

where is the church?

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What weakens the pro life movement and diverts its energies are the many illusions people have about succeeding through the machinery of government; through the Republican Party or the conservative movement; or getting the mass media to bear witness to the truth about abortion. But the worst illusion of all is that the churches, as they are listed in the yellow pages, are going to turn out en masse to win the fight.

We have to recognize that the churches are not the solution. The churches, as they exist today, are the problem. The spiritual inertia, the moral weakness of these churches is the basic reason we have a nominally "Christian" society which is morally rotten. The churches are the **cause** of the abortion plague! How can they possibly have the **cure** for it?

The pro aborts complain that the church is trying to impose its morality on everyone. It would be nearer the mark to say that the church is trying without success to impose its morality upon its own members. Actually, the church has abandoned the attempt to impose morality even upon those who pretend to be members of the church. Every sort of immorality is tolerated and ignored. Pro abortion presidential candidate Bill Clinton is welcomed as a member of a conservative Baptist Church. Pro abortion Speaker of the House Tom Foley is welcomed as a member of the Catholic Church, like many other "Catholic" statesmen who are supporters of abortion.

The pro life movement derives its spiritual force from the Christian faith. That much is obvious to everyone who has seen the movement up close. But the churches, as churches, have had nothing to do with that. It is individuals who sustain the movement--individual Christians who are entirely un-typical of the church they belong to, if they even belong to an organized church. It is rare to find a church where even a handful of the members have made a serious commitment. Even in churches where the pastor has made a personal commitment, he brings a fraction of the church with him into anything like a sustained effort. Pastors who push their congregations to become involved find themselves out of a job.

Pro life movement organizers have typically had the experience of approaching dozens, even hundreds of churches, and getting no response when you ask them to do anything which requires courage and spiritual energy. There is a terrible inertia in the churches that defeats the most energetic attempt to rouse the congregation to battle.

It is this inertia of the churches that allows abortion, as it allows every other evil practice. It is a mass church on a minimal basis, a church without any standards. As an institution it has lower standards than the bus station, which, at certain hours of the night, requires you to have some sort of ticket by way of showing good faith that you are at least a potential bus rider. The church has no such requirements. You can hang out there despite a total absence of faith and morals, or even if your purpose there is to undermine the faith and morals of others.

Looking to the "churches" to help the pro life movement is like looking to the Soviet Union to help Eastern Europe. If Eastern Europe can be accurately caricatured as a cripple, the Soviet Union has to be described as a dead man. By the same realistic standard, we have to recognize that the spiritual vitality the pro life movement needs cannot be found in "the churches" and that it is these so called churches that are in need of help, if it is not already too late for most of them.

When people talk in a vague way about the churches turning out, it is obvious that they don't really believe in the church any more, or they couldn't speak of it that way. They talk about churches on the assumption that one church is as good as another, or rather that one church is as bad as another, and what does it matter? It is the "nation" that matters to them.

The important relationship for most Christians, after the relationships with God and family, is the belief in the nation. The church is necessary to them like the grocery store is necessary but it is the nation they believe in as they do not believe in the church. They see the great battle between good and evil in terms of the American nation, not in terms of the Christian church. They would die for the nation. The idea of dying for the church would strike them as ludicrous, as if you were to ask them to die for the grocery store they go to.

But it was the church, not the nation, that Jesus died for. It was his friends and followers--his new family--for whom he laid down his life. He did not lay down his life for his nation, the nation of Israel, founded by Jehovah, and he certainly did not lay down his life for the Roman Empire, founded by Satan. *He laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* (1 Jn 3.16) It was the church, not a political party, that he entrusted with a mission of salvation for human society.

When people stop believing in something, it withers. That is what has happened to the church. Christians don't believe in the church any more and they are right not to believe in it. It has been a long time since the church was worthy of belief. But why?

the need for faith

When I first got into the pro life movement, I wasn't a Christian, and I didn't see why you had to be. **Abortion is wrong because it kills a baby** -- is a simple and obvious truth. You don't need "scientific" evidence or religious faith to establish it. It's a matter of common sense. If you don't believe it, look in the garbage can inside the abortion clinic. Or look at the pictures taken by someone who did. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, said it, in one of the books she wrote back in the 1920's: *No more will they kill babies in the womb by abortion* (when condoms become available; that was her big belief, her remedy for everything). Before it got into the abortion business in 1962, Planned Parenthood stated it plainly in its literature: *An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun.*

Some of the best people in the pro life movement, like Bernard Nathanson and Nat Hentoff, are Jews or even atheists. Logically, it is easier to arrive at the conclusion that abortion is wrong from simple humanism than from Christianity. There are Christians who think abortion isn't so bad because the babies go right to heaven. The Wichita abortionist George Tiller has a minister

who baptizes aborted babies for him as part of the abortion service. But, from a humanitarian perspective, it is a terrible thing to snuff out a life that is just beginning, to rob someone of the only chance at life that he or she will ever have.

And yet, as the days and weeks and months have gone by and the pro life struggle has intensified, as I have found myself pulled into a deeper commitment, I have been pushed to the conclusion that the pro life battle cannot be won without faith in Jesus Christ; that it cannot be won without the power of the Holy Spirit. Against my own bias, I have been pushed to find a faith in Jesus Christ and his church as the only way I can sustain a commitment to the pro life movement.

The doctrine that the life of every individual is precious has to be based upon the revelation by Jesus that God is our father. Otherwise, it is only a shallow and sentimental humanitarianism that is soon put aside whenever it becomes necessary to clear all these surplus people out of our way. No one in the Old Testament, no one before Jesus, dares to address God as "father." It is only through Jesus, the Son of God made man, that we acquire the right to address God as father. If God is our father, if every hair on our heads is numbered, then no one of us can be disregarded and discarded without violating the rights we have, as the adopted children of God himself. And otherwise, none of us have any rights that cannot be taken away.

In the natural order of things, the individual counts for very little and life is treated as a surplus commodity, as a waste product. The natural waste of human life is multiplied by the power of the state through its wars and its man-made poverty. It is only faith in the life and mission of Jesus Christ that teaches us to see the life of the most wretched and insignificant person as having eternal significance, because he is one of the "least of these" that Jesus died for, that Jesus commands us to love on peril of our own salvation if we refuse. He tells us a strange and frightening thing, that when we deal with the least person we encounter, we are actually dealing with Jesus himself. That doctrine makes priceless the life that the world regards as worthless, a life that **is** worthless as far as we can see, unless our eyes have been opened by faith, and our hearts have been warmed by God's Love.

It is love that puts a value on a life. Without it, you're done for. You are bound for the trash barrel and the garbage dump where society puts all the unwanted people. And we are all unwanted, sooner or later. Our human love is so narrow and inadequate that unless there is a God who really does love each and every one of us, we are all of us done for. No matter how much you have going for you today, it is only a matter of time until the garbage truck calls for you. And that is why the central doctrine of the Christian faith is essential to us: God became one of us; He died for us; And so proved that He loves us, each and every one of us.

It is only the courageous example of the hero Jesus Christ that can inspire us to take the risks we have to take to challenge the evil of the world that confronts us. The love and the truth manifest in Jesus and passed on to us are the only effective weapons we have to transform the society we must live in here on earth.

Because it isn't just ignorance or wrong ideas that we have to confront. It is the very power of evil that drives this mass murder of the innocents. We cannot defeat it without the power of the Holy Spirit.

I came to believe in the evil spirit first and in the Holy Spirit by implication: if the evil spirit exists--it obviously does exist, and it is powerful in all the affairs of men--then the good spirit must exist also. If there is an evil spirit that drives men to destruction, there must be some remedy for it. But I know that the Holy Spirit is a reality. In the midst of the struggle I perceive Him unmistakably.

Without it there is no power in the movement. Without it, the dead weight of the evil we must face is crushing. It makes all the difference when it appears--like the courage that wasn't there before, like an unquenchable light challenging a vast and overwhelming darkness.

the need for the church

I have also come to see that we encounter that Spirit best, not when we act as isolated individuals, but when we act together. This coming together in response to the call of the Spirit is a church that we do not find elsewhere.

