

# “Corruptio Optimi Pessima”\*

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*“Once again, as always, the fundamental question is whether we Christians imagine our God as violent or nonviolent.”*

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN

GOD AND EMPIRE: JESUS AGAINST ROME, THEN AND NOW

The condemnation of Bishop Marcion (A.D. 110-160), the son of the Bishop of Sinope in the Province of Pontus (Turkey), was for his belief that the God of the Old Testament was not the same God as the God of the New Testament. These two Testaments were believed by him to be inspired by two different Gods and hence he believed the Old Testament should be completely rejected. He also rejected three of the Gospels and a significant piece of the Pauline corpus. His condemnation did not include an explanation on how the two Testaments integrate, or on what the relationship is between the Testaments. Those whom I know personally—who proclaim the Nonviolent Jesus of the New Testament and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies—do not hold and would never teach that the God of the Old Testament was not the same God as the God of the New Testament, or that the Old Testament should be thrown out of the Christian Bible.

There are, however, some who see themselves as more “Catholic” than the Catholic Church, more “Methodist” than the Methodist Church, more “Christian” than the Gospels, etc., who want to drum-out of the Church the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies along with those who follow Him. Since it has become impossible to logically and rationally make the case, from the words and deeds of Jesus, that He is anything other than nonviolent, their *modus operandi* is the ancient tactic of becoming heresy baiters. A “Catholic” Catholic of minor renown even tried to pull this on Mother Teresa by challenging her in the presence of others that as a Catholic she could not be against all war on the basis of her faith in Jesus.

\* “THE CORRUPTION OF THE BEST IS THE WORST.”

Her answer? “Oh, then I am not a Catholic?” Those who have seen Jesus as nonviolent and as teaching a Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies have been Christians since Apostolic times. Over the last two thousand years Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Evangelical, and Pentecostals of just about every ilk have been committed to the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Nonviolent Way, and 99.99% have accepted and taught that the God of the Old Testament is the same God as the God of the New Testament. The ploy, by those who do not want to face up to the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels and His Way of Nonviolent Love, of tarring such Christians as Marcionites, is a last-ditch diversion tactic. Its aim is to direct attention away from the seriousness of the personal and ecclesial problem that the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels creates for every form of violence-riddled Constantinian Christianity, for a truthful interpretation of Church history—for authentic pastoring in the Church today and tomorrow.

The substantive issue here is not whether there is only the one and the same God in both Testaments—there is—but rather, “What kind of God God is and what does God expect of people?” The issue is the nature and will of the one God. Is God the kind of God who communicates to people that evil is to be overcome the way Samson—the moral equivalent of the modern suicide bomber—tries to overcome it, or is God the kind of God who says evil is to be overcome the way that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah overcomes it? Is there violence in God or is there not? Is it proper and right or blasphemous and evil to pray to God as follows: *A blessing on the man who shall repay you the evil you have done us! A blessing on him who shall seize and smash your little ones against the rock! (ps 137:8-9)?* Is such a prayer made at the inspiration of God? If hu-

man beings are created in the image and likeness of God and are to be imitators and agents of God's will on earth, then the answer to these questions is pivotal to our entire understanding of who God is and what God expects from us—critical to every aspect of our theology from theological anthropology to soteriology, from pneumatology to ecclesiology, from sacramentology to moral theology. And, the answer to these questions is of course indispensable to a life of holiness and meaning during our time on earth.

It must be specifically noted, however, that the problem of whether a person feels up to executing the will of God is a different problem from the problem of what the will of God is. The issue of one's willingness to pay the price required to do God's will is a distinct consideration from knowing the content of that will. A Christian may not want to "pick up his or her cross daily" and follow Jesus, a Christian may not feel he or she can "pick up their cross daily" and follow Jesus, but neither of these dispositions has anything to do with the fact that Jesus taught that if a person wants to be His disciple he or she is called to "pick up his or her cross daily and follow me." It is irrational to go down the path of the pastor who changes or ignores teachings of Jesus because he or she does not want to enter into the struggle to live them. Such a pastor is not "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you" (MT 28:20) as the Lord commissioned him or her to do. Rather, such a pastor is teaching people to obey the limited amount of Jesus' message, which he or she is personally willing to pay the price to obey. And more than likely, he or she is making-up new, substitute teachings, for the Christian community to obey in the name of Jesus, teachings that Jesus never taught, or even rejected, but which the Pastor is able to follow without great difficulty, or with little probability of being caught if he or she does not follow them.

