

Why Most Christians Are Not Consistently Pro-Life

by Wayne Northey

The other day Pat Robertson of the 700 Club called for the assassination of Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela. That would be, bluntly, counsel to commit murder. And some people acted surprised! One thing that should not surprise anyone is Christians supporting and carrying out murder of others. Almost ever since good religious folk first cried “Crucify him!” to Pilate, majority Christian religious types in the West (at least) have endorsed and carried out murder – on both small and massive scales.

Oh I know someone will react to my use of “murder” instead of “killing”. Moses’ law forbids murder they say – but not killing! And they’re right of course. But Jesus did. Forbade any kind of killing when he said “Love your enemies” and enunciated only Two Great Commands: love of God *and* love of neighbour. No exceptions. No murdering. No killing. WWJM? WWJK? The answer is clear: *no one*.

WWJE? Whom Would Jesus Embrace? *Everyone*. How many times? Seventy times seven or limitlessly. But what about hell? Theologian Lee Griffith wrote in “Redeeming Hell” (*The Other Side* magazine, July/August 1997), “This is the fire of hell. This is the eternal torment. Those who would reject all love are forced to endure it... Jesus is already there preaching to the unreachable and loving the unlovable... We cannot escape God’s love. In Jesus, God invades not only the earth but hell itself. God is the one who decides to go to hell. Hallelujah and amen.” The only hell there is biblically is that of our own making in failure to “love” – actively seek to draw into our circle of friends – the two Great Poles of human freedom: God and neighbour. God is determined to empty hell of its contents forever. Novelist Georges Bernanos’ country priest says, reflecting the biblical material: “Hell is not to love any more, Madame. Not to love any more!”

Yet not long after Jesus’ own wrongful state murder, his followers like the crucify-him mob came to support state murder – domestically and internationally. And they have ever since enacted, granted and encouraged that right to the tune of millions upon millions upon millions of victims. One might argue and possibly sustain it that Christians have probably slaughtered or endorsed the slaughter of more victims than they have ever made converts in evangelistic efforts; that more death has spewed forth from the collective Christian camp than life; that more bad faith of bombs, bullets and ballistic missiles (or their like) have been disseminated indiscriminately amongst the world’s masses at Christian behest and intervention, than ever good seed sewn of salvation, self-giving, and sacrifice on behalf of those same teeming millions.

Despite allegiance to the Prince of Peace, most Christians in the West for two thousand years have been virulently anti-peace. Since Augustine’s appropriation of Cicero’s pagan teaching of just war without reference to Gospel, Christians *en masse* have declared open season on their enemies. In terms of the injustice of sheer volume of victims violated by Christians throughout two thousand years, one can make a legitimate case that *it would have been better had Christ never been born*.

Oh yes, they will invariably give you that line about the distinction between a *personal ethic of love* for the individual, and a *collective immorality of violence* for the state. (Oops. Meant of course was “*morality*”...) As though such casuistry has any biblical resonance. Or they’ll argue the soundly discredited notion that Romans 13:1 – 7 supports state violence; disallowed not least since that passage for the church was not in the first place the text for relations to the state – Ephesians 6:12 – 18 was, which talks about *resistance towards* the state; with such opposition towards violence figuratively and vehemently reprised in Revelation 13.

If all else fails, the stock fall-back response is, look at God’s willing violence at every turn in the Old Testament. Hmm. Now that’s indeed a stopper for biblically faithful Christians opposing violence. Why, if indeed that is how such a “god” must be read, Marcion became a heretic; Bishop John Spong followed suit, most recently in his book, *The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love*; and websites and resources for ex-Christians abound. (See the “Leaving Christianity” website for an abundance and wide variety of thoughtful material, <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~slocks/decon.html#contents>)”.

As if Jesus is not God’s trump card when played against Hebrew Scripture background. As if Jesus was not that *Final Word* and *Ultimate Revealer* of John 1 and Hebrews 1. As if Jesus, the *Great Iconoclast*, never said, “[A]nd now one greater than Jonah [in mercy] is here.”; or again, “But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”; or still again: “But love your enemies, do good to them... Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”; or John never wrote, ““For the law [of *lex talionis* – vengeful retaliation] was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”. As if Jesus never summed up the entire sweep of Old Testament revelation thus: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

In short, most confusingly, down through the ages Christians have not in fact been *Christians* about treating neighbour/enemy, they have been *anti-Christians*. They have not followed Christ. They have idolized Mars, god of war and/or whatever contrary stand-in. They have not been *faithful* to the Gospel, rather massively *faithless* (as theologian Richard Hays through meticulous exegesis demonstrates and claims in “Violence in Defense of Justice”, Chapter Fourteen of *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*). Even in their mass evangelism to this day, *they have not led people to Christ* in response to the neighbour for all the verses in the world of “Just as I am”, so much as *they have instead sadly turned them into twice the sons of hell* unworthy of Christ’s name, according to Jesus’ own assessment in Matthew 23. They have promoted and practised *evangelism without the Gospel*.

