

**THE MIND OF CHRIST: A PARADIGM TOWARD A BIBLICAL
THEOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL AND PROACTIVE
RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis has been examined and approved for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in BIBLICAL STUDIES (NEW TESTAMENT)**.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own research efforts; undertaken under the supervision of Professor Danny Keith McCain and has not been presented elsewhere for the award of a degree or certificate. All sources have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged.

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God Almighty, through His Son, Jesus Christ, suffered, absorbed and transformed the worst of human violence into human redemption and teaches and urges violent humanity to unlearn the logic and practice of violence proactively.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Church of Jesus Christ particularly, in Africa and to the cause of liberating the harassed and helpless multitudes of Africa; and especially to the people of Liberia, whose lives violence has bruised, shattered, and broken; whose sense of propriety, dignity and self-worth violence has so obliterated as to render them hapless and hopeless; and to the millions of Christians who strive daily throughout the world to live out their most noble faith in the crucible of violence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

General

Ant.	The Antiquities of the Jews (Josephus)
aug.	augmented
Bk., bk.	book
cf.	compare
ch., chs.	chapter, chapters
diss.	Dissertation
ed., eds.	edition/s; editor/s, edited by
e.g.	for example
esp.	especially
etc.	and so on
et al	and others
Gk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
i.e.	that is
lit.	literally
n.d.	no date of publication
NT (N.T.)	New Testament
OT (O.T.)	Old Testament
p., pp.	page, pages
qtd.	quoted
rev.	revised; revised by
v., vv.	verse, verses
ver., vers.	version, versions

vol., vols.

volume, volumes

Ancient Literature

Genesis	Ge
Exodus	Ex
Leviticus	Lev
Numbers	Nu
Deuteronomy	Dt
Joshua	Jos
Judges	Jdg
Ruth	Ru
1 Samuel	1Sa
2 Samuel	2Sa
1 Kings	1Ki
2 Kings	2Ki
1 Chronicles	1Ch
2 Chronicles	2Ch
Ezra	Ezr
Nehemiah	Ne
Esther	Est
Job	Job
Psalms	Ps
Proverbs	Pr
Ecclesiastes	Ecc
Song of Songs	SS
Isaiah	Isa

Jeremiah	Jer
Lamentations	La
Ezekiel	Eze
Daniel	Da
Hosea	Hos
Joel	Joel
Amos	Am
Obadiah	Ob
Jonah	Jnh
Micah	Mic
Nahum	Na
Habakkuk	Hab
Zephaniah	Zep
Haggai	Hag
Zechariah	Zec
Malachi	Mal
Matthew	Mt
Mark	Mk
Luke	Lk
John	Jn
Acts	Ac
Romans	Ro
1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Corinthians	2Co
Galatians	Gal
Ephesians	Eph

Philippians	Php
Colossians	Col
1 Thessalonians	1Th
2 Thessalonians	2Th
1 Timothy	1Ti
2 Timothy	2Ti
Titus	Tit
Philemon	Phm
Hebrews	Heb
James	Jas
1 Peter	1Pe
2 Peter	2Pe
1 John	1Jn
2 John	2Jn
3 John	3Jn
Jude	Jude
Revelation	Rev

Apocryphal New Testament Literature

Mary	The Gospel of the Birth of Mary
Protevangelion	An historical account of the birth of Christ, the perpetual Virgin Mary by James the Lesser, Cousin and Brother of Jesus Christ, chief Apostle and first Bishop of the Christians in Jerusalem.
1 Infancy	The First Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ
1 Clement	The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians
Barnabas	The General Epistle of Barnabas

Encyclical (S)	The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrnam
Ignatius Eph.	The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians
Ignatius Rom.	The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans
Ignatius Phil.	The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians
Ignatius Smyr.	The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans
Ignatius Poly.	The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp
Polycarp	The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philipppians
Mathetes	The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus
Others	
Adj., adj.	Adjective
BibleWorks 5.0	Bible Software CD-ROM.
KJV	King James' Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	The New International Version
NIVEC	NIV Exhaustive Concordance
NLT	New Living Translation
SEC	Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
UNGER	The New Unger's Bible Dictionary

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ABSTRACT

Christianity seems to be losing focus on violence and the Christian response. Therefore, this work sought for responses to violence found in the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ and His apostles, that honor the Godhead, are faithful to the Bible, relevant to, and redemptive in the context of violence; sensitive both to victims and victimizers of violence; are theologically healthy and give voice to the sufferers of violence. It employed the historical-grammatical method of exegesis to study the Biblical (especially the New Testament) data on violence and the interdisciplinary method to analyze and construct a paradigm for a biblical theology of violence. It discovered that 1) in the Mind of Christ, Christians can unlearn the logic and mentality of violence; 2) proactive engagement of the structures of violence can transform violence for redemptive purposes; 3) although prevalent in African experience, scholars have not done enough to explain violence in African worldviews and religions and show its role and relationship to human existence; nor have they shown how to respond to violence in African religions and worldviews; 4) the conflagration of violence in African Christian experience is a menace that if not taken seriously, will hinder effective future Christian witness; 5) the implications of the logic and operations of violence for Christian education, theology, ethics and mission, particularly, require the Church to be more proactive against violence. Finally, the work proposed a paradigm located in the “Mind of Christ,” for doing the sort of biblical theology of violence it discovered should be done to help the Church remain the “salt and light” of a violent world.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

All beginnings are more or less obscure in appearance, but none were ever more obscure than those of Christianity (Bruce 1).

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Christianity is on the threshold of making significant global impact, although it also seems to be losing its cutting edge in responding to violence. But African Religious Studies Lecturer in University of Leeds, Kevin Ward, is very optimistic that Christians in Africa will make a noble contribution to a global Christian identity in our pluralist world (234). Leading the way is Nigeria that Wagner and Thompson describe as “a giant of today’s Christian landscape” and “Pearl of Africa,” with its Christian community and missionaries spreading the gospel throughout Nigeria, Africa and the once historic Christian lands (8, 21).¹ This is starkly contrary to E. D. Morel’s skepticism expressed nearly three and a half decades ago in his Nigeria: Its Peoples and Its Problems. Morel was skeptical about Christianity’s inability to advance in Nigeria over Islam as a religion for Africans. He argued that Christianity was incapable in West Africa to divorce itself from the West and be at home in Africa. Nigerian Christians did not need 35 years to prove Morel wrong. They now constitute the major missionary bodies, Christian teachers, Church planters, pastors and Christian workers in Nigeria and Africa.² Morel was also mistaken and misled in stating that Islam has become “a religion of the people, losing much of its rigidity and fanaticism as it works down to the coast absorbing the true Negro” (214). “Everything is against Christianity as presented to the Nigerian..., and everything is in favour of Islam, although Christianity in itself, contains more that should appeal to the Negro character than does Mohammedanism...,” Morel

contended (214). That may have been true depending on what Morel meant by “everything” and the “true Negro.” Both “everything” and the “true Negro” have shown that Christianity is at home among Africans. Mark Shaw’s remarks about the growth of Christianity in Africa also show how seriously misleading Morel’s skepticism was. The surge in the growth of professing Christians from 4 million in 1900 to 300 million in 2000 is an astounding surprise for 21st century Church history. Shaw argued that this phenomenal growth is “one of the most surprising facts of twentieth-century church history” (37). It has Nigeria written all over it (37). However, in spite of his skepticism, Morel’s observations about Christianity and Islam in Nigeria are help one to understand the continuous outbursts of violence in Nigeria between Christians and Muslims three and a half decades later. Christianity’s mission, witness and influence in Africa and beyond are seriously threatened by violence and the Church is not sure how to respond to this threat. It is even confused. The Church is in a state of tension.

American Country Music legend, Kenny Rogers, captured this tension in his Coward of the County.³ The tension is between demonstrating strength without recourse to violence on one hand, and employing violence to buttress, or justify strength, on the other. It is between daddy’s “You don’t have to fight to be a man, and Tommy’s Sometimes you have to fight when you’re a man.” But what constitutes “being a man” without a fight, and a fight because “one is a man”? What justifies “manliness” with a fight? And what are the limits to such a fight? What are the prospects for “manliness without violence?” or “violence because of manliness?” No overly simplistic answers to these questions will do justice to the discussion.

From its obscured beginning, the simple, humble and feeble Church grew rapidly and steadily from 120 members in Acts 1:15 to more than 5, 000 in Acts 4:4.

Yet this growth was not without its attendant problems.⁴ In spite of its lucid and straightforward teachings, its powerful attraction of people from different cultural, philosophical, racial and even religious persuasions, external and internal dangers threatened the Apostolic and Early Church.⁵ Combined state persecutions and gospel perversions placed the Church in a “struggle for existence” (Berkhof 43). The Church especially in Africa is not far from this description. Much of Christian faith, like the *textus receptus*, has come to Africa with prints of its origin, including what Matthew Man-oso Ndagoso described as the quarrels and divisions in Europe and America that formed essential parts of the gospel so much that these have also affected Christianity in Africa especially, “missionary activities.”⁶ Christianity now wrestles with more challenges. Bennie J. van der Walt’s Understanding and Rebuilding Africa referred to Africa as a “terra incognita” (ix), and Patrick Johnstone enumerated seven challenges facing the Church in Africa: Rapid growth with inadequate discipling; Unity in diversity; Morality and the AIDS crisis; Leadership training—the critical bottleneck; African theologians; The expatriate missionary force and Making missions central to the life of the church in Africa (36-39). Violence should be added to these challenges because it is threatens the Church’s very existence again, as it did before.

But ironically, where the Church is poor and struggling is where it is also overtly preoccupied with colossal cathedral projects, showing off its talents and brilliance. Claims by Reverend Daddy Hezekiah, founder of Living Christ Mission, of expending “more than five billion naira” to erect his gigantic 75,000 capacity worship center at Onitsha, Nigeria, with still an estimated N60 million more to be used before the structure is completed (Ogene 22-24).⁷ Another preoccupation is with miracles, prosperity, health and other felt needs as this Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries annual “Anointing Service” tagged “Salvation,” “Deliverance,” “Victory

over the enemy,” and “Healing,” with a statement of guarantee: “A divinely arranged opportunity for you to destroy the yokes of: stagnancy, poverty, non-achievement, demonic oppression, marital problems and sicknesses” advertisement shows (9).⁸

What is the Church saying and doing about structured violence that is destroying it from within and without? Political, economic, religious and ethnic violence cut deep into Nigeria’s fabric (Ogunmupe and Akpaekong 36; Murrary 1, 8); armed brutality has left Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda and Burundi in ruins; on-going armed violence in Cote d’Ivoire, Sudan and other parts of Africa, gross acts of injustice and corruption together with cultures of impunity, and militant Islam—all point to one direction: that the Church is once more in a struggle for existence and it needs to respond without compromising its mission, integrity and relevance in a violent world.⁹ Much of Christianity’s future rests on its response to violence.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Frequent and continuous violent eruptions in the heartlands of Christianity in Africa (Liberia, Nigeria, Burundi, Rwanda, for example) raise significant questions on how to respond to violence in the 21st century. Christians in past pioneered reforms and stood against certain forms of violence: slavery, cannibalism, abuse of human rights and dignity. Christianity again, must show the world how to deal violence in the 21st century. Its responses need not be violent. Yet, Christianity should respond to violence and remain faithful to Christ, sensitive to the people’s felt needs, relevant to society and redemptive in its witness and ministry in a hostile world. Do the constitutions of governments uphold the notion of self-defense? What are the implications of violence and nonviolence to the witness of the Church?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Five objectives guided the conduct of this study.

1. To seek biblically sound and theologically healthy responses to violence in contemporary Christian experience
2. To seek ways to unlearn the logic of violence
3. To construct a paradigm for a relevant theology of violence
4. To give voice to harassed, oppressed and helpless victims of violence.
5. To contribute to the growing body of literature on violence and participate in the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) agenda.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Prophet Habakkuk was dumfounded with Yahweh's disposition to violence before he learned how much Yahweh hated violence. Violence challenges God's wisdom and mocks at the Christian resolve so much that many Christians have lost focus of Christ's teachings and examples on violence. Violence is making the Church's ministry in many places extremely difficult. For example, the relationship between violence, sexual mobility and the spread of HIV/AIDS overstretches the Church's ability to respond as it should. So this work treated the violence question from an academic and cultic perspective, realizing how both academics and the clergy often struggle to understand the true nature and full weight of the problem. Besides, a growing culture of violence pretends to be a more realistic response to violence. In some cases, Christians overwhelmed by violence resign themselves to passivity and let violence reign. Others are undecided about how to respond to violence because they are not sure just what to say or do in the face of violence. All these groups need to have another look at violence and how to respond to it biblically and theologically.

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The menu of Christian thought and theology has dealt with decisive salvific issues. Dialogues in Christian-Muslim relationships are on-going. Cultural themes, traditional religious issues, and Christian ethics are making inroads. In more recent times, the academic theological agenda is giving serious thought to gender, human rights, health and environmental issues.¹⁰ But security matters still remain a big problem for biblical theology. Violence falls into the security category and is galloping menace to the Church.

Conflicting and often contradictory statements from ecclesiastical heads, pulpits and classrooms about Christian responses to violence further justified this work. A well defined theology of responses based on critical interaction with the Bible and the people's context does not seem to abound to help the Church deal with violence. The logic of arguments on the believers' response to violence heightens the confusion. Some responses encourage self-defense, implying resort to violence but they make no room for basic self-defense preparations and so become simply more suicidal than logical or biblical, unless it assumes that all believers know how to defend themselves. This is the fallacy of two wrongs making a right. And, where Christians are prepared to confront violence with violence, it is doubtful if their actions are constitutional (legal) and biblical. A selective hermeneutics makes it easier for Christians to run to Old Testament violent narratives for support but weed out major anti-violence or proactive teachings and practices, thus demonstrating the need for the Church to rethink the violence question more seriously and thoroughly. The Church is on the brink of a major violent eruption unless it deals effectively with the flood of violence that has engulfed it. It must not bleed profusely and die purposely.

Furthermore, a popular but unproved assumption that the New Testament teaches very little about violence and the Christian response, has influenced many well-meaning Christians, and incapacitate them from studying the New Testament and their ministry context for solutions. What the world enjoys in the way of legislations against various offenses and forms of inhumanity was largely because some Christians cared enough to risk everything, including their lives. The Church should scratch where its members itch. It should be asking, “How do we deal with the violence that daily threatens our existence?” “Who are those behind it and what are their motives, purposes and aims?” “How should we respond and still remain faithful to Christ and His mission while at the same time making the Church stronger?” And “what must we do to forestall violence and keep its perpetrators in check?” While the question of violence is not new in Christian experience and history, violence in Christian experience is on the increase. The Church also needs to ask about any relationships between Islamic violence against the West (America) and corresponding repercussions against Christians in Africa, like the Kano, Kaduna and Jos violent eruptions in the wake of the bin Laden 9-11 raids on United States territory. Is America the embodiment of Christianity and the Christian ideal? Finally, the World Council of Churches’ “Decade to Overcome Violence” (DOV) project, a welcome strategy for responding to violence, needs more heralds. The decade is already past midway and violence does not appear to be abating. What does that suggest?

1.6 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Because the Church lives and ministers in a violent world, to understand Christian responses to violence is to fathom much of Christian experience, thought and theology. Therefore, this study is purposive; and primarily biblical-theological in approach. It held to the principle of progressive revelation of God’s self-disclosure. It

employed the historico-grammatical exegetical method of hermeneutics to study selected biblical data, and relied upon inter-disciplinary approaches to understand and interpret the complex social, ethical, economic, philosophical and political contexts that breed and exhibit violence. Though analytical, the work is, on the whole biblical-theological, and does not therefore address violence primarily from social-ethical or political or economic considerations, even when it discusses these aspects. A phenomenological approach was also considered.

Primary sources for the work included the Judeo-Christian Scriptures (Old and New Testaments), some Ancient Near-East literature and works by selected early Church Fathers. That the Church came into being in the context of violence by the Roman Empire and Judaism is significant because there it began to respond to the violence. The work studied the contents of each New Testament book, analyzed and summarized them with respect to violence, and then evaluated its findings. A study of the vocabulary of violence in the Bible also became necessary. Finally, it identified what it perceived as a biblical framework, with principles for responding to violence.

Where major blocks of biblical texts dealt with violence, the work examined the specimen carefully, considering even variant readings, although none of the passages was found to contain any significant variant reading. Literature from the intertestamental period, New Testament Apocryphal, Medieval, Reformation, Modern and Post-modern era provided more insights on the Church's responses to violence.

1.7 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The work examined the logic and philosophy of violence in human experience; the context and nature of violence in the Bible; Graeco-Roman and Jewish contributions to Christian understanding and responses to violence; and teachings and practices of Jesus, Paul and other Apostles on violence. The first chapter showed the

overall direction for the research. The second presented an overview of the situation of violence against the Church from its earliest beginnings till date, noting how the Church has responded. The third chapter dealt with violence in ancient Jewish experience, noting the logic, perspectives, and motives behind OT violent narratives, and how the warring God, Yahweh, is also the God of Compassion, Grace, and Shalom! Chapter four summarized violence during the ‘400 silent’ years of no revelatory material before the New Testament period, observing the Graeco-Roman influence on the discussion. The fifth chapter analyzed Jesus Christ’s teachings and practices on violence based primarily on the Synoptic Gospels.

The sixth chapter examined the Book of Acts critically for its understanding, teachings and practices on violence. The seventh studied the Epistles and Johannean corpus for their teachings and practices on violence. The eighth and final chapter presented a proposed model for a biblical theology of proactive responses to violence grounded in the “Mind of Christ” and concluded with a submission of its contribution to knowledge. The work provided a complete citation of sources used.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THE STUDY

1.8.1 Existential Crisis

‘Existentialism’ is difficult to define precisely because its many adherents and users vary in how they understand it. This work used the phrase ‘existential crisis’ to refer to such acts or threats of violence that threaten to extinguish one’s very life.