The pro life movement **is** the church in a way. At least it is a true representation of what the church has to be. In the movement is the only place you can find something that resembles what has to be meant by the church--a group of people who really believe it and who prove it by trying to live up to it on a daily basis. In the movement you find the essential virtue of courage which is so conspicuously missing from the lives of most of those who call themselves "Christians." In the movement you find a concentration of people who are animated by a good spirit. You can see it and you can feel it. In the churches, they are isolated individuals, surrounded by those who come to church for every reason and no reason, as a matter of old habit.

If you wander into one of those buildings that are listed in the yellow pages under "Churches" you cannot find the church. You can find good people--some. You can find good pastors, and good preachers who read the word of God. What you can't find is anything resembling the church as Jesus founded it.

It isn't that Christians need to join the pro life movement so much as that they need to join the Christian Church. But where can you find that church except where people are bearing Christian witness as they do on the front lines of the pro life movement?

The individual can save himself by a personal faith, but to save the world we live in from moral destruction--how can it be done except by the church, except by a community of people who are strong in their faith in Jesus Christ and strong in their love for each other? How can we defeat the evil we face except by the indwelling Holy Spirit?

By yourself, you can be a Christian in a cave, but when you have a family, you have given hostages to the society that surrounds you. And so it becomes a matter of spiritual life and death as to what sort of society surrounds you. The church, if it really is the church, is already the

Christian society that we need. The morally fatal illusion is that the "nation" can take the place of the church as the Christian society we need. The false belief in the nation takes the place of the belief in the church, and leads us to try and build the Christian society on the wrong foundation, on the foundation of the "ruler of this world" rather than upon him who is the founder of the kingdom of heaven here on earth. They are two different and antagonistic societies and we must choose which one we will belong to. We cannot, as so many worldly Christians suppose, belong to both. We cannot serve God and Mammon both.

the belief in a "Christian nation"

"We are without question a Christian country" says a contemporary writer--because they cut a few bible verses into the corner stones of government buildings. Never mind that the building was built by slave labor, or that the money to build it came from the rum trade and success in war, or that it was built to house the power of this world.

Here is a biker with a black leather jacket, a swastika and a silver cross. "Without question this man is a Christian!" No, anyone with sense asks the obvious question as to how the hell you can be a Christian when you live by principles that are derived from Satan, not Jesus Christ. The symbols don't mean anything if the substance isn't there. Satan can quote scripture--he does it all the time--and Satan can wear a cross--he does it all the time.

Saint Nicholas at the pawn shop

The symbol of the three golden balls that hangs outside a pawn shop can be traced back to Saint Nicholas, a third century bishop of Asia Minor. Does that make the pawn shop a Christian institution? Or shall we labor to restore the Christian character of this somewhat secularized institution?

The belief in a Christian nation, actual or possible, undermines and destroys the belief in a Christian society. In one way it stretches the boundaries unnaturally so that it must include all citizens. In another way it artificially constricts the boundaries and excludes brothers and sisters who live beyond the lines drawn on a map by success or failure in war. Since we failed to annex Canada in the War of 1812, we exclude the Canadians from our sacred circle. Since we succeeded in annexing the northern part of Mexico in the war of 1836, we include some of the Mexicans and try to fence out the rest. Are these the principles upon which membership in the Christian society should be based?

When the church is defined in terms of political geography it can no longer be defined in terms of faith and morals. It becomes a mass church on a superficial basis, a society that is held together by external conformity.

To justify their worship of the state, modern Christians have adopted the myth that the United States of America was somehow founded by God Almighty--as in military might--and that the worldly politicians who broke away from England to start the American nation were clones of the 12 apostles, because they could quote the bible--to justify slavery.

The American empire came from the British empire which came from the Roman empire. American law is based on Roman law, the law of an evil empire, if there ever was one. Like the British empire that preceded it, like the Roman empire that preceded it, the American empire was built by slave labor and success in war. Between 1899 and 1902 the American army killed a million Filipinos in the war to establish America as the new landlord of the "liberated" Philippines. Such actions have been as typical of the American military as of any other imperial army.

Is there a Christian nation? You can't have a state without an army, it is a contradiction in terms. Is there a Christian army? No. You can't follow Jesus carrying a sword. Peter couldn't do it and neither can we. You can follow Moses or Joshua wearing a sword but you can't follow Jesus. If you want to use the Old Testament to cancel the New, you are a follower of Moses, not a follower of Jesus. Get a skull cap and keep kosher. Maybe the Law will save you. More likely, it won't, but you'll have more integrity than you have now.

If there is no such thing as a Christian army, then there is no such thing as a Christian state, because the state grows out of the army. "All political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." The peace time equivalent of military power is political power. The state is the military camp in between wars.

When a nation becomes "great," as every "great" nation does, through the violent acquisition of vast estates, when it acquires great wealth through murderous aggression, when it builds its power upon slavery and the exploitation of human labor kept in a condition of semi slavery, when it becomes a world power through war, is this greatness from God? Jesus Christ, **the prince of peace**, tells us plainly who **the prince of this world** is. Who else is the source of worldly power achieved through the violence of mass killing in war? You might at least recognize the style, if you are quite unable to understand the substance.

the waste of human life

We are a nation that grew from war and slavery, like every other great nation. Now, the affluent American life style requires abortion. The wholesale waste of human life has always been an integral part of the American life style. It is the rough back side of that tapestry that portrays the American dream--prosperous and happy people living in an earthly paradise.

They start with the thesis that America was once a Christian nation--that there really is such a thing as a Christian nation--and that it can be a Christian nation once again. All this vast array of military and industrial power will somehow operate in conformity with the sign of the cross. If America is a Christian nation then the government has to be Christian. If the government has to be Christian then the two party system has to be Christian. Enter Pat Mahoney with his forlorn crusade to restore Christian righteousness to the Democratic Party. It's like trying to restore virginity to Elizabeth Taylor. Absurd assumptions lead to absurd conclusions. If you can't recognize a lost cause when you see one, then you put all your time, money, and energy down the drain. Worse, to the degree that you fool other people, you put their time, money and energy down the same drain.

If the house is burning, you try to save your children from the flames. If you try to save your nice clothes and your jewelry too, you save none of it, and you and your children perish. So people want to save their children from the evil of our society, but they want to save all the rest too. They cling to the power, the wealth, the glory of America--it belongs to us Christians! It's ours! We won't give it up!

What many want is a restoration of the official position of the church, a restoration of the formal acknowledgment of Christianity, a return of hypocrisy. Does opening the school day with a prayer mean that our children are being educated as Christians? Then the rest of the day they are taught to glorify war, worship the state, and prepare themselves to spend their lives in the pursuit of money.

The desire to succeed in this world leads to the sacrifice of the souls of our children. A Christian father was happy when his son got the chance to go to Harvard. Predictably, his son is now an atheist and pro abortion. Parents rejoice when their children achieve the worldly success which is a spiritual cancer for Christian faith and morals. In the gambling spirit of the stock market they risk the souls of their children for the chance at the riches that Jesus warned us against. Surely Jesus doesn't want us to be at odds with the world we live in! Surely Christians have become blind and deaf to the real teachings of Jesus Christ.

King Midas rejoiced when he received the gift of the golden touch--anything he touched turned to gold! Then, when his daughter kissed him, she became a metal statue. We are like Midas in possessing the golden touch and in the consequence--our greed destroys our children!

As Americans we are in dead earnest about fighting our enemies. We pay any price, like 100 billion dollars, and we travel far from home to confront our enemies. As Christians, we are not in earnest about fighting our enemies. We casually turn on the television and, in effect, invite our spiritual enemies to come in and make themselves comfortable.

the state church

The belief in a Christian nation is the belief in the state church in a new disguise. Essentially it is the belief that the church of Jesus Christ is rightly joined to the wealth of the nation and the military power of the state. The kingdom of God has arrived upon earth, financed by the stock market, and with the assistance of the bayonets of the United States Marine Corps. What do you need wimpy sermons for when you can convert the world in a hell of a hurry at the point of a sword or a bayonet? **Do it or else!** We inherited this idea of the church from the state church of the Roman empire and its many successors.

