

file "Peace Church"

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP DEPARTMENT

S T U D Y D O C U M E N T

ON

VIOLENCE / NON-VIOLENCE DEBATE.

Minutes of Conference 1987 - No. 29.9.3. Page 285.

"Conference receives the resolutions on the Violence / Non-Violence Debate, Vigilante Violence, Extra-Judicial Executions and refers them through the Christian Citizenship Department to the Standing Committees on War and Peace and the Study of Violence with the request that they work together to provide material which may be studied by Quarterly Meetings and other groups and will help our people to come to an informed judgement."

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From the Minutes of Conference 1987, the Resolution 29.9.45 on pages 303/304 indicates that the "INVESTIGATION AND STUDY ON PEACE CHURCH CONCEPT" is referred to Quarterly Meetings for debate and report through the District Synods of 1988 to the Conference of 1988.

At the same Conference three resolutions referring to "Violence / Non-Violence Debate", "Vigilante Violence", "Extra-Judicial Executions" were tabled but not debated. The end result was the amended resolution No. 29.9.3. page 285. This was accepted in the hope that Quarterly Meetings, District Synods and the Conference of 1988 should debate and discuss together the debate as set out - "advocating a Peace Church" mindful also that a sector of the Church were wanting to give substance to the prevailing "Violence / Non-Violence Debate".

You are therefore invited to discuss the Study Document on "Violence / Non-Violence Debate" in conjunction with the earlier distributed Study Document on "Should we become a Peace Church?" It is our hope that your Quarterly Meeting and District Synod will struggle over these issues which demand a Christian Response.

Austen Massey  
General Secretary.

February, 1988.

1.2.3.

In an article in International Conciliation (Nov 1966), Gene Sharp lists 23 examples of effective non-violent action in a wide variety of political, cultural and geographic conditions, including:

Finnish resistance to Russian rule, 1898 - 1905.

The general strike and non-co-operation in Germany which broke the right-wing Kapp putsch, 1920

Norwegian teachers' successful resistance to the Nazi social national education, 1942.

East German workers' uprising, 1953.

Buddhist campaign against Ngo regime, South Vietnam, 1963.

Another outstanding modern example is the Philippines revolution which ousted the Marcos regime, 1986.  
(Described in the Peace Church study document, page 12)

1.2.4.

The major point of this overlong section is simply to show that, far from being an impossible ideal where a few liberal academic types debate comfortably in a "created space", non-violent resistance is a powerful and workable option with many strategies. The difficulty is that so little has been done to explore and test the non-violent option.

We humans were evolved in violence. We have a history of millions of years of violence. No wonder we have a mind-set which causes us to resort to violence once we are pushed beyond our human power to endure. What we need is a new mind-set, a better vision, deeper spiritual resources.

With such a mind-set, we could turn all our ingenuity to peaceful uses of power. Imagine sleeping-gas instead of nerve-gas, stun-guns instead of sten-guns .....

Some work has been done already on the concept of "Civilian Defence" (distinct from civil defence!) as a functional alternative to military defence. Here the civilian population as a whole would voluntarily participate in training for non-violent resistance to tyranny, whether internal, or external to their country. Coups d'etat or military invasion would be met with blanket non-co-operation, disruption, strikes, boycotts and ostracism. The tyrant would face impotence. Many quotations could now be given to support the thesis that tyrants cannot govern without the consent and co-operation of a sizeable section of the oppressed population. Certainly the present regime in South Africa depends heavily on the co-operation and co-operation of many black people (as well as the psychologically-induced sense of inferiority and helplessness that some black people still carry).

1.2.5.

There are a number of Peace Libraries in South Africa where resources on the theory and practice of non-violent action are available:

PACSA, Box 2338, Pietermaritzburg, 3200. 0331-20052

St. Antony's House, 85 Princess St, Mayfair 2092. 001-837-6582

Diakonía, 20 St Andrew's Road, Durban, 4001, 031-312-609

## SOCIAL NON-CO-OPERATION

Ostracism of persons : excommunication, interdict.

