

# RORSCHACH JESUS: THE IGNORANT MESSIAH

Could Jesus have been wrong and still have been the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Savior of the world? If Jesus is “like us in all things except sin” (Phil 2:7; Heb 4:15; Rom 8:3), then does it not follow that He was fallible, since humans are universally fallible. Ignorance, making mistakes, speaking untruth believing it to be truth may be many things but it is not sin.

How else is it possible to explain that the vast majority of Christians today, who believe that Jesus is Lord, simultaneously and vigorously repudiate His teaching on the rejection of violence and enmity? How else is it possible for Christians of all ranks and from Churches of every denomination to enshrine as God’s Will teachings e.g., Christian Just War Theory, Christian Just Capital Punishment Theory, Christian Just Inquisition Theory, that are in direct contradiction to what Jesus explicitly taught. The only explanation there can be for the setting aside of Jesus’ teachings is that He is in error when He teaches, by word and deed, the Way of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as God’s Will for His disciples,

Of course every moral problem conceivable is not addressed by Jesus in the Gospels, but He does explicitly address some—some which He evidently considers of critical importance, e.g., homicidal violence, enmity, oath-taking, adultery. Now, the ones He does address are one’s that there can be no doubt about vis-à-vis God’s Will—unless messiahship and divinity are so defined as to permit Jesus to be in ignorance of God’s Will and to unknowingly teach untruth about God’s Will to His followers.

But, why couldn’t Messiahship and Lordship be defined in a manner that permits an erroneously naïve understanding of reality to be presented as truth? Again, ignorance is not a sin. Maybe the fact Jesus desires to do God’s will in all that He does is all that is necessary for Messiahship. Maybe His believing, that He is doing God’s will in all He does and teaches, is the key ingredient for the salvation of the world. If so, then the content of His teachings would be irrelevant, and could even be wrong, since it would be the desire to will what God Wills that would be the central dynamic of Messiahship and Lordship, and hence discipleship.

Or, perhaps Jesus’ teachings about God’s will could be in error, and yet He could still be the Christ, if nothing more is needed for the salvation of the world than the incarnation, God becoming human. Here Jesus’ physical conception in the womb of Mary would be sufficient to accomplish the salvific task and His teachings would not be involved at all.

Jesus does, indeed, teach at the close of the Sermon on the Mount that “It is not those who say ‘Lord, Lord’, that enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father” (Mt 7:21). But He could be in error here as well. “Do” is the most used verb by Jesus in the Gospels. The “do” usually refers to doing the Will of the Father on earth as it is done in heaven. The Will of the Father is precisely what Jesus thinks He is communicating by His words and deeds to those who believe in Him. But again, if the God-man in His human fallibility and frailty is in non-culpable error, it would not be sin. He would just be participating in the common lot of humanity’s ignorance and confusion about reality, truth and God.

Since Jesus’ rejection of violence and enmity is so clear and predominant in the Gospel, the only possible reason for Christians justifying going to war, engaging in capital punishment, or burning Jews and heretics at

the stake while simultaneously calling themselves good Christians, is that Jesus' teachings are not true and/or are not relevant to salvation. However, human integrity really does demand that Christians and Churches be honest with humanity and with themselves and say plainly either that Jesus is in error and He does not know what He is talking about regarding the rejection of violence and love of enemies, or else come clean and be clear that His teachings need not be followed for they have no relation to salvation or to God's Will. Of course, a third option would be for such Christians and Churches to admit Jesus' teachings are the Will of the Father and repent for refusing to follow them. However, consideration of this option is beyond the scope of this essay and seemingly beyond the scope of what most Christians and Churches want to undertake.

However, for Christians to continue to go down the road of trying to combine Jesus' teaching of nonviolent love of friends and enemies with their participation in human slaughter by such stupidities as, "Jesus never said anything about not going to war," is just playing the spiritual phony before the world. How can one possibly be a combatant in war, or burn people up in an electric chair or at the stake without engaging in what Jesus rejected? Can one run a brothel without participating in lust? The fact is most of Christianity from top to bottom, from East to West, for the last 1700 years thinks Jesus' teachings on violence and enmity are dead wrong—and most Christians of every rank have said so privately. Practically all Christians regardless of their ecclesiastical or secular statutes think Jesus' teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies are absurd, unrealistic, idealistic, impractical fantasies. They believe His teachings do not correspond to how the world is nor do they respond to it sanely. Therefore let's hear them and their Churches' proclaim loudly and clearly, "Jesus is wrong about what the Will of God is!" Or, else let's hear shouted from every steeple, "Following Jesus does not mean one has to follow His teachings!"