What is that we are supposed to believe in, Jesus and his church, or Caesar and his empire? Stated like this, everyone knows what the answer has to be, and thousands of early Christians laid down their lives to validate their belief in the one and their dis-belief in the other. But the fundamental opposition between these two beliefs, the moral incompatibility between Christ and anti-Christ was made to disappear by the apostate Christians who made a deal with the Roman emperor. And modern Christians are the heirs of that deal. Now we die for the state, not, in defiance of it, for the church.

We have no king but Caesar! proclaimed the Jews who crucified Jesus. (Jn 19.15) *Caesar and Christ have merged* proclaimed the false Christians who sold out the church.

Since the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who consolidated his power in 312 AD, the most prosperous, powerful and historically conspicuous part of the Christian church has been that which formed the religious establishment of the secular state. From the time of Constantine until the final disintegration of the Roman Empire, there was a religious establishment which was part of the bureaucracy of the Roman government. On behalf of this state church and for the sake of political and military unity within the empire, other Christians were persecuted as "heretics." This official church joined the Roman government in attacking Christians who rejected the deal with the state, who refused to fight in its wars.

This religious establishment began as a totally corrupt arm of the Roman bureaucracy and got worse. This is the church from which all modern state-worshiping churches are directly descended, and it shows. Because church officials were exempt from the murderous taxation imposed by Constantine to maintain the grotesque luxury of his court, the most worldly of men rushed to become bishops, where, a generation before, the man who became a bishop had his ticket for martyrdom. The worldly and depraved character of this official church has persisted in many varieties right into modern times.

The mass church founded by Constantine and his subservient bishops was co-extensive with the empire. The Roman empire supposedly became a Christian society because the emperor officially endorsed Christianity as the state religion. You acquired membership in the church when you acquired citizenship in the state.

When membership in the church coincides with citizenship, then it becomes automatic membership--membership which is imposed, not chosen. Not only can you not expel people from the church, you force them to belong to it--or else! And so the church is established on an entirely new basis. It has become an anti church. It has become the nemesis of the real church. The church is no longer cleansed of cowards by external persecution and no longer pruned of the faithless and the immoral by its own strict standards. You belong to it because you belong to it, because you were born into it. It is based upon the geography of conquest, not the grace of God. It is a church of external and coerced conformity which is spiritually dead and morally rotten within. Everyone belongs to it, no one really believes in it, nor can any honest and sensible man continue to believe in it.

The state church represented a return to the old law whereby the church and the nation were one and the same. The violent power of the state was used to enforce the morality (and the immorality) of the church while the belief system of the church was used to create religious belief in the state, and enforce service in its armies.

the golden dagger

Recently, I saw a news item about a robbery in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Among other valuable items, the robber took *a golden dagger, described as a*

particularly important religious object. It didn't say why it was important. Was this the very dagger that Jesus used to assassinate his rivals in his original scramble for power? Did St. Paul buy it for a handy way to carry his personal wealth, during the period when he had no fixed abode?

But there is no mystery as to how a dagger made of gold could become *a particularly important religious object.* From the time that Constantine founded the new Christian Church of the Empire, murder weapons and gold have been at home in the "Church." Today, Christians have so little conscience in respect to either wealth or war that they don't even see the anomaly of such a "religious" object.

The murderous wars by Christians against other Christians which have marked the history of Christianity ever since, began with the establishment of Christianity as a state Church. The savage persecution of Christians who did not belong to the state establishment was promoted by "Saint" Augustine and he deserves the titles of Father of the Inquisition and enemy of the true church. He was personally responsible for the brutal and bloody persecution of the real Christians of North Africa, who were mis-called the "Donatists" by their persecutors. They called themselves "Christian" and "Catholic" and by the standards of the New Testament, they had the right to do so, as Augustine's church, the church of the Roman establishment, did not. These official so-called "Christians" were really the followers of Constantine, and he became the de facto head of this "church," as did the Roman and Byzantine emperors who came after him. [A fuller history of *The Church of the Empire* can be read elsewhere on this website.]

The church which divorced Jesus and walked down the aisle with the Roman Emperor was not the best part of the church or even the largest part. The real church was driven back into the deserts and the catacombs and it persisted as an underground church, and a frequently persecuted church just as it persists today.

The state church has ever since been the major source of the violent persecution of real Christianity. It is the sign of the true church that it suffers persecution. It is the sign of the false church that it joins the persecution, because it loves the power and wealth which it gets from joining the state, and it hates those who show it up for what it is. How often has it happened in the last few years that judges and politicians who are officially members of Christian churches have become the worst persecutors of pro life Christians? Many of those who are in jail tonight can testify to that.

There is a long dark history of these state churches from the time of the Roman empire to the time of the Soviet empire, when the official church helped with the persecution of sincere Christians in the Soviet Union. The Roman Catholic Church was guilty of a long series of inquisitions and murderous wars against fellow Christians. Catholics and other Christians were murdered by the official church of England. The protestant reformers, as soon as they themselves escaped persecution, used the power of the state against fellow Christians. Calvin established a totalitarian state in Geneva. Luther succeeded because of his alliance with the German princes and he sided with them in the violent persecutions of Christians who rejected the new state religion. The Baptists of the 16th century were persecuted, imprisoned and executed

by all the state churches of the time. The Reformation was a split within the state church along political lines rather than the moral reformation it pretended to be. It was driven by the lust for ecclesiastical and political power and the desire to seize the wealth of the old church establishment. As it has happened many times before and since, a just cause was betrayed by those who used it to disguise unjust desires.

The American colonies began with 13 state churches. As much as they wanted religious liberty for themselves, it never occurred to the pilgrim fathers to extend it to others when they controlled the power of the state. The colonial government of Massachusetts persecuted and banished Quakers and Baptists. In fact, they hanged the Quakers from a tree in Boston Common. They banished Roger Williams for preaching the heretical doctrine that they had no moral right to take the land away from the Indians.

Because there were so many rival churches in the United States, there was no possibility of having one established church. Instead we had the establishment of a secularized and generic Christianity which condoned slavery, war, wealth and the dispossession of the natives. It is a nation which once had a Christian facade. Now the facade is crumbling and so there are those who labor in vain to restore it. What they really wish to do is to hold on to a position of power and privilege in the American nation like that which the church once occupied in the Roman empire and its successors.

the kingdom of God *versus* the kingdoms of this world

The fundamental opposition between the true church and the state is one aspect of the fundamental opposition between **the kingdom of God** and the **world**. No doctrine is more clearly set forth in the pages of the New Testament. No doctrine has been so thoroughly obscured by the church which had to justify its deal with the empire, and which now has to justify its conformity to the world.

Jesus ends his time of preparation and temptation by refusing Satan's offer to make him the ruler of all the kingdoms of the world, a worldly **king of kings** who would owe his power to his Satanic majesty. (Mt 4.8 and Lk 4.5) Then he begins his time of teaching with the proclamation that *the kingdom of God is at hand*. (Mt 4.17, Mk 1.15) He really means it! It is here and now! (Luke 10.9-11, 11.20) And yet it is still to come. (Lk 21.31) (Rev 12.10) It is here on this earth (Mt 6.10) but it is *not of this world*. (Jn 18.36) It is not a political kingdom, established by armed men (Jn 18.36) rather, *the kingdom of God is within you*. (Lk 17.21) Not until the very end, will the kingdoms of this world become part of the kingdom of God. (I Cor 15.24) (Rev 11.15)

How are we to become citizens of this kingdom of God on earth? Jesus doesn't leave us guessing. When his disciples began contesting with one another, as men will, about precedence and power, he called a little child for a model and told them *except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*. (Mt 18.3) They are *not* to exercise lordship over one another as the rest of the world does. (Lk 22.25-26, Mt 23.10-12)

Neither power nor money is compatible with the kingdom of God: *Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God!* (Lk 6.20) *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* (Mk 10.25, Mt 19.24, Lk 18.25) The poor, not the rich, are the heirs of the kingdom. (James 2.5) Is that a call for hard sacrifices? He gives us a harder one: cut off your foot or pluck out your eye if you have to, *it is better for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.* (Mk 9.47) And this gospel of the kingdom of God is the gospel that Jesus sent his disciples out to teach--*take nothing for your journey* (Lk 9.3)--it was not the gospel that we hear today of worldly success and miraculous riches through a gambler's "faith." No other obligation, however serious, comes before this one. (Lk 9.60) *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and forget about the money.* (Mt 6.33)

In parable after parable, Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven: from the smallest of seeds, it becomes a great tree; it works to change society, the same way that a little yeast can grow until it leavens a mass of bread dough; it is a treasure hidden in a field and a *pearl of great price*, and to obtain it, we must give *all that we have.* (Mt 13.31-46) That is just the contrary of the doctrine we have today which offers us the best of both worlds, which offers us salvation without sacrifice, which lets us keep our wealth. The modern church sells us the pearl at a big discount. But it's a fake pearl!