1.8.2 Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy refers to “right belief, as contrasted with heresy,” when used of a religious system, and is used especially of Eastern Christian Churches that “are in communion with Constantinople, collectively described in ancient times as the “holy orthodox, catholic, apostolic Eastern Church.” They distinguish themselves from

heretic bodies like the Nestorians and Jacobites (Cross and Livingstone 1014).¹¹ Keith J. Hardman observed that the “closest NT concept is ‘truth’ and ‘correct belief,’ noting that the word derives from the Greek *orthos* (“right,” “true”) and *doxa* (“opinion”) (735); added that everything be measured by the “Word of God set forth in the first Christian century” as the standard of orthodoxy (736).

The first part of the word comes from the same English word that gave ‘orthodontist,’ one who makes teeth straight. The second is the Greek word *δοξα*, *h j, h` (doxa)* (1) that means a manifestation of light: *radiance, brightness, splendor* (Acts 22:11); (2) a manifestation of God’s excellent power: *glory, majesty* (Ro 9:23); (3) an excellent reputation: *honor, glory, praise* (Jn 5:44); (4) as a state characterized by honor, power, and remarkable appearance: *glory, splendor* (Lu 24:26); (5) of a person created in the image of God: *reflection, glory* (1Co 11:7) (BibleWorks 5). *Doxa* may also mean ‘glory’ or ‘worship.’ According to R. Paul Stevens, “doctrine that lines itself up (*ortho*) with Scripture is designed to be a blessing to everyday life and, at the same time, to bless God (*doxa*) in life itself. It aims...at true godliness and true humanness” (4).¹² So then, orthodoxy goes beyond mere intellectual correctness to “worshipful living” (Stevens 5). Dallas Willard shed more light on this.¹³ Most people mistake orthodoxy for something old-fashioned, obsolete and irrelevant, and that affects their self- and others perception in what they term “orthodox” Churches. Orthodox Churches are those that teach what is right and in line with the Bible. Orthodox responses to violence then, are what this work sought.

1.8.3 Orthopraxy

The word concerns right or straight practice. At its most basic level, says Stevens, “orthopraxy is about practices that are in harmony with God’s kingdom in the church and the world, that bring value and good into the world” (5).

1.8.4 Orthopathy

This is about the “cultivation of the heart” so that it believes and also lives out its beliefs (Stevens 6). This heart cultivation is necessary to respond to violence. Orthodoxy instructs the mind, orthopathy transforms the heart and orthopraxy enables the body to live according to God’s way of life.

1.8.5 Self-defense

Any pre-arranged means whereby a person wards off violence directed against self, either consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly. Often, repelling violence with violence is in mind whenever self-defense is mentioned.

1.8.6 Violence

Because of the complexity in defining precisely what violence is, Charles Selengut’s Understanding Religious Violence looks more at perspectives of violence and warns against stereotypes. Merrill F. Unger defines violence as “vehement, forcible, or destructive action, often involving infringement, outrage, or assault” (1354-55). “Violence is aggression gone astray.”¹⁴ (Gerber 146) “Violence is the destructive imposition of power.”¹⁵

1.8.7 Active non-violence

This is a response to violence whereby victims and would-be victims reject violence as a viable alternative but actively engage in more positive options to resolve the situation of violence. Adrian Helleman argued for this position¹⁶

1.9 THE VOCABULARY OF VIOLENCE

The word “violence” occurs 53 times in the NIV in 17 Old Testament and two New Testament books with an interesting distribution pattern. Seventeen of the 66 Bible books expressly use the word “violence.” The Psalms alone register 12 occurrences, followed by Proverbs and Ezekiel, both with seven (7) each. Jeremiah

has five (5), closely followed by Isaiah with four (4), and Genesis and Habakkuk with three (3) each; and Zephaniah with two (2). 1 Chronicles, Job, Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Malachi, Acts and Revelation have only one (1) occurrence each. This may be why many Christians believe that the Old Testament contains more violence material and the New Testament. But this distribution pattern by itself could be misleading if one relies on it to understand the occurrence of violence in the Bible. Yet, it may be pointing to the effect of progressive revelation by which God is moving human history from one point to another, first from a period of no violence to one of intense violence that gradually reduces into the time of the New Testament. Then it looks into a future when violence will be no more. What might this distribution pattern suggest? Another way to look at the distribution pattern is this: **Penteteuch:** three times; **Writings:** twenty-one times; **Prophets:** Twenty-seven times and the **New Testament:** two times (Acts 21:35 and Rev 18:21).

sm;x', sm';x' (*hamas*): The Bible uses different Hebrew and Greek words and phrases to express the concept of violence. Harm, damage, destruction, wickedness, evil, hatred, war, injustice, desolation, recklessness, rudeness, and the like, relate to violence in different ways. The predominant Hebrew word for violence is the verb **sm;x'** (*hamas*), which means to “treat violently,” or to “wrong.” From this are derivatives like to *be hard, strict, rigorous*, such that **sm;x'** conveys action and activity. It is not passive and is used of God, people and systems or institutions. Often, hatred characterized by violence produces violent activity and makes the person so characterized an **sm'x'** *vyai* (*violent man*, Ps 18:48). Thus, “a violent man” and “a man of violence” describe one given over to violence, the personification of violence.

Bi, a, bia, zw, bi, aioj, biasth, j, and biastai (*bia, biazō, biasthēs, and biastai*) constitute a major New Testament word family in the study of violence. The noun *bi, a* may refer to a person's "bodily strength, force, might or violence," as in Acts 21:35 ("...the violence of the mob was so great...); to the forces of nature violence, as the force of the *pounding of the surf* against the ship's stern in Acts 27:41. *Bia, zw* always goes with a component of force and, when used intransitively, may mean "use force, violence; in a good sense *press (in), try hard to (enter), enter forcibly (into)*." Luke 16:16 uses the verb in this sense of people "forcing" their way into the kingdom of heaven, possibly because of the narrowness of the door to the kingdom (Lk 13:24; cf Mt 7:13-14). When used transitively and in a passive sense, it refers to violent suffering or treatment received. Matthew 11:12 uses this of the kingdom of heaven and people's reaction to it. Classical Greek used the word to speak of *force, an act of violence, against one's will, in spite of the person*. But *bi, a|* alone as an adverb means *perforce, bia, zw, to constrain*. *Biaio&ma, caj, o` , (ma, comai)* meant *fighting violently*.

~x;l' (*lāham*) is a verb that occurs at least 171 times, and means to "fight," or "do battle." In certain instances, the word means to *engage in battle*, and sometimes to *wage war* (Jos 10:5; Jdg 11:5; 1Ki 22:46; 2Ki 6:8; 14:28, etc.). It is often used with B. when reference is to an enemy. This use occurs 60 times in various Old Testament passages (Ex 1:10; 17:9; 17:10; Nu 21:23; 21:26 22:11) and others.

hm'x'l.mi (*milhāmāh, war, battle*) is a situation that almost always involves one or several forms of structured or systematic violence is what the Hebrew word *hm'x'l.mi (battle, war)* portrays. War is a "state of armed conflict between groups of people in which lethal violence is used to coerce one to do the other's will" (Klassen

869). Palestine engaged in nearly 200 wars in 150 years before Jesus' birth and ministry there. Because violence is often connected with war, it is important to look at the etymology of war. The root of $hm'x'l.mi$ (primitive, $\sim xl$), means "to *feed* on; and figuratively, to *consume*" (Strong 59). The implication of this then, is, "to *battle* (as *destruction*): —devour, eat, fight (-ing), overcome, prevail, (make) war (-ing)" (Easton, BibleWorks 5). The verb $\sim x;l'$, means to fight, or do battle. Israel's battles were the LORD's ($hw''+hy> tAm\acute{x}l.mi \sim xePL'hiw$). $hm'x'l.mi$ was an art that required training and skills, meaning that it would be taught and learned. YAHWEH Himself was *teaching* warfare to Israel by leaving some nations to do war with them (Jdg 3:2, $hm'x'l.mi \sim d'PM;l;l$). However, in Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3, the day will come when nations will no longer *train for war*. Phrases like $hm'x'l.mi vya\acute{i}$ (a man of war, meaning a *warrior*), spoken of David (1Sa 16:18), appear frequently with $hm'x'l.mi$. Wars were fought with weapons thus, $hm'x'l.mi yleK.$, *weapons of war* ("armed for battle," NIV Jdg 18:11); ($\sim T'\acute{e}m.x;l.mi yle\acute{a}K.$, "armed for battle," NIV Jdg 18:16) and could be consecrated, that is, beginning them with sacred rites, $hm'x'l.m vD;q\acute{i}$.

$Poleme, w$ (*polemeō*): The New Testament Greek verb $poleme, w$ means to "(make) wage war (against), war, or fight (with)," as did Michael and his angels when they engaged the beast in Revelation 12:7 (Friberg, BibleWorks 5). Figuratively, the verb expresses hostile attitudes within a community, thus, *fight, be against*. Of the seven occurrences of this verb in the New Testament, six are in Revelation alone. The masculine noun $po, lemoj, ou, o`$ (*polemos ho*) is "war, battle; strife, conflict," (Jas 4:1). Literally, it is an *armed conflict, war* as in Matthew 24:6, which is the opposite of $eivrh, nh$ (*eirēnē, peace*). It may also refer to a single engagement,

battle, fight (1Co 14:8). The word has a figurative and negative connotation, as a battle of word (or words) within a community, and thus, *strife, quarrel, conflict* (Jas 4:1). The New Testament uses πο, λεμοj 16 times, nine in Revelation alone. Of the nine, eight are symbolic. This is highly suggestive of the New Testament's understanding of the ethic and theology of the Christian community with respect to this concept of war and the accompanying violence and wickedness. A few other words are related to πο, λεμοj.

Ma, ch, hj, h` (*machē*) literally meant “physical combat or a contest fought with weapons *battle, conflict, fight*” (Strong 14). This is not generally attested in the New Testament where the word assumes figurative and plural forms as battles fought with words only: *disputes, quarrels, strife* (2Ti 2:23). Ma, comai was (1) of physical combat, a *fight* (Ac 7:26); and (2) figuratively, of word battles: *quarrel, dispute, contend* (Jn 6:52; Tit 3:9). A common weapon soldiers used was the ma, caira (*machaira*, sword), which originally was a large knife for killing and cutting up. In the New Testament the *sword* or *saber* was literally a curved weapon for close combat. The small sword was the *dagger* (Jn 18:11). Figuratively, the sword represented a symbol of violent death (Ro 8:35); hostility (Mt 10:34); and of the power of life and death (Ro 13:4). It was also a metaphor for the penetrating power of words spoken by God (Eph 6:17).

The concepts of ruin and destruction tie in with those of war, death and violence. The main Greek word for destruction is απο, λlumi (*apollumi*). It is derived from the base απο, a preposition with the genitive, whose basic meanings are *separation off, motion away from*; to denote separation from a person or place *from, away from* (Lk 16:18), and many other uses like “separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal, etc.” (Strong 55). From this same base comes the

word $\alpha\nu\pi\omicron\beta\alpha\iota, \nu\omega$ (*apobainō*) and its forms that literally mean to *go away from*; from a ship or boat *step off, get out of, disembark (from)* (Lk 5:2). $\alpha\pi\omicron\beta\alpha, \lambda\lambda\omega$ (*apoballō*) is used literally of a garment with the meaning to *throw off, take off* (Mk 10:50); or figuratively, of losing or rejecting a quality or state, *throw away, cause to cease, do away with* (Heb 10:35) and comes from the same base. So also is $\alpha\nu\pi\omicron\beta\omicron\lambda\eta$, (*apobolē*) that strictly refers to *being cast off*; (1) from God's favor *rejection* (Ro 11:15); (2) from life itself: *loss, destruction* (Ac 27:22).

$\alpha\pi\omicron, \lambda\lambda\omicron\mu\iota$ (*apollumi*) can be active or used in the middle voice. Actively, it means to *ruin, destroy*; (a) of persons: *destroy, kill, bring to ruin* (Mt 2:13); (b) where the object is impersonal, the word means to *destroy, bring to nothing* (1Co 1:19); (c) with regard to a reward, loss and deprivation are in mind, (Mt 10:42). It is the opposite of $\theta\eta\rho\epsilon, \omega$ (*tēreō*, to *maintain, keep*). The middle means to *be ruined, be destroyed* (2nd perfect active as middle). When used of persons it means to *die, perish, lose one's life* (Mt 8:25). But of things, it means to *be lost, be ruined* (Mt 9:17). A third sense of the word refers to transitory things such that they *pass away, cease to exist, perish* (1Pe 1:7). Systematic violence often results in all the usages of this word. Other words and concepts like hatred and rebellion often accompany violence in one way or another, although this study did not include them.

$\eta\mu'x'l.mi\ y\lambda\eta K.$, *weapons of war*. The noun $\gamma\lambda\eta K.$ (singular) comes from the primitive root $\eta\lambda'K$. This root means “to *end*, whether intransitive (to *cease, be finished, perish*) or transitive, (to *complete, prepare, consume*):—accomplish, cease, consume (away), determine, destroy (utterly), be (when...where) done, (be an) end (of), expire, (cause to) fail, faint, finish, fulfill, have, leave (off), long, bring to pass, wholly reap, make clean riddance, spend, quite take away, waste (NIVEC 3973).” Another word from the same root and spelt the same way as the root is $\eta\lambda'K$. But

this word means a “*completion*; adverb, *completely*; also *destruction*:—altogether, (be, utterly) consume (-d), consummation (-ption), was determined, (full, utter) end, riddance” (NIVEC 3627). However, the noun *yliK.* means, “something *prepared*, i.e., any *apparatus* (as an implement, utensil, dress, vessel or weapon):—armor ([bearer]), artillery, bag, carriage, furnish, furniture, instrument, jewel, that is made of, pot, psaltery, sack, stuff, thing, tool, vessel, ware, weapon” (NIVEC 3973).

The weapons Old Testament nations used were basically the same, with each country modifying theirs according to age and country, and fell into two broad categories: *offensive* and *defensive* weapons. The offensive ones included the battle-axe, sword, spear, bow and arrow, sling, and battering ram; while defensive weapons included the shield, helmet, breastplate, and girdle. Ephesians 6:10-18 provides a catalog of spiritual weapons for Christians against Satan and Satanic influences. They include the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of gospel readiness, the shield of faith for extinguishing all the offensives of Satan, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Bible. They must constantly be worn with all kinds of prayers and requests. This prayer parade is the daily exercising for battle readiness. Of all these weapons, only two are offensive—the Bible and prayers.

The *br,x,ñ* (*herev*, sword) occurs 411 times in various contexts. It is a feminine noun with the meaning a. *sword*, as weapon of war (Ge 48:22; Jdg 7:14; 1Sa 21:9); *two-edged* (short) *sword* (Jdg 3:16); *edge of sword* (Ps 89:44). b. *gird on sword* (1Sa 17:39; 25:13; 25:13); c. *draw the sword* (Ex 15:9; Lev 26:33; Eze 5:2; 5:12; 12:14 :7). d. *whet, sharpen the sword* (Ps 7:13). Figuratively, the sword refers to the violence of war (Ge 27:40). In Proverbs 5:4 it refers to the grievous end of dealings with strange women. A second major meaning of the word is that it is a *knife*. *~yrIcu* (*tsurim*) or flint knives were used in circumcision (Jos 5:2; 5:3) or as razor. Third, the

br,xñ, referred to tools used in hewing stone (Ex 20:25). Even though the sword was a major weapon of violence in warfare, it was also used without violence. The *dagger* originated from Egypt and was the more common sword people wore. The Greeks and Romans generally used a straight two-edged blade that they wore on the left side. The sword in Israel symbolized war and the expression, *dragging the sword* was figurative of war and destruction (Lev 26:33).

The Greek word for weapon is ο[plon, ou, το, , (*hoplon*) and means “(1) literally, any *tool* or *instrument* (probably figuratively in Ro 6:13); (2) *weapon*; plural: *arms, weapons* (Jn 18:3); figuratively, as what is needed for successful Christian living, viewed as a spiritual warfare against evil: *means to win out* (2Co 10:4); possibly used in both negative and positive aspects of means for evil or good in Romans 6:13” (Friberg, BibleWorks 5). It shares the same context of militarism. Thus, stratei, a, aj, h` (*strateia*) which literally means the activity of an army: *campaign, expedition*; or metaphorically, *resistance against evil, spiritual warfare* (2Co 10:4); *struggle, fight* (1Ti 1:18), also is normally enforced by the use of weapons of the campaign, expedition or warfare. The verb ο`pli, zw (*hoplizō*), whose first aorist middle is w`plisa, mhn, (*hōplisamēn*) has a basic meaning to *prepare, equip, arm*. It occurs only in the middle voice in the New Testament, with meaning to *arm* or *equip oneself with* something. Used figuratively, it means to *prepare, get ready* (1Pe 4:1). 2 Corinthians 10:4 uses the plural form of the noun and thus, τα. ο[plath/j stratei, aj h`mw/n (the weapons of our warfare).

Panopli, a, aj, h` (*panoplia*) literally referred to a foot soldier’s full preparation for offense and defense, thereby giving it the sense of *full armor, weapons and armor, complete suit of armor* (Lk 11:22). In a metaphorical sense, the word is used of the spiritual characteristics of a believer for Christian warfare against

evil and against the Evil One (Eph 6:11, 13). Only in these three references does *panopli, a* occur in the New Testament. For the Christian, the reason for God's full armor is to provide sufficient resistance against the Devil. The New Testament uses *pa, lh.* for this engagement. God's armor includes both defensive and offensive pieces of weapons.

Meqodei, a, aj, h` (*methodeia* also *meqodi, a, methodia*) provides our English word "method," and means a method, or procedure. But it has a bad sense in the New Testament that refers to scheming, and deceiving: *craftiness, cunning, and deception* (Eph 4:14, in the phrase ...*by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming*, *evn panourgi, a| pro. j th. n meqodei, an th/ j pla, nhj*). The plural *stratagems, cunning attacks, tricks* are used in Ephesians 6:11, to refer to the activities of the Devil against which the Christian must withstand. The word may mean "wandering stars" (Jude 13), "wanderer", "causing to be mistaken, leading astray, deceitful" (1Ti 4:1). The substantive use gives it the meaning of *deceiver, impostor* as in Matthew 27:63. It could be (1) active: *lead astray, cause to wander*; figuratively, *mislead, deceive, cause to be mistaken* (Mt 24:5); (2) passive: (a) literal, *go astray* (Mt 18:12), *wander about* (Heb 11:38); (b) figurative, as blameworthy and mistaken evaluation: *be deceived* or *led astray, be mistaken, be deluded* (1Co 6:9; Gal 6:7); as abandoning what is true and committing oneself to error (in heart) (Heb 3:10; Jas 5:19) (Friberg, BibleWorks 5). So *pla, nh, hj, h`* (*planē*) comes to mean, "going astray, wandering." The New Testament uses it figuratively in the sense of (1) *straying from the truth which is due to error, delusion, deception* (Mt 27:64; 1Jn 4:6). Here, it is the opposite of *avlh, qeia* (*alētheia*, truth); and (2) completely wrong behavior, perversion (Ro 1:27).

