

My Servants Would Fight

By George Davis and Michael Clark

No one had ever heard anything like it! "Love your enemies . . . do good to those who despitefully use you . . . if your enemy thirsts give him a drink." How preposterous! Surely Jesus requires too much of us! How could one dare drop his guard in such a violent world?

Jesus came offering peace in the midst of turmoil and freedom, regardless of even the most oppressive circumstances. "Peace not as the World gives, give I unto you." The freedom Jesus offers His followers remains as great an offense to the politically minded of today as it was to Judas the Zealot. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Such freedom is not won by political or military conquest. Rather, it is enjoyed in the presence of our enemies. Jesus tells us how. "Bless those who curse you". This is not natural at all! Surely Christ requires too much of us! How is victory gained by giving those who seek to harm us a cup of cold water in Christ's name? Is it reasonable for Him to expect us to make ourselves vulnerable and thereby give our enemies the perfect freedom to do as they will to us?



And isn't He taking the side of our enemies when He exhorts us, "If your enemy bids you to go a mile go with him two"? Why is this? Christ has called us to be witnesses and the witness is in the second mile. In the second mile you are no longer conscripted (as it was under Roman law) but free to love and serve your enemy. There is no witness in the first mile. You have done what is required of you, the expected thing and demanded thing. This is not exceptional at all. Christ asks for more! The witness is in the second mile in which you serve freely. There is no

witness in our efforts to protect our rights and love only of those who give us our due. If we are to be perfect as God is perfect we must go beyond this purely carnal instinct. We are called to respond as God does. "He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." We are called to live above the natural, carnal responses that are rooted in the fleshy desire to protect our life and interests. Jesus' question to all who serve their own interests and love only those who serve their interests is, "What more are you doing than others?" In other words, "You

are no different that the rest of the world." The testimony is in the difference. Everyone is good to those who serve their interests. There is no testimony there. It is in loving or enemies that we are perfect as God is perfect. When we behave toward our enemies as God does toward His, then we are perfect—then are we sons of your Father who is in heaven. He sends His rain on the just and unjust! Do we?

Now, let's read Christ's words again, in context.

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:44-48 RSV)

This is extremely important because our obedience to Christ in this matter determines all God's responses toward us. He will not act on our behalf if our preoccupation in life is to ensure that we receive fair and just treatment and demand retribution from those who do not comply. If we defend ourselves He will not be our Defender. Why is that? We are saving our lives and receiving the promised results. If we seek to save our lives we will lose them. If we are unforgiving in our obsession to receive fair treatment, God will withhold forgiveness from us. Why? We are engaged in an activity that is not ours to do. "Vengeance is Mine says the Lord, I will repay." Though it is much easier said than done, if we make ourselves vulnerable, having complete faith in God's provision and protection, He promises to be our Defender. This principle is throughout the Old and New Testaments alike. A simple reading of the text will prove this out. Suffice it to say, God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are often not our thoughts. We must have our minds renewed in order to see victorious life as God sees it. Not by power or by might but by His Spirit.

Jesus modeled this at every turn and season. For instance, when He humbly rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, He was making a declaration of victory and peace that had, many years before, been announced by the prophets of Israel. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a

donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10 NRSV). Triumphant, victorious, declaring peace, yet lowly and humble; this is not the way it is done among the world's victors! Where is the parading of the vanquished in chains before all? What was so victorious about coming into Jerusalem meek and lowly, setting on a humble beast of burden only to be crucified shortly thereafter? Where is the victory in that? Unless our minds are renewed with the mind of Christ we will not see it. We cannot rejoice greatly until we comprehend the nature of the true victory that Christ won on our behalf—the victory to end all wars.

Before this victory could be fully won, Jesus first had to conquer the very thing which keeps humankind in a constant struggle to defend and save their lives. He overcame the carnal passion to retaliate in defense of His life. When Peter in his passion drew his sword in defense of the Lord, cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Jesus said, "Put up again your sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Though all the power of heaven was at His beacon call Jesus would not circumvent the cup of His suffering. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. How could God command peace to the nations if His own Son rose up to defend himself in the very spirit and character of every other warrior-king? No. Jesus came as Prince of Peace to show us another way. Through obedience to the Father's will, Jesus won a great victory. He disarmed rulers and authorities; "he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them . . ." Wait a minute! When did Jesus parade Caesar through the streets naked as His vanquished foe? How about Herod, Pilate, the high priests or the rest of the power structure that came against Him? How did He triumph over them? How did He make an open show of rulers and authorities? He did it by laying down His life on the cross. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:14-15 KJ2000).

