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## VIOLENCE

In the same way that one person's 'terrorist' is

another person's 'freedom fighter', so one person's 'violence' is another person's 'just order'. These counter understandings or definitions are embodied in narratives that opposing sides tell in conflicts in many parts of the world. Thus, attempts to define 'violence' outside of any context of language and culture-in-use must be considered sorely inadequate.

Certain actions, such as killing another person, are generally thought of as 'violent'. Yet, this leaves much unexplained and many distinctions and disagreements masked. For instance, those killed in automobile accidents are not said to have died violent deaths in the same way as those shot to death in, say, a robbery attempt.

The same holds true with 'coercion'. Although violent acts are generally considered 'coercive', not all coercive acts are thought of as violent. For example, a criminal and a police officer may commit the same act, and yet their differing status leads us to call the former 'violence' and the latter 'enforcement of the law'. Their actions may be equally coercive, and yet assigned radically different moral status. Thus we see that our very descriptions of some rather than other acts as 'violent' or 'coercive' presumes prior commitments to certain kinds of acts which we wish to justify.

One of the commitments that greatly influences society's understanding of what constitutes violence is the commitment to uphold 'order' (however we define it); societies tend to equate upholding order with the preservation of PEACE, and thus cannot imagine that 'upholding order' might be inherently violent. For example, from an Israeli perspective, if there are no disturbances or riots in the West Bank, then one presumes a state of peace. On the other hand, from a Palestinian perspective, which involves a very different understanding of 'order', the very occupation of the West Bank by the Israeli army is a continual state of 'violence'. From a Palestinian perspective, the lack of disturbances or riots at any one point in time in no way makes the current 'order' in the West Bank less violent. Thus, when Palestinians employ specific acts of violence against the Israeli forces, they justify their acts of violence by claiming that their actions are a response to and an attempt

to change the 'violence' of the current occupation in the West Bank and to install a regime of order and peace. This example should serve to remind us of the context-dependent nature of concepts such as 'violence'. For the meaning of 'violence' will often depend on who is doing the defining.

The same issues arise in distinguishing 'violence' from 'POWER'. In matters of CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, those committed to 'non-violence' will distinguish the use of power from the use of violence and employ non-violent forms of power. They will argue that power need not always be viewed negatively as inevitably violent. Hannah Arendt develops a compelling theoretical account distinguishing violence from power, arguing that people resort to violence when they are stripped of any other source of power. According to Arendt, appropriate exercises of power depend upon consent and cooperation, and the rise of violence is an indication that those forms of power have been lost.

Christian conceptions of what is 'violent' and their approach to dealing with violence will often be at fundamental odds with the definitions of violence and the practices of other communities. For example, some societies have laws which recognize the state's right to execute its political opponents. The same societies may deny that a person raping their spouse is violence, or deny that executing those who renounce military service is violence. Such views about violence cannot be reconciled with Christian practices.

The Christian community will always live in tension with any SOCIETY which demands they accept violence as necessary for order. As long as human societies assume a role for violence which is contrary to Christian peaceableness, intrinsic to the Christian community's practices of forgiveness, reconciliation and LOVE, this tension remains. Describing violence rightly will be a major task and constant struggle for the Christian community which strives to live faithful to the gospel.

How one describes 'violence' will influence greatly how one envisions the sources of violence. If, for example, one assumes that all 'order' is but disguised forms of violence, then one will see sources of violence to be located

in the very constitution of power structures of societies and/or of human nature. For example, on a Hobbesian model, one could view all life as a struggle for survival, in which some are subjugated to others in the interests of this continual survival. On this view, violence is part of the essential character of human existence as people whose lives are destined to death. Acquiescence to this 'order', which is acknowledged to be coercive and violent, is achieved on the assumption that it is better to have controlled rather than uncontrolled violence and that such 'order' makes our lives less nasty, brutish and short.

Other accounts of violence give it a less foundational character, ascribing violence to specific injustices. For instance, one could argue that those who are violent are responding to inequities in the economic and/or political system. WAR, TERRORISM, CHILD ABUSE, HOLOCAUST, RACISM, RAPE, REVOLUTION, political and economic oppression, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, ecological destruction – theorists have depicted all of these as causes of and/or responses to various perceived injustices. Some theorists will try to account for these various forms of violence by rooting them in 'deeper' social, psychological or physiological dysfunctions, lust for power and so on. Those who attribute the sources of violence to such causes often do so on the assumption that if we could eliminate such injustices we could thus eliminate the cause of violence.

Christian theologians have avoided giving any one explanation for violence. Rather violence is understood as SIN, i.e. rebellion from God's ordering of the world as a world of peace. The ultimate expression of the violence of the world is to be seen in the world's rejection of God's love in crucifying Jesus Christ.

Justifications of violence are as varied as understandings of the nature and sources of violence. The realist view rejects theoretical justifications of violence, maintaining that violence simply exists, justified or not. Rather than justifying violence, the realist strives to harness violence to serve worthier ends than those to which it is usually assigned. According to the realists, the goal of JUSTIFICATION is in the final analysis irrelevant; the acceptability of violence depends on whether it is being used in a smart and productive fashion.

