

The Alternative of Non-Violence and Peace in a Violent World

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Is there a chance for peace and non-violence in the contemporary scenario of growing local and global trends of violence and terrorism? Violence affects all of us and all communities and societies. One could say that there is no island of immunity to violence anywhere in the world. We are in a world of violence, small and massive; of terrorism, a new phenomenon; and of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological. We seem to be in a situation of an epidemic of violence. There is a growing sense of this culture of violence. When we see day after day on our television screens or in the newspapers pictures of broken bodies and blood stained roads, buses, railway stations and markets as a result of terrorist attacks and suicide bombings, we are shocked and outraged. Nations yield to the temptation of using force to settle disputes. We cannot remain neutral. We have to search for the roots of such acts of violence and terrorism and carnage. The causes and roots may be individual or communal and structural, ultimately rooted in human agency. Often they are complex in many situations. But we need to understand the human causality of the phenomenon and find ways to counter it and build a society on the foundation of a robust sense of our shared common humanity. We need to reverse the process of using violent means to secure justice and opt for the alternative process of using non-violent ways and means for building a society that is just, humane, non-violent, compassionate and peaceful. It means the double challenge of understanding violence and terrorism in its roots and a collective responsibility of building a non-violent and peaceful world. The second task calls for exploring ethically acceptable ways of non-violence towards building a just and peaceful world.

Given the limited objective of the paper, I do not enter into the history of violent conflicts. History may offer us some precious lessons for both understanding and responding to violence. Hence, we cannot ignore the historical perspective of violent conflicts in our reflection on the question of violence. Also, I do not discuss violence in the name of religion though I allude to it, as it is a matter substantial enough for a full-fledged inquiry.

In the first part of the paper I shall try to define or arrive at a working definition of violence and terrorism which would help frame the discourse on

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violence and terrorism in a way that is ethically and theologically intelligible and useful. This could help towards an intelligent discussion and constructive response to the phenomenon of violence and terrorism. Non-violence could be the code word for such a response. The latter would be dealt with in part two.

1. Violence and Terrorism

1.1 Violence

The first task is to understand what counts for violence in an ethical sense. The way we understand violence will also determine what counts for terrorism. This task is most urgent in a situation where people use the undefined language of violence and terrorism so glibly. The common parlance use of the terminology of violence is a case of tautology to be explained below. Indeed, we have to settle what makes a particular use of force morally unacceptable and hence falls under the category of violence. Everyone goes on using the term violence so facilely for any and every kind of use of force that is morally unjustifiable without examining the moral grounds that make the use of force morally unacceptable or acceptable. It amounts to a tautology of saying that wrong is to be avoided because it is wrong.

In the literature dealing with violence, we find little discussion of what counts for violence in an ethical sense. Everyone seems to take for granted the meaning of violence in an ethical sense. I would like to draw attention to this problem. I have been grappling with the ethical meaning of violence and I shall share some reflections on this in the first part. I understand violence as the use of force by a person or a group of persons against another person or a group of persons that violates and rejects his/her/their dignity and causes damage and destruction. It could include damage and destruction of things and property that belongs to another person or group of persons, symbolizing a rejection of the dignity and rights of these persons or groups. The word violence comes from the Latin word *violare* meaning to violate. It means whatever violates another person in the sense of denying his/her dignity or the rights due to him/her and rejecting or abusing them.

As Robert McAfee Brown puts it: “The basic overall definition of violence would then become *violation of personhood*.”² It means that any use of force that deliberately and directly intends the negative effect as mentioned above on persons or a community of persons is violence. It means a rejection of his/her/their dignity and personhood. Any use of force that depersonalizes or transforms a person into a thing is violence. When we speak of human dignity and personhood, we affirm that every human being has an intrinsic worth and an inalienable dignity. It means human beings are ends in themselves and can never be treated as a thing. Nor can they be used as a means to something

² Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 7.

else however noble. Every person has unique worth. In this approach to human personhood, no person is worth more than another person. As Daniel Berrigan says that “no principle is worth the sacrifice of a single person.”³ Biblical revelation affirms the intrinsic worth and dignity of every human person. According to this tradition, every human person, man or woman, is the image of God. Genesis 1: 26-27 gives us the proto-gospel of human equality of dignity of all human persons, men and women. N.T. theology enriches this understanding that Christ died for all. This embrace of all humankind by the divine love in Christ makes every human person uniquely precious. Here is what Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Rabbi says: “To meet a human being is a major challenge to mind and heart. I must recall what I normally forget. A person is not just a specimen of the species called *Homo sapiens*. He is all of humanity in one, and whenever one man is hurt we are all injured. The human is the disclosure of the divine, and all men are one in God’s care for man. *Many things on earth are precious, some are holy, and humanity is holy of holies.*”⁴