Agw/na hvgw,nismai (*Agōna hēgōnismai*). In 2 Timothy 4:7, the Apostle Paul remarked, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” The expression rendered “I have fought the good fight,” literally means (*athletic*) *contest*. Metaphorically, it is a *race* (i.e., *course*) of *life* (Heb 12:1) similar to what Paul in 2 Timothy 3:10 calls his “way of life” (i.e., manner, conduct, behavior, avgwgh,, h/j, h` (*agōgē*). A second usage refers to an exertion and self-denial in the face of opposition: *conflict*, *struggle*, *fight*. Figuratively, as in 1 Thessalonians 2:2, it speaks of intense nonphysical *struggle*, *conflict*. The apostle was obviously not referring to a physical battle in which he took arms. But his exertion of physical and spiritual strength and vitality in discharging his ministry duties included the much struggle or contest he faced (*cf.* v. 6). Agwni, zomai (*agōnizomai*) in 2 Timothy 4:7 was used literally of public games for which prizes were contested and thus, to *engage in a contest*, *contend for a prize* (1Co 9:25). Its figurative use referred to any heroic effort. For instance, the Apostle Paul labors, “struggling with all his energy,” (i.e., *striving earnestly*, *making every effort*, *trying very hard* (Col 1:29). However, the word is also used of fighting with weapons, and literally means to *fight*, *struggle* (Jn 18:36). When used figuratively in this sense, it speaks of great nonphysical effort and struggle, to *strive earnestly*, *do one’s very best* as Epaphras “wrestled in prayer” (Col 4:12).

Orgh,, h/j, h` (*orgē*) is closely related to, and often provides the fuel for violence. It is a “vigorous upsurge of one’s nature against someone or something” and can so be described as *wrath*, and *indignation*. Anger and wrath describe a human emotion (Jas 1:20). Wrath and indignation refer to God’s reaction against evil, whereby He brings judgment and punishment both historically and will do so in the future (Mt 3:7; Ro 9:22). The expression (*the*) *day of wrath* (Ro 2:5; RV 6:17) (h`)

h`me,ra (th/j) ovrgh/j (*hēmera tēs orgēs*) speaks of a future climax of judgment in which God will pour out His stored-up anger. The noun ovrgh/ (*orgē*) occurs 36 times in the New Testament but 262 times in the Bible. Also associated with this noun is the verbal form ovrgi,zw (*orgizō*, 1st aorist passive, wvrgi,sqhn) that is only passive in the New Testament, and used only of human and satanic anger with the meaning to “be or become angry, be or become furious, be or become enraged” (Friberg, BibleWorks 5). The idea here is the expressing of strong displeasure and hostility, and may range from insignificant human anger to God’s righteous anger against sinful disobedience. Orgi,loj, h, on (*orgilos*) describes the tendency to be prone to anger, being quick-tempered, and wrathful (Ti 1:7).

~q;n” (*nāqam*, vengeance) is another word or concept that is closely linked to violence. Unger defines ~q;n” as “punishment inflicted in return for an injury or offense suffered; retribution; often passionate or unrestrained revenge (Unger 1341)” He adds further that ~q;n” is to “grudge” and conveys the idea of an injured person punishing the wrongdoer in a bad sense. As a verb, ~q;n” thus comes to mean avenge, take vengeance. The subject may be God who avenges the blood of His servants against those who murdered them (~AQyI wyd’b’[] ~D;, Dt 32:43). It is also used of people, as of Israel and its leaders taking vengeance on their enemies (Nu 31:2; Jos 10:13); or of Edom against Judah (Eze 25:12). Judicially, the word refers to administering justice against a murderer (Ex 21:20). Because vengeance can be vindictive, God forbade His people to entertain revengeful feelings against their neighbors (Lev 19:18). However, He required vengeance to be taken for blood (Ge 4:15). But that was not done arbitrarily by just anyone; there were certain procedures.

The masculine noun form of ~q;n” is ~q’n” and means vengeance. God is the ultimate person to take vengeance, although individuals like Samson and others took vengeance against their enemies. The feminine noun is hm’q’n>.

Evkdike, w (*ekdikeō*) is the New Testament root of the word vengeance. It means 1) to help someone secure justice, and thus, to *avenge, get justice for* (Lk 18:3); and 2) to bring someone to judgment for something, and therefore, to *punish* (2Co 10:6) or *take revenge* (Rev 6:10). But the noun evkdi, khsij, ewj, h` (*ekdikēsis*) refers to 1) an act of retributive justice, that is, *vengeance, punishment, revenge* (Lk 21:22); and 2) evkdi, khsin poiei/n (*ekdikēsin poiein*) is to *give justice, see to it that justice is done* (Lk 18:7). This is “retributive justice,” and a vindication (Mounce 169-170). Ekdi, khsij (*ekdikēsis*) occurs nine times in the New Testament (Lk 18:7f; 21:22; Ac 7:24; Ro 12:19; 2Co 7:11; 2Thes 1:8; Heb 10:30 and 1Pe 2:14); the verb evkdike, w (*ekdikeō*) six times (Lk 18:3, 5; Ro 12:19; 2Co 10:6; Rev 6:10; 19:12); and the agent (subject) who exacts vengeance, e; kdikoj, on, (*ekdikos*) twice (Ro 13:4; 1Thes 4:6). Ekdikoj (*ekdikos*) is “deciding by legal process: *avenging, maintaining or defending the right*; and so used substantively, the one who carries out a judicial sentence becomes the *avenger, punisher* (Ro 13:4) and that one “inflicts punishment” (Mounce 170).

qa, nattoj, o`, (qnh, skw, *thanatos, thanēstō death*). Another very significant concept tied to violence is that of death itself. Were violence to dispossess its characteristic of causing death, this discussion would probably not be as urgent. Classical Greek also used the word in various contexts. For instance, one could threaten death; be tried for one’s life; a sentence of death could be passed on a person and death was a penalty. Qa, nattoj is also the twin-brother of Sleep. Nekro, j (*nekros*), means *dead*, and refers to those who have experienced *death*.

tWm (*mūt*) is the Hebrew verb to “die,” and the masculine noun tw<mn̄’ (*mawet*), occurs 161 times in the Old Testament as *death*. *Alimut*, the Hebrew word for violence shares a common root with *elem*, “muteness” (Weissman 135). Deborah Weissman noted that violence may result because people have no other outlets for their frustrations (135). The verb ~l;a’ (*‘ālam*) means to *be dumb*, that is, silent (Psalm 39:3), as well as, unable to speak (Eze 3:26). It also means to *be made dumb*. The noun ~l,añe (*‘ēlam*) means silence (Psalm 56:1), and the adjective ~Leai (*‘illam*) is “dumb, unable to speak” (Ex 4:11) and is used figuratively of idols.

[r; (also [v’r’ *ra’*, *rāshā’*), evil, is generally connected with the concept of violence, in a moral sense. As an adjective, it occurs 351 times in the NIV, and generally means *bad, disagreeable, inferior in quality*. By extension, [r; means “evil, wicked in ethical quality; what is disagreeable to God is ethically evil; God’s actions of judgment are disagreeable to the wicked (Eze 14:21), but are not ethically evil” (NIVEC 1490). The word is also translated as “wrong, harm, trouble, disaster, wild, grievous, heavy, malice, terrible, ugly, bitter, destroying, crimes, unjust, violence, misfortune, immoral, horrible, distressing, disaster, among others. The masculine noun [r; “evil,” can also mean distress, misery, injury, and calamity. The feminine h[‘r’, *rā’(āh)* occurs 316 times. Its meanings are similar to those of the adjective, but have nuances as discomfort, awful crime, sin, something desperate, great wickedness, and wrongs, among others. The verb [r; means to be, become evil. Although some argue that violence is not itself evil, the extent to which most expressions of violence become evil makes it allied to this study. Another masculine noun, [;ro, (*ro^a*) occurs 19 times with meanings of bad, disagreeable, inferior in quality, and by extension, evil, wicked, sad, sinful and ugly. h[‘r’ also appears with identical spelling and

vocalization for the words for “pasturing, shepherding” and “to be a companion, a friend,” and should not be confused with “evil.”

Πονηρία, α, αἴ, η` (*ponēria*), is a noun that occurs only seven times in the Greek New Testament, and is translated “evil, wickedness, malice, wicked ways,” and used in only a moral and ethical sense of intentionally practiced ill will. That is why it is translated *evil, wickedness, and malice* (Lk 11:39). In the plural, it expresses various evil-mindedness: *wicked ways, evil doings, and malicious deeds* (Ac 3:26) and is always opposed to God and His goodness (NIVEC 1585). Πονηρός, ὁ, ο, ο, ν (*ponēros*, comparative *ponhro,teroj, a, on ponēroteros*) can be an adjective and a noun. Adjectivally, it refers first, to what is physically disadvantageous, that is, *bad, harmful, evil, painful* (Eph 5:16; Rev 16:2). Second, to persons and objects, as having little worth to anyone, thus, *useless, unprofitable, unserviceable* (Mt 7:18; 18:32; perhaps Mt 6:23 and Lu 11:34). Third, it refers, in a moral sense, to persons and things characterized by ill will, that is, *evil, wicked, malicious* (Mt 12:35; probably Mt 6:23 and Lu 11:34). The substantival use refers to (a) persons as *evildoer, wicked person, bad person* (Mt 13:49); (b) as a description of the Devil ο` πονηρο,ς (*ho ponēros*), literally, *the evil or wicked one* (Mt 13:19). Maybe the phrase τῶν πονηρῶν (*tou ponērou* in Mt 5:37; 6:13) belongs here or it may be neuter. Finally, it is neuter (τῶν) πονηρῶν, with the general meaning of *evil* (Mt 5:11).

~Alv' (*šālom*) is the basic Old Testament word for peace and occurs 237 times in the Old Testament. The verb ~lev' (*šālēm*), used 103 times means to be complete or sound. The NIV uses the word *peace* 250 times in its various forms (NIVEC 864-65). When Bible writers repeat a word or concept so many times, it is on

purpose. The word appears in almost every Bible book. It occurs at least once in each New Testament book. In the Old Testament, 13 books do not use it. Notably among them is Exodus, whose case is probably obvious. Exodus is about Israel living in the absence of peace, even though they were not at war with Egypt. The others are Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Song of Songs, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. The concept of peace is almost evenly distributed throughout the Bible. If 53 out of 66 books use the word “peace,” the 53:66 ratio makes peace significant for any discussion of violence. The verb *~lev*’ (*šālēm*) has basic meanings in several semantic languages: *complete, requite, be safe, secure, free from fault, resign to, submit oneself*, especially to God, *be complete, unharmed, reward, repay, peace, security, welfare, greet, do homage*. The basic Hebrew meanings are: 1. *be complete, finished, ended*, used of the temple (1Ki 7:51); city walls; 2. (Neh 6:15); of time (Isa 60:20); 3. *be sound, uninjured*, (Job 9:4). It can also mean to *complete, finish*, (temple 1Ki 9:25); *make safe* (Job 8:6); *make whole or good, restore* something that was lost (Joel 2:25), or stolen (Exodus 21:37); pay a debt (2Ki 4:7; Ps 37:21; Pr 22:27; Job 41:3); *make compensation*, for an injury (Lev 24:18; 24:21); for trespass in sacred things; 4. *make good*, i.e. *pay*, vows, (Deut 23:22; 2Sa 15:7); 5. *requite, recompense, reward, good* (1Sa 24:20; Ruth 2:12); evil (Isa 65:6; Je 51:56); *reward according to one’s works* (2Sa 3:39; Ps 31:24).

From this verb comes the noun *šālom*, which generally means *completeness, soundness, welfare, and peace* (Isaiah 54:13) and used in these ways: 1. *completeness* in number (Jer 13:19, Judah is *wholly carried captive*); 2. *safety, soundness*, in body (Ps 38:4; Isa 38:17; Job 5:24 *is safe, secure*); 3. *welfare, health, prosperity*. One may inquire about the welfare, health or prosperity of another (Ge 43:27; Ex 18:7; Jdg 18:15). In this usage, *shalom* may mean to *be well with* (Ge 29:6); or one’s welfare in

time of prosperity (Job 15:21); 4. *peace, quiet, tranquility, contentment* (Isa 32:17); Ps 4:9 (to sleep); depart life *in tranquility* (Ge 15:15; 1Ki 2:6); Ps 69:23 *security*, (let it) *become a trap*; 5. *peace, friendship*, that is, human relations; *peace* with God, especially, in a covenant relation (Is 54:10). God speaks of His *covenant of peace*; 6. *peace* from war, that is, the absence of war: *make peace* (with) (Jos 9:15; Job 25:2); 1Ki 2:5, *in time of peace*. In Micah 5:4-5, God promises a reign of peace (Friberg, BibleWorks 5). *Shalom* as an adjective refers to those at peace with God (Ps 55:21). David T. Adamo divides peace into “spiritual, social, physical, economical and eschatological dimensions” (125).

Εἰρήνη (*eirēnē*). Εἰρήνη, ἡ, ἵ, ἡ is the basic Greek word for peace and is used in six ways, and the NIV uses it 92 times. The first is the literal meaning as a state of *peace* (Lk 14:32), opposite *πόλεμος* (*armed conflict, war*). Figuratively, it is an agreement between persons (Jas 3:18), and stands in contrast to *διαμερισμός* (*division, dissension*). Second, it is a greeting or farewell that corresponds to the Hebrew word *shalom: health, welfare, peace* (to you) (1Ti 1:2). Third, it is a religious disposition characterized by inner rest and harmony: *peace, freedom from anxiety* (Ro 15:13). Fourth, it is a state of reconciliation with God (Ga 5:22). Finally, it is an end-time condition, as the salvation of mankind brought about through Christ’s reign (Lk 2:14; Ac 10:36). A sixth meaning is figurative and speaks of an agreement between persons (Jas 3:18), in contrast to *διαμερισμός*, (*διαμερισμός, ἡ, ἵ, ἡ, division, dissension*).

The Greek New Testament records “100 explicit references” to peace (Desjardins 18).¹⁷ Beginning with Matthew 5:9, the Bible teaches that peacemakers are blessed. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God*. The adjective εἰρηνικός, ὁ, ἡ, ἵ, ἡ (*eirēnikos*) means peaceful, peaceable, free from

worry. It also means peace-loving, with a focus of being free from worry or emotional frustration. The verb to make peace, or to cause reconciliation between two parties is εἰρηνοποιεῖω (*eirēnopoieō*), and comes from the two Greek words *eirēnē*, peace, and *poieō*, I make, do or perform. This form occurs once, with reference to Christ making the believer's peace with God. In Colossians 1:20, the form *eirēnopoīēsa*, is used. Εἰρηνοποιός (*eirēnopoios*) is the *peacemaker* (adj.) and refers to establishing a friendly relationship between persons, that is, *peace-making*. But this can be used substantively as in Matthew 5:9, to speak of the person who makes peace, a *peacemaker*. The plural, *peacemakers*, of Matthew 5:9 is (οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, *oi eirēnopoioi*). The intransitive use of the word can mean to *keep peace, live at peace* with someone, as in Romans 12:18.

Romans 2:10 speaks of peace together with honor, in terms of rewards for doing good. Romans 3:17, however, speaks of the wicked, the sinner, as not knowing the way of peace. That has violence in mind. In Romans 12:18, the Bible teaches that Christians should live at peace with everyone, *if possible, as far as it depends on them*. Peace comes from God and is a gift from Him to believers. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 urges believers to live in peace with each other, that is, harmony or cordiality.

Elsewhere, 2 Timothy 2:22 instructs believers to *pursue* righteousness, faith, love and peace. Hebrews 12:14 stresses that Christians should *make every effort to live in peace with all* people. Peacemakers work hard to sow in peace and in order to reap a harvest of righteousness (Jas 3:18). 1 Peter 3:8-11 encourages the believer to not only live in peace and harmony with others, but seek peace and pursue it (3:11). It is impossible then, to think that Christians do not have an active agenda to pursue peace that is biblical. This is the biblical basis for peace studies and is cardinal to the discussion of violence and proactive responses.

1.10 SUMMARY

Violence is plaguing the Church seriously and requires carefully thought through responses. How should Christians particularly, in Africa, respond to violence in ways that are biblical and contextual? The next chapter of this work surveyed the growing body of literature on violence.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 VIOLENCE IN EARLY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

This chapter surveyed literature on violence against Christianity from the first century A.D. to date, noting its root causes, sources and implications. It concentrated on the responses of Christianity to violence. Such survey was necessary to understand the current state of the discussion. Violence is not new in Christian experience.

2.2 VIOLENCE IN THE APOSTOLIC AND EARLY CHURCH PERIOD

2.2.1 Sources

1 Clement; Barnabas; Ignatius (Letters to Ephesians, Magnesians, Romans, Polycarp); Polycarp; Josephus. The Complete Works of Josephus; Philip Schaff. History of the Christian Church 3 vols. in one, vols. 1 & 2 (n.d.); Mathetes; The Martyrdom of Ignatius; The Five Books Against Marcion; The Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs; Justin Martyr. Apology; Merrill C. Tenney & Walter M. Dunnitt. New Testament Survey (1953, 9161, 1985); Louis Berkhof. The History of Christian Doctrines (1969, 1975, 1978, 1985); Jonathan Hildebrandt. History of the Church in Africa (1981, 1987, 1990); Peter Falk. The Growth of the Church in Africa (1977); Peder Borgen. Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Scott Cunningham. Through Many Tribulations (1997).¹

2.2.2 Insignificant Beginnings and Persecution

Early Christian sources reveal Christianity's obscured and insignificant beginnings in the Roman Empire. It rose from the capital of Judaism, marched heroically "to the capital of heathenism," and grew phenomenally from a small number of adherents in the first century to between ten to twelve million by the fourth century, "about one-tenth of the total population of the Roman empire" (Schaff 1: 93,

94). But widespread persecution also accompanied this growth (Hildebrandt 9) because the Jews considered it “the sect of the Nazarenes” (Tenney 81) and the Roman state held it a *religio licita* (Berkhof 43). And although the Christians had done nothing to deserve this suffering, they nevertheless distinguished themselves not

by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe... They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by the lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all... They are evil spoken of and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred (Mathetes V).