But, regardless of another Christian's infidelity or fraudulent presentation of the teaching of Jesus, the prior questions still remain: Is God violent or non-violent and how to determine this? How to know if monotheism is violent or nonviolent? Note, monotheism, whether God is violent or nonviolent, calls forth ethical monotheism—unless there is an internal contradiction in God between His nature and His will. The Great Commandment (MT 22:38) logically proceeds from there being only one God to

love or to give one's self to "whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, and whole strength." To unreservedly commit to do the will of the One who created the universe, humanity and the individual human being is the inevitable logical conclusion of monotheism. If it is not the Creator's will and plan and way that is to be followed, then whose?

But, how to know what the will of God is for human beings, that is the momentous problem to which each and all—without exception—must respond in some fashion, and on whose solution everything of importance in human existence—without exception—depends. Of course, if it is believed that human beings can know nothing about whether God exists, and hence about the kind of God God is or what God wants of human beings, then that is a faith position. Atheism, agnosticism and apophatic theology have long histories engaging the human condition and each can appear as truth to human beings. But, holding such a faith means that a person has nothing he or she can say about God and God's will and therefore must be absolutely silent on the issue of what kind of God God is, and what God wants of people—except to explain that it is his or her belief that nothing can be known about the answers to these questions or to any questions relating to God.

The instant, however, that a person says he or she can say something about God's nature and/or God's will, then as a human being and as a Christian, he or she is bound by the grammatical, rhetorical and logical principle of non-contradiction: between two meaningful propositions, "X" and "not X," if one is true then the other is false. God is either violent or nonviolent—God can't be both. Jesus is either the incarnation of God or He is not. Can't be both. Jesus is either the Word (Logos) of God or He is not. Can't be both. Jesus is either nonviolent or He is not. Can't be both. Jesus is either one with the Father or He is not. Can't be both. Jesus is either the Self-revelation of God or He is not. Can't be both. Jesus is either the definitive revelation of God or He is not. Can't be both.

Pope Benedict made this abundantly clear in his news-making lecture at the University of Regensburg (9/12/06):

*"God acts with logos. Logos means both reason and word—a reason that is creative and capable of self-*

*communication, precisely as reason...Not to act reasonably (with logos) is contrary to the nature of God. John (the Evangelist) thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God. In the beginning was the logos, and the logos is God, says the Evangelist...But for Muslim teaching (according to Ibn Hazn), God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound-up with any of our categories, even that of rationality... God is not even bound by His own word (in Islam), and nothing would oblige Him to reveal the truth to us. Were it God's will we would even have to practice idolatry."*

Does Pope Benedict mean there are two Gods, one of Christianity and one of Islam? Of course not. But, he is being most definite about the truth and reality of the Logos in the One Divine Reality and in the Divine Plan of Salvation when he states: *"Not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God's nature."*

However, for Christians the Logos of God is "made flesh" in Jesus (JN 1:1-14). The will and the way and the logic of Jesus and the Father therefore are absolutely one. Jesus comes not to do His own will but the will of the Father (JN 5:30). Jesus total rejection in word and deed of violence and enmity in common affairs and in crisis situations must therefore be logically in conformity with the will of the Father. Jesus' nonviolent love (agapé) of all—friends and lethal enemies—is the logical application in the human situation of the will of the God, who is agapé (1 JN 4:8,16). It is also the authentic manifestation of the Holy Spirit of love (agapé) and truth. Jesus' "new commandment," proclaimed to His disciples at the institution of the Eucharist on the night before His passion and murder—"Love one another as I have loved you" (JN 13:34; 15:12)—must also be in logical accordance with the will of the Father. Therefore, what is logically discordant with the "new commandment" cannot be in conformity with God's Will or God's Holy Spirit, regardless of the arguments or ecstatic experiences that are employed to validate it. *"Not to act reasonably (with logos) is contrary to the nature of God."*