Let us now consider the use of physical force that intends directly a rejection of dignity and rights of people and their personhood as violence. We witness to the use of force as individual acts in inter-human dealings in daily life, in family, in transactions of society and its institutions. We mention here also the use of force as violence between groups and communities, between nations as well as the use of force other than physical, such as psychological, cultural or religious and structural, all of which involve rejection or violation of dignity and personhood. All these expressions of violence are analogically extended forms of violence beyond physical violence. Often these latter forms of violence are covert and subtle, and we need critical awareness to recognise them as forms of violence as well.

I would like to draw special attention to what is called structural violence or institutionalised forms of violence. Individual acts of violence are overt and obvious. But structural forms of violence, often the root cause of other forms of “violence,” need analytical understanding. In this connection I would like to refer to Archbishop Helder Camara’s analysis of violence.⁵

His analysis and categories can help us to seek the root causes of violence and respond to it in a constructive way. For Helder Camara, violence No.1 is a situation of injustice, humiliation and restrictions in which people are reduced to a life of slavery. It is unjust society. It is a situation in which people suffer not only overt violations of justice but more often covert ones as well as the violation of dignity and personhood. As McAfee Brown says: “It is the subtle

³ Ibid.

⁴ Harold Kasimow and Byron L. Sherwin, eds., *No Religion is an Island : Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 7.

⁵ Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971), Chapters 1 and 2.

institutionalised destruction of human possibilities.”⁶ It is a situation around us all the time. As McAfee Brown says further, “It is present whenever the structures of society act so as to depersonalize and “thingify” people by making them objects rather than subjects.”

We are familiar with the Aristotelian definition of justice: “Render each person his/her due.” The first act of justice, therefore the first moral duty we owe to each other is to render respect and protection of the dignity and personhood of each and all. Regarding a child the act of justice would also include rendering respect for the dignity and personhood of him/her. This would be meaningless if the child is deprived of those things to which he/she is entitled, such as food, clothing, education, protection, opportunities for growth, etc in society. Such society then is unjust and is doing violence to the child. In this thinking, injustice is an act of violence. An unjust society would be considered structural violence. We can analogically extend this understanding of violence to acts and structures of violence in other areas of personal, interpersonal and societal life, functions and organisations. This can be extended to the cultural realm of symbols and religion as well.

That injustice is violence means that in a situation of injustice, the human person or community of persons are rejected, humiliated and devalued, and so are their dignity and personhood. These moral implications are implicit in why Camara called injustice as No.1 violence. McAfee Brown makes this clear in his explanation of Camara’s view.

We shall now consider violence No.2. When violence No.1 which is injustice becomes too oppressive and intolerant, revolt on the part of victims becomes inevitable. It is a situation wherein all the just and legitimate ways of righting wrongs and injustice they are suffering from are closed. It is a revolt against the status quo of oppressive violence and its agents who deny people justice, freedom and dignity. The victims can no longer bear and suffer the oppressive violence of injustice and use force to overthrow the system of oppressive injustice or rule. Camara calls this violence as revolt violence No. 2. Whenever any form of government destroys the ends for which the government exists, then the people have the right to alter it or institute a new government to guarantee the ends for which the state exists. Even the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America foresees the right of revolt if such eventuality of the destruction of the ends of the State takes place. As Thomas Rose says: “The basic cause of most violent revolt is injustice and inequity, violation of personhood, and symbolic violence.”⁷ Here too in the moral reasoning justifying revolt with the use of force, the destruction of people, their personhood and dignity stands. But in concrete history and situation, the use of force may become excessive or disproportionate. Although the right to self-defence and the revolt of people as

⁶ McAfee Brown, 9.

⁷ Quoted in McAfee Brown, 11.

victims of oppressive violence, especially when the use of force is the only way to dismantle the unjust system, can be legitimate, there are some unforeseen factors in such revolt that can defeat the legitimate right to self-defence.

Violence No.3 is to repress this right to defend and to revolt against intolerable violence. Sometimes even the united unarmed resistance of victims of violence No.1 is considered violence by the agents of the status quo of an unjust society. The latter will engage in repressive violence to silence the revolt and suppress the movement of resistance. It often can be ruthless and brutal. In India we witness to this kind of repressive violence against the united unarmed resistance of tribals and dalits in their struggles against the injustice of the high castes or of the State (with the police often joining hands with the powerful of high castes or of the State in a partisan way). Sometimes unjust laws can support repressive violence. All unjust laws as instruments of unjust society belong to violence No.1. Some unjust laws like the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan has become the most frequent cause of violence against minorities in that country.

