1 Samuel 15.3: *utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass* *The Lord* decrees this massacre of babies because of a 200 year old grudge. He punishes Saul for sparing the livestock.

You cannot understand the teaching of Jesus Christ without recognizing that, although it was rooted in Judaism, it was also a radical reformation of Judaism. Jesus was the **First** Reform Rabbi and the **Last**. Hebrews 9.10 The only one with full authority to transform Judaism from a fiercely nationalistic warrior creed and State Religion into a universal pacifist and anarchist creed.

Jesus taught contrary to a religion which was tied to the state and victory in war with the help of God. The name *Is-ra-el* means *El Does Battle*. [*El* = *Allah* and *Elohim*--the ancient Semite name for God]

Like all states, Israel was established by success in war, and dis-established--it even disappeared--when they lost the war. As Bismarck said: *War is the Health of the State*. We have to believe in Victory in War, as the foundation of our belief in Our Nation. And the State Religion must give us a God who Helps us Win. *God Bless America !* points to that battle flag which represents the many victorious wars by which the American empire was established.

The modern confusion about what Jesus taught began when Imperial *Christianity* appeared as a state religion in the 4th century. It was an apostate offshoot of Christianity, dependant upon the police and the army, which made its converts by the sword. [See *The Church of the Empire*.] It was a state religion and a military religion like ancient Judaism and like Mohammedanism, which appeared in the 7th century as a rival to imperial Christianity and its mirror image as a fighting faith.

Christianity as an imperial religion and a warrior ideology has been with us ever since in one form or another. Meanwhile, real Christianity remained independent of the state and adversarial to its wars, as it had from the beginning. It persisted as a persecuted and sometimes underground sect usually found in the history books under the *heretic* label.

In John 18.36 Jesus defines the new *Kingdom of God* on earth by telling Pilate that *my followers don't fight* because *My Kingdom is Not of This World*. He defined it in a way which made it entirely incompatible with the forlorn hope of the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. That was still the great national hope of the people of Israel, and their mandate for the rebellion against Rome which began in 66 A.D.

When He says that His kingdom is *Not of This World*, that has to be understood in relation to what Jesus taught about *This World*: Satan is the Ruler of All the Kingdoms of *This World*--the Power that sustains the Empire--and the *World* hates Jesus and hates his true followers. That is, those who serve Satan and worship the Empire are the adversaries of Jesus and his followers. See Luke 4.5-7 and John 15.18-19. See *Render, Not Surrender, Unto Caesar*.

Jesus reformed Judaism. He defined the *New Covenant* contrary to the Old Covenant where righteousness came from a strict observance of Sabbath rules--John chapter 5--and ancient food rules--Mark chapter 7. It is what comes out of your mouth that makes you *unclean*, not what goes into it, Jesus said. He taught contra animal sacrifices in Matthew 9.13 and 12.7 and substituted himself for all such sacrifices--*this is my blood of the New Covenant* . . . [Matthew 26.27 Hebrews 10.4] He characterized giving tithes of mint and cumin as *straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel* in Matthew 23.23-24. Jesus taught that the commandments to *Love God* and *Love your neighbor* fulfilled The Law, He took the Law of Moses on divorce and put it in the trash in Matthew 5.31 and 19.3-10. He preached a New Covenant animated by a new Spirit, as I argue in *The New Covenant versus the Old Covenant* on the *Radical Christian Press.org* web site.

Love Your Enemies ?! **Never !**

A little further along in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5.44, Jesus adds another outrageous teaching: *LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, BLESS THEM THAT CURSE YOU, DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU*. Most of the world, including most of the *Christian* world, finds that admonition impossible to swallow. It violates our deepest feelings. It goes contrary to everything we believe. Instead, we find our righteousness in the uncompromising fierceness with which we hate our enemies, just like the Jews in the time of Jesus. In the books of the old covenant, "The Lord's" insistence that righteousness requires them to hate their enemies is a central theme: *thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt*

make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them (Deuteronomy 7.2) he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows (Numbers 24.8)

Matthew 5.41 has another admonition which points to the *ENEMY* that Jesus had in mind: *AND WHOSOEVER SHALL COMPEL THEE TO GO A MILE, GO WITH HIM TWAIN*. A Roman soldier could grab a Jew and make him carry his pack for a mile. And here Jesus advises them not only to put up with this indignity in a resentful way, but to volunteer to carry that hated pack an extra mile !

These admonitions of Jesus must have shocked and outraged most of those who heard them, just as they have done ever since. They seem to be designed to challenge that spirit of sullen hatred which is characteristic of oppressed nations. Which did in fact drive the Jews into a doomed rebellion against the Romans 30 years later.

The rest of the context in which these teachings are to be placed is found in the gospels generally. Jesus refuses to become the king, in John 6.15 even though he did not reject the title of *King of the Jews* which was later posted on the cross to mock his pretensions. John 19.19 He explains to Pilate that *My followers do not fight because my Kingdom is not of this world*. John 18.36

When the Jews discovered that Jesus was serious about refusing to become the Messiah King they wanted who would lead them in a war of liberation against the Romans, most of them lost interest in him. Thirty years later they followed the kind of *Messiah* they wanted in a rebellion against the Roman Empire. The Roman soldiers in the Temple fortress were slaughtered when they surrendered to the vengeful Zealots. The war ended in 70 A.D. with the destruction of the Temple. A million Jews died in the war, and the rest were scattered into exile all over the Roman Empire.