Social events, customs and institutions : suspension, withdrawal or boycott.

Social system : say-at-home, Sanctuary.

## ECONOMIC NON-CO-OPERATION/BOYCOTTS

Action by Consumers : Boycott, picketing, international pressure.

Action by workers : boycott, middleman boycott.

Action by management : traders' boycott, refusal to let or sell property to e.g. Government.

Action by holders of financial resources : refusal to pay taxes, debts, interest, rates.

## ECONOMIC NON-CO-OPERATION/STRIKES

Symbolic strikes : quick walkout, lightning strikes.

Special groups : prisoners, nurses, teachers.

Restricted strikes : slowdown, reporting "sick".

## POLITICAL NON-CO-OPERATION

Citizens : Refusal to accept appointed officials, refusal to dissolve existing institutions, removal of own marks and signs.

Citizens' alternatives to obedience : Slow compliance, non-obedience in absence of direct supervision.

Action by government employees : blocking lines of command, stalling, obstruction, deliberate inefficiency.

International government action : Downgrading diplomatic representation, expulsion from organisations.

## NON-VIOLENT INTERVENTION

Psychological intervention : self-exposure to the elements, facts, reverse trial, harassment.

Physical intervention : sit-in, stand-in, ride-in, mill-in, pray-in, non-violent obstruction, non-violent occupation.

Social intervention : overloading facilities (buses, toilets) guerrilla theatre, speak-in.

Economic intervention : stay-in strike, dumping, seizure of assets, alternative markets, alternative transport systems.

Political intervention : disclosing identities of secret agents, parallel government at various levels, overloading administrative systems.

## RESOLUTIONS BEFORE 1987 CONFERENCE.

### RESOLUTION 1.

Violence/Non-Violence Debate: Conference recognises that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa stands in a long theological tradition which accepts that in a situation of political and economic injustice, people may as a last resort add armed struggle to the strategies adopted for achieving the desired transformation.

In the light of this, Conference believes that, in the South African situation, due to the difficulties related to, and our lack of commitment as a Church, to non violent resistance and the brutality of state violence, Conference must reluctantly recognize armed resistance to the South African regime to be one of the necessary dimensions of the struggle against apartheid.

In order to minimize violence and its effects, Conference resolves to call upon its people to redouble their commitment to searching for, and participating in, non violent strategies for resistance.

### RESOLUTION 2.

Vigilante Violence: The term "vigilante" or "Mabangalala" has come to have a distinct meaning in South Africa. It does not mean a concerned citizen intent on preserving the safety of his family and "decent values". In South Africa the term "vigilante" has a far more menacing connotation. It is associated with potentially murderous gangs, intent on intimidating, injuring or killing anti-apartheid activists. That, and the fact that they are believed to enjoy police support, is very often all that binds the "A-team", the "Pakhatis", the "Mabangalala" the "Amadoda", the "Amosolomzi", the "Amabutho", the Mbhokoto" and the "Green Berets". (Nicholas Hayson: Mabangalala. Centre for Applied Legal Studies, March 1986)

Since Hayson wrote his study of vigilantes in 1986 reports of deaths, injury and burning have continued. Now there are reports from various places around the country of former vigilantes being recognised in the uniforms of briefly trained members of the South African Police Force ("Kits Konstabels") and members of the Municipal Police Force established by Black authorities ("green flies or green beans") and in the uniform of homeland Police Forces.

The majority of South Africa's internal refugees who seek shelter in the Churches' Sanctuary programme are the victims of vigilante violence or have fled because of the threat of vigilante violence. They cannot return to their homes because they and their families are in grave danger of death or injury.

The South African Government has indeed found most effective allies in its attempt to crush opposition to its policies.

Vigilantes must be seen as part of the total onslaught against people and community organisations who are working for an end to apartheid.

But many, perhaps a majority, of these vigilantes are worshipping members of the congregations of the Christian Churches.