It may happen that the agents of violence No.1, which could sometimes be the State, may allow a margin of dissent or revolt provided it does not rock the boat of the whole State or the government. This is called by Herbert Marcuse as “repressive tolerance.”⁸ We need to recognise the violent nature of repressive tolerance.

There is a sequence between the three kinds of violence. Violence No.1 as injustice or unjust society leads to revolt on the part of the victims, hence violence No.2. This provokes and leads to repression as violence No.3 on the part of the agents of violence No.1. Helder Camara calls this sequence from injustice to revolt to repression the “spiral of violence”. This spiral will continue on by provoking more revolt leading to worse and uglier forms of repressive violence. As we conclude this section, let us hear the words of Helder Camara: “The only true answer to violence is to have the courage to face the injustices which constitute violence No.1.”⁹

So far we have tried to understand what would count for violence in an ethical sense. If we accept the ethical understanding of violence as defined above, violence can never be a way to achieve justice. We shall hear Martin Luther King Jr :

“Violence as a way of achieving justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence

⁸ McAfee Brown, 11.

⁹ Ibid., 13.

is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.”¹⁰

Another important aspect of violence is its link with power. When power assumes the character of dominance, it becomes violence and takes on structural expressions. It is the ideology of power. As Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo’s states, “if the ideology of power takes over politics and that of the State, then it operates with the belief that use of violence is the only way to establish a just social order. Such an ideology of power will scorn any restraint on the use of force.” Lajolo continues, “Superpowers, regional powers, aspiring powers and oppressed peoples sometimes yield to the temptation to believe, despite the evidence of history, that only force can bring about a just ordering of affairs among peoples and nations” It is also true that there is the difficulty of “molding a consistent political will on the part of the international community.”¹¹

Here we can mention the specific case of Military Industrial Complex (MIC) as a form of structural violence. Dwight Eisenhower was the one who pointed out the danger of the U.S economy becoming a MIC economy. If a country’s economy is entrapped in MIC, it has slipped into a structure of violence. An economy that is largely related to and dependent on industry for the production of military weapons including weapons of mass destruction and its accessories cannot meet people’s needs. Such an economy defeats the purpose of all economic activities. The structural compulsion of MIC is that it survives only if there are conflicts that need weapons and it flourishes in weapons’ trade. In order to be viable, it has to promote subtly conflicts (surrogate for wars). MIC would be compelled to continually spawn conflicts and wars.

Furthermore, we cannot ignore the manifestation of violence in different dimensions life of people’s lives. One could call these different manifestations as different categories of violence.

Knowledge of different forms of violence stuns us into realizing the depth and the extent of depersonalization caused by the different forms of violence. Struck by the ubiquity and enormity of violence and its brutality and ruthlessness every day, for example the war in Iraq or the genocide in Darfur, Rwanda or Gujarat in India, we may begin to wonder somewhat pessimistically if we are not so much in a post-modern world as in a “post-human” world. I do not intend to list all the categories of violence which would be only a gory story of bloodshed, broken bodies, humiliated persons and people. Among the categories, the “villain” seems to be structural violence to which we can apply

¹⁰ Source: Nobel Address, Oslo, December 11, 1964.

¹¹ Cf. the Address of the Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, the Vatican’s special envoy at the 61st United Nations General Assembly in New York on September, 27, in *America*, October 9, 2006.

analogically our understanding of sinful structures. Structures of violence are sinful structures.

When power assumes the character of dominance, it becomes structural violence. Through the subjugation of others, it rejects the personhood of people. Similarly, racism, casteism, untouchability, ethnicism are forms of violence, personal, social and structural. Gender violence is an issue that calls for another fully developed article.

We have to note that the attitudes, mind-sets and acts that flow from them may not always employ physical but often psychological, social and cultural forms of force. Hence they are violence since they mean devaluing personhood of people. These forms of violence come under the analogically extended categories of violence.

Here I would like to turn to forms of violence that are due to religious fundamentalism, religious extremism and religious sectarianism. In all these forms there is the negativity of what one might call “totalitarian religion”. This species of violence needs special study and discussion and therefore, I do not go into it. Here I just allude to one instance of such violence.