Was this not the direct result of their failure to take seriously the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount ? That is a good reason to take it seriously. They fulfilled the mandate to *Hate Your Enemies*, contra the advice of Jesus. And the result they achieved was also forecast by Jesus: *All those who take up the sword perish with it*.

About 1900 years later, under the sponsorship of Russia and America, Zionism, an atheist and Socialist form of Judaism, was re-established in Israel in 1948. And they might re-build The Temple, at least as a tourist attraction, before 2070, which marks 2000 years since the animal sacrifices and the priesthood came to an end. Israel is nominally an *independent* nation which is in fact dependent upon the American Empire.

The State of Israel built an elaborate memorial to **Bar-Kochba** who led another doomed rebellion against the Romans in 132-135 A.D. And they still refuse to honor Jesus, Israel's most famous son, who tried to teach them a lesson they did not want to learn. They still put their faith in **God Does Battle**. They put their faith in **Battle** anyway, since most of them are atheists.

Israel, surrounded by the Moslems, is the trigger for *Armageddon*, aka World War III. Which will delight the *Christian Zionists* who are working to bring it about by their dogmatic *Support for Israel*. They are tied to the hope of doom's day for Israel because their kind of Christianity has no other future. A long time ago they left the road that leads to the Kingdom of God on earth.

Meanwhile, the reformed version of Judaism taught by Jesus has spread all over the world, although most often in the nominal and superficial and apostate form launched by the Imperial Church.

Like the Jews in the time of Jesus, modern Christians also reject the Jesus who refused to become the Warrior King of Israel. They have replaced him with **the God of War** who became Constantine's

partner in the 4th century--*In This Sign You Will Conquer !* [See *The Church of the Empire*, Chapter IV, *Constantine's Miracle*] When they sing *God Bless America* and bring out the soldiers and the flags which stand for the wars of the empire, they in effect convert Jesus into the Warrior King they want. And, like the ancient Jews, they thereby reject the real Jesus, the one who preached that scandalous Sermon on the Mount, which says *Love Your Enemies* and other ridiculous things.

A Slap in the Face

You don't have to push *turn the other cheek* to mean that we are forbidden to defend ourselves or others from a serious violent attack. And there are many other things that Jesus said and did which have to be taken into account before we can fully understand what the nonviolent witness of Jesus means. Taken in its original context, this verse seems plainly to mean that we must abate that prickly self pride which is the source of 99% of our quarrels.

Self defense or defense of your family are fundamentally different questions from the question of war, despite the perennial propaganda which confuses the two. And both differ from the question about personal honor defined as the readiness to fight when challenged. A slap in the face is a challenge to a duel. Sir ! You have insulted MY HONOR ! The most obvious meaning of *turn the other cheek* is that we must abate that prickly pride so typical of individuals and nations which demands that we must at once respond to any insult or challenge to our personal pride or our national pride. As Lamentations 3.30 suggests: *let him give his cheek to the smiter and be filled with insults.* cf Isaiah 50.6

At one time in my life, I came to know an old patriarch who had killed at least 4 men, with some justification, and who had fathered 23 children that he acknowledged. He took care of them by making and selling moonshine whiskey. He lived by a code which he taught to his sons and his many grandsons: *if you touch me, you better kill me*--If you so much as lay a finger on me, you had better be prepared to kill me, or else I will kill you ! And this warrior code was a major reason why a number of his sons and grandsons served time in prison, as he had himself, after sometimes deadly duels with other men for the favors of fickle women.

His code is very much the world's code. It is conspicuous in the relations between nations that instant retaliation for any insult is necessary to maintain our national pride and power. If you mistreat our ambassador, you had better apologize at once, or war is imminent. This prickly pride and hair trigger pugnacity is typical of the stance that nations and individuals must maintain. Face saving is a basic cause of war.

And against this code Jesus gives us a principle of *turn the other cheek* which must have astonished and outraged the men of his time as much as it dismays us who pretend to be his followers. If you want to hear some imaginative attempts to explain away the *LITERAL* meaning of the BIBLE, ask the average Christian what Jesus meant by *turn the other cheek*. From these explanations you can only conclude that Jesus said it for our amusement. It was some kind of joke. This is one of many scriptures which those who claim to read The Bible *LITERALLY* refuse to take literally.

In fact, when He is struck by the servant of the high priest, as described in John 18.22-23, Jesus does not turn the other cheek. Rather, he demands an explanation: *If I have spoken evil, bear witness to the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me ?* In one of his treatises Augustine tries to argue from this that Jesus meant something quite different from the obvious and *LITERAL* meaning of what he said about *turn the other cheek*. But it shows the characteristic way that Jesus changes a physical or military or political contest into a moral and spiritual contest. Neither does he incinerate the man who struck him by a bolt of lightning as you or I would do if we had his powers.

Jesus launched a spiritual war against the world ruled by Satan. He announced that The Kingdom of God had arrived. And gave us the mission to establish it and the power to do it. [John 20.21-22] And this happened immediately after his own death and resurrection.