Even when we are not aware of it, it is growing day and night, like the corn out in the field. (Mk 4.26) He describes the various ways in which Christians fall away after they have heard the word of the kingdom, how *the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches* keep us from understanding it and following it. (Mt 13.22)

The apostles amplify what the kingdom requires of us. It is only through *much tribulation* that we can enter it. (Acts 14.22) *I am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ* says the author of Revelations. (Rev 1.9) It is through *persecutions and tribulations* that we are made *worthy of the kingdom.* (2 Th 1.4,5) To enter into the kingdom, we need *faith*, and we must add to that: *virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity.* (2 Pet 1.5-11)

Saint Paul continually preaches the kingdom of God and what it means, *for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness* (= doing right by everyone) *and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.* (Rom 14.17) It is *the power of God that hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.* (Col 1.13) Only those that do right can enter the kingdom of God. The covetous are excluded as surely as the adulterers. Those who would belong to the Christian community must meet the strictest standards--whatever happened to them? (1 Cor 6.9, Gal 5.21, Eph 5.5) The last we hear of Saint Paul, he is in Rome, awaiting trial, but still *preaching the kingdom of God.* (Acts 28.31)

not of this world

His kingdom is *not of this world*, that is why his followers do not take up arms. (Jn 18.36) The world *hates him because I testify of it that its works are evil.* (Jn 7.7) Its works are evil and Satan is *the prince of this world.* (Jn 14.30, Lk 4.6) The world also hates those who follow Jesus

because they do not belong to the world. (Jn 15.18 1 Jn 3.13). *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.* (Jn 17.15)

And there they are--in the world, but not of the world. How are they to do it? Christians must rely upon the wisdom of God and *not the wisdom of the princes of this world.* (1 Cor 2.6, 3.19) They must be non-conformists! They must conform to Jesus and stop conforming to the world! (Rom 8:29, 12:2)--**Get rid of that suit and tie!** Stop imitating bankers and brokers and start imitating Saint Paul and Jesus! (1 Cor 11.1) The external conformity to the world is the sign of the internal conformity to the world.

It is the Holy Spirit that makes you a Christian and, at the same time, an enemy of the world and the prince who rules it. It is the *Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.* (Jn 14.17) The **world** lives by lies. They are the foundation of war; of conventional politics; of business and commerce; of the abortion industry. They are the characteristic sign of the way the world does business, but we are so accustomed to it, so de-sensitized to it, that we hardly notice it. The *truth* is the world's bane, its nemesis, and it naturally hates the man or woman who is animated by this **spirit of truth.** "Truth is the first casualty in war," as it is well said.

That is why truth is such a powerful weapon, such an essential weapon. That is why we have to avoid jamming it with any kind of falsehood. The indwelling Spirit of truth (Jn 14.17) is the one who gives us the strength to overcome the world. (1 Jn 4.4) The **power of the true word** is the weapon that Jesus Christ gives us: *he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.* (Isa 11.4, cf. Rev 2.16)

Jesus belongs to us, not to the **world.** (Jn 14.19-27) He came to *deliver us from this present evil world*, not to show us how to get along with it. (Gal 1.4) He *manifests* himself to us and *dwells* with us; he gives us a *peace* which the restless world lacks. *The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.* (Jn 14.30) So, if Jesus dwells with us, how often should we entertain the prince of this world as a visitor? How much, besides *nothing*, can we afford to have of that which belongs to the prince of this world? What is he the prince of? Of war, surely, just as Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Of wealth, surely. Why else does Jesus warn us again and again about money? *Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* (Mt 6.24, Lk 16.13, 16.19-25) Of power, surely--power as this world uses it. What else can he mean when he rebukes their competitions for place and power by showing them that they must be like children, like servants. What sort of a prince is it that washed their feet for them? (Jn 13.4-15) No prince of this world ever did such a thing.

What is it we crave when we crave power as this world gives it? We crave to be the center of attention, the star of the show, to have all eyes upon us, to be loved and applauded by all. But Jesus tells us that the world will hate us, not love us, if we accept the call of Jesus. (Jn 15.18-19) When the world applauds us, as it applauds wars and the heroes who fight them, it is a clear sign that we have chosen the love of this world over the love of Jesus.

There has to be a **fundamental antagonism** between the follower of Jesus and the world. *The world is crucified unto me and I unto the world* says Saint Paul. (Gal 6.14) He exhorts us to live *blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.* (Phil 2.15) *Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.* (James 4.4) *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* (1 Jn 2.15) *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.* (1 Jn 3.13) *And we know that we are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* (1 Jn 5.19)

When he left us, he sent us the Holy Spirit who brings comfort to us and *judgment* upon the *prince of this world.* (Jn 16.8-11) It is well to be very sure whose side you are on and which prince you are serving. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. (Jn 12.15, Zach 9.9-10, Isa 11.1-10) What the prince of this world gives us is the false peace of complacency and self-deception.

the battle we must fight against the world

In the world ye shall have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. (Jn 16.33) Does that mean that the battle is over and done, that all we have to do now is enjoy the good things Jesus has won for us, the spoils of his victory? That seems to be something like the major idea of the modern church. It simply erases the central challenge of the Christian life, to follow Jesus into the battle with the **world**.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. (Jn 17.18) What comes out here, as in every chapter of the New Testament, is the call to the individual Christian to follow the **example** of Jesus in doing battle against the evil power of the world.

Jesus begins his public life with a campaign against the devils. (Mk 1.25, 1.34, Mt 4.24, etc.) He gives his followers the power to do the same and sends them out to do it. A major burden of his preaching is the condemnation of the evil religious establishment of the nation of Israel. (Mt 15.3-9, 16.12, 23.13-35) That evil religious establishment re-appeared in the official church of the Roman Empire and it is with us today in its many successors.

Finally, the supreme act of his life is the one on one spiritual battle with the evil one himself, *the prince of this world.* (Jn 12.31, 14.30, 16.11) But then He calls us to carry on that battle by means of the power of His Spirit inside us. (Jn 15.16-20, 16.7-13) This battle isn't against the natural world but it is against the world of evil men and the prince they serve--*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* (Eph 6.12)

Is this battle over and done? No it has only begun! And it is up to us to fight it! *The spirit of anti-Christ is already in the world,* John tells us, *but greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* (1 Jn 4.3,4) *Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.* (1 Jn 5.4) But the prince of this world is still a long way from giving up the battle! Jesus is the alpha and the omega of the battle, it is His Spirit, the Spirit of truth and love and courage that fights the battle, but He fights the battle through us!