Dr Scot Holland speaks of this in his paper “The Gospel of Peace and the Violence of God”¹² in which he wrote about the Crisis of Kaduna in Nigeria in February of 2000 that led to a bloody clash between Muslims and Christians which left churches, mosques, schools, libraries, homes, and businesses burned and razed to the ground. It left in its trail three thousand people, Christians and Muslims, dead. They were killed in bitter fighting, in public riots and in private acts of violence in retaliation.¹³ The cause was religion or religious fundamentalism which is the same as “totalitarian religion,”¹⁴ even though this religion-related violence is not isolated from economic, ethnic, political or other social factors of the country.

1.2 Terrorism

Today there is a growing phenomenon of terrorism. Some try to understand it as an inevitable reaction of desperados in the face of long-standing injustice and oppression and justify it for this reason. We receive our daily fare of terrorist violence in the print and electronic media and some of us might be even witnesses of its perpetration if not its immediate victims. This brutal phenomenon is a frightening and challenging reality we cannot afford to escape or play down. It calls for proper understanding and response.

In addressing terrorism, we have to pay attention to three questions: 1.

¹² Dr. Scot Holland’s paper “The Gospel of Peace and the Violence of God” in *Cross Currents*.

¹³ Cf. B.E.E. Bedki, *The Tragedy of Sharia, Cry and the Voice of Masses: Kaduna Crisis from an Eye Witness* (Jos, Nigeria: Distributed by the EYN Center, 2001).

¹⁴ For an excellent treatment of contemporary Nigerian politics, economics, culture and religion, see Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: BBS Public Affairs, 2000).

How do we define what counts for terrorism? 2. Why is terrorism morally unacceptable? These two questions depend on how we understand violence in an ethical sense (cf. 1.1 above). 3. How do we respond to terrorism in ways that are ethically acceptable? If we do not justify acts of terror, how do we respond to the root-causes of terrorism?

Terrorism is a form of violence that brings fear to people i.e. terrorizes them. Terrorist violence puts people, the innocents and non-combatants under fear. Jessica Stern mentions two characteristics of terrorism to distinguish it from other forms of violence. According to her, “terrorism is aimed at non-combatants. This characteristic of terrorism distinguishes it from some war fighting. Second, terrorists use violence for dramatic purpose: instilling fear in the target audience is often more important than the physical result. This deliberate creation of dread is what distinguishes terrorism from simple murder or assault.”¹⁵ Terrorism is not only an act of violence but also a threat of violence. It inflicts or intends to inflict violence on non-combatants to exact revenge or to cause intimidation or to influence an audience.¹⁶ Here non-combatants should include innocents. In the just war theory, one of the conditions for *jus in bello* is that non-combatants are not harmed. This means also innocents including women, children, the elderly and the sick. Terrorist violence has no ethical regard for such categories of non-combatants and innocents. It does not respect nor follow the ethical criteria of just war. Besides the two additional characteristics of terrorist violence mentioned above, it intends the destruction of people or property or both in which there is rejection of people and their personhood, as in all acts of violence.

Archbishop Lajolo said that “Terrorists and their various organizations” represent “a new barbarism,” “rejecting the best achievements of our civilization.”¹⁷

Democratic nations are built on the foundation of the equality of all persons. This democratic tradition is supported by the biblical revelation referred to before. Terrorism ignores this.

During the Second World War, allies carpet-bombed many German cities, killing civilians and justified it by saying it was war.¹⁸ People like Ann Coulter invoke the language of war to justify the direct and intentional killing of innocent people. Is it any different from terrorism?

I agree with Michael Walzer that the bombing of Hiroshima was an act of terrorism: “The bombing of Hiroshima was an act of terrorism; its purpose was political, not military. The goal was to kill enough civilians to shake the Japanese government and force it to surrender. And this is the goal of every terrorist

¹⁵ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), xx.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ In *America*, October 9, 2006.

¹⁸ Cf. Ann Coulter, *Mansfield News Journal*, September 17, 2001.

campaign.”¹⁹ Terrorism as we have known is totally unacceptable because of its destructive violence and killing of innocent people. In other words, as in the above-mentioned case, terrorism is understood as the deliberately intended killing of innocent people for the purpose of achieving a greater goal, usually concessions from the government of the people the terrorists killed.

If counter-terrorism, or war on terror, as in the rhetoric of George W. Bush, means engaging in terrorism in order to combat terrorism, such an endeavour defeats its own purpose. In this sense, the terrorists have already won.