Like a soldier who gives up his life to defend his country, Jesus gave up his life to establish the *Kingdom* He preached. He was willing to die for it, but He was not willing to kill for it. That is the essential difference between the *Kingdom* of Jesus and every other Kingdom, as He says in John 18.36. He pushed the battle between good and evil into an entirely new dimension. [See *The Spiritual Warfare of Jesus Christ*]

weapons not carnal

And Paul teaches us how to 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.* In Ephesians 6.10-18 he describes the arms and the armor of the Christian Warrior and defines the enemy: *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.*

THE KINGDOM OF GOD versus the Kingdom of Israel

The **Kingdom of God** is the major teaching of Jesus and Paul and the other apostles. And, as they define it in the gospels and the epistles, it is fundamentally opposed to the **WORLD**, and to the **KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD**, including the **KINGDOM OF ISRAEL**.

The **WORLD**ly church which was established in the 4th century deliberately obscured that basic distinction and worldly *Christianity* has perpetuated that confusion ever since, because faith in the nation is an essential part of their worldly pseudo *Christian* faith.

Immediately after He turned down Satan's offer to make him the ruler of *all the kingdoms of THIS WORLD* (Luke 4.5-8) Jesus began his ministry with the proclamation that *The Kingdom of God is at Hand* (Matthew 4.23, Mark 1.15, Luke 4.43, John 3.3-5) as John the Baptist had done before him. (Matthew 3.2) And he went on to explain and define the *Kingdom of God* in dozens of verses to the end of his life. In John 18.36 he explained to Pilate that *my kingdom is not of THIS WORLD* and so his followers **do not fight** to establish it. He was crucified under a sign which mocked his pretensions to be *The King of the Jews*. And it points up the essential mystery of the life and death of Jesus Christ--why he refused to become the King of Israel even while he proclaimed **the Kingdom of God**.

Jesus had two chances to be the king and he turned down both of them. When the people of Israel intended to make him the King of Israel, Jesus escaped, as related in John 6.15. Jesus was **not a patriot** ! He was a **draft refuser** in respect to becoming the Messiah the Jews wanted--a king who would lead them in a successful rebellion against the Roman Empire. That is why they quit him. And why, a few years later, they followed false messiahs who led them into a doomed rebellion against the Roman Empire. That ended in the death of a million Jews, the destruction of the Temple, and the permanent exile of the Jews. As Jesus warns in Matthew 24.

Jesus defined his kingdom and his kingship by what he refused to do, by what he did and by what he said. Matthew 21.5-8 describes him fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9.9 *thy King cometh unto thee . . . lowly, riding upon an ass.* It is a kind of triumphal procession into Jerusalem for the final act of the

drama. But it is also the very negation of a proud military procession in which the **Son of David** should have entered Jerusalem, leading the army with which he would conquer Israel and throw off the yoke of the Roman Empire. Instead, you have these **undignified donkeys** and this ragged little impromptu procession. You have the unmistakable style of Jesus Christ. *Behold the man!* Behold the King of Peace! That is why the Jews rejected his claim to be the *Messiah*.

The apostate Christians of the 4th century caused this **pacifist** Jesus to disappear behind the Imperial Jesus who became the partner of the Emperor Constantine--**by this sign you will conquer!** In one of his orations Eusebius speculates that the Court of Constantine is the Kingdom of God. Today's false Christians do the same thing via **patriotic christianity**--*GodBlessAmerica!* What is it except the worship of the **beast** and his power? [See *Tracking Satan 666*]

The Original Kingdom of God--*The Lord's tent*

When John the Baptist and Jesus announce that **THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND**, they put forth a claim which resonates all the way back to Moses setting up a special tent where the Lord will dwell right in the middle of the camp as they travel through the desert. Exodus 25.8 29.42-46. They take this quite literally. Deuteronomy 23.13-14 tells them to *cover that which cometh from thee; For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp*

In Judges 8.23, Gideon refuses to become the king: *I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you.* And his refusal to become the king of Israel foreshadows the refusal of Jesus Christ to become the secular king of Israel in John 6.15 even while he persists in announcing that *the Kingdom of God is at hand*.

When the Lord finally agrees to let Israel have a human king, he agrees only under protest and says that it means *they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*. And in the very next verse, 1 Samuel 8.8, he equates their demand for a king with the apostasy whereby *they have forsaken me, and served other gods*. And in 8.11-18 he warns them that this king they have demanded will be a curse upon them, will take their sons and their daughters and their property, and that they will rue the day they asked for a king. 8.18 *And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day*. Hosea 8.4 says of the kings of Israel: *They have set up kings, but not by me. They have made princes and I knew it not*.

These passages show that the foundation of the Monarchy in Israel, represented not God's will but the wicked will of the Jewish people who thereby **REJECTED GOD**. This presentation is at odds with the belief that there is some easy compatibility between the Kingdom of God and the secular Kingdom of Israel.

The line which is drawn here between the kingship of God over the Jewish people and the rule of the kings of Israel points ahead to the line which Jesus Christ draws between the Kingdom of God which he proclaims and the Kingdom of Israel which he leaves to its folly and its terrible fate when he refuses to become the king of Israel.

The End of the Kingdom

Despite the reforms of King Josiah, he was killed in battle and the Kingdom of Judah came to an end in 586 B.C. The Lord abandoned it even though Josiah revived the observance of *The Law*. The northern kingdom of *Israel* proper had already been taken into permanent exile, by the time that the anti patriot prophet Jeremiah prophesied the doom of *Judah*, the southern kingdom. By the time of Jesus, it had been more than 500 years since Israel had been an independent kingdom.