Clearly, he means us to fight the battle as he fought it: **in person**, with **the weapons of the spirit**, and on behalf of **the kingdom of God**. What modern Christians substitute for this is a battle fought **a. vicariously**, with **b. the weapons of the flesh**, and on behalf of **c. the nation** and the worldly church.

a. We hire mercenaries with someone else's tax money or we draft the sons of the poor to fight for us. What we mean by "supporting the troops" is let them do the fighting for us, while we hold press conferences and make patriotic speeches. In the political battle we also look for something or someone who will do it all for us. That is the cause of our childish dependency upon The President, which is part of our worship of the nation.

b. We are too weak and fearful to wield the weapons of the spirit. Instead we trust to the power of money. We believe in the power of governments and political parties. We thank God for the invention of the latest infernal devices which can more efficiently maim and kill our enemies. We worship a god who inspires the invention of murder weapons and who encourages their use. Whatever we may call him, his real name is Satan. When the Prince of Peace was urged to drop bombs, Old Testament-style, *even as Elias did*, he didn't say: wait until I invent a smart bomb, he said: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* (Lk 9.54-56) There are two different spirits and the difference between them is as night and day to those who have the eyes to see it. But *the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not.* (2 Cor 4.4) There are two different "weapons systems." The one you choose shows which prince you serve and, foreordains what result you will achieve. Truth and love guarantee one result. Lies and violence guarantee the other.

c. With some help from our "friend," we willfully deceive ourselves and swallow the false propaganda which portrays the wars of the nation as the epic struggle between good and evil. But the "good" is the goods of this world--the wealth and power of **the nation**--and it is the "good" of the prince who is the ruler of this world. The kingdom of heaven is not established by armed men nor can it be defended by them. (Jn 18.36) It is the kingdoms of this world, which belong to the prince of this world, (Lk 4.5) that owe their existence to the army. If, as Saint Paul tells us, the kingdom of God means peace and doing right by everyone (Rom 14.17), how can we possibly interpret that to mean that the kingdom of God demands the universal wrong and bloodshed of war?

the body of Christ

With the advent of Jesus Christ, God has an entirely new way of working in the world. God become man is the central fact of the Christian faith. If you don't grasp it and what it means, then Christianity has no real meaning for you--and that describes most modern "Christians."

They still worship an Old Testament idea of a god who controls everything down here through his power and the fear of that power. Why doesn't he use his power? Why doesn't he destroy the abortion clinic with a bolt of lightning? When will he get mad enough to make a tree fall on the abortionist?

But Immanuel is the God who has become a man like us. He works as a man. He sets us an **example!** He says: see, do it like this, and, with the help of my Spirit, you can do it all. Don't wait for the lightning bolt to do it for you. I don't work that way any more.

He isn't even a man of wealth and power--just the opposite! It isn't just his teaching that condemns our worship of wealth and power, it is the example of his entire life. We want a God who is richer than Croesus, more powerful than the Emperor. We are given instead God as a ragged man of no social standing whose power comes solely from the spirit of truth and love he manifests. He has no style! No class! Not in the way we see it.

Jesus enters Jerusalem: on a donkey with a foal trotting alongside. What a pathetic farce! As if to mock all triumphal processions! If you or I had a hand in it, we would never have done it that way! What suits such an event as the Son of God entering Jerusalem in triumph, for the final act of his great drama? Jesus, in a white glitter suit, wearing his golden dagger. A matched team of white horses pulling a golden chariot decorated with red rubies and green emeralds--at the very least! the Devil chained to his chariot wheel, snarling and lashing his forked tail; decorated floats commemorating his mighty miracles; marching bands, and pretty girls twirling batons; thousands of men in uniform, legions of Roman soldiers; temple priests in long robes and beards; the mayor of Jerusalem presenting him with the key to the city . . . Instead, you have these **undignified donkeys** and this ragged little impromptu procession. Instead, you have the unmistakable style of Jesus Christ, the unmistakable substance of Jesus Christ. *Behold the man!*

That's how he does things. That's how he works. That's how he expects us to work. He works through the poor and the powerless, not through the wealthy and the powerful. He works through the spirit, not through the flesh. He works through *the body of Christ*--through the **church**--not through the army.

The church is *the body of Christ*, St Paul tells us. (Rom 12.5, Eph 1.22,23, etc.) *There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling* (Eph 4.4) *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.* (Eph 4.1)

We are stuck with a God who became a man like us. Who is still present among us through his "body" and through his Spirit. How else will God work then except through that body, that is, through the church? The nation is not the body of Christ. The Republican party is not the body of Christ. Only the church is the body of Christ--it should be anyway. Where else will we find the Holy Spirit? And how shall we do battle with the world unless we are *full of the Holy Spirit?* (Acts 7.55)

It was through a man, Jesus Christ, that God manifested himself to us. It was the church that Jesus trusted to carry on his mission--his battle with the evil one, and his work of salvation in this world. We have no right to change that or depart from it--not if we choose to call ourselves Christians. The church of the 4th century had no right to sell its mission to the Roman empire, to pass on its mission to the Roman soldiers, who converted the world at the point of a sword. We have no right to pass on our mission to the American nation.

Why did God do it that way? Why did he put his own Son through that? Why didn't he just **Wield Power** in a majestic way? Why did God send us our salvation through a man? Through a suffering man. Through a defeated man. And this by way of **example** to us as well as by way of accomplishment for us. That is, each one of us has to work out his own salvation on the same road of suffering and worldly defeat and so follow the example of Jesus. The condition of our salvation is that we take up the burden of the mission of salvation that Jesus began. It is a battle to be fought; it is a great work to be done; it is a harvest to be gathered.

It is the price we pay to become the Sons of God. He put His own Son through it and so he puts us through it. He gives us the same Spirit to see us through. You must bear the cross before you can wear the crown. The heresy of the modern church is that you can follow the broad and easy road to get there. But it doesn't go there! What the modern Christian hustler wants is the crown the world gives to those who can raise the money and put together a political organization.

Why did God do it that way? To give us freedom. (But most people don't want their freedom. They're afraid of it. They've been slaves too long.) To make us full partners in the great drama of salvation. It remains a great mystery but it is the central mystery of our Christian faith. If you don't believe it, if you aren't living it, you aren't a Christian, no matter how much time you spend in church, no matter how much you read the bible.

We destroy that Christian faith when we substitute for it the pre-Christian, Old Testament idea of a remote God who works through the wrath of nations, who effects his will through war and worldly power. We **throw away our own role** in the salvation of the world. Instead of relying upon the Spirit that is in us, we turn to superstitious invocations of Power. When Jesus Christ won't do it for us, we turn to the ruler of this world who will do it our way. When we pray to **the god of this world** (2 Cor 4:4), when we pray for wealth and power, we really invoke Satan, and, in his own way, he answers such prayers.

pruning the church

What communion has light with darkness? asks St. Paul. And what accord has Christ with Belial? Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean. (2 Cor 6:14,17)

In First Corinthians (5.9-11) Saint Paul makes an essential distinction between the character of the world we live in and what the character of the Christian church has to be. We can hardly avoid the company of the idolater, the fornicator and the covetous, if we are to live in this world, he says, (cf. Mt 13.38) but *with such an one do not eat*, that is, don't share the common meal with him, don't let him into the church. And the early church had strict standards for admission to the church and for continuing to belong to the church. The official "church" of the Roman empire admitted everyone--coerced them to join, actually--and so created a mass church on a minimalist basis. That is the tradition that persists in the modern church. Recite the salvation formula, participate in the ritual and that's it. Now you belong to the church. You thereby create a large and prosperous church that has no standards. [see *Everybody's Church: wheat & tares* page 131, Chapter XIII of *The Church of the Empire*.]

Imagine the church of St. Paul's time tolerating such a one as Senator Ted Kennedy for five minutes! The excuse for this policy of **idiot tolerance** is charity for sinners. But the reason is the desire to have a church of worldly wealth and power. Such a church cannot afford strict standards, especially when it is necessary to evict someone who is rich and powerful.

But therein lies the way to change the church. If what the church pretends to believe were preached courageously and insisted upon, it would be the beginning of that process of pruning without which the church cannot survive.

The church is a vine in need of constant pruning. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.* (John 15.2) When the church became a state church it was pruned no longer. It was "pruned" by the worldly men who drove out the sincere Christians.

The **world** is a field full of weeds, (Mt 13.38) but the church is a vineyard, a garden. Even when you have good soil and good seed, the garden is doomed to fail, if you don't regularly pull the weeds. The weeds have long since overrun the garden.