We recognise that terrorism, today more so than ever, has been changed from isolated acts of individual extremists or fanatics into networks of high sophistication with access to significant amount of financial resources. Terrorism is totally unacceptable in an ethical sense. It is based on contempt for human life and uses persons as means to achieve an end.

In addition to killing innocent victims, terrorism also leads to isolation, distrust and closed-mindedness, which in turn cultivate hatred. This leads to a vicious cycle of violence engendering further violence. We affirm that terrorism is an attack on human dignity and personhood of people and also an attack against the humanity of all people.

All this calls for international cooperation with particular attention to resolving problems, grievances and long-standing injustices that fuel terrorism. We have to note that the recruitment of terrorists is easier in social contexts where seeds of hatred are sown, where human rights are trampled upon in relentless frequency and where injustice has been perpetrated against people for too long.²⁰ The ethical stand is a clear “no” to terrorism. This stand also goes with the imperative to address the root causes of violence and terrorism. Such an ethical approach is in keeping with the Gospel of Jesus and the social teaching of the Catholic Church. In the history of the Church we have pages of betrayal of this Gospel. We can recall this history only in humble repentant spirit and foster greater fidelity to the Gospel of reconciling, healing and transforming love from the cross.

Reflecting on war we must consider our tendency to depersonalize and demonize our enemies. John Glenn Gray talks about this in his book *The Warriors*²¹, in which he says that during war, we tend to talk about enemies either in the abstract “The” enemy, or as subhuman and use the language of “vermin” filth, “animals”, etc. Here we can remember Reagan’s language of the Evil Empire or that of George W. Bush of the Axis of Evil.

Something is wrong with such rhetoric. When we totally dehumanize our enemies, the terrorists, once again, have won. Democratic nations are founded

¹⁹ Michael Walzer, “An Exchange on Hiroshima,” *New Republic*, September 23, 1981.

²⁰ Cardinal Renato Martino, “The Role of Religions in Promoting Peace and Solidarity and Denouncing Terrorism” (*Zenit*, July 1, 2006).

²¹ John Glenn Gray, *The Warriors* (New York: Harper, 1970).

on the equality of all persons and of the intrinsic worth and dignity of every human person. It means that no person is above or below another person in dignity. And at the heart of Christianity is the affirmation that all persons, no matter how sinful, are created in the image of God. Jesus' injunction to pray for one's enemies implies this faith of biblical revelation. We pray for human persons. We don't pray for the devil or vermin.

As Kyle Fedler says: "When we demonize our enemies we see ourselves as totally righteous and the abstract enemy as totally evil. This may be comforting but it is naïve, self-righteous, and in my opinion supremely un-Christian. When we do this we have been drawn into the simplistic dualism of the terrorists who see themselves as totally righteous and all Americans as totally evil."²²

Traditional Catholic teaching on the concept of a just war divided judgment into two areas: when it is justified to use force, "jus ad bellum"; and the principles guiding the use of force, "jus in bello."

For a war to be justifiable, a number of criteria need to be satisfied: that there be a just cause; that the action be initiated by a legitimate authority; that it be guided by the right intention; that the results of any action not produce more evil than the good sought; that it is the last resort; that there is a reasonable chance of success; that the eventual outcome be the establishment of peace.

Once a proposed military action has met these requirements there are also limits on what is legitimate in the resulting action. There should be a proportionality in the means used, avoiding force that is in excess of that needed to achieve the ends of the conflict.

Here we may question if the traditional theory of just war and the criteria for justification both for waging just war and the ways of conducting it are adequate to combat terrorism. We know that just war theory and its criteria collapse before the weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. The criteria of just war cannot justify terrorism and modern warfare. The way of dialogue, negotiation and non-violent methods have to be affirmed.

The wars of the 20th century with weapons of mass destruction -- nuclear, chemical and biological -- have led to greater reluctance to use the just war criteria on the part of the Catholic Church to approve the use of force. An important stipulation in the theory that care must be taken to avoid the injury and death of innocent parties and damages to their property is impossible in modern wars using weapons of mass destruction. Thus, some argue that just war criteria are not adequate for modern warfare with its weapons of mass destruction as if we have to create new theories to justify them. Yet, since the minimal moral demands which the just war theory requires are no longer possible with modern warfare, its immorality stands exposed.