So from a Christian perspective, there is no genuinely new revelation that comes through Mohammad. Jesus the Word (Logos) of God "made flesh" is the Self-revelation and Self-communication of God and of God's will to humanity. Hence, He is the ultimate, definitive, unsurpassable revelation of God and God's

will to humanity. The absolute and unimpeachable public revelation, of God's will and of what is necessary for the salvation of all, closes with Jesus. Nothing more can be added and nothing can be subtracted, e.g., any private revelation must be in logical conformity with public revelation given by Jesus or else it is *ipso facto* pseudo-revelation. (A logical and reasonable human being does not add or subtract from the Self-revelation of God made by God Himself in person!) However, this also means that anything presented to humanity by Moses or Mohammad or anyone else, as the revelation of God and God's will, which is logically contradictory to the revelation of God and God's will through Jesus, the Word-Logos of God, is not authentic divine revelation.

For the Christian the progressive revelation of God and God's will from Abraham to Jesus is not obscure to the eyes of faith. The painstaking discernment is to ascertain what in the Old Testament constitutes this progressive revelation and what does not, what is an authentic communication about the nature and will of God and what is not? And, why? Is it really the will of God—as Moses communicates it formally in the Torah—that chronically disobedient adolescent boys be stoned to death? That adulteresses be put to death? That an eye be taken for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc.? I could go on to a book-length elaboration, as many authors have, on the barbarity of what at times Moses and others in the Old Testament teach and do as the will of God. But again, revelation is progressive. For instance, before the 6th century B.C., monotheism in the Old Testament is not monotheism as it is known today. Before that time Yahweh is the God absolutely superior to and above all the other Gods and the God to whom Israel owes total allegiance and exclusive worship. But until the Book of Isaiah it is accepted that there are other Gods: "Thou shalt not have strange Gods before Me." The first explicit and formal profession that the gods of the nations are nothing, nonexistent, appears in ISAIAH 40-55. Again, I could go on about the discernment of what is and what is not the progression of authentic revelation in the Old Testament, but the point is clear. God does not reveal Himself all at once to human beings through the Jews as completely as He ultimately desires to reveal Himself to humanity—most likely because exposure to too much light too quickly blinds those living in darkness, thus not permitting them to see more clearly. Hence, the

need for a progressive revelation, a gradual exposure to the light that penetrates the darkness.

But this automatically raises the question, “What in the Old Testament is genuinely revelation from God and what is the product of concupiscence-soaked sinful humanity putting God on its side for whatever activity it perceives to be in its interests?” This in turn presents the further unavoidable question: “By what standard is it to be determined whether killing disobedient boys or slaughtering every man, woman and child of the Amalekites is God’s will or is self-interest exploiting God for its own ends, e.g., the desire to control and dominate others?”

For the Jew and for the Christian the definitive interpreter of Hebrew Scripture is the Messiah, the Christ. After the Messiah arrives Scripture must be read through Messiah glasses, with the Messiah’s mind and spirit, because “that level of trust and obedience is owed to the Messiah that is due to God” (Martin Buber). Prior to His coming, God is continually trying to reveal Himself to a sinful humanity by way of a sinful humanity, and therefore confusions, contradictions and clouds hang over the entire process, while God’s pure revelation gets distorted as it passes through post-Fall, sin-ravished psyches, persons and communities (Hatfields and McCoys, Jews and Amalekites, Samson and David). Evil is so deeply embedded in culture and imprinted on the mind as normal in the human situation that Jews and all humanity need a Savior to rescue them from it and from its consequence, eternal death. Auto-salvation via a post-Fall, concupiscence-ravaged consciousness about God and God’s will is impossible. Salvation without the specially chosen-anointed (Messiah-Savior) from God, to bring what is needed, is self-evidently not possible. Humanity cannot rescue itself from evil and death. Human history is proof beyond a reasonable doubt of this. Education, the process upon which so many auto-salvation plans are posited, cannot save. There is no necessary relationship between human cognitive development and goodness. The “Brightest” are seldom the “Best,” and are, more often than not, found among the “Worst”—the doers of great, great wickedness. The salvation of God is from the Jews through Jesus, the Christ, the Word-Logos of God.