They saw themselves in the world as what “the soul is in the body” and would not “resort to carnal weapons or stir up rebellion and revolution” when persecuted and martyred (Mathetes VI). Martyrdom was “a far nobler heroism than resistance with fire and sword” (Schaff 1: 234) and Polycarp exemplified this self-understanding at his martyrdom: “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?” (Encyclical (S) IX). Ignatius (also called *Theophorus*, “*He who has Christ within his breast*,” in The Martyrdom of Ignatius (A.D. 30-107) admonished believers to be different by being:

meek in response to their wrath, humble in opposition to their boasting: to their blasphemies return your prayers; in contrast to their error, be ye steadfast in the faith; and for their cruelty, manifest your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brethren in all true kindness; and let us seek to be followers of the Lord (Ignatius Eph X)

Ignatius described himself as “the wheat of God” to “be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts,” that he “may be found the pure bread of Christ” and thereby “truly be a disciple of Christ” (*Ignatius Rom. IV*). In Ignatius Poly., and encouraged believers to “Bear the infirmities of all, as being a perfect athlete [in the Christian life]” because “where the labour is great, the gain is all the more” (I, shorter ver.). Believers were to “Stand firm, as does an anvil which is beaten” and like “a noble

athlete to be wounded, and yet to conquer” (III). So the Church grew stronger and spread wider. At first insignificant and contemptible to many, Christianity confounded the wisdom of Greece and the power of Rome, and planted “the standard of the cross in the great cities of Asia, Africa, and Europe,” proving “itself the hope of the world” (Schaff 1: 94). Their persecution in the first three centuries was a “bloody baptism of the church” that “resulted in the birth of a Christian world” (Schaff 2: 17).

2.2.3 Rise of the Apologists and a Shift in Christian Response

Second century Christians, however, shifted position in responding to violence. While still submitting to persecution and martyrdom, they “called upon the emperors to consider the validity of their faith and provide tolerance for it” (Falk 27). Justin Martyr challenged Emperor Titus Aelius Adrianus Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar boldly, to give the Christian cause a fair hearing and dispense justice.

Reason directs those who are truly pious and philosophical to honour and love only what is true, declining to follow traditional opinions, if these be worthless. For not only does sound reason direct us to refuse the guidance of those who did or taught anything wrong, but it is incumbent on the lover of truth, by all means, and if death be threatened, even before his own life, to choose to do and say what is right. Do you, then, since ye are called pious and philosophers, guardians of justice and lovers of learning, give good heed, and hearken to my address (First Apology II).

He argued against the injustice of false accusation and punishment for “the mere application of a name,” and hating “what is *excellent*” by hating Christians who were the “most excellent people” (First Apology IV). Justin’s Second Apology addressed to the Roman Senate, explained the Christian self-understanding, relationship to God and the rest of creation, the role of *justice* in society, and the responsibility of the Emperor to ensure that those who are wronged get justice.

Tertullian’s legal mind pressed for fair and impartial opportunities for Christians to defend themselves and the truth of their religion. He challenged the government’s hatred against the name ‘Christian’ as “unjust” unless of course, it was

deserved; and questioned why Christians were treated differently from other criminals, if indeed they were criminals according to the accusations against them.

If, again, it is certain that we are the most wicked of men, why do you treat us so differently from our fellows, that is, from other criminals, it being only fair that the same crime should get the same treatment? When the charges made against us are made against others, they are permitted to make use both of their own lips and of hired pleaders to show their innocence. They have full opportunity of answer and debate; in fact, it is against the law to condemn anybody undefended and unheard. Christians alone are forbidden to say anything in exculpation of themselves, in defense of the truth, to help the judge to a righteous decision (Holy Martyrs II).

2.2.4 The Nature of Internal Persecution

Meanwhile, the Nazarenes, Ebionites, and Elkesaites, all showing strong tendencies toward Judaism, and Gentile Christian Gnosticism persecuted the Church.

Christianity had to suffer a great deal from the written attacks of some of the keenest minds of the age, such as Lucian, Porphyry, and Celsus, men of a philosophical bent of mind, who hurled their invectives against the Christian religion...But however great these dangers from without were, there were even greater dangers which threatened the Church from within. These consisted in different types of perversions of the Gospel (Berkhof 43).

Marcion of Pontus saw discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, and distinguished between their separate Gods. The Old Testament Creator God was imperfect and ruled with “rigour and justice,” was “full of wrath,” and knew “nothing of grace,” but the New Testament God was “good and merciful,” although “unknown until the fifteenth year of Tiberius, when He revealed Himself in Christ, who is often spoken of as the good God himself” (Berkhof 53). The literature of the period showed that Christianity responded with nonviolence, submission to persecution and martyrdom, defending the faith, teaching the truth of Christianity and engaging in seeking justice. Berkhof described these as a threefold task: “defensive, offensive and constructive” (56). Tertullian probably expressed their philosophy of persecution: “The blood of the Christians is the seed of the Church” (qtd. in Schaff 2: 18).

2.3 VIOLENCE IN LATER CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

2.3.1 Sources

Plato. Republic; Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologica; Irenaeus. Against Heresies; Luther. Table Talks; Roland Bainton. Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (1950); Arthur F. Holmes. War and Christian Ethics (1975); Philip Schaff. History of the Christian Church vol. 5 (n. d.); Peter Falk. The Growth of the Church in Africa (1977); W. Ward Gasque, “The Challenge to Faith.” The History of Christianity A Lion Handbook. Ed. Tim Dowley rev. ed. (1977, 1990); Jonathan Hildebrandt. History of the Church in Africa (1981, 1987, 1990); Joseph H. Lynch. The Medieval Church: A Brief History (1992).

Later Christian experience shifted markedly away from its predominantly nonviolent, justice seeking predecessors to fashion a conquest mentality that introduced the Crusades as “just” or “holy” wars that were really more the:

muscular Christianity of the new nations of the West which were just emerging from barbarism and heathenism. They made religion subservient to war and war subservient to religion. They were a succession of tournaments between two continents and two religions, struggling for supremacy — Europe and Asia, Christianity and Mohammedanism (Schaff 5: 96).

The Crusaders wanted to retake the Holy Land from Islam that had previously taken Jerusalem, threatened Rome and fiercely persecuted Christian residents and pilgrims in Palestine, imprisoned many, enslaved others and sent some home to Europe with a tale of woe that sparked retaliation in many hearts. The First Crusade took Jerusalem on July 15, 1099, with much piety and “heartless cruelty to infidels, Jews, and heretics” (Schaff 5: 105). The Second Crusade failed to achieve its goals of taking Damascus, although Edessa fell to them in December 1144. So did the Third, Fourth and Fifth Crusade and Children’s Crusades, the “most tragic of the Crusader tragedies” because it was “a slaughter of the innocents on a large scale” (Schaff 5:

117). The Crusades failed to win the Holy Land, permanently keep Islam in check and heal the East-West schism. This failure of the Crusades partly explains the loss of North Africa, a one time center of Christianity. “God-fearing people of Alexandria” were the first African Christians (Falk 28). Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus’ cross and his sons Alexander and Rufus were known to have received Mark’s Gospel (Mk 15:21; Ro 16:13). Justin Martyr from Asia Minor lived in Alexandria arguing for the “reasonableness of the Christian faith according to philosophic thought” before his martyrdom in Rome in 166 (Falk 27). Alexandria had the Catechetical School, the “first school in the world” (Hildebrandt 9). Tertullian, Origen, Dionysius, Athanasius, Clement, Cyprian, Arius, Augustine, Frumentius, and others worked out their Christianity in North Africa. Although heretical teachings threatened the survival of the African Church seriously, the mixing of politics and religion that happened when the state befriended Christianity caused more internal struggles between Church leaders. Arianism and the Donatists heresy weakened the Church more internally.

Before Augustine died, the Vandals took Rome in 410, captured Hippo in 430 and occupied North Africa until the century ended. The Christian responses to war and violence are better understood in this context. “AD 500-700 was a time of persecution for the Coptic Church in Egypt” (Hildebrandt 17). The Arabs invaded Africa the first time in 639 and by 710 they had completed their conquest and “All the land from Egypt to Morocco and the Atlantic Ocean was under their control” (Hildebrandt 27-28). Hildebrandt noted that although the Muslims first tolerated the Christians after they conquered Egypt, they later pressured them (28). The once healthy center of Christianity finally crumbled from within and the Islamic conquest sealed its dome. By this time, Christianity had well developed at least two distinct positions on violence: *nonviolence* and *militarism*. Schaff put it more succinctly:

False religions are not to be converted by violence, they can only be converted by the slow but sure process of moral persuasion. Hatred kindled hatred, and those who take the sword shall perish by the sword. St. Bernard learned from the failure of the Second Crusade that the struggle is a better one which is waged against the sinful lusts of the heart than was the struggle to conquer Jerusalem (5: 98).

2.3.2 Violence and the Just War Theory²

Augustine, the architect of the doctrine, justified war as necessary for peace, provided it met his three critical factors: the act, agent and authority for the action and contended that an act has merit or demerit depending on the authority behind it. The criteria of just cause (*jus ad bellum*) and just means (*jus in bello*) have produced a representative list of rules to govern a just war: *just intent, last resort, lawful declaration, immunity of non-combatants, limited objectives, and limited means* (Holmes 4-5; 425-435).³ Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas justified war for God's honor. For Aquinas, the authority of the sovereign who waged the war; a just cause and right intentions made a war "just" (Summa Theologica 2-2, Q. 40). But he exempted clerics and bishops from fighting. Much later, Martin Luther's two kingdoms principle defended the right to self-defense against a sovereign who became a tyrant to avoid self-destruction. Luther understood the Christian as a citizen of two kingdoms, and as a spiritual and secular person.

...a Christian is composed of two kinds of persons, namely, a believing or a spiritual person, and a civil or temporal person. The believing or spiritual person ought to endure and suffer all things, it neither eats, nor drinks, nor engenders children, nor has share or part in temporal doings and matters. But the temporal and civil person is subject to the temporal rights and laws, and tied to obedience; it must maintain and defend itself, and what belongs to it, as the laws command. For example, if, in my presence, some wretch should attempt to do violence to my wife or my daughter, then I should lay aside my spiritual person, and recur to the temporal; I should slay him on the spot, or call for help. For, in the absence of the magistrates, and when they cannot be had, the law of the nation is in force, and permits us to call upon our neighbor for help; Christ and the Gospel do not abolish temporal rights and ordinances, but confirm them ("Of Constrained Defence," Table Talk DCCLXXXIV).

2.3.3 Nonviolence

Athenagoras, Tertullian, and Origen defended nonviolence. Tertullian stressed prayers for the state and the emperor as the biblical Christian duty and response because when Jesus disarmed Peter, He “unbelted every soldier” (Holmes 44). He saw Christ “among the barbarians” and argued that to fight was to in effect fight against the very Christ Christians hoped to present (Holmes 47). Origen held to the image of God in humanity, *imago-dei* as reason for shunning violence. He maintained that Christ did not teach violence to His followers and their existence did not originate in rebellion, therefore, violence was not a Christian trait (qtd. in Holmes 48). Besides, he discouraged Christian participation in government because the Church was “another national organization, founded by the Word of God,” for saving people for eternity (Holmes 50). Lactantius, the “Christian Cicero,” made kindness or mercy the “greatest bond of human society” (qtd. in Holmes 51). The image of God provided the bond that made hatred and enmity evil. He argued that God gave love to humanity as a means to preserve the specie. Because kindness bears love, and love for the other will not permit one to offer harm to another, violence was not Christian. So also did Ambrose of Milan (qtd. in Holmes 55ff.).

2.4 VIOLENCE IN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

2.4.1 Sources

Kwesi A. Dickson and Paul Ellingworth. Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs (1969); Festus Iyayi. Violence (1979); Emefie Ikenga Metuh. God and Man in African Religion (1981); Donald R. Wright. African Americans in the Colonial Era: From African Origins Through the American Revolution (1990); Charles Partee. The Story of Don McClure: Adventure in Africa (1990); CAPRO OFFICE Research Office The Cross and the Gods (1992); CAPRO OFFICE Research Office. Conquered

by the Sword (1993); George Kinoti. Hope for Africa (1994, 1997); CAPRO OFFICE Research Office. Kingdoms at War (1995); Tokunboh Adeyemo. Is Africa Cursed? (1997); Yusufu Turaki. Christianity and African Gods (1999); Yusufu Turaki. The Unique Christ for Salvation: The Challenge of the Non-Christian Religions and Cultures (2001); Olusegun Obasanjo. This Animal Called Man (n.d.); B. J. van der Walt. Understanding and Rebuilding Africa (2003); Francois Vrëy. Africa Journal on Conflict Resolution 5:2 (2005); Alastair Roderick. Justice Africa 2005; Samuel Waje Kunhiyop. African Christian Ethics (n.d. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop); Wale Banks and Wale Olaniyan. Nigerian Indigenous Missions: Pioneers Behind the Scene (2005).

2.4.2 Violence and African Worldview

How do Africans understand and respond to violence from their worldviews and experiences? Donald R. Wright, African Americans in the Colonial Era, observed that institutional slavery in pre-colonial Africa promoted violence.

African societies obtained slaves by more or less violent means. Warfare—including raids, banditry, and kidnapping—was the most common method. Even wars not fought to gain slaves often had that effect, for prisoners of war were usually enslaved and sold or put to work to help defray the costs of the wars. If ransom was impossible, there were other considerations. Young boys could train as future soldiers; girls and women could become concubines; slaves of either sex could be given as gifts to religious persons or shrines. (15)

Colonial days in Nigeria sometimes witnessed clashes between hostile natives and European merchants that left Western missionaries as the victims of vengeance (Banks and Olaniyan 7). Although not discussing violence in Africa, Tokunboh Adeyemo saw Africa's problem as "primarily moral and spiritual in nature" (35).

One of seven characteristics about humanity in Africa is their moral and spiritual obligation to live in harmony with the physical and spiritual world (Turaki, Unique Christ 67). That obligation makes violence evil and not welcome in African traditional life. But Turaki did not show how African worldviews respond to this

unwelcome violence. His Christianity and African Gods analyzed African worldviews, beliefs and practices in relation to Christianity from theological, ethical and philosophical perspectives. Humanity in Africa is preoccupied with exercising “cosmic, mystical and spiritual control.” (90). But Turaki did not discuss violence in this system of control apart from witchcraft, and how to respond to it.

Traditional religions and the *islamization* of conquered people groups also promoted violence among Africans. Conquered by the Sword reported the impact of Islam since the 11th century in Borno and Yobe States (18-19).⁴ The Cross and the Gods discussed the Chamba of Taraba and Adama States in Nigeria who became Muslims by force during the 19th century Islamic jihad in Northern Nigeria. Conversion to Christianity there attracts severe persecution, although Islam reportedly entices Pastors with gifts of “money, position and women” (113). This may be a possible factor in violence in Nigeria. Also, the Glavda of Borno reportedly require their teenage male initiates to wear warrior-like costumes, with “spears and arrows in their hands” at the end of their initiation rites (59). Kingdoms at War reported violence among Baruba cultists in Niger and Kebbi States who reportedly manipulate “shinagura,” a “gun-like object” secretly to kill a suspected thief by lightening (34). Their worship portrays violence. A demon-possessed person inside the shrine reportedly kills a fowl and drinks the blood and the Bun-Koho cultists are also believed to drink the blood of children (33).

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop’s African Christian Ethics dealt with “Ethnic and Religious Conflicts” in its fifth chapter. Kunhiyop dismissed as useless and irrelevant, Western conceptual categories like nonresistance, pacifism, just war theories, Crusades and preventative wars to resolve violence in Africa because of the new and different ethical issues violence raises—civil, ethnic and religious wars and issues of

justice, conflict management in the Church and oppression of ethnic groups by Government, that the Western categories do not resolve (141). From Helder Camara's Spiral of Violence, Walter Wink's Jesus and Nonviolence, and Ronald Sider's Nonviolence: The Invincible Weapon, respectively, he observed that, "violence attracts violence" (150); "violence mirrors violence" (151); and "violence produces more casualties and bloodshed than nonviolent approaches" (152).⁵ After a brief treatment of few New Testament passages (Mt 5:38-41; 26:52; Lk 6:29-31; 22:36-38 and Jn 18:36) to establish a basis for biblical and theological teaching on violence, Kunhiyop rejected violence in favor of nonviolence based on the love for enemy principle for conflict resolution (166-168). However, he defended self-defense in certain instances, arguing that Jesus disallowed His disciples to use violence at His arrest scene and not in all situations, and listed five components for developing a solution to violence.⁶ Kunhiyop strengthened the arguments for nonviolence, but his defense of self-defense makes him a supporter of limited violence.

Swaillem Sidhom's "The Theological Estimate of Man," Biblical Revelation and African Belief, hinged humanity on the tribe concept—a complex unity that incorporates everything that is humanity. What hurts one's tribe hurts every member of the tribe and sometimes *vice-versa*. People are physical and spiritual creatures with bodies that function only as containers whose significance is in their contents. Humanity's identity is only complete *in relationship*. This "existence-in-relation" concept binds humanity to "nature, God, the deities, ancestors, the tribe, the clan, the extended family," and self (Sidhom 102). Such "relatedness" explains violence and nonviolence. Neighborliness is more important than religious persuasions (Sidhom 107, 110). (Natural) death is not an enemy but only a "disrupter of relationships;" yet

to cause others to die through violence is not acceptable (Sidhom 112). But Sidhom does not tell how this relational focus explains or deals with violence.