Jesus spoiled the Spoiler and took his captives captive to Himself by becoming their righteousness. Jesus overcame evil with goodness that defines all that is good. This is the anomalous victory that from a purely human perspective looks like utter defeat. Leaving scoffers to mock, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King

of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Matthew 27:42-43 NKJV). He could have saved himself. He could have called legions of angels but He didn't. Instead elected to model another way; He overcame evil with good.

The impact of Christ's victory is far-reaching. James A. Francis was indeed within the mark when he wrote:

"I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as that *One Solitary Life*" - *One Solitary Life*

This powerfully stated truth would not be true at all had Christ not overcome in a particular way. Had He returned evil for evil, all would have been lost. If we want to know the victory of Christ we must obey Him in this matter for such a victory is known only by those who walk as he walked.

Overcoming Evil with Good

For the sake of emphasis, let's now compare Jesus' words on this subject and the words of those who were commissioned by Him, noting the general comprehension and application of them among the early believers.

Jesus taught,

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, don't resist him who is evil; but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. If anyone sues you to take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and don't turn away him who desires to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you, that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you

have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? If you only greet your friends, what more do you do than others? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:38-48 WEB)

Woe when men speak well of you! For their fathers did the same thing to the false prophets. "But I tell you who hear: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer also the other; and from him who takes away your cloak, don't withhold your coat also. Give to everyone who asks you, and don't ask him who takes away your goods to give them back again. As you would like people to do to you, do exactly so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive back as much. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back; and your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. (Luke 6:26-35 WEB)

How did those who were taught and commissioned by Christ perceive and communicate His teachings? Peter wrote,

Beloved, don't be astonished at the fiery trial which has come upon you, to test you, as though a strange thing happened to you. But because you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also you may rejoice with exceeding joy. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you; because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. On their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is glorified. For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters. But if one of you suffers for being a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. If it begins first with us, what will happen to those who don't obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:12-17 WEB)

Finally, be all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brothers, tenderhearted, courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing. For, "He who would love life, And see good days, Let him keep his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil, and do good. Let him seek peace, and

pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And his ears open to their prayer; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (1 Peter 3:8-12 WEB)

Paul wrote,

Don't seek to revenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God's wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord." Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his head." Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:19-21 WEB)

See that no one returns evil for evil to anyone, but always follow after that which is good, for one another, and for all. (1 Thessalonians 5:15 WEB)

Pretty clear don't you think? To this we were called! It is evil when someone attacks me. It is evil when I retaliate. Two evils don't make a good. For the next few moments let's look at Matthew 5:39, where in three little words Jesus gives the only righteous response to evil.

"Resist Not Evil"

"You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:38-39 KJ2000)

We tend to take the Bible literally except for passages like this. Surely there is some deeper meaning that doesn't leave us at the mercy of our enemies? Who is guiltier, the one who does evil or the one who returns evil? "He hit me first!" is a popular excuse offered by children on playgrounds every day. An eye for an eye, tit-for-tat, surely I am just in repaying my enemies double especially if they strike first. Until the teachings of Jesus are taken seriously, there will never be an end to the wars. A godly peace is not won by the chariots, war-horses and battle bows but through lowliness, meekness and self-sacrifice.

While exiled on the island of Patmos, John heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down". How is the accuser cast down? How do the salvation,

strength, kingdom and power of Christ come? The record continues, "And they [the overcomers] overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (see Revelation 12:10-11). How is the accuser of the brethren cast down? Overcomers cast him down. They do this by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. One more thing is needed before we can possess the final victory. The very thing that was required of Christ himself is required of us. He loved not His life unto death and it is written of these overcomers, who obviously had taken the best hit that Satan could deliver, "they loved not their lives unto death." They suffered evil but they overcame just as Jesus did.

Jesus taught that you can only keep what you lose. He taught that the surest way to lose your life is to try to save it. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever will lose his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25 WEB). This goes beyond living by the sword and dying by the sword but reaches to the heart and depth of what makes men hedonists and survivors by nature. If we are altogether given to pursuing our own pleasure and defending our rights, we will most certainly lose everything in the end. When Jesus commissioned his disciples, He said, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16 NKJV). He did not send his followers forth as armor clad crusaders, defenders of the faith and "protectors of the Holy Land." Though we live in this world, we are not of the world. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal (see 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Though it is sometimes taken by force, God's kingdom cannot be advanced by force. The wrath of man doesn't work the righteousness of God.

