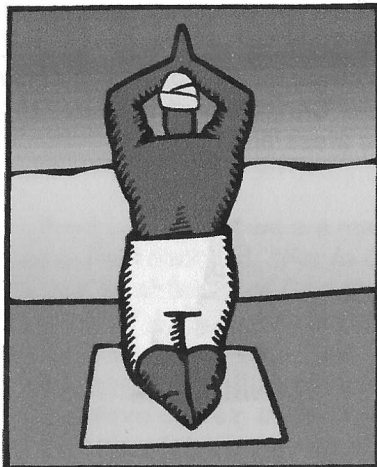


GHANDI SAID!



A Strawberry Mountain View
"Unique - Challenging - Controversial!"



"Berry Good News!"

by:

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GHANDI SAID!

Mahatma Gandhi, the renowned leader of people in India in seeking to overthrow British colonial rule of his native land, was an avid reader. Although a **Hindu**, in his quest for freedom, he read the four Christian Gospels. He wanted to know more about **Jesus of Nazareth**. In his reading of the Gospels he was impressed with this man whom Christians worship and follow.

Where could he find out more about this Jesus whom Christians refer to as "the Christ - the Messiah?"



One Sunday morning **Ghandi** decided that he would visit one of the Christian churches in Calcutta. Upon seeking entrance to the church sanctuary **he was stopped** at the door by the ushers. The ushers told him that **he was not welcome** nor would he be permitted to attend this particular church as it was for **'high caste' Indians and 'whites' only**. He was neither 'high caste' nor was he British. Because of the rejection by this church **'the Mahatma'** turned his back on Christianity. With this act **Ghandi rejected** the Christian faith **never again** to consider the claims of Christ. He was 'turned-off' by **the sin of segregation** that was practiced by the church. **Ghandi** later declared, "I'D BE A CHRISTIAN IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE CHRISTIANS!"

Segregation, prejudice and other forms of bigotry have plagued the Christian Church for centuries. We will never know the difference it would have made had **Ghandi**

been welcomed by Christians and in turn had he come into a personal relationship with Christ as his Savior and Lord. What an impact Christianity could have had on India, a land that has been held in the clutches and bondage of a heathen religion [**Hinduism**] for centuries. The people of India are still held in the bondage and clutches of a religion that is without hope.



Hinduism is a religion of "**karma**," i.e., of *fatalism*. Hindus worship literally thousands of gods and goddesses. Hinduism has become **the breeding ground** for the New Age Movement. It actively promotes the **unscriptural** teaching known as **reincarnation**. India is a land that has been spiritually blinded for centuries. All types of spirit beings are worshiped and feared by the devotees of Hinduism.

At this point you may be wondering as to what **Ghandi's rejection** by Christians has to do with me. I take my faith in Christ very seriously. It troubles me to no end to see the actions of too many Christians and churches, especially theologically conservative churches, that do not display God's love. The fact that Christ declared that **the mark** of His disciples (followers) would be **love for one another** is largely missing in most churches is a very sad commentary on the institutional Church.

Rejection, bigotry, prejudice, and at times outright hatred is **alive and well** in much of the institutional Church. **Jews** have experienced **anti-Semitism** at the hands of some people who name the Name of Christ. **Anti-Semitism** continues to manifest its ugly head in a segment of Christendom in our day. **African-American Christians** continue to experience segregation and rejection by some 'white'

Christians **claiming** that the Bible backs-up their views. **Native Americans and Asians** are ignored by many Christians. **Gays and lesbians** continue to be disenfranchised from theologically conservative churches. In fact the **GLBT community** has become the scapegoat of many churches. **The homeless, the poor and others** continue to be ignored, scorned and rejected by too many churches.

Why is it that some professed Christians display actions that are anything but Christian and Christlike?

'White' evangelical and fundamentalist Christians often continue to judge, reject and castigate groups of people whom they view as being 'different' from them. Keeping **the status quo**, for whatever the reason, has become the norm in many churches. In some communities people will attend certain churches for business, social and/or political reasons while avoiding other churches because the people attending those churches are not the 'in' crowd.

Churches need to return to the simplicity of the early churches freeing themselves from the useless baggage that has embellished them. **The message of reconciliation** is desperately needed today. I am convinced that **until** churches begin putting into practice this message, we will continue to flounder and lack the essence of New Testament Christianity. **What does the message of reconciliation entail?** The apostle Paul gives us the answer to this in **2 Corinthians 5:17-20**,

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for

Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." NRSV

This message is plain and simple. As believers **we have been reconciled to God in and through Christ.** We, therefore, have been given this message of reconciliation to share with a world that is lost and separated from God. This message is a **'whosoever will'** call to the people of the world **regardless** of race, ethnicity, gender, age, culture, sexual identity, educational or social status, **whoever.** Christ came to save all who will repent of sin, confess, believe and receive Him as Savior and Lord. **See – Romans 10:9-13.**

It is in Christ that we are made one. The apostle Paul declared, **"For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."** (Galatians 3:26-28) NRSV

If only the church that **Ghandi** tried to worship with had accepted this message what a difference there might have been. If my Christianity depended solely on fallible churches and/or other Christians, I, too, like **Ghandi** would probably reject Christianity. However, my Christianity **does not rely or depend** on churches, denominations or other Christians. In fact, I've **reworded Ghandi's statement** and it works for me. Remember Ghandi is reported to have said, **"I'd be a Christian if it were not for the Christians."**

My declaration is:

I AM A CHRISTIAN IN SPITE OF SOME OF THE CHRISTIANS!

Christ died for my sin. The penalty of my sin was nailed to His cross.



In His death, burial and resurrection He overcame the sting, power and penalty of sin. I no longer face spiritual death, but I have been given the gift of eternal life. I am assured a place in heaven by my Lord. **See - John 14:6; 5:24.** I am saved, i.e., *made spiritually whole*, by grace through personal believing/trusting faith in Christ. He is my Savior and Lord. Salvation is God's free gift of grace **not based on religion.** In fact, organized religion often hinders and separates from God's free gift of grace.

Are you turned off by Christians who are not practicing what they profess to believe? Whatever you do, do not allow people and religionists to deter you from authentic faith in Christ because of the actions, lives and mean spirit of some professed Christians. Remember, real Christianity is Christ.

This non-denominational para-church ministry invites your inquiry for what we have to offer.

OLIVE TREE MINISTRIES

"Ambassadors of Reconciliation"



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