Jews, however, do not believe the Messiah-Savior has come, so they must interpret Scripture as best they can

without him. Christians do believe the Messiah-Savior has arrived in Jesus of Nazareth. They, therefore, are required to interpret Scripture through the mind of Christ. Moreover, for Christians Jesus is not just the Messiah, He is God and hence owed not only “that level of trust and obedience that is due to God” but also that worship that is owed to God alone—*latría*. Jesus is not only the ultimate standard by which to judge what is and is not the wisdom and truth of God and God’s will, but is also the power to live and die freely in this wisdom and truth. His wisdom and truth and power are supremely manifest in the logic of the cross of nonviolent love toward all, even toward lethal enemies. It is a logic that is “a scandal to Jews and folly to Greeks” (1 COR 1:23). But, it is a logic that makes visible a power so beyond any notion of power, of which human beings can conceive, that the only word capable of communicating its incomprehensible awesomeness is Resurrection. Jesus is the embodiment of the truth of the revelation of the Nonviolent Suffering Servant of Isaiah. By His resurrection, He validates that revelation as authentic Divine revelation. He is also, as Messiah and Word-Logos of God incarnate, the light by which humanity knows the truth that Samson’s commission of suicide as a means to destroy his enemies is not the way and will of God—although there may be other elements in the Samson story that are genuinely revealing of God and His will.

Jesus is the revelation of God—not through sinful individuals or communities—but as the “sinless one.” Any contradiction between what Jesus teaches about God and God’s will and a human being’s perception of God and God’s will must mean that the person’s perception is intrinsically erroneous. So regardless of the thousand acts of violence in the Old Testament, the Christian knows with moral certainty that violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the human soul because Jesus, the sinless Messiah, the Word-Logos teaches by His words and deeds a Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies as the will of God. In light of who Jesus is for the believer, it would be the extreme of irrationality for a Christian to commit himself or herself to words and presentations of logic about God and God’s will that contradict the Word that is the Creator of words, the Logos that is the Source of logic.

“Not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s will,” proclaims Pope Benedict. Is it possible

in good faith to reasonably conclude that the Jesus of the Gospels would have burnt to death those accused of being witches? Is Jesus piloting a B-2 Spirit stealth bomber, loaded to its full capacity of 40,000lb of weapons, leading an inferno-generating, “shock and awe” attack on Baghdad, a reasonable icon of Him and the God He reveals? Are these even remotely plausible logical interpretations of Him and His Way, of His “new commandment” to “*Love one another as I have loved you.*”? If not, how can Constantinian Christianity in its assorted configurations—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Evangelical and Pentecostal—continue in good faith to say they are? How can Constantinian Christianity, in all its violence and enmity-justifying institutionalizations, not be engaged in presenting evil as good, if St. Paul speaks the truth of God in ROMANS 14:23?