I found a dead bush in the yard and I cut it down to the ground as a preparation for digging it out. But, I didn't get around to digging it out that day, and, when I went back to it, a week later, it was throwing out green shoots from the roots. But it was only the total pruning that brought it back from the dead. The church appears to be dead. It is dead unless it gets a total pruning of the dead wood, that is, unless most of those who now pretend to be Christians are either driven to live up to the name or else driven out of the church. Drive them out or drive yourself out = let them have the buildings. Most of them have long since become temples of Satan. What a perfect house for him is a church building from which the Holy Spirit has departed! **The church must be pruned!**

the Catholic Church

Even the churches which have adopted--on paper--a firm anti-abortion position are part of the problem, not part of the solution. Most people assume that the Catholic Church is a bulwark of the pro life movement. Officially, it is. In reality, people who still call themselves "Catholics", and who have every right to do so because of what the church has become, are a major part of the passive and even active support for the abortion industry. It isn't that the Catholic Church is worse than the others. But it thinks it is better, and so it fails to recognize that it is just as bad.

Other denominations like the Baptists and Lutherans have split into several branches because of disagreement about abortion and other basic questions of faith and morals. That is at least healthier and more honest than the false unity that has been preserved in the Catholic church at the price of gross and epidemic hypocrisy.

The Catholics who have made anything like a serious commitment to the anti-abortion battle are a tiny minority in that church. There are as many active pro-aborts in the Catholic Church as there are pro-lifers and the fact that they are tolerated is sufficient evidence that we are dealing with a church that is morally adrift. There are priests and nuns who publicly support abortion without any effective action from their bishops.

There are several Catholic bishops who have effectively supported the pro life movement. But 99% of the bishops have done nothing and many of them tacitly condone abortion. The abortion rate among "Catholic" women is higher than in the general population.

The official Respect Life program is a sorry excuse for a program. That is essentially what it is, as with other official programs--an excuse. It gives them something to point to: See, we're doing something = pretending to do something. Not only aren't they doing anything, they aren't even saying anything. The idea is to have an official pro life program that won't offend all those in the church who have compromised with abortion. But what is really wanted is a program that will mortally offend these people, that will drive them out of the church and begin the process of pruning. Without it the church is so much dead wood.

What passes for "faith" in the Catholic Church today is self-justifying complacency. Like a father who disregards the fact that all his children have had abortions. It isn't his fault, because he has never wavered in his stated position against abortion. The idea is that the church is justified by its official statements despite how its members live and regardless of what its clergy are actually teaching, by word or by silence or by example.

"Catholic" Mexico, "Catholic" Brazil and the "Catholic" Philippines don't allow abortions. That is, they don't allow them officially. In fact, all of these countries have a higher abortion rate than the United States. Suppose you were to wake up tomorrow to discover that, miraculously, the nation was now 80% Catholic and had a strict legal ban on abortion--how would that affect abortions in the United States? The answer is that we would have more abortions than ever, judging by what actually happens in the "Catholic" countries of South America.

The whole of Catholic Europe has abandoned even the hypocrisy of having laws against abortion. Last year, "Catholic" Belgium finally legalized what had long since become a common practice. That is very plain evidence that, except for a green sprig or two, we are dealing with an institution that is spiritually dead and morally rotten. How else could it have happened that with so many centuries to preach and practice the Christian religion, the Church there has failed so dismally in teaching people this most basic moral commandment?--at the very least, **don't murder your own children!** Is that too much to ask of "Christians"? By their rotten fruits you shall know them! Centuries of "Christianity" have produced societies as morally rotten as the pagan societies they replaced. How can that be?

Abortion isn't some minor peculiarity of Catholic belief. It isn't some arbitrary point of morality, like playing cards, upon which churches and individuals might reasonably differ. The killing of unborn babies is so gross and obvious an evil that societies which allow it must abandon any pretense to be moral. They must abandon any claim to be Christian. The church which is responsible for this condition of society must acknowledge its own complete failure as a church. If people can kill their own children and think it all right, what is left of the moral order?

The major "advantage" of the Catholic Church over the others is that it has preserved more of the Christian facade = more of the hypocrisy. The Catholic church still refuses to allow divorce--officially. The thousands of "annulments" granted each year--61,416 in the United States in 1989--are not divorces, because they aren't called that. Thus, through official hypocrisy, a moral

position is maintained that has long since been abandoned in practice. That opens a way to the resolution of the abortion problem. Just call them something else besides abortions!

The same is true of using contraceptives. The official position of the church is ignored by most of those who call themselves Catholics. And it is this contraceptive mentality that promotes abortion. Abortion has become a back up method of contraception. Instead of being accepted as a blessing from God, children are regarded as a burden to be avoided, because they interfere with that pursuit of money and worldly success, which is the main purpose in life of the modern Catholic.

Some of those in the church are at least trying to draw the line against abortion. It is not only a moral issue, it has finally become a matter of family survival and even personal survival. But it is like trying to defend the last redoubt when all the major fortresses have already been surrendered, and most of the garrison have a secret allegiance to the enemy.

The Knights of Columbus publish a poster which says: *Pray the Rosary to Stop Abortion*. Meanwhile, the Knights of Columbus make thin excuses as to why they can't expel pro abortion politicians like Mario Cuomo and Ted Kennedy. That is a good example of how you can use prayer as an overcoat to hide moral cowardice. These "knights" want to hide behind Mary's skirts. They want her to fight the abortion battle for them so they don't have to offend powerful pro abortion Catholic politicians.

That is typical of church institutions. They maintain an official position against abortion, while, for all practical purposes, they go along with it.

what ever happened to the church?

The usual analysis of what has gone wrong with the Church supposes that all was well before the 1960's came along. A story about the Catholic Church in Canada, which says that it is disintegrating as rapidly as the Church in the United States, offers the explanation, that some Government bureaucrats, infected by secular humanism in the 1960's somehow got control of the church machinery and, in one generation, all but destroyed it.

It's like what happened to Christian America--supposedly. An irresistible mental virus called ***secular humanism*** invaded our minds and destroyed our values.

But how could a real Christian church have been so weak? How could the body of Christ be so vulnerable to a virus? Obviously the church had spiritual AIDS. It had no immunity left against spiritual diseases.

The real church would never have succumbed to a mere set of ideas, especially a set of ideas as nebulous as those lumped under the head of secular humanism, if it had been in the keeping of the Spirit of Truth. Are wrong ideas rare and hard to find? You haven't been to the book store lately. Are they intellectually and spiritually powerful? Only with the weak-minded. Only with those who have lost the Spirit of Truth.

The church which withstood the bloody and brutal persecution, the raw military power of the Roman empire would not have collapsed like a cardboard shanty because it was exposed to the breeze of a few wrong ideas. The Communist empire threatened lives and property, but, without the military and financial backing, its ideas were impotent. But supposedly, like a lady with delicate nerves, the church fainted dead away when **secular humanism** insulted her.

Why was it so fragile? Isn't it obvious that a church which could so readily be destroyed, was already dead spiritually? Something that easy to push over was already rotted in its very roots. A church which is worldly in its faith, must inevitably succumb to the morals of the world.

The old church was a mass church which lived by a minimal moral standard. It was held together by a rigid external discipline, by uniformity and regimentation--how else do you hold a mass church together? It's "unity" was modeled on the army. Everyone wore a uniform and marched in step. But then, when the teacher left the class room, when the rigid discipline was relaxed, all hell broke loose. Literally.

The old church offered a minimalist package of salvation for a mass church. Obedience to the law and observance of rituals will save you. Even if you don't love God, the fear of hell is enough to save you. Like a discount store, they offered some kind of salvation for every budget.

In the old church there was an outward show of virtue, which concealed every sort of vice. The open endorsement of homosexuality and abortion in the modern church are only the coming out of the closet of the homosexuality and the abortions that were hidden in the old church.

It was the new freedom that destroyed the old church. And there is no going back to it. The state church mold, in which the old church was cast, is long since broken.