1. The Conference resolves to pay most serious attention to this problem of vigilante violence by:-

RESPONSE BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON WAR AND PEACE ON THE  
VIOLENCE / NON-VIOLENCE DEBATE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

1.1. THE ISSUE

Clearly the issue is : Faced now with the actual on-the-ground violence in South Africa, does non-violence offer any really viable strategies? Will talk about non-violence not simply be a "dead end"? Or worse, will it not merely serve the interests of the oppressors in this struggle to the death that we face?

To put in another way : Faced with the reality of vigilantes, removals, assassinations and torture today, is it not true that our people have no option but to use violence? Why can the Church not recognise that those who seek liberation in South Africa have been compelled to use violence by the intransigence of the South Africa regime? Surely violence is now "one of the necessary dimensions of the struggle against apartheid".

To put it yet another way : What practical workable strategies do the proponents of non-violence offer to the oppressed in South Africa today? The time for high-sounding resolutions is long past. What action is being offered and demonstrated which is more effective and quicker than violence?

1.2. SOME ACTION-STRATEGIES

1.2.1 The amended paragraph 5.5.4. of the Peace Church Study Document is worth quoting here:

In fact the most effective strategies in the present struggle for liberation in South Africa have been non-violent. Effective action has flowed from the power of labour organisations, through rent and bus boycotts, through strikes, slow-downs and stay-aways, through school boycotts, funeral demonstrations and through non-collaboration with Government agencies, agents and edicts. Those who support the Peace Church resolution must indeed support and participate in this kind of non-violent action and devise other non-violent actions which will effectively bring change in our society.

1.2.2. Gene Sharp has listed 198 non-violent tactics (in Martin Jelfs, Manual for Action, Action Resources Group, London 1982, ISBN 0950-818100). A selection is:

Protest and Persuasion

Formal statements : speeches, letters, petitions, declarations of indictment.

To a wider audience: caricatures, banners, displays.

Group displays: mock awards, picketing.

Symbolic public Acts: wear symbols, delivering symbolic objects, protest disrobing, new street signs.

Honouring the dead: demonstrative funerals, homage a burial places.

Withdrawal: Renouncing honours.

- 1.1. Identifying the causes of the formation and growth of vigilante groups and seeking ways in which these may be eradicated;
- 1.2. Speaking out strongly and publicly against the use of vigilante violence against persons and the destruction of their homes;
- 1.3. Teaching congregations about the Churches attitude to such violence;
- 1.4. Encouraging Christians to offer sanctuary to those who have had to flee their homes;
- 1.5. Working in local communities to end such violent attacks.

RESOLUTION 3.

Extra-Judicial Executions: Conference notes the growing practice of extra-judicial executions as part of the assault on anti-apartheid activists in Southern Africa.

Conference also notes that the usually efficient authorities have so far failed to bring a single perpetrator of such executions to justice.

We cannot escape the suspicion therefore that the State is either involved in or condones this practice, and we demand from this Government an unequivocal repudiation of this practice as inimical to any civilized state.

Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, Abingdon, 1960.

John Howard Yoder, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, Abingdon, 1970

J.G. Davies, *Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution*, Orbis, 1976

Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, Fortress, 1975.

Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Between Christ and Caesar*, Berdmans, 1986.

Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976.

On South Africa.

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Preamble:

The Conference of 1987 directed the Christian Citizenship Department to prepare material for Quarterly Meetings on the violence / non-violence debate. This document, as a response to that resolution, seeks to do three things: Firstly, it attempts to focus the questions relating to violence in Southern Africa; secondly, it approaches the question from a Wesleyan perspective and finally it reports on an extensive ecumenical study on violence which provides wider classical and contemporary resources for tackling this difficult issue.