For Christians today, and many yesterday, Jesus is a Rorschach inkblot. Read into the Jesus of the Gospels what you will. You want to use homicidal violence and kill people in war, in revolution or in the electric chair, Rorschach Jesus is there as your transcendental justifier. You want to kill people in order to recapture Golgotha from Muslims, or to free the world of Jews who won't convert to Christianity, Rorschach Jesus is available to support your endeavors. Indeed, there is no place that Rorschach Jesus cannot fit in. Christians can even be tearing each other to pieces and Rorschach Jesus will be there giving his moral support and divine assistance to all parties on all sides. If following Jesus' teachings is not intrinsic to the call to discipleship, or if His teachings are erroneous, fanciful, unrealistic, or if nonviolent love of friends and enemies is just a stupid idea for running a life or for running a Church, then Rorschach Jesus is the only Jesus there is.

If Jesus, the greatest spiritual teacher who ever lived, so wanted, He did possess the verbal competency to teach the following:

There are two ways to do God's will and follow me: You can either hate your enemies or love your enemies. You can either kill your enemies or die for your enemies. You can either follow the way of redemptive homicidal violence against others or you can follow the way of redemptive nonviolent love of friends and enemies. You can either justify, as being in conformity with God's will, what is done by people to people in war or you can reject becoming part of the lie that the infliction of mass death and misery is ever the Father's Will for any of His sons and daughters.

Jesus could have said this. He could have given these options to those He called. But, He didn't! There is no option for violence and enmity in the teachings of Jesus. As one of the most renowned Catholic Biblical scholars of the Twentieth Century, Rev. John L. McKenzie, emphatically states:

No reader of the New Testament, simple or sophisticated, can retain any doubt of Jesus' position toward violence directed to persons, individual or collective, organized or free enterprise: He rejected it.

McKenzie is saying that the very structure of human language and human consciousness does not permit any

reader of the Gospels to deny that Jesus objectively, in fact, rejected violence. Of course, to reject this teaching of Jesus as false but to assert that other teachings of Jesus are true is simply to again say, “We have a Messiah that doesn’t know what He is talking about. His ignorance has caused Him to teach untruth as truth. But ignorance is not sin.” The fact is an ignorant Messiah, whether totally ignorant or partially ignorant, pushes us back to a Rorschach Jesus, a Jesus we subjectively create as we subjectively decide upon the standards we will use to say whether this or that teaching of His is truth or falsehood.

WWJD, which is just shorthand for applying Jesus’ new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn. 13:34), is meaningless in the world of objectively contentless Rorschach Jesuses. In such a world, WWJD really means WDIWTD—What do I want to do? In such a world Rorschach Jesus will be available to justify every form of violence and enmity from abortion to state violence, to revolutionary violence, to capital punishment, to nuclear war—as self-interest dictates.

And so, we arrive at a crisis moment, a moment of judgment: Do I follow a Rorschach Jesus, who is but a revelatory inkblot and whose moral content and substance are constructed on the basis of need by subjective understandings garnered from Cicero, Rev. Ike, George (“I’ll hunt bin Laden down and kill him.”) Bush, John (“I’ll hunt bin Laden down and kill him.”) Kerry, Torquemada, Billy Graham, Bishop Rarkowski (Catholic Military Bishop for the Nazi military), Pope Julius II, etc., *ad nauseam*? Or, do I accept, in faith, that Jesus—as the Christ, as Lord, God and Savior—requires that I believe He teaches what the Will of the Father is and that I, as a Christian, am called to obey that teaching, that Will? No Christian, regardless of his or her status in the Church can have it both ways. To choose one is to eliminate the other. To accept Jesus’ teachings of nonviolent love of friends and enemies as the Will of the Father is to reject Rorschach Jesus. To bypass or change an explicit teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and then say that these self-created, altered teachings are Jesus’ teachings is to follow a Rorschach Messiah, a contentless Jesus. No Christian can obey two masters: in the moment of moral choice, he or she will choose to reject the first and love the second, or be devoted to the first and despise the second. No one can serve both Rorschach Jesus and the Jesus of the New Testament who embodies, enfleshes and teaches by word and deed unto death the Way of God, the Will of the Father.

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