But they kept alive the hope of a restored kingdom. And this hope was mixed up with the great expectation that it will also somehow be **THE KINGDOM OF GOD** on earth. And it is this double hope which Jesus addresses in his teaching--**which he separates**. He proclaims the *Kingdom of God* while refusing to become the King of Israel. Jeremiah's prophecy of the **New Covenant** is adversarial to a Patriotic Faith centered upon the Nation of Israel and The Law and The Temple in which the endless animal sacrifices are essential to their relationship with The Lord. As Hebrews 10.4 explains: *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins*. [See Hebrews 8.8-12 re: Jeremiah 31.31-34 the **New Covenant**.]

From the very beginning, Jesus had an adversarial relationship with the Kingdom of Israel. King Herod tried to kill him. (Matthew 2.3-18) And his son Herod beheaded John the Baptist who first announced that *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Matthew 14.3-10 Jesus set out to reform Judaism in basic ways. He challenged their rule bound religion, which *strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel* (Matthew 23.24). He deliberately violated the Sabbath rules by telling the man to pick up his bed and carry it. (John chapter 5). He taught them that it is **what comes out of your mouth**, not what goes into it, that makes you *unclean*. (Mark chapter 7) But mainly he defined **The Kingdom of God** to show that it would necessarily part company with **The Kingdom of Israel**. When you take away the Sabbath rules and the food rules and the animal sacrifices in the Temple and the faith in the nation of Israel, what is left of historical Judaism ?

In his parables he showed that the *New Covenant* was not restricted to the Nation of Israel and that *The Kingdom of God* was not reserved for the Jews-- *many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness*. Matthew 8.11-12 And Luke 16.16 *The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it*. And Luke 17.20-21 *And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here ! or, lo there ! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you*.

In Luke 22.16 Jesus says *I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God*. In Luke 24.42-43 he does eat, by way of showing that the *kingdom had arrived* as the result of his crucifixion and resurrection. In Luke 24.44, Jesus says that by his death and resurrection He has now *fulfilled all things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*. That is, the fulfillment is done.

In the 24th chapter of Matthew, and other places in the gospel, Jesus warns them of what is coming to them because they have rejected the kingdom of God to pursue a secular kingdom. Instead they continued to pursue the dream and the illusion of a restored secular kingdom of Israel.

The rejection of King Jesus and his Kingdom was Act One. Act Two was the attempt to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel by a great uprising against the Romans in 66 A.D.. That was the kind of Kingdom they believed in. Act Three was the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Romans, the death of a million Jews, and their dispersal to all nations.

Of course they were already dispersed. By the time of Jesus there were as many Jews in Alexandria Egypt as there were in Jerusalem. And the destruction of the Temple accelerated the development of the spiritual and individual form of Judaism which is not centered upon the Nation of Israel and which no longer relies upon the animal sacrifices of The Temple to stay right with God. And they are hardly to blame for not converting to that Military Christianity which began to persecute the Jews as well as the non-conforming Christians in the 4th century. The Jews will be converted if and when they ever encounter authentic Christianity. They won't learn it from the TV evangelists.

Paul preaches the *KINGDOM OF GOD*

Acts 14.22 *We must through many tribulations enter THE KINGDOM OF GOD.* say Paul and Barnabas
Acts 19.8 *And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of THE KINGDOM OF GOD.* Acts 20.21-25 *testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ . . . 24 so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.* And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching THE KINGDOM OF GOD, will see my face no more." [**comment:** Paul calls it THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD and he has preached it to both the Jews, and also to Greeks and he also describes it as preaching THE KINGDOM OF GOD. So the gospel of grace and the gospel of the kingdom are THE SAME GOSPEL;]
Acts 28.23 *So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of THE KINGDOM OF GOD, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.* Acts 28.30-31 *Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, 31 preaching THE KINGDOM OF GOD and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*

Romans 14.17 *for THE KINGDOM OF GOD is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* 1st Corinthians 4.19-20 *But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power* 20 *For THE KINGDOM OF GOD is not in word but in power* 1st Corinthians 6.9-10 *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit THE KINGDOM OF GOD ? . . . nor extortioners will inherit THE KINGDOM OF GOD.* 1st Corinthians 15.24-26 *Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.* 1st Corinthians 15.50 *flesh and blood cannot inherit THE KINGDOM OF GOD; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.* Galatians 5.21 *they which do such things shall not inherit THE KINGDOM OF GOD* Ephesians 5.5 *no fornicator . . . has any inheritance in THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND OF GOD* Colossians 1.13-14 *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into THE KINGDOM OF HIS DEAR SON 14 in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.* Colossians 4.11 *and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for THE KINGDOM OF GOD who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.* 1st Thess. 2.12 *that you would have a walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.* 2nd Thess. 1.5 *that you may be counted worthy of THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*

Jesus the Pacifist

In describing Jesus Christ as a pacifist, I mean that he refused to go to war, and that he taught his followers to do the same. He refused to be the secular King of Israel or to lead a rebellion against the Roman occupation of Israel. The Christian community he founded was entirely independent of the Jewish nation, unlike the Old Testament church, which was a state church. In fact the early Christian church defined itself in opposition to the Jewish religious establishment which had the primary role in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and in the persecution of the early Christians. And the true Christian community remained independent of the Roman Empire long after some apostates and traitors cut the deal with Constantine which established the new imperial church of the 4th century--the grandparent of today's Secular Christian churches. [see *The Church of the Empire* on the *Radical Christian Press.org* web site]