Their Scripture has been “verses” like this from papal legate (chaplain) Arnaud Amaury to the Pope’s armies in 1209: “*Kill them all, God will know his own.*”, at the massacre of 20,000 villagers in Béziers, southern France. The aim was to rout out the Albigensian heresy. The consequence was about one million Cathar victims wasted overall in that crusade. Again “Scripture” rang out from Martin Luther who urged the (ironically) recently turned anti-Catholic rebel Protestant nobility in response to a peasant uprising in 1525, “*If a man is in open rebellion, everyone is both his judge and his executioner. . . Therefore, let everyone who can, smite, slay, and stab, secretly or openly, remembering that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel. It is just as when one must kill a mad dog.*” Multiplied thousands were consequently slaughtered. The renowned Protestant Reformer was also a great anti-Semite, as were most of his Christian medieval contemporaries. He wrote about the Jews in *On The Jews and Their Lies* (1543), “*We are at fault in not slaying them.*” His writings about Jews were so heinous that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America finally officially renounced them in 1994. Adolf Hitler in 1925 wrote in *Mein Kampf*, “*Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*” Luther’s writings were worse.

Similarly towards the Japanese, under full authorization of Baptist Sunday School teacher and President Harry S. Truman, General Curtis LeMay unleashed a murderous firestorm against nearly seventy cities in the final months of World War II that was unmitigated holocaust, for which he himself admitted he’d have been tried as a war criminal had America lost the war. He boasted of the greatest slaughter of innocents ever in one night of terror in Japan: “[W]e scorched and boiled and baked to death more people in Tokyo on that night of March 9-10 [1945] than went up in vapor at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.” (For the record, he was factually mistaken.)

Billy Graham in a secret letter to President Nixon April 15, 1969, urged that if the peace talks in Paris were to fail, Nixon should step up the war and bomb the North Vietnamese dykes. Such an act, Graham wrote, “could overnight destroy the economy of North Vietnam”. On Nixon’s own estimate in response this would have killed a million people. The Nazi Reich commissioner in occupied Holland, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, was sentenced to death at Nuremberg for amongst other things destroying dykes and consequently inducing thousands of civilian deaths in Holland during World War II... Billy Graham, and now his successor Franklin, iconic representatives of 100 million Evangelicals in the United States, for more than fifty years have prayed with presidents and Americans for victory through repeated slaughter of cumulatively millions of enemies.

Finally, Christians have believed in a view of hell as “eternal conscious torment” created and sustained by a “god” who grotesquely is the opposite of “love” (“God is love”, Scripture repeatedly claims), that thereby makes the worst of human tyrants appear to be engaged in mere child’s play at evil over against Christians’ majority view of God and his not-biblically-warranted hell of endless punishment. (See my review of Larry Dixon’s sad book, *The Other Side of the Good News* on the Clarion website under my name.)

A character in my novel, *Chrysalis Crucible*, excerpts of which are posted on the Clarion website, agonizes: “My conclusion from simple observation is: Evangelicals routinely practise an under-your-breath ideologized ‘footnote theology’ that reads repeatedly, ‘Except our enemies’, when quoting John 3:16 and all other similar New Testament ethical teachings. How could Billy Graham *tell* the North Vietnamese that God loves them, when he fully blesses his own country in *doing* the exact opposite; when Billy Graham is still praying with the President for victory in the War – which means massive carnage and widespread wanton destruction? When he apparently wills the utter inversion of *everything Gospel* in treatment of neighbour, enemy and creation?”

Columnist Matt Miller wrote ironically of the same text, “For God so loved the world that he temporarily died to save it from himself. But none of that really matters because most people will be tortured for eternity anyways.”

My answer to the implied question in the article’s title is a tautology: *Because they aren’t (Christian or pro-life)!*