Indeed, we must state that all wars are violent. Modern wars are all the

²² Cf. "The Rhetoric of a War on Terrorism" -- a lecture presented presented by Kyle Fedler at Ashland University on September 17, 2001, from *Cross Currents*.

more so. It would not be an exaggeration to say that war is a kind of terrorism. To counter terrorism countries use military force which only ignites hatred and vengeance creating a spiral of violence. What is needed is to remove the causes of hatred and vengeance that fuels terrorism by addressing the political and social factors and long-standing grievances and injustices that give rise to armed violence. It means that the countries should address the legitimate political grievances and unresolved long-standing injustices that terrorist groups exploit (cf. the cases of Israel-Palestine dispute, repressive policies by Arab governments, and the continuing U.S. military occupation in Iraq). This can be done only by non-violent methods.

John XXIII in his encyclical "Pacem in Terris," Nos. 126-9, emphasizes negotiations instead of the use of force. In the face of the threat of nuclear arms, the Pope declared, "It is contrary to reason to hold that war is now a suitable way to restore rights which have been violated".

The Second Vatican Council in "The Church in the Modern World" highlighted the destructive nature of modern warfare (Nos. 79-80) and warned against the use of terrorism as a method to wage conflicts. However, while encouraging always the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the Council did not rule out the use of armed force: "As long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful defense, once all efforts have failed."²³ "Terrorism is to be condemned in the most absolute terms. It shows complete contempt for human life and can never be justified, since the human person is always an end and never a means." Total warfare leading to wholesale destruction of cities and civilian centers is considered "a crime against God and man."

The teaching of the Church on the use of force is summarized in the Catechism, in No. 2309. It notes that the power of modern armaments weighs heavily in determining if the use of force produces more evils and disorders than the evil to be eliminated. It also condemns the indiscriminate use of force and the validity of the moral law during a conflict.

But the Catechism also says of those who serve in the armed forces: "If they carry out their duty honorably, they truly contribute to the common good of the nation and the maintenance of peace"(No. 2310).

Some argue that the destructiveness of modern warfare, which has led to the reluctance of recent Church teaching to endorse the use of force, implies that there is an inherent presumption against war. According to this point of view it is very difficult to justify any type of armed action to resolve problems.

However, others, such as American scholar James Turner Johnson, author of several works on just-war theory, argue that even if some modern Church teaching on war does include a presumption against war, this is a result of a

²³ Cf. also *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 513-515.

prudential judgment. Johnson considers that by its nature a judgment of this type is contingent on the particular circumstances and therefore resorting to force cannot be ruled out categorically. So while modern popes have emphasized the importance of a peaceful resolution of injustices, this does not mean that military action can never be justified.

In fact, John Paul II, in his 1982 message for the World Day of Peace, stated that “Christians, even as they strive to resist and prevent every form of warfare, have no hesitation in recalling that in the name of an elementary requirement of justice, people have a right and even a duty to protect their existence and freedom by proportionate means against an unjust aggressor,”(No.12). One could therefore speak of the right to legitimate defense of persons and human societies as right-duty but always by recourse to ways and means that do not lead to new forms and situations of violence.

There can be no doubt as to the immorality of terrorist actions. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in its “Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation,” stated, “One can never approve – whether perpetrated by established power or insurgents – crimes such as reprisals against the general population, torture or methods of terrorism.”²⁴

In the general audience held the day after the attacks in the United States, John Paul II declared: “In the face of such unspeakable horror we cannot but be deeply disturbed. I add my voice to all the voices raised in these hours to express indignant condemnation, and I strongly reiterate that the ways of violence will never lead to genuine solutions to humanity’s problems.” However, the Pope also exhorted the United States “not to give in to the temptation of hatred and violence” in the wake of the terrorist attacks and he appealed to “the beloved American people” “to respond with justice.” Fighting the threat posed by terrorism with “justice” is not an easy task.

2. Non-Violence

If our discussion on violence and terrorism shows that they cannot be the way to respond to legitimate grievances against the violation of justice, the denial of freedom, the rejection of dignity and human rights, then what is the alternative? The alternative concerns not only the ways or means to redress or to right wrongs and injustices, but it touches also alternative ways of being human and inter-human, which generate constructive and liberative ways of righting wrongs and policies and of setting priorities for building just, humane, compassionate, non-violent, peaceful communities and societies. It concerns building a new social order.