1. THE QUESTION

Christians have traditionally concerned themselves with the morality of violence and have been particularly troubled by revolutionary violence. They continue to be so troubled, but must also allow that their own tradition requires them to condemn violence less harshly than indifference, even if only because the latter can never be an expression of love. (1)

The complex and disturbing pattern of violence endemic to Southern African society cannot be understood apart from an analysis of the political and social context. It is predominantly the result of the confrontation between an oppressive minority, determined to hold onto power and privilege (by violent means if necessary), and an oppressed majority which in frustration has resorted to violence as a means of change.

The situation is complicated by at least two significant factors: Firstly, the dramatic increase in the use of state aligned vigilantes in the repression of anti-government organisations and communities. And secondly, the exploitation of the violent situation by a criminal element whose motives are neither political nor revolutionary.

Current state propaganda gives the impression that only those opposed to the present government are violent, whilst the state itself uses "force" to maintain "law and order". The oppressed are labelled as the initiators of violence, alleging that the repressive violence of the state is merely a response to revolutionary violence. History indicates, however, that the reverse is true: It is invariably prolonged repressive violence that initiated revolutionary violence. Dom Heider Camara has illustrated this by describing the spiral of violence as beginning with institutional violence, which leads the violence of revolution, which in turn produces further repressive violence - and so the spiral continues.(2) A deeper understanding of the historical struggle in Southern Africa is, therefore, fundamental to the formation of opinion on violence in this context.

How does the Methodist Church relate to this violent situation? Clearly it cannot opt out. Methodists are as involved in the conflict as any other group in the country. Young white Methodists doing national service in the armed forces of the state are required to patrol townships where black Methodists participate in the community and political organisations struggling against oppression and exploitation.

The important question facing the Church is how to contribute to breaking the spiral of violence, ending the present oppression and bringing about a situation in which oppression and its resulting violence does not occur. In other words, the primary question is not whether the Church supports or condones revolutionary violence. However, future generations may ask what serious alternatives were practised by the Church in order to terminate the injustice of the present. Indeed, it is questionable for the Church to pass moral judgement on violence used as a last resort, if it fails to provide and promote viable non-violent alternatives.

Yet, this does not mean that the Church is absolved from making judgements about and distinctions between the particular forms of violence evident in Southern African society. Whilst the Church must undoubtedly always hold out the ideal of non-violence, a blanket condemnation of all forms of violence is neither helpful nor responsible. It may be true that no manifestations of violence are more understandable or even justifiable than others. The point is: The Church is simply not equipped to participate in working for a new and just society unless it has a clear and honest analysis of the present situation. It cannot know where to go if it does not know where it is.

## 2. WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE

It is possible to provide no more than an introductory comment on Wesleyan teaching on violence and non-violence - hoping to stimulate discussion and action. Further reading in this regard is recommended in the appendix.

John Wesley did not write either systematically or thematically. He wrote and spoke in response to the situations and crises that arose in his own time and place. His position on war, revolution and violence must, therefore, be distilled from his occasional writings on these matters. It is of equal importance to note that Wesley's political favour for the Tory Party of his time was consistent with his authoritarian views. Despite his emphasis on the priesthood of all believers he neither allowed for Methodist societies to choose their own leaders, nor for the British people to choose their own monarch. Wesley held, in both these examples, that greater popular participation in decision making processes would only diminish the liberties of the people. Bluntly put, he was no democrat!

Whatever we may think of his political views on such matters the significant matter was the attainment and preservation of the liberties of the people. The monarchy was God's instrument of guaranteeing the liberty of the people. For Wesley it was liberty and not the monarchy that was fundamental to human life:

Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; and no human being can deprive him of that right which he derives from a law of nature. If, therefore, you have any regard to justice, ... render unto all their due. Give liberty to whom liberty is due, that is, to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. (3)