For the Christian the Ultimate Norm by which to discern, that which is genuinely of God and that which is not, is Jesus, the Messiah-Savior, Word-Logos of God—“the sinless one.” (If He is not the Ultimate Norm for such discernment by the Christian, one wonders who or what is?) This is why the “new commandment” of Jesus, “to love one another as I have loved you” (JN 15:12; 13:34), “contains the entire Law of the Gospel” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1970) and why it “summarizes all the others and expresses the Father’s entire will” that daily Christians pray “will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (CCC §2822). Since Jesus is nonviolent and teaches love of enemies, even lethal enemies, then those who say with St. Peter, “You are the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” know what the will and way of God is to which they are called by faith in Jesus Christ. They also know what they are not called to: “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (RM 14:23). Christians are explicitly chosen to glorify God and actively resist and conquer evil and death by following the Way revealed to them by God through His gift of faith to them in Jesus Christ, God’s Word-Logos “made flesh.”

In the end, the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is a personal and a communal faith problem of the highest order, not a logical or literary issue about the clarity of what Jesus said and meant. The hypothetical problems people conjure-up in regard to this teaching of Jesus are countless and never-ending. As soon as one objection is reasonably answered, a new one is sure

to come suddenly to mind: “Well what about this then?” Gospel Nonviolence and love of enemies is “folly” for those who have been spiritually nurtured from childhood in one of the Constantinian Churches, where as philosopher Alfred North Whitehead writes in *Process and Reality*, “[The] Church gave to God the attributes which belong exclusively to Caesar.” In these Constantinian Churches the Nonviolent Jesus and His Nonviolent Way are replaced by a day-in and day-out, decade after decade proclamation that

*“Your eternal and temporal security lie in having the Gospel in one hand and the gun in the other—just in case Jesus has not risen, or anyone tries to send you and yours home to the risen Jesus before you want to go into His blessed and all loving presence. Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!”*

The Nonviolent Christic-Love of the Gospel, where both hands are always firmly kept on the Gospel, necessitates that a Christian and a Church put all their eggs in one Easter Basket. Its foundation is a trust in Jesus so total that, even if one of the world’s “Best” and the “Brightest” or one of its “worst” and “dullest” comes along with the intent of smashing earthly existence to smithereens, there is no need for a Christian or a Church to fear or waver in their trust. Why? Because, “He is risen!” Why? Because, “We know that all things work for the good for those who love God... [and] nothing can separate us from the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord” (RM 8:28-39).

If Christ has not risen then loving the one God “whole heart, whole soul, whole mind and whole strength” by following the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is in vain. It is in fact the “scandal and folly” that most “Jews and Greeks,” in St. Paul’s time, as well as, most Christians and non-Christians today think it to be. But, if “He is risen” then Gospel Nonviolence and Love of enemies is the Truth, Way, Will, Power, Wisdom, Logic, Spirit and Reality of God—and what is contradictory to it cannot be of God, even if an “angel of light”—or any lesser enlightened being—says it is (GAL 1:8; 2 COR 11:14,15).

Temporal longevity for self and others has its place but the Christian cannot procure it by parting company with the will of God as revealed by Jesus. Secu-

rity for the Christian, and all that he or she loves, is intimately tied to living and dying in the Way of God as revealed by Jesus. This is the fundamental teaching that the history of Christian martyrs proclaims. Security and the peace that flows from it do not lie in desperately attempting to grasp a cubit or nanosecond more of earthly existence by taking one hand off the Gospel in order to pick up the gun. The Christian by her or his Baptism into Christ must prefer to die in the Way of Jesus rather than continue earthly existence by choosing the way of Satan. The “one God and Father of all” (EP 4:60) neither wants nor needs any Christian to take one step off the Way of the Nonviolent Jesus to defend any one, or all, of His sons and daughters from any one or all of the manifestations of evil. The Way of the Cross of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies is the only Way to conquer evil and death. It is the only Way to that temporal, as well as, eternal security and peace for which all human beings were created and for which all innately long: for themselves, for their loved ones, and for every soul.

Consider the following. If someone asks me for directions so that he or she can travel to the Royal City and I give them perfect directions, except at one last fork in the road I misdirect them by telling them to turn left rather than right, when left leads over a cliff, of what use or good are all my perfect directions up to that point? Is this not an illustration of partial-truth being utilized in the service of evil by the deceiver? Suppose that I have been told the correct directions by someone whom I am certain knows the way to the Royal City, but I intentionally substitute my own conjectures for his knowledge when I tell another to turn left at that fork, then what am I as a person—before myself, before God? Here again ROMANS 14:23 confronts every one of the Constantinian Churches and every Christian who makes one of these Churches his or her spiritual place of residence.