When the leaders of the Jews delivered Jesus to be executed, Pilate tried to ascertain exactly what it was that Jesus was guilty of. He asked Jesus, "What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from here." (John 18:36 KJ2000). My kingdom is not of (ek), out of, from or by this world. Jesus' kingdom is not after the model of worldly kingdoms. He offered as proof of this the fact that he did not allow his servants to fight in His defense. If His kingdom were of this world, His servants would fight. It is not unreasonable to conclude, if it is fighting it is not Christ's kingdom.

Those who are truly born of His Spirit are still not allowed to return evil for evil because that is not how the Father does things. His sun rises on the good and evil. It is not in

His Father-heart to do evil to His children no matter how deluded they are. He is not willing that any should perish. He is longsuffering. He patiently and lovingly waits for the fruit of the earth. He does not render evil for evil.

One time Jesus and the disciples were turned away from passing through a Samaritan village because these people perceived that they were on their way to Jerusalem.

"...when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, will you that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?' But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, 'You know not what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' And they went to another village." (Luke 9:54-56 KJ2000). Like Father, like Son. Of God's purposes Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9 KJ21).

Those who rush to take men's lives, even for a "just cause", do not know what spirit they are of.

When the leaders of the Jews sought to kill Jesus he told them, "**You are of your father the devil and he was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.**" Worldly kingdoms and fighting go hand in hand, because they are under the authority of the prince of this world. But Christ's kingdom is not of this world order. Therefore Christ's followers do not fight—not even to promote "the greater good."

Perhaps you are asking, what about the untold thousands that were killed or tortured in Holy Wars and Inquisitions under the banner of the Christian cross? How did war become holy and torture become evangelical? This brings us to the very heart of the issue of this article. At what point did the church cast off the example and teachings of Christ in order to engage in "Crusades" and "Holy Wars" to "promote the cause of Christ" or even "Christian principles"? And what are the grave consequences of this among Christians today?

Has Christianity Lost its Savor?

We will now ask a difficult question. Has the Spirit of Glory departed from Christianity because the church no longer turns the other cheek?

We tend to marvel over Israel's treatment of Christ, their Messiah, and their inability to comprehend His teachings, not recognizing that a similar condition exists in the Church today. When Jesus came as Messiah, Israel was looking for a conquering king who would not only drive out the Romans, but dominate the whole earth and rule from Jerusalem, setting their existing rulers up in His new administration to co-rule with Him. Israel didn't want a Messiah who would tell them to put down their weapons, suffer offenses, turn the other cheek, carry the packs of the Roman soldiers that extra mile, etc. This message is just as unpopular in the church today. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is a constant source of irritation to those, like Judas the zealot, who seek a militaristic solution for the salvation of the Americanized Church. Israel wanted a Messiah who would lead them in a military victory over Rome. Is this what fundamentalists are asking Him to do today? By all appearances it is. Many Christians today have made Christ their god of war to help defeat the Muslims.

Recently, we tuned in to a Christian television broadcast. Two televangelists were discussing "the war on terrorism." We were stunned by how casually they concluded that our country needed to attack another country because of their terrorist affiliation and how freely they salted the conversation with intermittent praises to Christ for the defeat of America's enemies. It is becoming commonplace to hear such talk coming from Christian quarters nowadays. Televangelists increasingly sound more like generals in war rooms than heralds of the gospel of peace! It was interesting to watch the show put on in the nation's capital after the 9/11 attacks. Assembled in the National Cathedral were the top leaders of Christendom, a Jewish rabbi, a Muslim cleric, the President and most of his cabinet, congressman and even the admirals and generals of the US military. They were there to invoke God's help in calling down fire on our enemies. Warriors were seeking the approval of clerics to use their influence over the people to get the backing of the nation to go to war. It is one thing when nations rise against nations but quite another when "Christians" participate by giving their support.

Just a few months ago, another prominent television evangelist told his viewers that our country should "take out" the Venezuelan President to prevent this Latin American country from becoming a "launching pad" for extremism. "We have the ability to take him out", he exclaimed, "and I think the time has come that we exercise that ability." What? Is it the Spirit of Christ? Can you imagine Christ saying such a thing? The world holds Christians to a higher standard than this! Evidently we don't impress them all that much! Even they recognize that the Church ought to follow the example and teachings

of Christ. They have every right to judge us and they are more than eager to do so. Gandhi once told a missionary in India who asked why he was not a Christian, "I would believe in your Christ if it was not for you Christians."