Emefie Ikenga Metuh's God and Man in African Religion observed that a human being is a unit that contains many principles that do not contradict each other. The real person is invisible and is represented by his or her shadow (113). The Igbos identify four principles that constitute a person. The *Obi* is the heart or breath, the life force that links the person to the cosmic force. *Mmuo* (sometimes called *Onyinyo*) is the spirit or shadow—the real self that God created. *Chi*, the destiny-spirit, is a spark of the Creator in the person. Each person has a personal *chi*. *Eke* is the personality or ancestral guidance that links the person to their clan life-force (115). Again, though Metuh's presentation of humanity in African worldview is helpful, he does not discuss the African concept of violence or how it relates to life in Africa.

Benjamin C. Ray's African Religions portrayed the person as a “constituent of a particular community,” although it affirmed individualism (132). “Every person is a nexus of interacting elements of the self and the world which shape and are shaped by his behavior” (132). A person is a “microcosm,” “the world in miniature,” and people have predetermined destinies. (133). A destructive prenatal destiny notion explains why people fail in their social roles, but it does not determine the evil in people. Evil is inherent in human ambitions and jealousies, such that “demonic humanity,” that is, witches and sorcerers are the source of evil (139, 150). This perspective places evil and violence beyond a person as if something to which one cannot respond.

Olusegun Obasanjo's This Animal Called Man described humanity a paradox:

a contradiction, a complex being, and a unique animal. On the one side of him are hatred, depravity, wickedness, transgression and sin; on the other side are kindness, compassion, love and humanness. Man is a helpless sinner. On the one hand, he is goaded by the devil and his own sinful nature, whereas he still has the capacities that will relate him to God...Man has two faces. One side of man shows his ingenuity, his

humanness, his creative capacity, and his capacity to be kind, compassionate, loving and to acknowledge and honour the truth. This is the divine aspect of man. The other face shows him using his ability, capability, and ingenuity maliciously, selfishly, devilishly and oppressively. This is the satanic aspect of man. With man capable of the divine and the satanic at the same time, he therefore, is not only a bundle of contradictions but always engaged in civil war within himself...

Man is dignified and degraded, honoured and debased, honouring and despising, elevated and downgraded. Man is fallen, lost and alienated from God his Creator (viii).

Humanity is wicked and a disappointment to God (91). This duality admits violence but does not respond to it either from African worldviews or Christianity.

Lenard Nyirongo's The Gods of Africa stressed tribal affinity, identity in community, age, seniority of birth, roles, gender, ritual status and material possessions as important in understanding a person. However, Lenard did not explain how tribal affinity and identity in community relate to, explain or respond to violence.

B. J. van der Walt's The Liberating Message described the African view of humanity as essentially "communalist," to stress the anthropocentric or "human community" emphasis of human beings as the most important creatures. Human existence relates critically with the larger community and defines it: "We are, therefore I am," and not the "I am, therefore we are" of the West (181). The positives of communalism include the alienation of individualism, communal decision-making about important issues, loving and caring for people because they are people and not because they are successful and, teaching virtues to children. The ideal person is peace-loving, friendly, forgiving, having appreciation and respectful (182). The darkness in communalism is that the need to belong to a group has been "overdeveloped...and has therefore impaired the balance of the individual and his community." That in turn has resulted in the "overappreciation of the community and the consequent *underappreciation* of the individual" (182). Van der Walt did not show

how communalism and peaceful traditional religions relate to, or can help resolve violence in Africa, but showed violence in Christianity and Islam.

Traditional African Religion is a peaceful religion, accommodating other religions. However, in many African countries where Muslims and Christians share citizenship, the minority group often suffers oppression. In regions where the two beliefs are more or less equally strong, like in Nigeria, violent clashes continuously occur with loss of property and human lives as a result. When tribalism and religious fanaticism coincide the situation gets worse. Many African countries have yet to learn that adherents of different religions should tolerate each other and live peacefully together as citizens of the same state (Walt 53-54).

If traditional religions are that peaceful, then how do they influence tribalism in responding to or overcoming violence? Is traditional religion really peaceful? Jean-Paul Azam's "The Redistributive State and Conflicts in Africa," argued that ethnicity is one aspect of political violence in Africa, and that violent conflicts result from the failure of a state to perform its fundamental tasks—maintaining civil peace and a functional redistribution system within and among groups. This, Azam contended, is a key to creating solidarity links whose absence triggers political violence. From Azam's perspective, economics, not ethnicity or religion, is the real cause of violence in Africa.⁷ Toure Kazah's Ethnic-Religious Conflicts in Kaduna State approached the issue from a different perspective but identified undemocratic governance and a group's self-perception as being marginalized, as contributors to the conflict (2, 7).

Alastair Roderick and Francois Vrëy's focused on violence and HIV/AIDS and military structure, respectively.⁸ Roderick argued that the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa is related to violence because of the sexual exploitation, increased social mobility and destruction of healthcare systems that violence causes; and used Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia as specific cases. Vrëy focused on politics and the role of African governments in shifting from military leadership to structuring and maintaining constructive military forces as a way to eradicate African wars. Even

where war may not be avoided, Vråy is thinks that African wars can be eradicated from a political and military perspective.

2.4.3 Two West African Illustrations

In Nigeria, Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions coexist. Religion and other social-political factors combine often to produce violence. Since 1980, Christians and Muslims have engaged in open and destructive hostilities. Jan H. Boer's Nigeria's Decade of Blood identified the *demon of corruption* and the clash of contemporary concepts on human rights with traditional views as major causes of violence (Boer 11-15). Boer urged Christians to develop a "more comprehensive, biblical world view he described as *wholism*, and Muslims to embrace *pluralism*, and distinguish it from *secularism* (14). Boer's discussion is set in *Kyperianism*, a Neo-Calvinistic school of thought and social action that originated in the Netherlands in response to nineteenth century secular liberalism. Kyper believed that whenever competing world views clashed, the thing for the Christian to do was to embrace pluralism and emphasize the value-laden, commitment-driven nature of life (16-17). Boer other book, Christian: Why This Muslim Violence? is a welcome attempt to resolve the Nigerian Christian-Muslim violence in more nonviolent ways.

While the Nigerian case is heavy on religion, corruption and ethnicity, the Liberian situation is political, economic, and ethnic. Prince Yomi Johnson, a leading perpetrator of violence in the Liberian war, has provided penetrating insights into the root causes, actions and responses to various issues that sparked off the Liberian civil war.⁹ In his The Guns that Liberate Should Not Rule and The Rise and Fall of President Samuel K. Doe, Johnson justified violence. Like him, the late Liberian President Samuel K. Doe and exiled President Charles Taylor, who is now awaiting trial for crimes against humanity, all justified violence and used it to destroy Liberia.

James Youboty's A Nation in Terror described violence in Liberia in graphic terms and showed how the logic of violence ruined the entire nation. Neither Doe nor Taylor nor any other rebel leader demonstrated that violence solved the fundamental problems they set out to resolve. Instead, they all mirrored even more severe and brutal forms of violence in the name of justice and democracy.

2.4.4 Summary

Although prevalent in African experience, African writers have not demonstrated convincingly how African worldviews and religions understand and respond to violence. If traditional African worldviews seek harmony with the spiritual and the physical worlds, and are peaceful, should they not help resolve conflicts and violence on the continent? Is there nothing in African worldviews against violence?

2.5 VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

2.5.1 Sources

Helmut Thielicke. Theological Ethics Vol. 2 (1969); Jules Koslow. The Despised and the Damned (1972); John H. Yoder. The Politics of Jesus (1972); Os Guinness. The Dust of Death (1973); Pascal Trocmé. Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution (1973); Os Guinness. Violence (1974); Philip Hughes. A History of the Church Vol. 1 (1979); Roland J. Sider. Christ and Violence (1979); Jerry H. Combee. The History of the World in Christian Perspective Vol.1 (1979); Arthur F. Holmes. War and Christian Ethics (1975); Robert G. Clouse. War: Four Christian Views (1981); George Kinoti. Hope For Africa (1994, 1994); Samuel P. Huntington. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996); Michel Desjardins. Peace, Violence and the New Testament (1997); Robert Herr and Juddy Z. Herr. Transforming Violence (1998); Andre Gil Bailie. Violence Unveiled (1999); Walter Wink. Peace is the Way (2000); Walter Wink. Jesus and Nonviolence (2003); James

Turner Johnson. First Things (2002); Prince Y. Johnson. The Rise and Fall of President Samuel K. Doe (2003); James Marshall McLuhan. War and Peace in the Global Village; Charles Selengut. Understanding Religious Violence (2003); Encyclopedia of Religion; Mark A. Gabriel. Islam and Terrorism; Jan H. Boer. Nigeria's Decade of Blood (2003); Ecumenical Review 55.2 (2003); Jan H. Boer. Christian: Why This Muslim Violence? (2004); James Youboty. A Nation in Terror (2004); Peter Garnsey. Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis (1988); Robert McAfee Brown. Religion and Violence. (1973); John Stott. Authentic Christianity; Robert and Juddy Zimmerman, eds. Transforming Violence (1998); Walter Wink, ed. Peace is the Way (2000).

The growing body of literature on violence demonstrates the severity of the violence issue. There is a gradual shift in interest from violence to nonviolence. Os Guinness's The Dust of Death analyzed violence in Western political, evolutionary, psychoanalytic and cultural theories. He found the theories wanting and so advanced his "Jesus' Third Way" as his alternative Third Way, nonviolence.

Herman A. Hoyt defended nonresistance from Matthew 5:39 and listed seven elements that were involved. 1) an aspect of Christian separation from the world (Ro 12:2); 2) a basis for Church and state separation (Jn 18:36); 3) a differentiation of defense methods by Church and state because the two entities are different (Jn 18:36; 2Co 10:3-4); 4) forbidding physical violence by Christians as a method to achieve a purpose; 5) forbidding physical violence by Christians to propagate the gospel; 6) prohibiting believers from using physical force and joining the world in doing the same; and 7) obliging believers to instead use spiritual means to do good (Jas 4:7; 1Pe 5:9; Eph 6:10-13) (Clouse, War 31). He noted that nonresistance is for believers and biblical nonresistance is different from pacifism (Clouse, War 36 44).

Ronald J. Sider's Christ and Violence examined Christ's teachings on violence from a pacifist perspective, argued that "Christians who reject violence follow the way of the cross rather than the way of the sword," and explained the way of the cross by first revealing the New Testament framework that provided the political, religious and social context into which Jesus stepped (16). In an "imperialist violence and oppression" context where some Jews justified killing the godless as a religious duty, Jesus presented a fourth possibility, nonviolence (18-19). Sider urged Christians not to support an unjust status-quo silently and so proposed "activist nonviolence" rather than nonresistance as Christ's way. Sider's interpretation of Matthew 5:39 is twofold, that 1) "one should not resist evil persons by exacting equal damages for injury suffered (i.e., an eye for an eye);" and 2) "one should not respond to an evil person by placing him in the category of enemy" (47). He upheld using different economic and political power, including economic boycotts and civil disobedience as consistent with Jesus' meaning of not resisting an evil person or system (61) and added that power is "not innately evil" (63). He argued that although Christianity has answers, Christians should rededicate themselves in a radical manner to the dictates of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, their Lord and King. It is not enough to discuss what needs to be done, but Christians must also be involved practically, with changes in even consumer behavior against unjust international trade and labor policies.

John Howard Yoder's Politics of Jesus discussed and dismissed several improper perspectives of Jesus that misrepresent Jesus, and sought to bridge theology and ethics. Yoder charted a nonviolent socio-economic ethic by carefully pointing out how Jesus' ministry and life were in the context of the kingdom of God as the inauguration of the jubilee framework. This led him to discuss a Christian view of the meaning of history in the Book of Revelation. That view puts the direction of history

not in human hands, but in God's. Disciples of Jesus will learn from their master's obedience because it is the key to living Christianly (Yoder 245). The secret to Jesus' triumph over violence by nonviolence is located in the hymn of praise in Revelation: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Rev 5:12), Yoder pointed. He showed how John is here meaningfully affirming:

the cross and not the sword, suffering and not brute power determines the meaning of history. The key to the obedience of God's people is not their effectiveness but their patience (13:10). The triumph of the right is assured not by the might that comes to the aid of the right, which is of course the justification of the use of violence and other kinds of power in every human conflict; the triumph of the right, although it is assured, is sure because of the power of the resurrection and not because of any calculation of causes and effects, nor because of the inherently greater strength of the good guys. The relationship between the obedience of God's people and the triumph of God's cause is not a relationship of cause and effect but one of cross and resurrection (238).

Understanding Jesus' ethic and its implication means then, that Jesus becomes the standard of Christian ethics and theology, and not merely of Christian spirituality and realizing "our readiness to renounce our legitimate ends whenever they cannot be attained by legitimate means itself constitutes our participation in the triumphant suffering of the Lamb" (244). This implies that when Christians embrace nonviolence, it is not because they wish to achieve their own ends by coercion, but that even if they, by legitimate means cannot achieve those goals they desire, their master's way is still the winning way. Yoder concluded by noting the creation of a new community that rejects violence of any kind as the dominant theme in the New Testament.

André Pascal Trocmé in Jesus and the Nonviolent Revolution traced how the Israel changed its focus from violence to nonviolence, from Elijah to Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, with the introduction of the suffering servant of the Lord who, in spite of the injustices and suffering exiled Israel was experiencing, was focused on

establishing justice. In Isaiah 42:1-4, the prophet emphasized that the unconquered suffering servant is the Jewish nation, a people called to be the light to the nations and to establish justice on earth, will not fail until they had done just that (79). But, in establishing justice, the servant would not break a bruised reed or quench a dimly burning wick (80). God would now deal with the entire world in His redemptive plan:

When God redeems the guilty, He is neither refusing to see the power of evil nor is He refusing to look at the world as it is, nor is He evading His responsibility. Redemption does not eliminate divine violence, but rather redirects it from the head of God's enemy to the Lord's servant, who is called to suffer instead of the guilty (80).

Trocme looked at the limited framework that bounded Jesus' early movement and ministry: "Attitude toward Gentiles, Samaritans, the Romans and Women" before the explosion of His nonviolent revolution began (103). Torn between violent and nonviolent options, Jesus finally settled on the redeeming event, with a redemptive purpose in mind. Though greatly tempted to respond with violence, Jesus gave up His life on Calvary in order to consummate the path of nonviolence that is redemptive. To redeem humanity was a choice to save life. In the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus

laid the indestructible foundations of Christian nonviolence, by limiting His disciples to the only true dilemma every conscience must face: To do good or to do harm, that is, to save or to kill. By choosing to save man at the price of His life, Jesus forever joined two facts: 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 a man's life (108-116).

Unlike Trocme, though maintaining the general non-violent stance, John Stott acknowledged both violence and non-violence in Jesus in his Authentic Christianity.

The God of the Bible is a God of both salvation and judgment. But not equally so, as if these were parallel expressions of his nature. For Scripture called judgment his 'strange work'; his characteristic work, in which he delights, is salvation or peacemaking. Similarly, Jesus reacted to willful perversity with anger, uttered scathing denunciations upon hypocrites, drove the moneychangers out of the temple and overturned their tables. But he also endured the humiliation and barbarities of flogging and crucifixion without resistance. Thus we see in the ministry

of the same Jesus both violence and non-violence. Yet his resort to violence of word and deed was occasional, alien, uncharacteristic; his characteristic was non-violence; the symbol of his ministry is not the whip but the cross (359).

The Essenes chose to absent themselves from the real world, but the Zealots made their presence felt by their swords. Neither group truly represented God's agenda. Pietism and activism must be balanced. A. J. Muste noted the psychological basis for using nonviolent methods is because like produces like, kindness provokes kindness and injustice produces resentment and evil (Wink, Nonviolence 5).

Gil Bailie in Violence Unveiled, observed that the world is perhaps in the "midst of the greatest anthropological challenge in history." He contrasted 'history' as "the stage in human history during which collective and cathartic acts of violence could be counted on to bring a period of social chaos to an end, and in doing so, to convince its participants and sympathetic observers of the truth of the myth that justified the violence" with 'history' as "a journey toward truth," the later being his concern (13-14). Bailie noted the difficulty today to explain away violence because nearly all the interpretive and explanatory tool used to do so are products of the European Enlightenment that attempted to underestimate and repudiate the Judeo-Christian tradition. On the contrary, the Bible desires to convert human hearts and "allow humanity to dispense with organized violence without sliding into the abyss of uncontrollable violence, the apocalyptic abyss" (12, 15).

Bailie argued that violence is veiled. He borrowed from Northrop Frye, who charged that human beings create what they call history only as a screen to conceal the workings of the apocalypse from themselves, to explain veiled violence as "violence whose religious or historical justifications still provide it with an aura of respectability and give it a moral 'official' status it preempts" (15). If veiled violence is stripped of its religious and historical justifications, distinguishing itself sufficiently

from the counter-violence it opposes is impossible. So, religion and culture actually restrain violence because without them, violence and unveiled violence do the same thing: they incite more violence, and as the scope of violence grows, the ability of its perpetrators to reclaim their religious and moral privilege diminishes.

Rather than history, as Frye noted, archaic religion is what human beings created to hide the apocalyptic, Bailie protested. Inhuman culture begins when an act of unanimous violence ends the violence that preceded it in such dramatic manner that it gives birth to primitive religion (28). To Bailie, human history, which fundamentally is a struggle between myth and gospel does not do this (34). The Gospel truth is what makes people reckon with what they wish to forget. That truth is the death of Jesus Christ, which was “an act of official violence regarded as legally righteous by the political authorities and as a sacred duty by religionists” (37). This gives the Christian Church an anthropological role in human history that can be overly simplified as the undermining of the structures of sacred violence by making it impossible to forget how Jesus *died* and showing the world how to live without such structures by making it impossible to forget how Jesus *lived* (274). The content of the anthropology of the Gospels is that it provides a basis for nonviolence in Christianity.