“*Corruptio optimi pessima*.” This is what Constantinian Christianity represents, is, has been for its 1600 years, and always will be so long as the Churches cling to it as their way of “being an extension of Christ in time and space.” “*Corruptio optimi pessima*.” This is what has become of the great gift of religious consciousness that the Logos has bestowed upon human beings by way of the brain given to them. Religious consciousness is the gift of the Di-

vine Logos that contains the potential to open human beings to the transcendent in all its magnificent possibility. It is a gift given to all human beings by the one God who is love and truth; given through the Word-Logos who is love and truth incarnate; and given in the Spirit of the Holy which can only be the Spirit of love and truth. Religious consciousness and the human brain that allows for it are given so that human beings, unlike dogs or dinosaurs, can access the beauty and grandeur of the Holiness, Love and Truth that is their Source and Destiny, that is the “Father of all, over all, through all, and in all” (EP 4:6).

However, since the dawn of known history, generation after generation of religious “leaders” across the planet have nurtured and exploited this extraordinary gift in order to religiously justify and ennoble their own banality and brutality—their own violence and enmity, lust for power and for control, acquisitiveness and importance. “*Corruptio optimi pessima*” is what the history of religion in general has been because of such religious leadership and what the history of Christianity in particular, since the time of Constantine the Great, has been because of it.

“*Corruptio optimi pessima*” is the sickening experience of a religiously deceived person as he or she grows in awareness of the waste, misuse, abuse and misdirection, of the great gift of the human brain engineered by civil and religious leaders, and especially of their self-serving manipulation of its capacity for God-consciousness. This dimension of the brain could allow people cognitive and experiential access to the Ineffably Transcendent, to the Perdurably Holy, to the Infinitely Benign, to that Peace that surpasses understanding, to the Glory of God that fills heaven and earth. However, for most of history, including most of Christian history, this great gift from God has been almost irreparably corrupted in the human being before a child is “6 or 7 or 8.” It is corrupted by having imposed upon the child as God’s reality and God’s will the petty agendas, resentments and fears of its adult overseers who nurture the child in the name of God so that he or she will “hate and fear and be willing to destroy all the people their relatives hate and fear and are willing to destroy.”

If only children were not so coaxed, coached and hardwired neurologically in such gruesomely ugly ideas about God and God’s will, the irrationally of

mass murder and nationalistic, ethnic and racial enmity as the will of the “Father of all,” would be near impossible for Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, Temples, nation-states or revolutions to foist on people, let alone palm off as the Way of Jesus. If only the young were not subjected to such brainwashing in and psychological bonding to petty, violent, enmity-ridden, fear-inducing gods made in the image and likeness of petty, violent, enmity-ridden, fear-inducing men, then people, and especially followers of Jesus, could never be conned by religious hucksters into believing that the Great God of galaxies and gluons wants them to go on legal or illegal killing missions. Jesus speaks severely to those who would deform human religious consciousness when He warns, “It would be better for a person that he or she be thrown into the sea with a millstone around their neck, than that they should lead astray a single one of these little ones (LK 17:2). The desecration of religious consciousness of which Jesus speaks was suffered by Mark Twain as a child. He writes:

*“To this day I cherish an unappeasable bitterness against the unfaithful guardians of my young life, who not only permitted but compelled me to read an unexpurgated Bible through before I was 15 years old. None can do that and ever draw a clean sweet breath again this side of the grave.”*

“Corruptio optimi pessima” is precisely what Jesus’ teachings address, which begin

*“Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut up the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces, neither going in yourselves nor allowing others to go in who want to. Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when you have him you make him twice as fit for hell as you are” (MT 23:13-15).*