Many theories of violence adopt a bifurcated approach and justify only certain forms of violence. For instance, a 'two kingdoms' view distinguishes state violence from the violence used by individuals. This view is based on the presumption that the state can use violence in an impersonal and controlled fashion in a way that an individual cannot. The police function of the state is justified because it is thought to exercise an impartial and thus just authority (see POLICING). Similarly, war fought by states is distinguished from other forms of mass violence, because it is thought to be done with legitimate AUTHORITY and in an organized fashion, which makes it appear capable of minimal rational control.

St Augustine justified state violence on the basis of the Christian duty to protect the innocent. Augustine argued that Christians could use violence to defend the empire because Christian charity required the protection of the innocent neighbour even if such protection required the death of the attacker. Interestingly, Augustine did not believe that Christians could kill in self-defence. If one was attacked, one could attempt to defend oneself in a non-lethal manner, but it was better to be killed than to kill. Augustine's defence of just war was a theory of exceptions to the Christian norm of acting non-violently. Augustine's primary goal was not to justify war, but to limit its practice among the new mass of converts following Constantine.

Some contemporary theorists argue that just-war theory is a theory *justifying* state violence against other states, thus fundamentally changing the theory's original purpose as an attempt to *limit* state violence in war. This transformation is not surprising, because the just-war criteria, which make a moral distinction between forms of violence used by an established authority versus violence done without such authority, can easily be co-opted by those in power to prove that their use of violence is legitimate because they constitute an established authority.

Christian reflection on the justification of violence has ranged from realist presumptions to those that disavow all use of violence on the part of Christians. It is often pointed out that the Bible is a book of extraordinary violence,

true of both the Old and New Testaments. The Israelites are ordered by God to annihilate their enemies. The Psalmist prays for death and destruction for his enemies (Psalms 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 109). Jesus died a violent death.

Christian attitudes to the possibility of acting violently also have been shaped by their understanding of Christian witness to the wider society (see CHURCH AND STATE). Those who have understood the place of Christians as being faithful witnesses while being perpetual outsiders and critics of society have understood violence differently from those Christians who have understood their role as ruling their society. In a related way, Christian attitudes have been shaped by whether they believe that their primary call is to live as Jesus does in the midst of violence, or whether their call is to (possibly) do violence in order to reduce the amount of violence.

One of the great ironies of Christian tradition is that the justification of violence that many Christians advocate would legitimate the execution of Jesus by the Roman authorities. However, most Christians have continued to maintain the centrality of the Cross in a manner that has always sustained a tension between Christian convictions and the legitimization of violence. Certainly the portrait of Jesus Christ in the New Testament shows that he dealt with violence by calling into question the very presumption of the necessity or the efficacy of violence.

Nowhere is this displayed more eloquently than in the Pauline accounts of Jesus' confrontation with the Powers. In confronting the Powers, Paul shows that the proper source of power for the Christian community lies in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the church's faithful embodiment of that power. Jesus is born into a society of violent power. His very birth evokes a genocidal reaction from Herod the Great (Matthew 2). At the inauguration of his ministry Jesus is tempted to express his power unfaithfully, is tempted to violence (Luke 4: 1-13). Christ defeats the powers and principalities, not through the avenues that the devil advocated or those which society expects, but through forgiveness, reconciliation and love, as they are defined in the light of the Cross and resurrection. In doing so, Jesus repudiates that

society's conception of power. The rejection of the use of the power of violence is most clearly displayed by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. When Jesus tells Peter to put away his sword, Christ shows all Christians that His way, and thus their way, is not the way of violence (Matthew 26: 47-56). It is in the power of the Cross and resurrection that Jesus effects salvation. The salvation Christ brings is liberation from the powers of the world, powers existing from the fall to the eschaton.

Jesus' peaceable salvation wrought in the Cross and resurrection is the culmination of his peaceable life, whose purpose is to call his followers to the KINGDOM OF GOD. The kingdom of God is the new society inaugurated by Jesus and governed and sustained by the Holy Spirit, who gives birth to the Christian community at Pentecost (Acts 2). In the power of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, the Christian community strives to live the Biblical vision of the kingdom of God. Radically different from any worldly kingdom, the kingdom of God is shown in the peaceableness of creation where all humans and animals live at peace with one another, and is envisioned in Isaiah's (ch. 11) and Hosea's (ch. 2) prophecy, in St Paul's discussion of the yearning of all creation for liberation from the bondage of this world (Romans 8) and in St John's vision of that time when 'They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; . . . And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes' (Revelation 7). The Christian community's faithfulness to the gospel will not consist merely of an absence of violence, but in the active embodiment of the peaceableness of the kingdom of God.

Violence is with the world until the return of Christ. Yet the message of the gospel seems to make doing violence contradictory to all basic Christian convictions. So for the Christian community, the first and primary question with regard to violence must be not whether violence is *per se* right or wrong, or whether violence by Christians can be justified, but how Christians are to live peaceably in a violent world.