Robert Herr and Juddy Zimmerman Herr’s Transforming Violence looked beyond violence, to the opportunity it brings. They noted that “a time of change and crisis carries dangers but also opportunities for new thinking and possibilities” (13). The essays in this volume concentrated on how to make nonviolence practical. For example, Walter Wink, “Jesus’ Third Way,” pointed out that Matthew 5:38-41 is about *how*—not *whether*—one should fight against evil, because Jesus never taught not to fight against evil. For many, the options are between *flight* and *fight*, but not so for Jesus who abhors passivity and violence in dealing with evil. Jesus’ Third Way

addresses the victims whose nonviolent action “robs the oppressor of power to humiliate them” (36). His way helps the victim to oppose evil without it being mirrored (40-41). Jesus’ urges the Christian to deal with violence by:

seizing the moral initiative; asserting your own humanity and dignity as a person; meeting force with ridicule or humor; refusing to submit or to accept inferior position; taking control of the power dynamic; shaming the oppressor into repentance; standing your ground; forcing the powers into decisions for which they are not prepared; recognizing your own power; being willing to suffer rather than retaliate; forcing the oppressor to see you in a new light; depriving the oppressor of a situation where force is effective; being willing to undergo the penalty of breaking unjust laws and dying to fear of the old order and rules.

Avoid <u>Flight</u>	and	<u>Fight</u>
submission		armed revolt
passivity		violent revolt
withdrawal		direct retaliation
surrender		revenge (40-44)

Danila Dolci in “On Nonviolent Revolution” observed that “to achieve peace, we must be revolutionaries, nonviolent revolutionaries” (Wink, Peace 224, 225).

Walter Wink’s Jesus and Nonviolence proposes “creative nonviolence” (36). Wink began with a survey of successful nonviolence responses against violence, including the Corazon Aquino-led protest in the Philippines and credited the success of nonviolence responses partly to training in nonviolent direct action by Church leaders and others (1, 97). Wink attributed the source of the misunderstanding about Jesus’ teaching on responding to violence in Matthew 5:38-48 to the King James Version translators who translated *antistēnai* as “Resist not evil” and not to Jesus or His teaching. Given Jesus’ teaching in its original social context, Wink argued that it is “one of the most revolutionary political statements ever uttered” (10). He argued that Jesus said nothing about His oppressed hearers not resisting evil because “that

would have been absurd” (10). Wink’s translation is “Don’t strike back at evil (or, one who has done you evil) in kind.” Three general responses to violence are passivity, violent opposition and militant non-violence, the last being that of Jesus (11-12).

The Third Way (of Jesus) is the Way of the Cross. That is, to take on the violence of the “Powers That Be.” Doing so means casualties but much less than what it would be in a violent revolution. The Third Way is not avoiding violence but engaging in a “creative struggle to restore the humanity of all parties in the dispute” (19). For Wink, creative nonviolence is the “most creative, transformative response” to violence (36). The heart of Jesus’ Way of the Cross response is in love for enemies because they are also children of God. Wink produced six principles or guidelines that should govern Jesus’ Way (57-97): 1) Love for enemies; 2) means that are commensurate with the new order we wish to achieve; 3) respect for the Rule of Law because violent revolutions contradict what they desire to establish; 4) rooting out the violence within us. Here he notes that for us to resist something, we need to meet it with counter-force. But resisting violence with violence implies a mirroring the evil of violence and makes us what we are resisting; 5) not a Law but a Gift because the Way of the Cross frees us; not a necessity, but an enabling to do what we must do; 6) the Way of the Cross. “The cross was not just Jesus’ identification with the victims of oppression; it was...also his way of dealing with these evils” (87). Wink does not think of violence as an absolute evil to avoid at all costs or even the main problem.

Charles Selengut in Understanding Religious Violence, conceded that “violence in language and deed is an element in every religious worldview” (13). Selengut analyzed various aspects of religious violence. Three reasons for holy wars are that religious groups want to defend their religion against its enemies. Second, holy religious wars ensure religious conformity and punish deviant behavior. Finally,

holy wars usually occur under the leadership of a charismatic leader (22). His case studies of contemporary holy wars was excellent. His conclusion: “Toward a Holistic Approach to Religious Violence” is Selengut’s agenda for reducing future violence: 1) an informed laity 2) the role of the state 3) the role of charismatic leadership 4) recognizing symbols of religion, especially of popularly unpopular religions 5) secular and religious cooperation and 6) conflict, dialogue and religious camaraderie. He meant meaningful dialogue that can unite even religions in conflict; strategies, dialogues and activities for mediating religious conflict and promoting peace and harmony between religions (232-238).

Michel Desjardins’ Peace, Violence and the New Testament argued that the New Testament actually supports violence just as much as it does peace. Her aim is not to prove, disprove, or judge, but to understand. Desjardins found “less direct” textual support for Christians acting violently (e.g., “New Testament writers’ tendency to denigrate others, both inside and outside the group”— (Gal 5:12; 1Co 5:3-5; Mt 8:44), but also observed that such types of exhortation abound throughout the New Testament, and contribute significantly to its violent side.

North America now redefines violence to include two complementary aspects—direct overt physically destructive acts carried out by individuals or countenanced institutions; and a personal or institutional act that violates the personhood of another in ways that are psychologically destructive rather than physically harmful (Desjardin 12; Brown 8). Desjardins also broadened the definitions of violence and peace so that the contemporary reader will look at the New Testament texts with “different perspective than the writers had” because first-century Jews and Christians, though concerned with structural inequalities and discriminations, would not have called those ‘violence’ (13). She argued that when

compared with the sacred texts of other religions, the New Testament is a wholly nonviolent book. But when the definitions of violence and peace are extended beyond the physical, the New Testament becomes a book of violence. Desjardins highlighted the most important elements of the New Testament's message of peace, proceeding from the general to the specific. After examining briefly the vocabulary of peace, she presented an overview of the non-violent exhortations and actions in the lives of Jesus, Paul and Simon Peter. She compared the four evangelists' accounts of Jesus' arrest (Mk 14:43-50; Mt 26:47-56; Lk 22:47-54; Jn 18:1-12), and identified the underlying message as "that violence is ineffective in altering God's control over human history;" and the motto of the story as, "Submit yourself to God and recognize his plan" because to attempt to interfere with God's plan, especially using violence, is useless (22). Apart from this, Desjardins noticed "two disruptive features" to the story's peace promoting perspective. 1) Jesus is apparently unconcerned for the victim. But Luke addresses the issue by having Jesus heal the victim and rebuke the assailant (22:51). 2) Jesus does not appear to condemn violence, but "only violence not in accord with God's plan" (23). For Jesus, victory over violence was through accepting, not inflicting violence. She turned attention to the disciples who are unperceptive but eager. Their growing unperceptiveness "changed to misconception (Mk 8:27-14:9) when they misunderstood and resisted Jesus' non-violent nature. For instance, Peter and Jesus understood messiahship differently. Desjardins insinuated that from all that transpired between Jesus and His disciples, He may be saying that His "perspective on peace is not one that people in general will readily accept—it goes against human nature" (27).

She followed a similar path to discuss Paul, who was violent before his conversion. Like Jesus, Paul's lot was suffering (2Co 11:21-29), although violence

did not disappear from Paul's life after his conversion to Christianity, but the source of the violence did (28). She saw non-violence and possibly, passivity in Paul (*cf.* 2Ti 1:11-18). Simon Peter began by embracing and using violence but ended with rejecting it (29). What these portraits of Jesus, Paul and Peter reveal is a model of non-violent Christian interaction with the world. The Pastorals (addresses to second generation Christian leaders) follow the same non-violent, peace-promoting posture, and suggest that "the image of the disciple as child perhaps best raises this model, and Matthew's Gospel emphasizes this image most dramatically" (31). That is, in many ways, Christians are to be childlike—humble, meek, forgiving, compassionate, merciful, peacemaking—a transformation that implies a certain degree of helplessness. Desjardins warned that she would change lenses to argue that "'peace' that does not allow for resistance against physical oppression can be considered 'violence,' especially when it is combined with a disregard for the need to transform society" (34). She argued that the climax of all New Testament exhortations for non-resistance to violence is martyrdom (35). Desjardins explored the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' parables, and the New Testament's eschatological urgency, for their relevance to peace, and pointed out how the New Testament documents targeted Christian communities that regarded the intentional inflicting of violence on others as damning. Furthermore, the major sources of violence (greed, revenge, insensitivity to others, lack of purpose in life) were reduced and at times even removed by their sense of living in the end times. This eschatological orientation helps to explain at least in part, why the New Testament demands for peaceful and non-violent behavior are so radical and categorical (54).

Turning to Paul's ethic of peace, Desjardins argued that his ideal of equality, his spirit of compromise, and his belief in the imminent demise of the 'old age', this

world, that is, made him “an apostle of peace” (54). Equally peace-promoting is Paul’s practice of accommodation (57). Having examined the New Testament’s peace message thoroughly in the first part of her book, and concluding that the New Testament advocates peace, Desjardins put on the other lens to investigate violence. She warned that “the New Testament’s strong message of peace should not blind us from seeing that it is also suffused with violence. This violence mirrors the natural human condition, but goes much further to promote violence” (62). She wondered if the New Testament does not present humanity with a *trompe l’oeil*, an optical illusion that makes the same picture look like a vase one moment and two opposite silhouettes of faces the next. For New Testament aspects that support her argument, Desjardins identified 1) the unquestioning acceptance of soldiers and war; 2) her concern about the extreme violence the New Testament expects at the end of the world, including God’s wrath on humanity; 3) the male domination of those texts and 4) the tendency to group humanity into camps of “insiders” and “outsiders” (62).

She examined the vocabulary of violence and reflected on violent exhortations and actions. The New Testament’s angry tone and its occasional acceptance of violence if it will effect positive change are two specific situations she explored (68-78). First, the New Testament attributes a great deal of violence to God Himself in disciplining and reproofing those He loves (Rev 3:19; Heb 12:7-11); human sicknesses inflicted by God because the Jews generally thought that sin brought such sicknesses so that He can reveal His works in the sick person (Jn 9:1-3); God’s occasional killing those who act against His will (Ac 5:1-11); the judgment, horrors and unending punishment of people after they die (Mt 22:1-14); God’s treatment of a wayward Christian (Lk 12:41-48); the threat of punishment over the heads of Christians who persist in sin (Heb 10:26-31); God’s inflicting on others the very violence that humans

are forbidden in vengeance (Ro 12:19) and many, many more examples point to violence in the New Testament. Desjardins mentioned the setting of Christ's disciples against family, in favor of faith (Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21; Mt 12:46-50); the precedence of loyalty to the religious group over traditional customs (Mt 8:19-22; Lk 9:57-67) and modern readers (including the two-thirds world) seeing a revolutionary element in Jesus (Mt 22:15-22; Lk 20:20-26) when relating to civic duties, as further illustrations of the violence in the New Testament. Furthermore, they show a Jesus who is willing to condone violence (75). Desjardins argued that reading the New Testament documents with the violence lens produces the violent image in it from the *trompe l'oeil* (78). That then leads to the New Testament's accommodation of the occasional use of physical violence, what Desjardins called the non-pacifist stance that results from a "selective reading of the texts and by what is thought to be (whether rightly or wrongly) the 'essence' of the New Testament message" by particularly the Brethren, Mennonites and Quakers (78). After a systematic discussion of various aspects of New Testament violence, including that directed against women, although no physical abuse to women is in the texts, Paul's language of insiders-outsiders, and the apocalyptic ones, Desjardins concluded that violence is just another face of the New Testament. Where one sees the face of peace, another look will make that of violence to begin to emerge, and it poses a real problem for the reader who wants to make sense of its message.

Desjardins offered in her conclusion, how to resolve the tension. The options are either 1) to hold both views as consistent and complementary rather than contradictory because opposites make the whole; and mythic and ritual violence make people live in peace (112-114). 2) to hold that violence and peace are two inconsistent and irreconcilable views in the New Testament. That raises two natural questions—

a) what is responsible for the inconsistencies? b) how does one interpret the New Testament message? At this point Desjardins discussed four basic contributing factors. 1) “the involvement of many people and communities in the composition of the New Testament books; 2) the time lapse between the times the books were written; 3) the particular social situations that gave rise to the New Testament writings; 4) our particular world-view as contemporary readers. On interpretations, Desjardins offered these suggestions. a) to accept the New Testament as simply an outdated book; b) to seek a ‘core’ that gives the New Testament consistency, assuming that contingent factors have changed an otherwise coherent message (115-119). However, none of these approaches is intellectually satisfying to Desjardins. Unsatisfied with the exclusive peace and violence-promoting ‘cores’ interpretations, Desjardins suspected that this is the result of attempts by the evangelists to present an unnaturally peaceful and peace-promoting image of Jesus of history to make Him the living Christ. She also refused to make Jesus a political revolutionary because to do so is to go beyond what the textual evidence allows.

Considering the “insider-outsider” perspective, the inferiority of women, the image of a violent God living in violent times, Desjardins preferred a two-pronged ‘core’ of the New Testament that sees the New Testament as promoting both peace and violence, and not one to the exclusion of the other, as the best approach (115-121). She hoped that if people appreciate the New Testament’s dual nature that will make a contribution to society’s movement toward a more peaceful world.

2.5.2 Summary

The violence debate is at a critical stage. However, the logic of nonviolence, though difficult to practice constantly in all cases of violence, is nevertheless, not

impractical. Christians can unlearn violence and replace it with nonviolence as the literature on nonviolence has demonstrated. Violence can be minimized.

2.6 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES TO THE VIOLENCE DEBATE

The World Council of Churches' (WCC) Ecumenical Review 55.2 (2003) summarized the state of the debate without taking sides. It also identified the extent and the complexity of the debate and preferred and encouraged nonviolence:

consistent with our obedience to Jesus Christ; however, there may be extreme situations where violent resistance may become a Christian duty, and in such circumstances Christians must follow principles like those enunciated for "just wars"; violence seems to be unavoidable in some situations where non-violence does not appear to be a viable option (qtd. in 55. 2: 141).

In spite of this, the WCC report urged Christians to vehemently resist "violent causes like conquest of a people, race or class by another; unjustified violence such as holding hostages, torture, deliberate and indiscriminate killing of non-combatants" and others (141). It also identified forms of violence that need Christian attention:

physical violence, which expresses itself in killings, massacres, genocides and other forms of blood-letting; structural violence, where the very social, political, cultural structures oppress, discriminate, exclude or marginalize groups of people; economic violence, where the economic life is organized in a way that denies even the very basic needs of people to live in dignity; social violence, where forces like racism and sexism exclude peoples on the basis of colour, gender, caste, ethnicity, etc; domestic violence, where women and children are abused or treated brutally within established relationships; psychological violence, where persons or groups of persons in an institution, or in a society in general, are kept intimidated and live in fear; moral violence, where the brutal force of the state or a dominant group denies people's human rights or their right to peoplehood" (141-142).

The WCC, in its concern for peace and harmony in the world, investigated the strange connection between religion and violence, and not just in Christianity. It noticed that religion, far from being obsolete, is in many places an essential force for the moral fiber of society; but lamented that it "may also serve as a tool for disruption

and conflict” (106). Religion has already so become in much of Africa during most of the last decades, and is “not an innocent bystander in conflicts” (107, 109). Hans Ucko wondered if in understanding the relationship between religion and violence there is such a thing as “just” violence; and if so, when was violence justified? (109). The WCC’s goal in its Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) project is to “attempt to build a counter-culture to the culture of violence,” by making people of religious faith realize that too often, they are part of the very problem of violence (110).

It presented essays that analyzed violence in Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity with the hope to find ways to overcome violence in each tradition. The essays revealed that violence is present in each of the religious traditions, and that each tradition has used violence in its experience. The analysis of the holy scriptures of these religious traditions and their interpretations by various scholars in the traditions are partly responsible for how they use the data on violence. One essay, however, related violence to the humanities and is worth noting.

2.6.1 Violence and the Humanities¹⁰

Hansulrich Gerber, “The Spirit and Logic of Violence” considered more anthropological factors that contribute to violence because philosophical, sociological and anthropological explanations have so far failed to address the question of increasing violence adequately (144-150). Explaining the spirit and logic of violence, Thomas Hobbes observed that violence at the heart of pre-modern societies was regulatory and kept itself in check. It became a tool for demarcation for the established order, in spite of its injustice and unfairness. Such violence followed rules (Gerber 145). He referred to the Indian writer Arundhati Roy, who pointed out that globalization of only capital, goods, licenses and services rather than free movement of people and respect for fundamental human rights, that the masters of globalization

champion, itself is violence. And so is pre-emptive war or the threat of it, against people alleged to possess weapons of mass destruction. Gerber's point is that such attitude "is itself a weapon of mass deception to cover up large-scale destruction caused by unjust and violent globalization" and that war against terrorism that claims to fight violence "in fact feeds from and deepens a spirit and logic of violence. It will invariably lead to "more violence and increased terrorism" (Gerber 145).

Gerber used the modern warfare language of "collateral damage" to explain how contemporary society generally considers life—"disposable or recyclable;" and argued that Christian notions of humanity as essentially evil, were also responsible for their inability to deal with violence "creatively and constructively;" and noted how the notion of human depravity has led to that of the disposability of life (146).

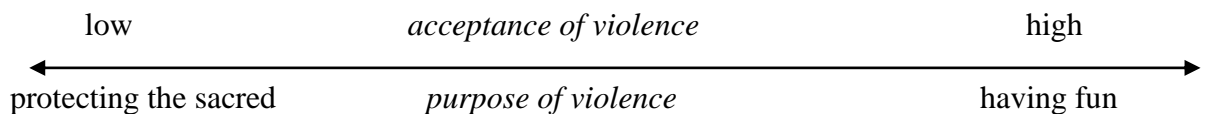
However, the Reformation emphasis on humankind viewed the specie more in light of its corruptibility, not evil. That implied vulnerability and aggression. What "constitutes a major motivation for being violent," was to seek or pretend to be invulnerable (Gerber 146). Violence can be less acceptable when people accept that aggression is a part of humanity and that it is not in itself evil; and that "human life is neither evil nor disposable, but holy and precious — worth being protected and nurtured" (146). A second anthropological factor Gerber identified is the ambivalent relationship between humanity and violence. He referred to the DOV study guide, Why Violence? Why Not Peace?¹¹ that put this relationship in triplet:

Violence repels us but violence also attracts us.
Violence alarms us but violence also entertains us.
Violence destroys us but violence also protects us (146).