The truth of these teachings is not limited to a few Jewish religious leaders two thousand years ago but is applicable to all “masters” and “lords,” “fathers” and “rabbis,” “monsignors” and “mullahs,” “bishops” and “ayatollahs” who deform the brains and corrupt the religious consciousnesses of human beings by nurturing them in a multiplicity of evils—violence, enmity, revenge, mercilessness, indifference to suffering, lust for power, domination and oppres-

sion of others—under the deceitful auspices that participating in such evil is God’s Holy Will and/or Jesus’ Way

As terrible as “*corruptio optimi pessima*” is in relation to the history of religion, when it is seen as a truth of the history of Constantinian Christianity, it takes on infinitely more dire implications. If the Plan of God for the salvation of all is, as Christians believe—that God sent His Son, His Word-Logos to reveal to humanity the Way out of the corruption of consciousness that has taken place and to impart to humanity the power and wisdom to follow that Way—then what are the implications if the very people His Son chooses to teach that Way by word and deed “to all nations” (MT 28:20), change His teachings to mimic precisely the evil untruths and behaviors He came to banish? How then can humanity be saved? How can that *metanoia*—that change of mind through which the grace of salvation flows to the self and to the world—take place? Ideas that people never hear are ideas they can never act on. Ideas that religious leaders refuse to teach, or actively teach against by word or deed, are ideas that those subject to their psychological-spiritual control have either no interest in or have a “natural” perception as being absurd and/or repugnant. “*Corruptio optimi pessima.*”

I began this reflection by quoting the fourth to the last sentence from the final chapter of *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome Then and Now*, by Biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan: “*Once again, as always, the fundamental question is whether we as Christians imagine our God as violent or nonviolent.*” Let me conclude by quoting the three concluding sentences of that final chapter:

*“Put your sword back into its place,” says Jesus to Peter in the Gospel of Matthew, “for all who live by the sword will perish by the sword” (26:52).*

*“You have forgotten to clean your sword,” says Aslan to Peter in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. “Whatever happens, never forget to wipe your sword.”*

“Looks can be deceiving,” especially when coupled with a nurtured, prejudicial, superficial attentiveness to what passes for reality. The sword wiped clean of the blood it has spilt is not the same as the sword kept in its sheath, although upon cursory inspection they

may appear indistinguishable. Monotheism: violent or nonviolent? Between two meaningful propositions “X” and “not X,” if one is true then the other is false. Both cannot be true. Whose revelation, about what kind of God God is and what God expects in relation to violence and enmity, is truly revelation? Is it Moses’? David’s? Phinehas’? Samson’s? Mohammad’s? Joseph Smith’s? Cicero’s? Or Jesus’?

What say you in answer to this question my Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal brothers and sisters in Christ? Examine your conscience in the presence of Jesus. Examine it to become aware of what contained therein is the consequence of faith in Jesus Christ and what contained therein contradicts faith in Jesus Christ. Then ponder on behalf of yourself and on behalf of the Constantinian Church, to which you belong the logically necessary implications of the relationship between the two rationally indisputable Gospel truths discussed in this essay: the Nonviolent Jesus and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies, and Jesus as Logos “made Flesh.” Finally—with an acute consciousness of the spiritual seriousness of ROMANS 14:23, “What is not of faith is sin,” and in full awareness that if “X” is

a true statement, “not X” has no logical possibility of being true—ask yourself, your pastor and your fellow Christians these three questions:

“Have I—and my Constantinian Church—made an evil a normal and acceptable part of our Christian faith?”

“Am I—and my Constantinian Church—participating in the corruption of the Best News that humanity will ever hear, the best revelation humanity will ever receive?”

“Is there anything worse I, with the life and faith given to me—and my Church, with the gifts given to it—could be doing to harm humanity and offend Christ-God than teaching as consistent with what Jesus taught for the salvation of the world, exactly what he rejected?” Is there any worse corruption of the good, in which a Christian or a Church could choose to partake?