The true Christian community is the antithesis of the state church. Nor is there any such thing as a Christian Nation or a Christian Empire. [See *Heresy of the Christian State*] It is a contradiction in terms. *My kingdom is not of this world*. The imperial state church or the Christian nation both describe the unholy union of the secular state and the Christian Church--as if *the world* and *the kingdom of God* could merge. When Jesus says that his *kingdom is not* of this *world* and that his followers therefore do not fight (John 18.36) He means just that. We are spiritually and morally separate from *THE WORLD* and so we do not go to war on its behalf.

That is how the first Christians understood the teaching of Jesus and thousands of them went to their deaths rather than join the army or take a patriotic pledge of allegiance to the empire and its emperor. They defined the only real *Christian nation* by their witness and by their blood. They saw themselves as belonging to a kingdom which was separate in a fundamental spiritual and moral way from the Jewish nation and from the Roman empire. They were the new Israel and the true Israel and they followed the true king who led them into a new kind of war for a new kind of kingdom.

So in the primary meaning of *PACIFIST* as one who refuses to participate in war, who refuses to participate in the contest by which nations are established or destroyed, clearly Jesus was a pacifist. He didn't just say it, he meant it and he did it. He did refuse to go to war to defend his nation or to liberate it from the foreign conquerors and it was soon thereafter destroyed as the direct result of his refusal. His refusal was one of the primary reasons for his crucifixion. His claim to be the King meant trouble with the Romans and with the Jewish establishment while his refusal to actually become the new King of Israel lost him the popular support by which he might have prevailed in a contest with these powerful enemies.

In respect to his nation and its desperate struggle to free itself from Roman bondage, Jesus Christ was a **Draft Refuser**, and at the highest level. He refused to be the King they needed. (John 6.15) Even though, by any secular standard, the cause of Israel in respect to the Roman Empire was entirely just. They had 100 times as much justification for rebelling against the Roman Empire as the American Colonies did for rebelling against the British Empire. By contrast, the American justification is an exercise in trivial complaint. Imagine Jesus answering the question: *Is it Lawful to pay the tax which Parliament has put on tea ?* Yes, of course. Is that all you have to complain about ? You are going to go to war over this ? ! But Jesus would not fight for his own nation despite the terrible oppression they suffered under the Roman Empire. And he explained why: *My Kingdom is not of this world*. And that is why **MY FOLLOWERS DO NOT FIGHT**. Don't fight in armies, don't fight with physical weapons, don't fight for power. Instead He called them to a spiritual battle to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Pacifism, not passivism

Jesus was a *pacifist* not a *passivist*. Patriots and secular Christians are *passivists* who content themselves with verbally supporting what they avoid doing themselves. Jesus was the reverse of passive. He led the way and set the example. He did everything and *SUPPORTED* nothing, unlike those who falsely claim to be his followers, who *SUPPORT* everything and do nothing. He launched an aggressive war against the world which continues to this day among the few who have remained faithful to his call. He fought the battle in person and put his own body on the front line.

Patriots are seldom seen at the front lines of the battle. When they do get there, they get out of there as soon as they can. The further from the front lines, the hotter burns the fire of patriotism. Patriots *SUPPORT* the boys at the front in lieu of joining them. Waving a flag from a safe distance is the substitute for being out where the bullets fly. They *SUPPORT* the war just like secular Christians

SUPPORT the Christian cause with small contributions and symbolic gestures, in lieu of living the Christian life themselves. They wave the flag a few thousand miles away from where the killing and dying takes place. They don't stick an extra \$ 100 in the tax return envelope to pay for the war, but they *Support the Troops* by spending \$ 2 for a bumper sticker which says that. Unless they can get one for free.

power & money

The major causes of war are not, as simpletons are taught to believe, that we have to defend our families. The major causes of war are the love of money and the passion for power. We have never fought a war that was necessary to defend our families. We have fought a dozen wars that were necessary to establish and maintain the power and the wealth of the American empire. We did not go to war with England because the English would not leave our women folk alone. The great slogan of the American Revolution was: *taxation without representation is tyranny* ! That is, they are taking our money and replacing the corruptions of the colonial legislature with the corruptions of Parliament, so we have to go to war with them.

If you read what Jesus taught us about power and money you see that he taught us to shun both. And therefore, if we live as Christians, we will find that we have eliminated both of the major reasons for war. So if we do not go to war for money or for power, if we do not go to war for the nation, what is left ?

defending our families

The pretended justification for war is always the same: we have to protect our families. If we don't conquer those blue painted barbarians of the British Isles, they will soon be down here in Rome raping our wives and daughters. And, sure enough, 400 years later, that is just what they did, having been recruited into the Roman Army and supplied with Roman weapons in the mean time.

If we don't send 500,000 soldiers to Vietnam, those Vietnamese will soon be rowing across 10,000 miles of ocean to attack our wives and daughters. That is why we have to send our fellows there to attack their wives and daughters as a pre-emptive measure.