Though the term non-violence is a negative imperative against violence and terrorism, it comprehends a positive holistic approach to human behaviour and

²⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (Vatican City; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1986), 79.

entails a project of building a new humanity based on love. S. Jeyapragasam speaks of *ahimsa*/non-violence in five categories: 1. non-killing and non-jury, 2. love, 3. non-violent action, 4. non-violent ethics and values and 5. truth.²⁵

In our reflection on the alternative of non-violence, I would like to reflect on and critically assess the common axiom that end does not justify the means. First we must restate the axiom in its correct ethical perspective. It should go like this: A good end does not justify the use of evil means because the good end is in the means. The goodness of the end is already present though in a partial way in the means. It means that through partial embodiments of the goodness of the end in the means we use, we move towards achieving the fuller goodness of the end. We cannot move through the use of evil means which is embodiment of evil towards achieving the fuller goodness of the end. Good end does not drop from heaven. "The end does not justify the means" signifies more precisely, though still ambiguously that "evil may not be done that good might follow therefrom".

In the N.T. Paul refers to this principle. Gandhi is very clear on this principle. The use of non-violence and non-violent ways embodies the principle that good end can be achieved only by the use of good means. Ethically speaking, ethically good end justifies use of ethically right and therefore good means.

Here is what Martin Luther King Jr says: "Constructive ends can never give absolute justification to destructive means, because in the final analysis, the end is pre-existent in the means."²⁶

In the months after 9/11, Jim Wallis challenged peace advocates to address the threat of terrorism. "If nonviolence is to have any credibility," he wrote, "it must answer the questions that violence purports to answer, but in a better way."²⁷ Gandhian principles of non-violence provide a solid foundation for crafting an effective strategy against terrorism. Non-violence is fundamentally a means of achieving justice and combating oppression. Gandhi demonstrated its effectiveness in resisting racial injustice in South Africa and winning independence for India. People-power movements have since spread throughout the world, helping to bring down communism in Eastern Europe and advancing democracy in Serbia, Ukraine, and beyond. The same principles - fighting injustice while avoiding harm - can be applied in the struggle against violent extremism.

In a world of weapons of mass destruction, we need a movement of people towards the elimination of all such weapons and their production. Stockpiles of such weapons are themselves structures of violence and sin. The words of the prophet Micah tell us "they shall beat swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither

²⁵ Cf. *Nonviolence*, vol.1 no.5. September-October 2005, p.388.

²⁶ Martin Luther King Jr. in *Stride Toward Freedom*, New York, 1958, 92.

²⁷ Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 160.

they shall learn war any more”(4:3). These words symbolize the challenge to turn the weapons of mass destruction into instruments of constructive development for the life of the poor of the world. It goes with a moral critique that diverting precious resources from the development of people’s lives and wellbeing to the manufacture of weapons of death is an act of violence and sin in our already unjust world.

Helder Camara says that that he would rather be killed than kill. He was the staunch champion of non-violent ways of building justice and peace. Filipino bishops gave a statement on the abolition of capital punishment in their country with the title: “From Justice that Kills to Justice that Heals.” It embodies a vision that envisages a move from retributive justice to restorative justice echoing the Christian message of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. Such an alternative approach is symbolically indicated by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as “turning the other cheek”. This is what we read: Jesus said, “You have learnt how it was said: ‘Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.’ But I say to you, Offer the wicked man no resistance. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him” (Mt. 5.38-41). It is the way of *ahimsa* and non-violence.

In this paper, I do not discuss violence perpetrated in the name of religion. Yet I would like to make the following observation. In a world of religious conflicts, fundamentalism and communalism make religions part of the problem instead of the solution. Followers of religions through their practice of interreligious dialogue should make religions a source of enlightenment and a constructive force for peace-making and building social harmony between peoples, especially in situations of misguided religious extremism, fundamentalism, communalism and sectarianism. This is the way religions become part of the solution rather than the problem. Towards achieving this goal, religions ought to come together for promoting a culture of non-violence in the common task of peace-making worthy of all religions. This task is bound up with the future of religions.

Andre Trocme in his book: *Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution* says:

“We have seen that nonviolence was integral to Jesus’ teachings. But nonviolence towards whom? In the synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus gave an object and a body to his ethical teaching, namely, our neighbour, the person in need. It was also on that day that Jesus laid the indestructible foundation of Christian nonviolence, by limiting his disciples to the only true dilemma worth considering. The choice is not between violence or withdrawal, but between doing good or doing harm, that is, to save or to kill.

By choosing to save at the cost of his life, Jesus forever joined two realities: redemption and nonviolence. Because Jesus is the Redeemer, no one can any longer save by killing or kill to save. Life alone, life given,

not life exacted from others, can save life.”²⁸

The text implied is Mark 3: 1-6. The lesson we learn from Jesus on the cross is, as Kosuke Koyama has put it, “He saved others by not saving himself.”²⁹

Another important passage in Mathew speaks of the love of enemy. Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy; But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those whose persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? (Mt. 5.43-46).

Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, was a great advocate of non-violence. This is what he wrote about Gandhi: “Gandhi’s nonviolence was not simply a political tactic which was supremely useful and efficacious in liberating his people. On the contrary, the spirit of nonviolence sprang from an inner realization of spiritual unity in himself. The whole Gandhian concept of nonviolent action and satyagraha is incomprehensible if it is thought to be a means of achieving unity rather than as the fruit of inner unity already achieved.”³⁰ So Merton calls us to be contemplatives and mystics of non-violence, instruments of the God of peace.

“Second, Merton teaches us to become students and teachers of nonviolence. Merton was not just a great teacher, but the eternal student. He was always studying, always learning, always searching for the truth. So when he started reading Gandhi in the 1950s and then meeting peacemakers like Daniel Berrigan and the folks from the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Catholic Worker, he became a student and teacher of Gospel of nonviolence, and I think that’s what each one of us has to do – to study, learn, practice and teach the Holy Wisdom of nonviolence.”³¹

Another witness to non-violence, Franz Jagerstatter during Nazi rule, says:

“In a world of total war, a world on the brink of destruction, only one kind of sanctity bears fruit – the one that Jesus embodied and Franz embraced. Daring nonviolence that refuses to kill no matter the pretext. Willingness to die without a trace of retaliation. Divine, universal love for everyone, even the enemy. And public, prophetic, outspoken defiance of

²⁸ Andre Trocme, *Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution* (New York: Orbis, 2004), 148.

²⁹ Cf. Kosuke Koyama, “I am Jesus, Whom You Persecute (Acts 9: 1-9),” *Christian Century* (April 5, 1989), 347.

³⁰ Thomas Merton, *Gandhi on Nonviolence* (New York: New Directions, 1964).

³¹ John Dear, “Thomas Merton and the Wisdom of Nonviolence” (2005) on www.fatherjohndear.org.

patriotic militarism and state violence.

In an insane world, Franz points the way: “refuse to fight, refuse to kill, refuse to be complicit in war-making, refuse to compromise -- and pit your very self against structures of violence with all the nonviolence in your soul.”³²

Ahimsa and non-violence belong to the core message of Asian religions and eminently of the Gospel of Christ. Hence we are challenged to another way of being human and interhuman – the way of non-violence, the way of love and compassionate solidarity for conflict resolution and conflict transformation. If non-violence belongs to our humanity, we can say that the future of humanity belongs to non-violence.

3. Conclusion

The areas of violence, terrorism and the alternative of non-violence and peace are vast and complex. They call for comprehensive theological and ethical research in dialogue with religions, cultures and ideologies. The fruits of such research would help us to envision a world that is non-violent and peaceful. Religious communities, churches, theologians, philosophers and civil society should be ready to cooperate and join initiatives and programmes to overcome violence “challenging and transforming the global culture of violence in the direction of a culture of just peace.”³³ The alternative of non-violence and just peace is a challenge we cannot evade.

Appendices

I have included below two quotes from Woodstock Centre Conversations on Reconciliation (from the Woodstock Theology Centre, Conversations on Forgiveness and Revenge <http://woodstock.georgetown.edu/publication/>)

Cardinal Kuharic of Zagreb in the first quote was of the heroes of 1990s: “One is Cardinal Kuharic of Zagreb, famous for saying: ‘If someone burns down my house, I will go protect his house. If someone kills my father, I will go protect his father. If someone burns down my church, I will go protect his church.’ Kuharic did that over and over again and set an important model. And alongside him and probably standing over him, standing over almost any one in that conflict, was Bishop Komarica of Banja Luka, who was a symbol always of inter-faith cooperation, caring for Muslims and Serbs and Croats in what had been the rectory – over 30 people living in that rectory from the different religious groups, feeding them all every day and speaking out for human rights.

³² Quoted by John Dear in NCR, &, 6, February 2007, vol.1 no.25.

³³ Margaret Kassmann, *Overcoming Violence*, Risk Book Series, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1998, p.5.

Whenever there was pressure on the Muslims, he was immediately at the side of the imam.”

The second hero is King Hussein of Jordan of the late 1970s:

“We also need to celebrate examples of international forgiveness, and repeat them. Don mentioned King Hussein. And if you don’t remember, King Hussein’s great act was that after a Jordanian soldier killed a number of Israeli school girls on an outing, he came to Israel, visited each family and kissed the feet of the parents. It’s a great deed. It needs to be much better known.”