In the same way that the Christian community must struggle to maintain a faithful conception of violence, so must it struggle to maintain a faithful conception of peaceableness. For instance, there are pacifists who define peace in

largely negative terms, as an absence of overt violence (see PACIFISM). Such pacifists often think that war in the modern age is unthinkable as a moral option; it is impossible to justify war anymore on purely utilitarian grounds given the existence of nuclear weapons. These 'liberal' pacifists understand their mission as one of protecting the world from war. Similarly, the role of the state is often seen as one which protects its citizens from violence. Certainly the Roman Empire understood its task as one of bringing peace and order to otherwise anarchic and barbaric regions. Thus the Roman Empire spoke of its *Pax Romana*. Yet it is clear that this *Pax Romana* is not the same as the *Pax Christi*, the peace of Christ.

Jesus says 'my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you' (John 14: 27). That Jesus' peace is different from that of the world is embodied clearly in Jesus' Cross. For Jesus does not come to protect Christians from suffering violence, but to give them strength to live faithfully to the gospel, whatever its demands may be. The history of the early church and its martyrs makes it clear that the *Pax Romana* could never be and will never be the *Pax Christi*.

For the *Pax Romana* is merely ordered violence, reinforcing the social structures that further the interests of the Empire. That the interests of society are inevitably at odds with the *Pax Christi* is clear from the example of Jesus. For it was the high priest Caiaphas who wanted to preserve *Pax Romana*, the world's peace of undisturbed status quo, and the world's peace meant that Jesus had to be edged out of this world to the Cross. To protect the *Pax Romana*, it will sometimes be necessary that some persons should die for the good of the whole people, (John 18: 14). If Christians are to proclaim the *Pax Christi*, they must not expect their society to accept their peace anymore than it did the peace of Jesus Christ.

If the Christian community recognizes the peace of Christ as an active power confronting the *Pax Romana* with the gospel of forgiveness, reconciliation and love, then it will never confuse its pacifism with what might be called 'passivism'. The Christian community will proclaim that 'Blessed are you who are poor', but

will never separate that from the corresponding 'But woe to you who are rich', and will never accept such beatitudes as calling for passivity (Luke 6: 20–6). For example, the 1968 Medellín document, published by the Latin American Catholic bishops, speaks of the violence done to the poor by the maintenance of the institutions which maintain the majority of the population at a subsistence level (or less) while a small percentage of the population lives in relative opulence. If the Christian community speaks for the side of wealthy by simply accepting the status quo as 'ordained by God', then it is unfaithfully proclaiming the violent *Pax Romana* and has failed in its task to bring the gospel of *Pax Christi* to these people. Someone like Dorothy Day who could say 'blessed are the poor' and yet work to assist the poor and down-trodden is on their way to understanding Jesus' beatitudes.

Similarly, with respect to the problem of domestic violence, if the church adopts society's all-too-common conception of the issue as merely a 'private affair' to be worked out at home, or worse, advocates that this is rightful 'submission' of the wife, then the church perverts the gospel and denies the obligation to seek true reconciliation. In this instance, the Christian community might appropriately separate the batterer from his wife and children by taking one or other into their homes, confront the batterer with his actions and tell him that he must repent of his actions and show his peaceableness before he will be allowed to live with his spouse and children.

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## VIVISECTION

Vivisection comes from the Latin words *vivus* (living) and *sectio* (cutting), though it is now used generally to describe any painful experiment performed on a living animal which may or may not involve incision. Living animals are used in experiments not only to aid basic scientific research but also in product testing, behavioural research, for instructional purposes, in *in vivo* tests and for emergency medicine. In product testing – to take only one example – a wide range of substances are tested for their toxicity including 'insecticides, pesticides, anti-freeze, brake fluids, bleaches, Christmas tree sprays, silver and brass polish, oven cleaners, deodorants, skin fresheners, bubble baths, freckle creams, eye makeup, crayons, inks, suntan lotions, nail polish, zipper lubricants, paints, food dyes, chemical solvents, and floor cleaners' (Gendin 1986: 16).

The practice of dissecting live animals as a method of scientific enquiry dates back to the beginning of Western medicine. About 300 BC, the author of the Hippocratic text *On the Heart* 'cut the throat of a pig which was drinking coloured water, in order to study the act of swallowing' (Maehle and Tröhler 1987: 15). Human unease with the practice, at least when certain animals were used, is also ancient. The Stoic physician Galen of Pergamon found the expression of apes when vivisected 'unpleasant' and recommended using pigs or goats instead (Maehle and Tröhler 1987: 15). The use of vivisection fluctuated in succeeding centuries, and then proved influential in the development of physiology in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. British scientists were slow to adopt vivisectional techniques partly for reasons of scientific tradition (see French 1975) though it is likely that concern about animal suffering also prevented the quicker adoption of the practice. Though animal experimentation had 'increased greatly' after the publication of the English trans-