The dumbest draftee must sometimes wonder if he is really defending his family and his country when he finds himself 12,000 miles from home and 10,000 miles from the nearest American shoreline. That is when Defending Freedom or some other abstraction is put in its place.

If you are really concerned with protecting your home and family, you might note the obvious fact that you can do it much better if you are at home instead of 12,000 miles from home. You might recognize that attacking somebody else's home and family in a foreign country isn't actually the same thing as protecting your own in this country. So you can be a *pacifist* in the philosophical sense and still go around armed to the teeth because of your fears for your daughter's safety. If men fought only in defense of their homes and their families there could be no wars. Someone has to leave home before the war can begin. Typically, both sides are far from home, like the Americans and the Japanese battling for possession of the Philippines.

A good reason for being a pacifist is that war always brings an epidemic of rape. If you are serious about preventing rape, you have to be serious about preventing war. The thousands of rapes committed in the war in Bosnia and in the endless African wars are only the latest examples. Our Russian allies in World War II were notorious for raping all across Europe. The Germans did the same. The Americans and the British did the same. Every army in the field in war time turns into a gang of rapists. How else can it be

? You take young men away from their homes and their wives and their girl friends at the lustiest time of their lives. You put them in desperate situations where death is a daily reality, where there is no law except the soldier himself. You turn them loose on a defenceless population. If they don't rape women, they prostitute them with their army pay. They leave behind a crop of illegitimate kids to fend for themselves in a society devastated by war. [See *Rape in War Time*]

That raw fact is routinely covered up and left undocumented. That isn't the image of the soldier that we want to present to the folks back home. G.I. Joe is shown giving a candy bar to the orphan. He is not shown making an orphan out of the boy or prostituting his mother with a carton of cigarettes. It is another of the basic lies about war. There was a rare candid report done after the war in which Pakistan split into West and East Pakistan--now called Bangladesh. Some 120,000 women were raped in East Pakistan by the soldiers of the West Pakistan army, and that in a small war, between former countrymen, that only lasted a few months. Many of these women were then cast out by their orthodox Moslem families, and so some of them committed suicide.

The fiction is that armed men will protect our women folk from being raped. The fact is that these armed men are themselves the primary cause of rape. And how do you defend yourself and your family when the Russian army--or the American army--comes marching down the street ? *An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.* Preventing armies is the effective way to prevent rape.

It is too bad no one ever asked Jesus the **key question:** *Suppose a Roman soldier were about to rape your mother, and you had a sword, and the only way you could stop him . . .* Which is typical of the *Hypothetical Morality* questions people deploy to justify anything and everything, like sending an army to the other side of the planet. Our fantasies distract us from dealing with our realities. [See Bulletin # 8 of that title in the *War for the Unborn*] One obvious answer is that Roman soldiers traveled in troops and the individual in a conquered town had no chance to stop them, no more than a resident of Berlin could stop the Russian soldiers. No more than the Vietnamese villagers could defend themselves against the American rapists.

protecting the children

Another propaganda lie is that military force is necessary to protect children. The violence which pretends to be in defense of children invariably leads to killing them. *Defending our children* is the perennial excuse for wars in which millions of children are killed. It is used as an entering wedge argument, just like *Saving the life of the mother* is used as an entering wedge argument for the mass murder of abortion. The allied bombing of Dresden created a fire storm which killed all the children of Dresden. The children of Hiroshima and the children of Nagasaki were destroyed by the atomic bombs that America dropped on those cities. The children at Mylai were massacred without mercy by American soldiers who would tell you that they went there to protect their families back home. Of 60 million people killed in World War II, two thirds were civilians and half of those were children. So this righteous war on behalf of Americanism and Bolshevism defended children by killing 20 million of them.

See *The Roots of Abortion* VIII THE COMPOST PATRIOT and IX Child Sacrifice to the Goddess Of Liberty.

A mother's watchful eye is the weapon that protects children. The police & the army are no use--the children keep getting in the way of all that firepower. You don't need a .357 Magnum to protect your child from being knocked down on the playground by a bigger kid. But the justification of *protecting my*

child is used over and over again to justify killing somebody else's child. The fantasy is that guns protect children. The reality is that guns kill children.

The children of the world are not protected by our guns. Rather, they need protection from the guns and the bombs that we use so wantonly in these wars that we fight for wealth and power and national glory. They need protection from these armaments that we sell around the world to keep our faltering economy going. Thousands of children are killed or injured every year by the millions of antipersonnel land mines scattered in various foreign wars and never collected. Most of them were made in the U.S.A., which is the world's leading arms supplier.

And that is only one of the several kinds of child murder that we perpetrate. Thousands of children die from preventable causes in those slums which are created here and abroad by our love of money and our indifference to the poor. It isn't our guns that are needed to protect children. It is the money that we spend on weapons--100 billion and more ! --and on luxuries for ourselves while others lack basic necessities. This *protecting a child* argument is invoked as a cover for something very different.

War has to do with the state. It has nothing to do with self defense, nothing to do with defending your daughter and rarely has anything to do with *defending our country*--although simpletons are routinely deceived into believing that it has to do with all of these things. It has a lot to do with furthering something called *the national interest*--supposedly--but even that is debatable. That "interest" seems always to coincide with the interests of rich and powerful people who are very unlikely to be sharing with the rest of us.