Gerber reworded the first statement to read, "Violence terrifies us, but violence also fascinates us," and added that people "have an adrenaline-driven, love-hate affair with violence." He drew attention to the distinction and confusion between conflict and

violence and lamented their uncritical interchangeability. Conflicts may, and often lead to violence when not resolved properly, but violence can occur without conflict. Gerber demonstrated the changing level of acceptance or rejection of violence depending on the purpose or objective by placing violence on a continuum.

the purpose tends to be for the ultimate situation to protect something sacred. Only then is violence acceptable. Where general acceptance is high, the purpose can be much more mundane or profane, and at its extreme violence can be used simply for fun. In other words, violence when unacceptable will more likely only be used for the highest, most noble purpose. Where acceptance is high, violence tends to be used for just about anything, including fun. In the middle of the...continuum one could locate violence as a means to defend community values or to achieve greater control over people or goods (148).



If a community can reduce its social acceptance of violence of any sort, then it will be easier to overcome it. Perpetrators of violence, especially men, must be told not only to reject violence, but also that violence is unacceptable, as a way of reducing it. Another important aspect that Gerber pointed to is the need to “give a voice to the victim” (149). That is a call for a theology of Christian response to violence, the very call this work is attempting to answer. Concluding, Gerber argued for a change in perspective on the issue. Rather than dwell on the perpetrators of violence and the specific acts of violence, the way forward will be to identify with the victim of violence, as God did in Christ on the cross. In protecting Cain after his murder of Abel, and in forgiving those who crucified His Christ, God stood in the non-violence spirit. But more than anything else, “God is the victim” (149).

2.6.2 Overcoming Violence

Guillermo Kerber sought to overcome violence through justice (151-157).¹² He discussed restorative justice and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

(TRCs) this approach has produced, focusing more on the victim while not neglecting the perpetrator of violence. It is victim-centered, and seeks not just to restore relationships and situations back to their former states especially when such states were unjust; but looks forward to “building new and just relationships in the community” in what Kerber termed as “*pro-storative*” (155). The victim-centered justice approach attempts to include the victim who has normally been excluded from the process, and works to ensure that the victim benefits. Two basic principles that underlie this process are the “liberal principle” and the “difference principle” (155). The difference principle has received much discussion in legal proceedings. The liberal principle concerns “basic liberties such as political liberty, freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience and freedom of thought, among others” (155). The success of restorative justice models depends heavily on the community (155).

2.6.3 The Power of Religion

Religion is potent to motivate participants and legitimize violence so much that many movements, including the Ku Klux Klan of the United States, seek support for violence in religious scriptures and traditions (Selengut 227). This potency of religious motivation, even when manipulated for secular ideological purposes, gives the conflict and violence sacred characteristics that make resolving the conflict difficult (288). Tikva Frymer-Kensky noted how first generation religious thinkers engaged in inter-religious dialogues and dismissed violence as “a distortion of religious teaching or as an indication of the absence of true religious spirit” (164).¹³ But today, religions are “actively engaged in violence” (164). Apart from the state, religion is “the greatest and indigestible of all authorities” (Conyers 44). This truth places the greatest responsibility on religion to address the issue of violence and its involvement with it. Thomas M. Thangaraj was not mistaken in saying that, “religious

traditions need an intense renewal that will enable them to acknowledge the dehumanizing power of violence, and offer a penetrating moral critique of the structures that perpetuate violence” (113-114).¹⁴ The Church should champion this cause even though it can be reasonably certain that the world will continue to be violent because “Faith does not insulate us from the daily challenges of life but intensifies our desire to address them precisely in light of the gospel which has come to us in the person of the risen Christ” (Challenge of Peace, i).

2.6.4 Summary

Whether in religion or the social sciences, violence is still difficult to comprehend and resolve. The discussions on how to understand and overcome violence tend not to so much extol violence as they seek to undo it. Religion, because of its power, should do more to respond to violence in ways that respect humanity and maintain human dignity. To this extent, Desjardin’s analysis of violence in the New Testament is highly stimulating as it lifts the violence aspect of the New Testament and tends to harmonize it with the peaceful part. However, her solution leaves the problem where she met it. Should Christians be violent if and when necessary or should they not be? What are the parameters and guidelines for which direction to follow? What are the implications of a “peaceful-violent” ethic for Christianity?

2.7 THE CHURCH AS AFRICA’S HOPE

George Kinoti’s Hope for Africa is an all embracing political, economic, social, cultural and educational appraisal of the people, their structures and systems, and how these taken together, have brought Africa where it is today. Kinoti underscored the abject wretchedness of humanity in Africa and advanced five reasons why Africans continue to be blind to their plight. 1) a perverted perspective that accepts the widespread poverty, hunger, oppression and disease as normal. 2) the low

literacy level that renders Africans incapable of understanding and analyzing the operations of economic and political systems. 3) what this researcher terms *le retour des petits bourgeois*. The more educated class do one of two things. They are either more preoccupied with their own economic survival or, as Kinoti put it, they are “too engrossed in their pursuit of power and wealth to care about their people” (iii). Either way, the educated class keeps every other person on their blind spot. 4) what Karl Marx attributed to religion—the opium of the people. Africans have made religion and faith as “a narcotic—to evade the pain, the ugliness, the difficulties, the concrete reality of the world in which we find ourselves” (iii). 5) the destructive blow that foreign powers are dealing to Africa. What these powers call development activities, foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs), instead of helping Africa, continue to worsen its deterioration. The cumulative result of these is the unprecedented survival crisis Kinoti warned about (iii-iv). These are among the reasons for violence in Africa, although Kinoti did not focus on that.

Kinoti is very hopeful that Christians and the Church hold the key of hope for Africa. Pastors, theologians and every African Christian, Kinoti urged, must be a part of the search for the peace and prosperity of Africa (95). Kinoti understands the structures of violence and urges the Church to be completely immersed in the total life of Africa in order to deliver Africa. These two are his contributions to this debate.

2.8 SUMMARY

The growing body of violence literature illustrated that while some people uphold and justify force and violence, others reject it as a destructive element in human experience. But because religion exercises tremendous influence on people and is a major participant in any discussion on violence, it has power to accentuate violence or overcome it. However, the overwhelming majority of Christians do not

appear to subscribe to the path of violence, even if they justify it in certain situations. The way of peace and nonviolence is the ideal to strive after. The New Testament will continue to inform Christian response to violence and so Christians should carefully study its pages and remain honest to it rather than to their particular Christian traditions or desires. There are responses to violence that are consistent with the character and nature of Christ who absorbed violence and transformed it redemptively in order to reconcile humanity to God. It is the honor of the Church to live out the teachings and implications of its sacred book to the glory and honor of God and His Christ. The decade to overcome violence is just four more years before it closes. What will be the state of the violence debate and the Church's response when 2010 comes around? Will the Church have overcome the logic of violence?

CHAPTER THREE

CONTOURS OF VIOLENCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

...the way in to understanding and applying the Old Testament ethically is not by plunging in and seizing on whatever appears relevant. What we have to try to do is to put ourselves in Israel's position and understand how Israel perceived and experienced their relationship with God and how that experience affected their practical living as a community (C. Wright 19).

3.1 THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE IN THE PENTATEUCH

Christopher J. H. Wright, above, argued that we read Old Testament narratives in perspective. Similarly, Robert H. Stein observed that “where you start determines where you finish” (Stein, Messiah, 17). Because Jesus, His followers and the Apostolic Church all read and upheld the Old Testament Scriptures, a truly Christian understanding of any New Testament subject must stem from a proper understanding of its Old Testament foundations. This chapter traced the contours of violence in Old Testament—the Pentateuch, Writings and Prophets. Christopher Wright's advice about not plunging into the Old Testament and seizing what appears relevant, but seeking to understand Israel's context, was a basic guiding principle for this chapter.

3.1.1 A World Marred by Violence

D. G. Reid observed that a foundational premise of the Bible is that the world is fallen, and that “humanity in particular is violent” (832). But how does the Old Testament reveal this truth? God created an orderly and “perfect” world that He evaluated as “very good” (1:31).¹ David Atkinson described the opening chapter of the Bible as containing “*majesty*”, and “*mystery*” (17) and also as a “poem of “beauty and grandeur” (15). But Genesis chapter 3 does not show that very good world, but one marred by violence. From where did the violence come? The Jewish apocryphal book of 2 Edras tells of Angel Uriel explaining the origin of evil: “At the beginning of time one grain of evil seed was sown in the heart of Adam” (4:30a). But the Bible

teaches otherwise. It locates evil in humanity to an act of disobedience to God (Ge 3). Human evil in many ways was the forerunner of all subsequent occasions of violence in the race thereafter.² So, it is reasonable to suggest that violence originated with the serpent, the Devil, then extended, or was transmitted to the human race without ceasing in the Devil. The first murder in the Bible occurred shortly after, and as a consequent of the first act of giving to God in worship, when Cain murdered his brother Abel (Ge 4:3-8). Josephus described Cain as not only “wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting....,” a man who used violence to acquire wealth and pleasure (Antiquities I. 2.1, 2). His became a life overtaken by violence.

Later, Lamech, a grandson of Cain, much like his grandfather, introduced a violence-invoking word, in addition to his practice of polygamy. It is ~q'n", vengeance (Ge 4:24) or its passive form, to be avenged, from the verb ~q;n", to avenge, take vengeance, both from the root ~qn, to take vengeance). Of Cain's posterity Josephus observes:

...Nay, even while Adam was alive, it came to pass that the posterity of Cain became exceedingly wicked, every one successively dying one after another, more wicked than the former. They were intolerable in war, and vehement in robberies; and if any one were slow to murder people, yet was he bold in his profligate behaviour, in acting unjustly, and doing injury for gain (Ant. I.2.2).

Lamech was not claiming “a life for a life, but a life for a blow ... and is even claiming divine sanction for his attitude” making himself sufficient reason for the disappearance of Cain's line that breaks at Genesis 4:24 (Ellison 119).

A violent response to violence. Abram the Hebrew and his 318 domestic army responded with violence when they routed a raiding party that defeated its rival and “carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions” (Ge 14:12). Abram seemed to have understood violence against his nephew as violence against him. His response also seemed to be in the spirit of God's justice with an earlier prohibition against

wasting life in mind (Ge 9:5-6). God did not rebuke Abram for his response. Instead, He accepted an offering from him through a certain Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High. Melchizedek in return blessed Abram. Abram's response was timely, and although reactionary, it was also proactive. That his men were "trained" demonstrates that warfare was common in those days. Long before an actual incident of violence, Abram had engaged in training a rapid action domestic militia to respond at short notice. Abram was neither consumed by destructive revenge, nor was his action vindictive. Once he defeated the enemies and recovered what he had come to rescue, he left, as if operating by some already determined rules of warfare. He demonstrated the principle that violence repels violence. It is not this action of Abram that God created as faith. And because the narrative is not didactic, but descriptive, it does not provide a basis for response to violence.

Ishmael as the embellishment of violence. Abram's son, Ishmael, would become the head of nations because of his father. He, however, would be a wild donkey (willfulness) of a man whose hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and will live in hostility toward all his brothers (Ge 16:12). The Bible records no precise situation of violence involving Ishmael directly, but makes it crystal clear that he will be the source of many troubles and occasions of violence in the world. The kicking Aramean ass-like trait of Ishmael would set his descendants against those of Abram's other children. Ishmaelitic violence would be the watershed between brothers. A large number of the campaigns of conquest that Israel would engage later in their journeys would confront these other descendants of Abraham.

Ishmael's descendants do not show up again until Genesis 25:12-18. After Ishmael died at a hundred and thirty-seven years of age, the conclusion on his descendants is consistent with the prophecy of God about them: "His descendants

settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers” (Ge 25:18). This is a description of violence against them. The territory from Havilah to Shur may cover the region of today’s Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq and the Saudi Arabia, Arab lands of the Middle East, centers of on-going global violence. This extension of Ishmael’s influence may very well be a significant factor in the on-going Israel-Palestinian and Middle East arms struggles. Ishmael had “Egyptian blood” [African] from his mother’s side. Later, his paternal brother Isaac, had Jacob and Esau. But Esau (Edom) is more often identified with his uncle Ishmael, and their descendents were often noted for violence.

The SimLev response to violence. The first rape case in the Bible involved Dinah, Jacob’s daughter (Ge 34). Dinah’s brothers, Simeon and Levi (*SimLev*), responded to this situation with deception, hatred, anger and murder, the Shechem Massacre that took the lives of all the men of Shechem because one man raped their sister. Logically, Jacob’s sons committed a generic fallacy making the men of Shechem pay for the crime of Shechem, son of Hamor, the Hivite ruler. To them, Shechem’s guilt involved all the men of Shechem were guilty! The massacre of an entire town to both punish one criminal and ensure that the crime does not happen again demonstrates the logic of violence. Though vindictive, their solution was also didactic. Interestingly, Yahweh did not speak either for or against this response. But Jacob strongly disapproved of his sons’ action. He had good reasons to be afraid that the logic of violence would compel the inhabitants of the land to destroy him and his household (Ge 34:30) because the *SimLev* response to violence simply makes violence to produce more violence. Just before his death, Jacob blessed his children (Ge 49:5-7) and the blessings of Simeon and Levi emphasize Jacob’s understanding of violence,

although he himself had alluded to using violence, that is, his “sword and bow” to acquire land from “the Amorite” (Ge 48:22). His blessing of Simeon and Levi also denounce violence. The New American Standard Bible translates the verse thus:

Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel (Ge 48:22).

3.1.2 Violence and Liberation

Egypt enslaved and oppressed Israel cruelly. Though very many, Israel could not free itself of Egyptian bondage. They submitted to oppression and endured violence. But they cried to God and God came to their rescue. To liberate Israel, God used violence against Egypt. His motives were to show His power (Ex 7:5; 9:16) and to be honored in the world through Pharaoh (Ex 14:4). The battle cry was “Let my people go...” Israel’s liberation revealed three principles. The first was to define the task or mission—rescue the children from oppression (Ex 3:7-10). The second was to provide tactful leadership—Moses and Aaron. The third was to set clear goals—demonstration of God’s power and the honor of God’s name (Ex 7:5; 9:16; 14:4). In liberating Israel from Egypt, God demonstrated why He, not Israel should be violent, without requiring Israel to do the same. In fact, Moses urged them to stand their ground because God would fight their battle (Ex 14:12). He fought for His people by “miracle, not sword or spear” (Lind 24).

Holy violence. The battle with the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-15) was one to that Israel responded in self-defense, carrying out God’s command to “completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (Ex 17:14). God avenged Himself on the sins of certain men of Israel and Midian (Nu 24; 31:1). He commanded Moses to “take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites” (Nu 31:1), and Moses called that battle

“the LORD’s vengeance” (Nu 31:2). In spite of all that, God declared that bloodshed pollutes the land (Nu 35:33), to show his hatred for violence. Israel’s wars of conquest (Nu 32 and Joshua’s wars) were divinely sanctioned violence, holy wars or *harem*. God commanded Israel to fight these wars and gave them specific instructions about how to fight them. Although Israel fought, they understood the wars as God’s and not primarily theirs. He was the standard, the divine warrior, and they were only doing as He commanded. Whenever Israel went to these wars without directives from God, they lost. Only in obedience to Him did they win their battles and were able to partially conquer and settle in the land God had promised them. Besides, the LORD warned Israel not to be like the nations He was driving from before them because those nations were defiled and He was punishing them by having the land spew its inhabitants out (Lev 18:24-25 NASB updated ed.).

Avenging violence. The Decalogue stipulations to Israel were to govern their conduct in dealing with each other. Broadly speaking, the Ten Commandments can be divided into two categories. Commandments 1-4 tell how to relate to God and Commandments 5-10 how to deal with other people and their possessions. Both groups are about relationship. The eighth commandment, specifically against murder, implies thoughtful, premeditated violence against human life and attracted the death penalty (21:11-18). However, the death penalty was administered not by an individual or group at their discretion, but by the authorized authority instituted in society to deal with such cases. Exodus 21:22-25 is particularly significant; and Jesus referred to this in Matthew 5:38 in abbreviated form.

If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take *life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise*. (Emphasis added).

Exodus 21:22-35 is best understood in the narrower context of 21:12-35, where the laws given govern personal injuries. However, verses 23-25 strictly concern a situation not between groups of people, but more of personal strife between two or more persons. Exodus 21:22 begins the section with the conditional word “if.” $yki(w>$. The verb $Wc\acute{a}N^yI$ (impf. 3mp.) in that form appears only here and in Deuteronomy 25:11 and comes from the root $hc'n$ which in the niphil and hiphil stems means ‘struggle.’ As used in Exodus 21:22 and elsewhere, it refers to physical struggle, as well as wrestling. The next verb in that statement, $@g:n$ ”, means to ‘smite,’ or ‘strike.’ In this context, it can mean to ‘hit’ (NIV). The pregnant woman spoken of, is in potential danger if her baby ‘comes out’ ($ac'y$ ”), prematurely, that is, abortion or miscarriage. Actual danger is when either mother or child is significantly hurt. In that case, the woman’s husband must claim damage—but even his demands were subject to judicial supervision. In this instance, reciprocal justice, which the *lex talionis* was all about came into play. The stipulation did not allow the husband or his relatives and friends to take the law into their own hands. Otherwise, he would have to equally injure or kill the wife (wives) and infant of those who have caused him the loss of his wife and child. There was an arbitrating legal body demanding and taking loss for loss, as the sequence “...tx;T;ä...” (“...for/in the stead of...” provides.

Who is for the Lord? The Golden Calf incident symbolized Israel’s apostasy and God’s stern judgment on them. There, God Himself, through Moses, was purging His people, separating the rebellious from the obedient. Moses’ command for the Levites to kill their brothers, friends and neighbors, a slaughter that claimed three thousand lives that day (32:27-28) was indeed violent, yet, approved and ordered by God. The same faith community executed this violence upon itself; but this incident does not

teach that subsequent communities of faith may purge themselves or others of moral filth by shedding the blood of the unfaithful and disobedient among them. The Bible does not prescribe this, and the narrative must be left in its descriptive temperament. This may prefigure Jesus' metaphorical sword that spoke of the cost of following Him (*cf.* Mt 10:34-39).