This was not an exclusively religious liberty but a comprehensive freedom to "enjoy our lives and fortunes in our own way, to use our property, whatever is legally our own, according to our own choice". Wesley's campaign for the emancipation of slaves was, for instance, undertaken in the name of this true human liberty. On the other hand, Wesley's opposition to the American revolution was based on his conviction that to rebel against the monarchy in favour of democracy was to endanger human liberty. After the success of the American Revolution however, Wesley's passion for liberty resulted in a shift in his thinking, and he could accept the independence of the American people as true freedom:

is only under the absoluteness of God and the relativity of creaturely existence that human life can be placed in proper perspective and given its due respect. Ultimately, the difference between a pacifist and one who is not only becomes apparent in the extreme cases of life where ethical decisions are at best difficult, at worst impossible.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Debate is important, but the challenge is to move beyond debate. The luxury of debating violence is open only to those who are protected from the violence within society long enough to hold debate. For the dominated classes in South Africa this space for debate is foreclosed by state repression. The outlawing of non-violent resistance, the banning of meetings, the detention of articulate leaders, the crushing of strikes and the state of war in townships and schools militates against all debate, and often against all forms of non-violence.

The Church is called to identify the real cause of the violence in the illegitimacy of the apartheid state, and participate in breaking the spiral of violence by actively working for its end and the birth of a new situation.

What Emilio Castro, the Methodist General Secretary of the MCC, says of Latin America is true for Southern Africa:

In the urgency of the Latin American situation there is no time to lose in discussions about violence and non-violence. Those who are committed to non-violence should prove the efficiency, the validity of their approach, not by discussing it with those who do not share their conviction, but by struggling with the factors of oppression in society. (10)

Prepared and written on behalf of the Committee by Rev. A.S. Brews.

## NOTES.

1. C. Villa Vicencio, *Theology and Violence*, Skotaville, 1987, p7.
2. Dom Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence*, Denville, 1971.
3. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Berrmans, 1979, Vol XI, p79.
4. *Ibid*, vol XIII p251
5. Albert Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, Collins, 1967, p126.
6. Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Hoover Institution Publications, 1977, p740.
7. *Cape Times*, 23 March 1987.
8. For eg: Matt 5:21ff; 18:21ff; 26:47ff; Luke 6:20ff; 17:3f; 22:47ff; Mark 14:43ff; John 18:2ff.
9. For eg: Matt 10:34ff; 21:12ff; Luke 12:51ff; 19:45ff; 22:35ff; Mark 11:15ff; John 2:13ff.
10. Emilio Castro, *Amidst Revolution*, Christian Journal Ltd, 1975, p68.



## The Pacifists

The memory of the pacifism of the early Church has continued, however, to haunt and challenge the Church, refusing to allow a complacency with war or violence. It is an ideal which no Christian can afford to ignore and one which recurringly appears within Christian tradition.

The challenging question is: Has the Church really explored all the viable non-violent options open to it? Have Christians really been serious about those non-violent options which have been pursued? The truth is that the Church has not taken the task of developing and practising non-violent resistance seriously at all, and has, as such, contributed to the present violence. Resolutions have consistently been made by Synods and Conferences but little has been done beyond mere protest.

Recognising that ideally absolute pacifism should be the theological norm, three kinds of argument are offered against this suggestion:

Firstly, the argument of realism. Here it is argued that the absolute pacifist option idealistically under-estimates both the determination of people in power to hold onto power, and the will of the oppressed to be free. Pacifism, it is argued, does not sufficiently account for the sinful nature of humanity, nor does it provide an adequate basis from which to enter the ambiguous conflicts which characterise human life. In the end, pacifism tends to be pre-occupied with the good moral conscience of the Christian, rather than the transformation of oppressive reality. Absolute pacifism has not yet answered the question: What options do oppressed persons have when every conceivable non-violent option has failed? Do they simply submit to oppression or is it justifiable for them to fight? This does not mean that pacifism is not an ideal goal for which to strive and pray. Realistically, it is only the oppressed who, having explored all viable non-violent strategies, are in a position to recognise whether violent struggle is necessary or justified. Pacifism is almost entirely convincing but room for the last resort must be left.