Philosophical Pacifism

Pacifism, in its general and philosophical sense, means that you are opposed to war. It doesn't necessarily mean that you reject personal self defense. You may or may not, but it is a separate question. There is an obvious difference between one conscientious man using force in a desperate personal situation and a war in which the prisons and the slums are emptied to put a million armed hooligans into uniforms. Then they are sent halfway around the world to shoot people whose language they don't even understand. It is one thing for an American to shoot someone who is trying to rape his daughter. It is another for him to be raping a Vietnamese woman at the point of a gun, or prostituting one with his army pay. The imaginary situation is used to justify an entirely different one--the one that actually happened in the 1960s.

A person need not be a Christian pacifist to subscribe to some such propositions as these: 1) If I want to fight my enemies, I don't have to travel 10,000 miles to find some--I don't need to go any further than Washington D.C. 2) I don't need to have the federal government make the decision for me as to who the enemy is.

So pacifism, that is, being opposed to war, can be argued as a common sense proposition to the secular-minded--that is, to most "Christians." But common sense seems never to provide a sure foundation for morality of any kind when faith in God is lacking. For some reason it seems that we have to learn to see the invisible and the far off before we can see what is visible right in front of us.

Christian pacifism

Pacifism which is based on real faith in Jesus Christ takes on an entirely new dimension. It is no longer just a negative opposition to these epidemics of rape, robbery and mass murder, which are called "wars," it is an affirmation that there is a way to go to war against evil which works.

Were Jesus and his disciples safe from evil men ? They aggressively challenged a society that was as lethal as anything we have ever faced. Like Saint Stephen, you could be summarily executed just for saying the wrong thing. But Jesus Christ walked unafraid down the narrow streets of Jerusalem for a high noon confrontation with the bad guys. Just like Gary Cooper, but without the guns. The Man had Guts ! And the Son of Man had a Spirit of Courage which he bequeathed to us ! [John 20.22] So we don't have any excuse for not following his example because we don't have to rely upon the puny spirit that is in us. It is the very Spirit of God that gives us the necessary courage to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Of Saint Peter. Of Saint Paul. Of Saint Stephen. Of Ignatius and Polycarp, Perpetua and Felicitas, and all the other Christ-imitating Saints who boldly confronted the evil of their day, following in the footsteps of the Master. They were mortal men and women like us, who showed that they were animated by an immortal Spirit.

In fact, the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ fights for us when we take up the battle in the way that he showed us. One way or another he will protect us and defend us and we may proceed with absolute confidence that we are never at the mercy of evil men, no more are we at the mercy of evil spirits. God isn't looking the other way, He isn't out to lunch, He isn't sleeping, and He hasn't turned His back on us, not if we are doing His work and fighting his fight. He is an employer who takes good care of his employees.

When you get that into your head, and when you finally learn to believe it, it changes all your calculations as to where safety lies. In fact, it changes your life.

It isn't that bad things never happen to us. Bad things happen to Christians all the time. But, somehow or another, sooner or later, God turns them into good things. And that teaches us to put our trust in God, not in things. It teaches us to put our trust in God, not in money, not in guns, not in the safety which the police and the army pretend to provide. It teaches us to trust in God in bad times just the same as in good times. It teaches us that the Great Empire is an idol with feet of clay. It cannot protect us, it cannot even protect itself. The hymn truly says:

*Some may trust in horses
some may trust in chariots
But we will trust
in the name of our God !*

*In the name of Jesus
our salvation lies
He will hear from heaven
And answer every cry !*

My only argument with the verse is that Jesus isn't so far away as *heaven* implies. When we have real trouble, He is right down here with us. The Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ walks into the battle with us when we fight it in Jesus' way.

But secular Christians continue to put their faith in the Lone Ranger. They look to the good man with a gun instead of the Prince of Peace for their protection. They apply ethical principles taken from Saturday morning cartoons, westerns, space fantasies, spy novels, detective stories and war melodramas--all the scriptures from which patriot *Christians* learn their most basic moral principle: **A GOOD MAN WITH A GUN ANSWERETH TO EVIL** (John 30-30, Luke 45-70, Matthew 12 gauge)

in guns we trust

These gun fantasies come from that fantasy land which is the devil's play ground. The faith in guns is one variety of the faith in power and money. It is a cousin of the faith in the law and the lawyers. It is spiritually akin to the fantasy that we can win the victory through conventional politics. People who are afraid of guns have instead the faith that morality can be popularity, that it can be established by popular vote. They have the illusion that there is a safe and respectable way to fight the battle that requires no real sacrifice or courage from us. We can stick with the crowd = *the people are with us*.

What is missing is faith in the way that Jesus Christ showed us. What is missing is faith in courageous personal witness, the commitment to nonviolent direct action. Instead of worrying about how we are going to defend ourselves when they come to get us, we should be worrying about the best way that we can get them ! The best defense is a good offense. The best offense is the one that Jesus Christ chalked out for us and showed us how to run.