Why is it that, in this matter, even the world seems to have a clearer perspective than many Christians do? We believe this is due to the blinding effect of a long held church doctrine called "the just war theology" dating back to Constantine. Yes, ours is not the first country to try to make Christ their war god. Let's take a brief look at the roots of this dark tradition.

Rethinking the Just War Theology

The early Church had no "Just War Doctrine." From the time of Tertullian and Clement in the second century to Augustine in the fifth, there was a massive defection from the teaching and faith of the lowly Christ. Tertullian's words reflect the general mentality of the early believers toward war. "Only without the sword can the Christian wage war: for the Lord has abolished the sword." Clement of Alexandria wrote "...he who holds the sword must cast it away and that if one of the faithful becomes a soldier he must be rejected by the Church, for he has scorned God."

Three hundred years later we find that the opposite position being promoted by the leading theologian of that day.

"True religion looks upon as peaceful those wars that are waged not for motives of aggrandizement, or cruelty, but with the object of securing peace, of punishing evil-doers, and of uplifting the good." (St. Augustine's works, but Can. Apud. Caus. xxiii, qu. 1)

Augustine was the leading theologian of his day and was largely responsible for shaping the views of the Roman church of the fifth century. He was not just addressing civil government here. He was writing to a body that claimed to represent Christ. At that time the Roman Church was the civil government.

Why such a drastic change from Christ to Augustine? How could someone so familiar with the teachings of Christ write such a thing?

Augustine is often blamed for the "Just War Doctrine." He certainly upheld it but it did not originate with him. Augustine only took it to its logical conclusion. The "Just War Theology" really began with Constantine. It was under this first "Christian" Roman Emperor that the church made the horrendous shift from spiritual weapons (wrestling with principalities and powers) to carnal weapons (wrestling with flesh and blood). The historian Eusebius records this transition. While he was praying at Mid-day, Constantine supposedly had "a Vision of a Cross of Light in the Heavens. . . he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription, Conquer by this."

According to Eusebius, Constantine further stated that "the Christ of God appeared to him in his Sleep, and commanded him to use in his Wars a Standard made in the Form of the Cross." He was "to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies." He got up at dawn the next day and called together the workers in gold and precious stones to create "the Standard of the Cross, which the Romans now call the Labarum." (See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 1. pg. 490-491)

Seneca the Younger rightly observed, "Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful."

Constantine found religion very useful indeed. By his deceitful visions, He made Christ the leader of his campaign to become Emperor. He did this by putting a symbol on his implements of war that soon came to represent Christ Himself, "the cross."

After becoming Emperor, Constantine used Imperial edicts demanding that those loyal to him become Christians and if that didn't work he used bribery. He finally used his Roman Legions to force all the provinces in his domain to become "Christian." Thousands who resisted were killed by cross-engraved swords. For the first time in the history of the Church, (if one can actually call such a thing "the church") killing another human being was not murder but was a holy activity. It was Constantine who declared the first "Holy War." He was the first to lead a "Christian army" in order to solidify his power over the whole of the Roman Empire. This was without doubt the seminal beginnings of the crusades. The mold was cast for future "Holy Wars" which would also be fought to possess land and enlarge the coffers of king's and clergymen.

Previously, it was a shame for a Christian to become a soldier. Constantine made it an honor for professing Christians to fight. He married Christianity (not true Christianity) to Rome's military. Before long it was compulsory for all Roman soldiers to be "Christians." What afterward began to be called "the Church" cannot, with any degree of honesty, be called "Christian." Can something that so violently resists the Spirit of Christ rightly be called "Christian"? This church was, in spirit and practice, something completely other than Christ intended. In the years following "Christians" blindly supported and participated in many wars. The Crusades which have pitted "Christians" against Muslims began when Pope Urban II found religion useful. He raised an army of western knights to help him recover his lost Asiatic provinces. Urban promised complete remission of sins to all Christians, who would take part. This was extremely tempting considering the high price of forgiveness in those days. Urban's Crusade was no different than any other war. It was all about gaining/regaining and defending turf, to increase the scope of his dominion. Urban played on the superstitious masses by joining the old idea of pilgrimage to the Holy Land with a new idea; holy war against the infidels. This must have been very tempting! You didn't have to pay large sums of money for forgiveness any longer. You got to go on vacation to the holy land, with the added bonus of killing a few infidels along the way.