Secondly, a related pragmatic argument. Violence is an almost inevitable part of human reality, most especially in situations where an unjust order is maintained by the institutionalised violence of the state. The Church and its people cannot opt out in such a situation, but must make judgements about the nature of violence and its causes in that context. Here the suggestion is that violence cannot be debated in a general or universal way, but only in relation to the specific violences of a particular human context. This presupposes an analytical understanding of the situation under consideration, and the social, political and economic causes and nature of the violences in that context. This argument also implies that the moment when violent resistance is justifiable cannot be discerned in advance, but only in the particular situation.

Thirdly, a theological argument. The absolute pacifist position is founded upon the total inviolability of human life. This, it is argued, is to make human life into an absolute principle alongside the absoluteness of God. Theologically this means that the freedom of God to command God's creatures is restricted by an absolute principle apart from God. Respect for human life cannot rival the respect owed by humanity to God alone. Life is no second God. Only God is absolute and no human principle can be placed alongside or in contradiction to God's absoluteness. Further, it

As our American brethren are now totally disentangled from the State, and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strongly made them free. (4)

Wesley, like many others found himself entangled and trapped in a political morass. What had changed, together with an altered political situation, was Wesley's perception of how the freedom of a people can be assured. Satisfied that true liberty had come to the people of the American states Wesley concluded that their revolution was God's strange act of bringing liberty to the people.

The only war to which Wesley was willing to give reluctant support was one which defended the religious and civil liberties of the people involved. However, Wesley consistently regarded war as an absurd and unacceptable way of settling human conflicts.

In short, it could be argued that Wesley held to a form of the "just war theory" which allowed that under certain conditions violence may be used as a last resort to bring about a desired political result. He emphasised the absurdity of war, but did not exclude its possibility as a final option in the defense of religious and civil liberties.

Definitions of civil and religious liberties differ according to the cultural and historical context. Wesley (as a person of his time) is likely to have understood the Gospel imperative of freedom differently to the way in which it is understood in South Africa today. Nonetheless, his passion for human liberty (however defined) remains a challenge to the contemporary Church.

Given this passion the real question is: How do Methodists participate in securing true religious and civil liberties for all people? Nonetheless, Wesley never tired of claiming a place for Methodists within the Church universal and the question of violence and non-violence must be considered in a wider ecumenical context.

### 3. THE ECUMENICAL DEBATE.

#### 3.1. History.

Few would argue that South African history has not been characterised by violence. The sub-continent was colonised by the violence of both the Dutch and the British; the Afrikaner fought violently for liberation and power; and Black people continue to be engaged in a protracted, and often violent, struggle for human dignity and liberty.

This history exposes the culpability of the English-speaking Churches in the legacy of violence in South Africa, indicating their collusion with the ruling powers throughout the colonial era to the present apartheid state. It also reveals the violence of the Afrikaner struggle for freedom. Finally, it tells of the reluctant road to a black revolutionary struggle.

The armed resistance of the liberation movements emerged in the early 1960's after decades of attempts at non-violent resistance, following 300 years of growing resistance to oppression and exploitation. The 1950's saw an intensification of non-violent resistance which included the Defiance Campaign, bus boycotts, labour strikes, school boycotts, and women's protests. No better expression of the agony of those days can be found than the words of Nobel peace laureate, Chief Albert Luthuli:

Who will deny that 30 years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of my many years of moderation? Has there been any reciprocal tolerance or moderation from the government, be it Nationalist or United Party? No! On the contrary, the past thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights. In short, we have witnessed in these years an intensification of our subjection to ensure and protect white supremacy. (5)

Against this background the words of Nelson Mandela at his trial in 1964 become understandable:

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices - submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back with all the means in our power in defence of our people, our power and our freedom. (6)

A comparison between the results of state violence and that of the liberation movements is instructive. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu on returning from discussions with ANC leaders in Lusaka:

Mr. Tambo could quote abroad the statistics that the ANC had caused 80 deaths from 1976 to 1984, and the security forces had been responsible for 2000 deaths since 1984. (7)

The Methodist Church's response to the violence of the present must pay careful attention to this history. Decisions about reality cannot be made in splendid isolation from the past. Yet, this history must in turn be seen in a wider theological context.