The response that Jesus gives to Pilate gives his basic prescription for dealing with evil: *bear witness*. We are swamped by evil because we do not have the courage to bear witness against evil. We let it grow and grow until war becomes inevitable. Let the government take care of it, let the military deal with it. If the so-called Christians of Germany had witnessed against the evils of Nazism when it first began, it would not have taken 60 million killed to stop it. And it wasn't really stopped then, it was only transformed into the success of Communism, which led to another 60 million killed. Imagine what the difference would have been if only a few more Christians had followed the example of Franz Jaggerstatter in bearing Christian witness against the evils of Nazism. Which, together with Bolshevism, its twin, were the poisonous fruits of World War I, that great eruption of mass murder in the very heart of patriotic Christendom. [See *Hitler Deploys the Patriot Pastors* on the *www.Radical Christian Press.org* web site]

If, like the early Christians, we shun the pursuit of power and wealth, if, like Jesus himself, we do not respond with violence to personal insult, we thereby eliminate the three major causes of war. If we *bear witness* against evil on a daily basis instead of letting it grow unchecked, like weeds in the garden, we do not find ourselves in those desperate situations in which massive State organized violence seems to be the only remedy.

When you neglect to do all the things you can and should do to bring your son up right you arrive at a situation where there is no alternative except to hand him over to the police. And they can't do anything with him either. The actual premise of war is that we neglect Christian witness and fail to oppose evil in all of the ways that are open to us, until finally evil has grown to where there is nothing for it but to kill 60 million people to eradicate it. That is, to achieve the illusion that we have eradicated it. Because we were afraid to open our mouths and witness to the truth, we arrive at a situation where there seems to be no alternative except to send in the soldiers to deal with this evil.

If those who called themselves Christians had energetically opposed slavery there need never have been an American Civil War. They went along with it for centuries. Then most of those who opposed it opposed it as a matter of idle opinion, discreetly expressed, not as a matter of passion, conviction, courageous personal witness, and nonviolent direct action. The result was that their sons had to pay with their lives in a contest that was about power not about the evil of slavery. As General Sherman once bluntly stated it: *all the niggers in the South aren't worth the life of one union soldier. This is about control of the Mississippi*. But they had to believe in the righteousness of this cause and the necessity of this cause or admit that the blood of their sons had been shed in a contest that was inspired by the devil.

Ask yourself a pair of real questions: I. how many times have you saved someone from death by having a gun handy and using it ? II. how many times have you let someone die because you did not have the courage to bear Christian witness, like that brave handful who save babies from death by *Sidewalk Counseling* in front of the abortion clinic ? In fact the babies die every morning while secular Christians pursue the affluent American lifestyle and indulge themselves in fantasies of some day saving a life with that gun they keep handy.

The Witness of the Early Church

A sincere Christian does not try to find his way around texts like *love your enemies* or *my followers don't fight because my kingdom is not of this world*. Jesus did forbid us to go to war and we have to live up to that. That isn't my opinion, it was the conviction of the early church before the anti church of the Roman Empire appeared, as witness Polycarp, Origen, Tertullian, the *Canons of Hippolytus* and the personal statements of thousands of Christians who went to their deaths for refusing to serve in the Roman army. Respect their courage and their witness in blood to their belief that Jesus taught us not to kill. What do secular Christians believe in enough to die for ? They believe in the empire enough to conscript other people's sons to die for it.

In the example of his own life and in his teaching, Jesus shows us three things that we must shun: wealth, power and violence. And these things are tied together. Wealth buys power and power brings wealth, but war is necessary to get and keep both. There are 50 places in the gospel where by his example and his teaching Jesus shows us that we must avoid money, power and violence. A modern Christian can explain away all of them by way of validating a Christianity which is in fact wedded to wealth, power and war. In the first centuries of Christianity they didn't explain them away. Those primitive Christians avoided all luxury and shared everything they had. They could not be magistrates. They went to their deaths for refusing to serve in the Roman army, just as Jesus was killed for refusing to be the kind of a king that the Jews wanted.

That pacifist witness has persisted through the centuries despite the persecutions of the state and its ally the state church. The refusal to kill for the state is characteristic of the *heretical* sects that tried to restore the Christian Church to its original integrity. It reappears in the early Baptists, (= the present-day Mennonite and Amish) in the Quakers and in the sometimes authentically Christian parts of otherwise secular churches, like the early Franciscans.

I have been studying war and pacifism for many years now and I have gone to prison for it. But I am still trying to understand the mystery of the life of Jesus Christ and what his nonviolence means for us. Thinking about it is one thing, trying to live up to it is another. For most of those years I have had a gun handy. It is only in the last few years that I have tried seriously to follow Jesus more closely. I think the gun is one of the things you leave behind when you get serious about following Jesus Christ.

the God of Peace

The God that the New Testament reveals to us is not a god of war. He is a God of Peace who wages spiritual war through us. As Romans 16.20 says *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. Note *under your feet*. Even though the power is his, the victory is ours also. Hebrews 13.20 says: *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. To whom be glory for ever and ever Amen.*

Isaiah 9.2 says: *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.* We have been given a *great light*. We are soldiers who belong to *the camp of light*, as Tertullian said, who have sworn our loyalty to the Prince of Peace. We must not then join those who have turned back to *the camp of darkness*.

Terry Sullivan

For more on the pacifism of Jesus Christ, see:

Turning the Other Cheek / Jesus the Pacifist

Render, Not Surrender, Unto Caesar

He Beat them with a Whip !

Two Swords Is Enough--Enough for What ?

Tracking Satan 666

The New Covenant versus the Old Covenant

The Spiritual Warfare of Jesus Christ

Hitler Deploys the Patriot Pastors

Heresy of the Christian State

The Church of the Empire

on the *Radical Christian Press.org* web site