In the old church there was some recognition that the more you made it in this world, the further you traveled away from the church, but they couldn't prevent it, because of the imperative to achieve success in this world. If you went to the state university, you would lose your faith. That is just what happened to thousands of young people, who did go to the state university. What happened next was worse: instead of leaving the church, they brought the values of the world back into the church--materialism, condoms, divorce, abortion--all the abominations that are so common today among people who still call themselves Catholics.

There are good individuals in the church who remain there out of loyalty or sentimentality, but the church as an institution does not facilitate their goodness. It undermines it.

At the height of its worldly success, the church began to disintegrate. Is that hard to understand? Is it surprising that worldly success brings spiritual failure? At the time of its greatest success, the most sincere Christians in the church were leaving it because they found it spiritually dead. It is still the case that when anyone comes to a serious belief in Jesus Christ, he is on his way out of the church, whether he realizes it or not. Sooner or later he will find it intolerable to be surrounded by "Christians" who are spiritually dead, who are going through the motions.

A church is built by its members. When there are no standards for membership, the church soon ceases to have any standards. When the standards are minimal, they are still too much trouble and they inevitably break down. Faith in the church becomes the superstition that magic rituals will force the Spirit to remain in a congregation which has lost track of faith and morals. But no one owns the Spirit, and no one controls Him.

The old church worked in a way because you could ignore all the people in it. You could walk in there and pray to God and no one distracted you. The mysterious character of the Latin mass made up for the pathetic attempt at a sermon. But when people were forced to turn around and take a good look at their fellow church goers, when they had to treat the church as if it were the spiritual community it was supposed to be, they discovered that the Christian community did not exist in that church. You can find God anywhere--even in church--if you are sincere in your personal quest. But you can't find the Spirit in your fellow church goers if the Spirit isn't there. The modern ceremonies are embarrassing because they reveal all too clearly the absence of the Spirit without which the church has no claim to be the church.

The church still seems less concerned with the loss of souls than with the loss of revenues. At one church I went to, the entire sermon was devoted to the problem of raising \$100,000 to rebuild the organ. Even though the matter was fully explained in the bulletin, the pastor devoted his homily to the subject also, instead of using his one chance to deliver a spiritual message to those in his care. Another pastor briefly mentioned the two Roman martyrs whose feast day it was, and spent the rest of the sermon recalling a wealthy lady who had given the money for all the marble etc. in the church. Actually she was a woman of bad character whose undermining of the morals of a priest was overlooked because of her large donations. The pastor is right in saying in effect that the example of those martyrs is not very relevant to the modern church. All they did was die for the church, a long time ago. No one is going to die for this church, no matter what the marble is worth. What is relevant to the modern church is the example of a lady who paid to keep up the marble and stained glass style of the church, so never mind her character.

Modern Catholic bishops are often millionaires. Even when they aren't they live like millionaires. It isn't surprising that the vows of chastity and obedience are going the way of the lost vow of poverty. It isn't surprising that so many unworthy men have become bishops. It is a safe, comfortable and luxurious life style, which attracts worldly men, which offers no hurdles to those whose motives are unworthy.

The old church tried to cover the world with endless parishes like wall to wall carpet so that no one could escape the church. It was the would-be successor to the Roman Empire. It aspired to a world wide version of Calvin's totalitarian theocracy. The real driving force was that passion for world conquest that lurks in every man and in every worldly institution. It was the yielding to the temptation that Jesus rejected--to become the ruler of all the kingdoms of this world on Satan's terms, Satan's deceptive terms, because he never keeps his bargains. It was the Christian nation become the Christian empire and then the Christian world. All the political power, all the military power, all the wealth united to the church to which all must belong.

Now, like every other half-built empire, it is falling into ruin. The only way the church can save itself is to lose its wealth and pomp and power--lose all those who belong to the worldly church. The church gained the whole world in its deal with the Roman Empire--so it seemed--but it lost its soul. How will it recover its soul unless it gives up the world again?

the true church and the worldly church

The Christian churches today are characterized by a fantasy kind of other worldliness which allows every kind of worldliness for practical purposes. Religion is a fantasy which gives you a world of beautiful ideals that you can escape to, while you live just like your pagan neighbors. Go to war like the pagans but take a bible with you. Buy and sell just like the pagans but pray to Jesus for better luck than your pagan competitors.

We all know people--and perhaps we know them very well--who turn to romantic fantasies instead of finding a real love relationship. The same thing happens in religion when fantasies are allowed to take the place of a real relationship with Jesus--a relationship that can only be established while you march along with him.

Romantic fantasies often take people in the opposite direction from love and marriage. It's the same with religious fantasies--they take the place of the real thing and bring us no closer to it. The church competes with the TV in offering us escapist fantasies.

All these flattering songs. But words of love are just words if you don't live by them. I praise him for saving me in the hereafter and for giving me all this money in the here and now. What is missing is the most basic idea in the teachings of Jesus. He doesn't want us to keep thanking him and praising him, he wants us to follow him! He never put himself up on the pedestal we have built for him. Instead he got down on his knees to wash the feet of his followers = you fellows have a lot of walking ahead of you, so take care of those feet! We think if we keep him up on the pedestal and spend all our time praising him, he won't notice that we're not doing what he told us to do.

Our relationship to Jesus Christ requires us to imitate Him, not just praise Him! ***Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!*** When we praise Jesus instead of imitating him, we are substituting insincere flattery for the basic obligation of the Christian life.

The superstitious expectation of cataclysmic events distracts us from living the Christian life. We ignore the simple challenge of good and evil as it faces us in our daily lives. Religion becomes an escape from life rather than a way of meeting its challenges.

Christians are blind and deaf to the real horrors of the world, to the vast evil of the world. They frighten themselves with comic book versions of Revelations and remain ignorant of and complacent about the evils under their nose, for which they themselves are responsible. They don't see the real terror that has come upon us--we must go on living indefinitely in this world as it is, as we have made it, by what we have done, and by what we have failed to do. The worst

punishment God could inflict upon us is to make us live with the mess we have made. There is every sign that He means to do just that!

It is no favor to people when you give them a false assurance of salvation, when you sell them the love of Jesus at a cut rate price. To reach a mass market, the church makes salvation cheap and easy. Just repeat the formula. Just perform the ritual. But what they are really selling is deception to those that wish to be deceived.

The church is selling quack nostrums in place of real medicine. It is selling fake cancer cures to people who have real spiritual cancer. People think they're Christians because they were born into the church. But there's no such thing as being born into the church. To be a Christian, you have to be born again! It means that you have to be born into a new and different life. If you are living the same life as your pagan neighbors, you haven't been born again!

Of all the sins of the modern false preachers, the one that most condemns them is the false assurance of salvation. It's like a doctor who mis-diagnoses what's wrong with you, and so keeps you from seeking the cure you need.

One of the characteristic marks of the worldly church is corruption in regard to money. One of the church corruptions that was used as an excuse for the Reformation was the selling of spiritual indulgences--that's how they built St. Peter's Basilica. It cost a million dollars and lost a million souls. You can see it today when the TV evangelist sells blessings. Send him money and God will bless you. One of the long lost documents of the early church, a second century catechism called *the teachings of the apostles* says tersely: *If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.* You can see why they lost it!

the signs of the real church:

When you start searching for a lost child or a lost church, it helps to have a picture so you can recognize it. What is the church supposed to be, what does it look like, what are the characteristic signs of the real church?

Will the real Christian church please stand up? That's how you recognize it. If it won't stand up for what is right, it isn't the real church, which bears **witness** to the truth.

It isn't the "invisible church." It is often the most visible and manifest church around--as visible as 85 people in bright orange prison suits being taken into a court room after a rescue. It consists of those who show up with signs in public places. It is made up of those who are conspicuous because they insist upon bearing witness to the truths that other people do not want to think about.