Soon, crusaders by the thousands were passing by the windows of Popes and Bishops to receive blessing with impunity, to unleash the dogs of war. The forbidden sword of Peter was recklessly employed by so-called "leaders of the Church" down through the years. Christian knights replaced the evangelists and spread their bloody gospel by the edge of the sword. In a few short years, the apostate Church had gained much turf and was fighting to defend it. The gilded cross and sword of Constantine was the beginnings of the just war theology. Theologians constantly perfected it to suit the needs and sooth the guilty consciences of kings and clergy.

This tradition is still with us. The following words can still be found in many "Christian Hymnals." "Onward Christian soldiers marching off to war with the cross of Jesus going on before." Innocent or not, these words sound a little too much like Urban II to suit us.

Paul warned of the delusion of worshipping "another Christ." This is exactly what must happen for Christians to promote war. Before war can become "holy", Christ the peacemaker must be replaced by the christ of Constantine and Urban II—a christ after our own likeness, who no longer commands us to love our enemies but conveniently

hates all the same people we do. As a modern sage put it, "You can safely assume that you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do" (Anne Lamott).

This is the secret of making war. Rulers and clerics have down through the centuries use all their influence to convince the masses that God hates the same people they do. It is a short commute from there to the conclusion that if God hates these enemies, so must we. "Cry Havoc! And let slip the dogs of war!"

Centuries after Augustine another famed theologian made it the responsibility of clerics to "counsel other men to engage in just wars."

"Now, among the faithful, carnal wars should be considered as having for their end the Divine spiritual good to which clerics are deputed. Wherefore it is the duty of clerics to dispose and counsel other men to engage in just wars." (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* - 1225 – 7 March 1274)

Here again we see the clergy working overtime to make war appear Divine, spiritual and good. Today we are hearing the same old stuff from the same old caste of men. Hundreds of years since the first crusades into Muslim held territory, Christians find themselves embroiled in another "holy war." Like the descendants of the Hatfield's and the McCoys we have inherited a feud. Our enemies are merciless. They want to kill us all—to take our heads by the edge of the sword. What shall we do in the face of such evil? If we obey Jesus we will not return evil for evil.

Let governments wage war. No one can stop that. Even Jesus consented that "Nation will rise against nation." This simply will happen as governments flex their political and military muscle. He made no mention of His church choosing sides or promoting nationalism. It may come as a shock but Jesus is not an American! He is not a patriot proudly supporting and defending American values. Neither is the God of the universe that views the nations as mere dust on a balance. Though Jesus was born an Israelite of the tribe of Judah, His Kingdom is not of that nation and tribe. Neither is he now exporting the values of the nation in which He was born. Jesus sent the twelve with good news for the entire earth. "But you shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8 KJ2000).

Jesus did not say that His Church would choose sides in war. As is often the case, those who don't choose sides find themselves hated by all. Jesus told us what to do at such a time. Don't resist evil. Pray for your enemy! Do good unto them! Make yourself their servant. This is a vital part of the witness that Christ has empowered us to bring to the whole world. Without this witness we are no different than the world. ". . . what more are you doing than others?"

It is time for the true Church of Jesus Christ to stand up and make a formal apology to the world for failing to be a true witness to them! By our disobedience to Christ we have obscured the light that the world so desperately needs. We were meant to be a city set on a hill; the light of it seen and the warmth of it felt. Instead, we have much to live down. Those who called themselves "Christians" down through the years have left us a bloody legacy. Jesus' words to the Pharisees hold true here, "As your fathers did so do you." So-called "Christians" are still calling for the blood of the infidel. Such men might represent America but they do not represent Christ. Those of us who are grieved over this tremendous misrepresentation of our Savior, Jesus Christ, must openly repent. How do we expect them to believe that Jesus loves if we don't love them?

Because we disobey Christ's teachings and example we have brought great shame upon His testimony. Guilty as charged! It is time to repent of this great evil that has been bequeathed to us by the likes of Constantine, Augustine and the clergy of kingly and presidential courts!

We are not called to conquer our enemies. It is the goodness of God that leads all men to repentance. And it is long past time that our enemies saw that goodness coming from those who claim to be Christ's representatives. If you refer to yourself as "a Christian" by that you are claiming to represent Christ. We represent Him by obeying Him.

No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously. "You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best--the sun to warm and the rain to nourish--to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do

you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you. (Matthew 5:42-48, Message Bible)

" . . . not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but instead blessing; knowing that to this were you called, that you may inherit a blessing." (1 Peter 3:8-12)

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