### 3.2. Biblical and Classical Tradition.

#### The Bible

The question of the legitimacy of violence as a last resort for change cannot be conclusively argued from the Scriptures. The Old Testament predominantly refers to violence as the act of the powerful upon the powerless. And, because the oppressed did not write the Bible, there is largely silence on the responses and perspectives of the oppressed to the violence inflicted on them. The New Testament is equally inconclusive. It contains passages which respond negatively to the use of violence (8) and those which indicate that extreme situations may allow for violence as a means of self defence. (9) The pacifist tradition finds its basis in the former passages, whilst, in time, the so-called just war tradition developed out of the latter. Clearly, however, the biblical witness militates against all glorification of violence and emphasises the justice, peace (shalom) and reconciliation as gifts of God to human society.

#### The Early Church

The early Church was chiefly pacifist. This resulted from a combination of the biblical imperative of respect for the inviolability of human life, the idyllic implications of serving as a soldier of the Roman Empire, and the powerlessness of the early Christians. However, the consistent emphasis on the need for justice and peace in society remained central to the Church's proclamation. The "conversion" of Constantine changed this situation and soon the unholy alliance of Church and State led to the glorification of the violence of war. To counter this tendency the just war theory developed as means of limiting war.

#### Just War Tradition

In its simplest form the just war theory holds that only under certain predetermined conditions it is considered just for the Church to support participation in war as a means of self-defence or restoring peace and order. These conditions are normally summarised as follows:

1. The war must have just cause.
2. War may only be declared as a last resort when all other options for achieving the desired result have been exhausted.
3. The intentions and purposes of those who wage the war must be just.
4. Only legitimate authority may declare war.
5. There must be a reasonable prospect of success.
6. The suffering caused by the war must not be disproportionate to what the war aims to achieve.
7. Just means must be used to wage the war.
8. Innocent people and non-combatants should not be harmed.
9. The peace aimed at must be just and acceptable to all involved so that conflict is not perpetuated.

In summary: just war tradition allows war as a last resort, but it equally recognises violence as an unequivocally ugly alternative. The inevitable excesses of war are warned against, and care is taken to ensure that war contributes to a better human situation.

The question of whether such an ugly alternative can ever be regarded to be 'just' is significant, and some prefer to speak of justified war, allowing that no war can ever be defined as just, moral or ethically acceptable.

Controversy exists over the nature of the legitimate authority required to declare war. The fourth clause above has tended to ensure that the just war tradition has almost always been used to protect and defend the interests of those in authority at a particular time, in a specific context. Hence, in the matter of war, the Church has tended to favour the prevailing ruling classes and hinder the struggles waged by oppressed people against unjust authority. As such it has tended to be used to support "law and order", rather than the establishment of justice.

However, questions concerning the nature of legitimate authority - (eg Is the prevailing authority necessarily the legitimate authority?) - have resulted in the just war tradition also being developed as a basis for explaining revolutionary violence.

Liberation theologians have, for example, provided a radical alternative to traditional just war theory, locating the Gospel and the Church firmly on the side of the dispossessed and marginalised of society, rather than in alliance with rulers. They suggest that when oppressed people have exhausted all the realistic peaceful options for resistance then, rather than submit to domination, it is justifiable or necessary for them to fight for freedom. In a word, just war thinking is relocated on the side of the oppressed. The oppressed, like their oppressors, are afforded the theological right to resort to violence. The liberation theologians believe that God explicitly favours the poor and oppressed in their struggle against domination and exploitation, whilst traditionally just war theory tends to favour the rich and powerful. The passion of the former is justice for the oppressed, whilst that of the latter is the preservation of order. As with Wesley, the real issue is not violence itself but the goals of liberty and justice in human society.