Actually, it is the church conformist, the church passive, that is invisible when it is time to stand up and be counted. Except for a few private and peculiar superstitions, it is indistinguishable from its pagan neighbors. It is invisible because it conforms to the world around it--like the chameleon!

love and sharing = all things common

The church is **the family of Jesus Christ**, who takes us home with him, who teaches us to call God "father." He puts this new family ahead of his natural family and he tells us that we must do the same. (Mt 12.48-50, Lk 14.26)

Beyond even the commandments to love God and our neighbor he gives us *a new commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.* (Jn 13.35,36) It was this special love that created the Christian community, the original model of the Christian church, which *had all things common.* (Acts 2.44-7 4.34,35) How else can it be, if you have a family which really loves one another? It follows that they will share what they have. What sort of family is it when no one shares, when each keeps what he has and ignores the needs of his brothers and sisters? It is **not** the Christian family!

In the beer commercials and in the sit-coms on TV you can see a group of people who really care about each other. But there is no such "community" to be seen in the Christian churches today.

The communism of the early church persisted for centuries, and you can still find it, but it altogether disappeared from the official church of the Roman empire which belonged to wealthy and powerful men, landlords and slave owners, who imposed the church upon their slaves, but who had no inclination to share anything beyond that with them.

There was an equality of fortune in the early church that stood in stark contrast to the gross inequality of rich and poor in the world. Today's church has conformed to the world in tolerating and furthering that gross inequality. The indifference of Christians to the miseries of the poor is the passive form of hatred, it is the negation of the love which they must have as Christians.

Those who use the Old Testament to negate the New, necessarily ignore most of what is written there, such as the mandates for genocidal war (Deut 20.15, 1 Sam 15.3), or having many wives, or owning slaves. They also ignore the basic law against usury--making money off of money instead of by honest work--which condemns the very basis of the capitalist economy. (Exod 22.25, Lev 25.36, Deut 23.19, Psa 15.5, Prov 28.8, Eze 18.8,13,17 22.12) We have not only abandoned the Christian economy, we have embraced practices that not even the standards of the Old Testament allow.

Where the church once had its own economy, separate from **the world**, it is joined to the world in this most basic way. We can't afford nice scruples as to what work we do, and we can't afford to pity those who fall out of the race for survival--we're lucky to be working at all.

Christians work at the same jobs as pagans, jobs which are often the very antithesis of doing the Lord's work, jobs which exploit others or pander to their vices. Even useful work is grossly under paid or grossly over paid because of the anti-Christian character of the forces that determine it. How little of our time and talent is spent in God's service! How much of it is spent in serving the world!

The kind of work we do and what we spend our money on creates the kind of economy in which we all must make our lives. Without the principles of Christianity we create a predatory economy that has no mercy on the weak; which gives people far too much money or far too little instead of giving them enough. Our economy regularly creates extremes of wealth and destitution and both extremes lead to abortion.

poverty

If you read the whole of the New Testament carefully, if you study all of the things that Jesus Christ says about money, riches and poverty, the only conclusion you can come to is that there is no such thing as a rich Christian. You can be rich or you can be a Christian, but you can't be both. That is verified by what Acts tells us about the early church, how all the prosperous men gave up what they had to belong to the Christian community. (Acts 4.34-7) We aren't called upon to starve, we have the assurance of Jesus Christ that all our needs will be met when we put the kingdom of God first. But **poverty** in the sense of simple living is the characteristic of the true church. Wealth and luxury are therefore the signs of the church which has compromised with the world. You have to be very near-sighted, even legally blind, not to see that false church right in front of you!

God gives us just enough money. It is Satan that gives us wealth, because he knows that riches choke out the word of God. (Mt 13.22) When you worship the god that made you rich, you worship Satan.

It isn't just materialism and greed that keeps people so obsessed with making money. It is a desperate striving for security. Instead of the social security of the Christian community, it is every man for himself, every family constantly bailing its own leaky little boat.

The alternative to this mad endless scramble for money is the horrible destitution that afflicts 90% of humanity. You can wind up just like them, living on the garbage dump and competing with the rats for food! Because we have turned our backs on the poor, because we don't even share with our sisters and brothers in the family of Jesus, none of us has any real security. Each one of us has to make the best deal he can with the world--with the prince who rules this world.

nonconformity

Nonconformity to the world is the sign of the true church, conformity to the world is the sign of the false church. Christians thought they could take all the good things of this world and still observe the moral minimums that are necessary to protect our families. But the line keeps moving. We keep accommodating ourselves more and more to the values of the world. We enjoy our prosperity and we don't worry about the children of poverty who die because they lack the necessities of life. We justify the deaths of children killed by our wars. Yes, it's sad, but . . . we need war--this rich and powerful nation was built by war and it won't long survive without it. So now the moving hand points to our children and grandchildren, whose lives are a dangerous threat to that precariously-balanced prosperous lifestyle.

persecution

The true church is **persecuted** for righteousness sake--that is, for doing the right thing. That is exactly what it means when they lock a fellow up for years because he tried to save babies from abortion. Persecution doesn't mean when they put a TV evangelist away for defrauding people.

Typically, the false church is on the side of the persecution. Historically the Christian churches have blessed war and justified slavery. The pope blessed Mussolini's troops on their way to the rape of Ethiopia. You can find a thousand similar episodes in the sorry history of the "Christian" churches.

And yet there always seems to be a remnant of the Christian church that opposes war, that opposes slavery, that opposes abortion. And that is put in prison for doing it. And that is the sign of the true church--it is persecuted when it stands up for what is right. And it has to stand up to the false church as well as to the rest of the world.

courage!

The true church has to have **courage!** There is no such thing as a cowardly Christian because you cannot follow Jesus if you lack courage! Cowardice is the characteristic sign of the false church. Instead of confronting the evil in the world fearlessly, secure in the power of the Spirit, it locks the door and calls the police--to protect its own property.

The **Holy Spirit** is the one and only authority in the church. Where the Spirit is, the church is. Where the Spirit isn't, the church isn't and all the bibles in Christendom and all the ceremonies in Christendom can't force Him to come back. One thing we know for sure about Him, He doesn't keep company with cowards! That is one reason He is so conspicuous by His absence in modern churches!

mission

The true church has an urgent sense of **mission** to challenge the evil in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. It means something different than building the power of the church by selling superficial Christianity around the world. We need to bring the missionaries home, because no country is more derelict in Christianity than our own. If we can't make it work here, it's no use preaching it abroad. Billy Graham needs to convert himself. A preacher who won't preach against abortion has lost his license to preach Christianity.

Too many think that all we have to do to turn people against abortion is to show them horrible pictures of abortions. But morality is something different from squeamishness. If you had to slaughter your own meat or watch films of the meat-packing industry, you would probably turn vegetarian. But once you have decided that it is all right to eat meat, you just avoid the slaughterhouse and the back room of the butcher shop. Many "Christians" are not just tolerant of war, they are enthusiastic about it! They avoid seeing the real pictures of war and draw a curtain

over it on which heroic scenes are painted. That is just how other people deal with the horror of abortion, if they wish to justify it. The excuses made for war echo the excuses made for abortion.

We have to go beyond gory pictures if we are to arrive at a convincing morality of abortion. That morality isn't so convincing if we acquiesce in all the other ways in which society actively or passively destroys human life. Gandhi said that poverty is the worst form of violence and you don't have to spend much time in the slums of one of our big cities to see what he meant. If we truly have a commitment to stop abortion it pushes us into a passionate commitment to rescue all those whose lives are discarded by an affluent and pleasure-seeking society.

The pro life movement is spiritually shallow and morally compromised--90% of it is anyway--just like the church it grew out of. That is why we are losing. That is why even the legal and political "victory" that is coming will be a hollow victory. It won't stop abortion. And abortion is only the most obvious of the evils that eat away the very foundation of our society.

The movement grew out of the church, like a new shoot from an old stump. The pro life movement can't take the place of the church, but the church we need has to grow out of the kind of commitment that we have in the pro life movement at its best, a commitment that can be found in few other places.

What is the church? A building where people congregate once a week to get edified? Then they go back home and spend the rest of the week living just like their pagan neighbors. That is not the church. The church is a spirit filled movement that changes your life. It makes you personally responsible for the evil in the world--for the evil in your town, in your neighborhood. It puts upon you the obligation to go out and bravely challenge that evil, not by yourself, not by your own strength but in the company of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Come out then, and do it!

Terry Sullivan