3.2 VIOLENCE IN THE WRITINGS AND THE PROPHETS

A certain progression occurs in the Old Testament on how Israel responded to violence. Israel under Joshua carried on with the battles of the conquest of Canaan. When Israel had occupied the land, it focused more on consolidating the community. By the time of the Judges, violence due to Israel's low perspective of God and their sinfulness made them restless. They came under the bondage of many other people groups. The story of the Levite and his concubine (Jdg 19) and the battle between ensuing civil war that followed between the eleven tribes and the tribe of Benjamin demonstrates what can happen when people let self-interest obscure others-interest. The Benjamites behaved in keeping with the ravenous wolf that devours the prey in the morning and divides the spoil in the evening prophetic blessing of Genesis 49:27. They were violent. To such incredulous act of violence, the rest of Israel responded with violence in order to restore justice and sanity. However, this was a period of anarchy in Israel's history.

In Judges, violence is related to ineffective leadership. Because Israel had no king (18:1; 19:1; 21:25), "everyone did as he saw fit" (21:25). Anarchy and violence go together but good leadership cures both. The table below summarizes the state of violence in Israel during this period. The book does not offer an agenda for violence for several reasons, but describes Israel's state as a result of their turning their backs on God. At these times, Israel had no national leaders at such, so might determined right.

The table below summarizes the spiral of violence at this stage of Israel's political and military development.

Table 1

Cycles of Violence in Israel in the Book of Judges

S/R	TEXT	OPPRESSOR	DURATION	LIBERATOR	COMMENT
1.	3:7-11	Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Aram Nathraim	8 years	Othniel, Caleb's younger brother	War followed 40 years of peace
2.	3:12-30	Eglon, king of MoabPhilistia	18 years	Ehud, the left-handed Benjamite	Assassination, then war followed by 80 years of peace
3.	3:31			Shamgar	One-man army that killed 600 Philistines with ox goad
4.	4:1-5:31	Jabin, a king of Canaan	20 years cruel oppression	Deborah a Prophetess	Battle, followed by 40 years of peace
5.	6:1-8:35	Median, Amalek and other eastern peoples	Severe oppression	Gideon son of Joash	1. Religious reform; 2. Two battles followed by 40 years of peace
	9:1-57	Abimelech	Three years	Abimelech	Abimelech's case was different. God judged him for murdering Gideon's other sons.
6.	10:1-2			Tola	He led Israel 23 years.
7.	10:3-5			Jair	He led Israel 22 years.
8.	10:6-12:7	Philistines and Ammorites	Crushing and shattering oppression for 18 years	Jephthah the Gileadite	He led Israel six years.
9.	12:8-10			Ibzan of Bethlehem	He led Israel seven years.
10.	12:11-12			Elon the Zebulunite	He led Israel 10 years.
11.	12:15			Abdon son of Hillel	He led Israel 8 years.
12.	13:1-17:31	Philistines	40 years	Samson	He led Israel 20 years.

13.	19:1- 21:25	Benjamites who violated the Levite's concubine	The rest of the Israelite tribes	The cycles of evil and violence in Israel ended here with a civil war.
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Violence and Knowledge of the LORD

The battles of the kings of Israel, beginning with Saul's recorded much violence. Most of these battles were either to consolidate the kingdom or defend it against external attacks. Before captivity, the Prophets warned Israel about the consequences of her sins against God, which proved their lack of proper knowledge of God. Sometimes they used violence symbolically to communicate God's intention. By the time of Israel's violent captivity in Assyria and Babylon, God continued to point His focus to Israel—a time when *knowledge of the LORD* will be the solution to violence and peace will reign.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:6-9).

Isaiah also spoke of the time when nations will beat their “swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks,” and will “not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” because they will walk in the light of the LORD (2:4). The LORD promised, “I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler. No longer will violence be heard in our land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders...” (Isa 60:17b-18a), and ends on the note that God *will* create a new order of things and avenge Himself on His enemies (Isa 66). Jeremiah spoke extensively about the judgment of the nations and Israel for their sins, but still pointed the way out in God. This judgment is what Hosea refers to by “Swords will flash in their cities” (Ho 11:6).

The Old Testament is filled with hope for a better, nonviolent future. This is obvious indication that Yahweh does not support violence as the status-quo. He

admonished Israel to give up their violence and oppression (Eze 45:9). The reference is to the oppressive political and economic system. Yahweh declared He would punish Egypt for the violence they had done to Judah (Joel 3:19). When God sent Jonah to Nineveh, the king of Nineveh decreed that his people give up their evil ways and their violence, in keeping with God's message to them (Jnh 3:8). However, in the Book of Ezekiel, probably more than any other prophetic book, Yahweh reveals the full extent of His wrath against Israel and Judah for their sins against Him. He threatens to ruin them (5:1-17); prepares violence as an instrument to punish wickedness (7:11); and notices that violence and bloodshed fill the city (7:23); and for that, the people would suffer calamity (7:26). Also, He uses famine, the sword, afflictions and the very exile as weapons to destroy His people for their wickedness. The greater portion of this book portrays vividly how God perceives human violence and unless repentance occurs, how He uses violence to deal with it. One thing is very specific in Yahweh's battles especially as He revealed in Ezekiel. He wants His people to know Him and to know that He is the one in charge of all creation and history. The clause, "Then they (you) will know that I am the LORD" or variants of it occur more than 65 times in the 48 chapters of the book; and are concentrated between chapters 1 and 39, an average of about 1.1 times per chapter. This is very significant for understanding why Yahweh uses violence. It is both to punish wickedness, but the end result is to cause the hearts of people to turn away from sin toward Him. Therefore, violence in Yahweh has a missionary motivation.

Amos decried social injustice and violence because the two are related, and urged the people to seek the Lord and live (5:5-6, 14) and hate evil (5:15). The social injustice of Amos' day was such that many today would have justified violent revolutionary responses. Yet, God urged the people to be transformed from within in order to transform society without. Micah abhorred violence in the leaders of Israel who despised

justice and distorted all that is right; “who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness” (3:9-10). The sins of these leaders and their people only brought God’s judgment upon them (6). What God required was “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (6:8), not violence. While God protects and cares for His own, He pursues His enemies into darkness (Nahum 1:7). Nahum’s harsh language (2:1-4) depicts violence against Nineveh for its sins, and describes what will happen to Nineveh before it falls. Nineveh is described as a “city of blood” and all sorts of vices (Nahum 3:1-4) but God is against her (3:5) because of her violence.

Habakkuk’s portrayal and abhorrence of crass violence is graphic. He was appalled at God’s seeming neglect of the state of violence. His first complaint that opens the book makes this clear.

How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted (1:2-4).

Habakkuk’s second complaint is not very different, either. He wonders why God, who was too pure to tolerate wrong tolerating the treacherous; and was silent while wicked people swallowed up those more righteous than themselves without any indications that someone or something can stop them (1:13-17). God reassured him that the violent were under His judgment. Four woes of chapter 2 (hoarding stolen goods and becoming wealthy by distortion, 2:6; building an empire by unjust gain, 2:9; building a city with bloodshed and establishing a town by crime, 2:12, and intoxicating neighbors with drinks, 2:15) indicate that God is against violence and will punish it (3:16-18).

Zephaniah reveals that God will punish those who work violence and deceit (1:9). God urges people to seek righteousness and humility (2:3). Zechariah’s message is for the people to turn from their evil practices and turn to the Lord (1:3-4); to administer true

justice; show mercy and compassion to one another; not to oppress widows, orphans, aliens and the poor; and not to think of evil of each other (7:9-10). In Malachi, God expresses his hatred for violence, although divorce is in mind here (2:16). Yahweh does not hide His hatred of violence. When the wicked rise up against the righteous, and seem to extinguish them, Yahweh reassured His prophet that even then, He was not unaware or inactive. Violence and wickedness cannot overcome, no matter how brutal or enduring. Of course, this affirmation does not make the issue of what response to adopt against violence any easier. It, however, assures Christians that God is always on the side of the victims to help them see Him, just as much as He is with the victimizer, to reveal Himself to them as well. He is good and does all things well.

3.3 SUMMARY AND EVALUATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is not a manual for violence, even though it records the basest forms of human inhumanity and violence. Yes, Yahweh ordered Israel to use violence in defense of selfhood, or as instruments of His judgment against Israel's enemies. Other times, He used heathen nations like Assyria and Babylon to discipline Israel. Many times Yahweh fought battles without human means to demonstrate His sufficiency to those who trust in Him. Unless He commands a person or group to engage in violence, it is very difficult to appeal to the Old Testament as the biblical authority for any use of violence in His name and cause. Significantly, Yahweh used violence to honor His majesty and exact repentance of the nations. The knowledge of God's Word and obedience to it are proactive against violence. But on the whole, the Old Testament resonates with sentiments of Yahweh's disgust with violence. He hates it and does not prescribe it. Instead, He urges nations and peoples to seek and know Him, seek and do justice, righteousness, show mercy and compassion, and learn love and pleasant thinking

about each other. The burden of proof rests on those who argue that Yahweh has commanded violence for Christians because He did so for Israel.

CHAPTER FOUR

VIOLENCE IN INTERTESTAMENTAL LITERATURE

My son, if you are going to serve the Lord, be prepared for times when you will be put to the test (Sirach 2:1).

The Creator never intended human beings to be arrogant and violent (Sirach 10:18).

It is better for us to die fighting than to stand idly by and watch the destruction of our nation and our Temple. But the Lord will do what he pleases (1 Maccabees 3:59-60).

4.1 CONQUEST AND RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS IN PALESTINE

The three statements above demonstrate further the tension in the violence debate. The Old Testament is not the only source from which to understand how Israel functioned in the context of violence, either as victims or aggressors. Chapter three demonstrated whenever the Old Testament permitted violence, it did so often with qualifications. Whenever Israel used violence or was victim of it, there was usually some divine purpose in mind. Literature during the intertestamental period help to understand Israel's later perspectives and responses on violence. God through Judith, a widow of Manasseh, rebuked the leaders of Israel under King Uzziah, for holding a truncated view of God and His dealings with His children. The Chelodite alliance of Medianite king Arphaxad and forces from the mountain nations, those along the Tigris, Euphrates and Hydaspes Rivers, and the inhabitants of the plain region that King Arioch of Elam ruled (Judith1:5-6), crumbled under the Assyrian Nebuchadnezzar. News of the Assyrian exploits reached Judah and terrified the Jews greatly. They had just returned from the exile, rededicated their Temple and were afraid about what would happen to the Temple of Yahweh (Judith 4:1-3).

Holofernes, Nebuchadnezzar's general led 170,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry and support troops to lay siege to Bethulia (7:1-8). The size of the Assyrian army frightened Israel's warriors, but they prayed and held to their weapons in readiness to fight. The enemy's siege work cut Bethulia's water supply and each passing day became more unbearable for the Jews because of the acute shortage of water. They cried to the Lord for help because they had lost their courage, and the enemy had surrounded them on all fronts, leaving no possibility for escape (7:19). The blockade had run for 34 days, leaving all the reservoirs and cisterns dried up, children grew weak and people collapsed. Utterly desperate because "No one had any strength left" (7:21-22), the people blamed Uzziah and protested against him for not making peace with the Assyrians. They demanded Uzziah's immediate surrender so that they all could be Nebuchadnezzar's prisoners instead of dying the way they were now certain they would. Nevertheless, they wept loudly to God and prayed. Uzziah urged them not to give up. "Let's wait five more days to see if the Lord our God will be merciful to us," he urged; and promised to surrender if after five days the Lord did not deliver them (7:30-31). This response was totally unacceptable to Judith who believed that Israel had no business testing God with such statement (8:12-13). Judith's theology was clearly not affected by crisis as shown in these words (8:15-17).

If he decides not to come to our aid within five days, he still may rescue us at any time he chooses. Or he may let our enemies destroy us. But you must not lay down conditions for the Lord our God! Do you think that he is like one of us? Do you think you can bargain with him or force him to make a decision? No! Instead, we should ask God for his help and wait patiently for him to rescue us. If he wants to, he will answer our cry for help.

Her message ended with pleading "no surrender now!" (8:23) because surrender is a shameless compromise and dishonoring of Yahweh. "No, my friends, we should set an example for our own people. Not only their lives, but the fate of the Temple and

the altar depends on us” (8:24) are courageous words. Judith used her beauty to charm all the Assyrian soldiers so intensely that Holofernes thought it would be stupid to let her go without having intercourse with her. He invited Judith to a banquet, hoping to seduce her—just what Judith had hoped. But that was the beginning of his end because that night, Judith beheaded the great Assyrian general in his drunken stupor (13:7-8), and brought victory to Israel (11-15).

4.1.1 Judith Speaks Today

Judith depended on an on-going relationship she had nurtured with the Lord. Although she used violence to repel violence, it is clear that God permitted her action even if He did not originate it in her. The warrior God was in action in a woman, to deliver Israel. Judith “models right relationship with God in ways that shatter narrow orthodoxy” because in ancient Israel, it was unconventional for a woman to chop off a man’s head (13:8), tell a lie for the sake of God’s sanctuary and her people (11:8); upbraid the theology of the male leaders of her community (8:9-34), delegate the management of her household to a slave woman (8:10) and refuse to remarry (15:22) (New Jerusalem Bible: 573). Judith teaches that God does not need an army to save.

4.1.2 The Power of Prayers

The Book of Esther shows the potency of prayers offered out of complete reliance upon God. Mordecai and his niece Esther led the Jews to defeat violence. The Jews, according to Haman, their state enemy, constituted the single most significant obstacle to a unified government (Esther B.1-7), and were thus, to be shown no pity (B.6) because they were enemies of the state. Mordecai humbled himself before God by tearing his clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes (4:1). Then, he went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly, going only as far as the king’s gate (4:1-2), but informed the Jews about their plight. Every province in the empire that had Jews

living there mourned with fasting, wailing and weeping (4:3). These people understood the danger that threatened their existence. But he also involved his niece, Queen Esther, so that she may seek the intervention of the King in the matter, although they all realized that only God could save them. Esther instituted a fast and planned a concrete course of action. Although a very dangerous thing to do, Esther promised she would see the king. But she requested Mordecai to gather together all the Jews in Susa to fast and pray for her for three days and nights without food or drink. “When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish” (4:16). Mordecai’s operation has roughly three basic “P” components: 1) *Prayer* 2) *Plan* and 3) *Project*.

God overturned the situations, judged Haman and convince Xerxes on the need to issue a counter decree stamped with the royal seal that permitted the Jews to arm themselves in self-defense (8:11), because anything stamped with that seal cannot be revoked (8:8). In allowing this trend of things, the literature presents God operating in the natural course of a nation’s laws to honor His name and deliver His people but at the same time judge His enemies. Again, here as elsewhere in the Old Testament, self-defense was not undertaken without proper authorization and legitimization. God delivered the nation and promoted Mordecai as the second most important person in the Persian Empire (10:3). The Jews used violence only when it became necessary and was authorized by the government of the land.

4.1.3 The Wisdom of Solomon

The book explains some reasons behind certain oppressions of the righteous by the wicked. Often, because the world of the righteous contradicts the wisdom of the wicked (2:14), righteous people become strangely odd in the thinking of the wicked (2:15). They look upon their possessions and statuses and decide to “test” the

righteous by being cruel, and torment them, to “find out how calm and reasonable they are!” (2:19); and see if the God they proclaim to have and serve will protect them (2:20). In their wickedness, evil people do not see that they are wrong (2:21) and that death is the outcome of the Devil’s jealousy (2:24), rather than an invention of God (2:23). God on the other hand, protects the righteous (3:1; 5:15, 16). For their cause, He will go into battle and defeat the wicked. As warrior, God’s weapon is creation itself. Righteousness is His armor, genuine justice is His helmet. Holiness is His invincible shield, and anger is His sword. The forces of nature are God’s army including bolts of lightning, hailstones, oceans and rivers in flood, great windstorms, lawlessness, the ruin of the whole world and evil actions that destroy governments (5:17-23). In teaching about absolute power, mercy and justice (12:19), God reveals that one who is righteous must also of necessity, be kind.

4.1.4 The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach Eleazar (Ecclesiasticus)

Wisdom admonishes people to “stand up for what is right, even if it costs you your life; the Lord God will be fighting on your side” (4:28); and warns against doing what is destructive, whether significant or not, or being an enemy when one should be a friend (5:15). Just as adding logs to a fire might hurt the person adding the logs, sinners should not be provided with more opportunity to sin (8:10) because to such people, violence means nothing (8:16). And although a sinner awaits opportunity to use violence (11:32), God never intended human beings to be arrogant and violent (10:18). Similar to this thought is an even more forceful one, that God has never commanded anyone to be wicked or given permission to anyone to sin (15:20). Rather, people should have intense hatred for wickedness (17:26). Because human thoughts are so eclipsed by evil (17:31), they indulge in violence, even of words, that is, insults (27:15) and forget that “Every lawless act leaves an incurable wound, like

one left by a double-edged sword” (21:3). Also, situations like death, violence, conflicts, disaster, famine, sickness and epidemic are said to have been created because of the wicked (40:9).

God is again seen as the “warrior” who fights for His honor. Letter of Jeremiah 56 portrays Yahweh as a warrior who cannot compare with worthless idols who neither fight kings nor war against their enemies. The worthlessness of pagan idols and idolatry is also the key issue in Bel and The Dragon (esp. 1:3, 23, 28-32). God used Joshua (46:1) to fight a “holy war” (46:3); He fought His enemies at the pass of Beth Horon with a “hailstorm of devastating force” (46:5-6) and destroyed His enemies by a mighty roar of thunder from heaven (46:16-18). God used David to permanently crush the Philistines (47:2-7) and gave a reign of peace to Solomon (47:12, 16); and rescues all those who rely on Him and saves them from their enemies (51:8; cf. Baruch 4:21). This warrior God shelters His own even against the most wicked of kings in the world—lawless, hateful and defiant (Az 9).

4.1.5 Alexander the Great and the Maccabean Resistance: First Maccabees

First Maccabees introduces Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon, and his exploits in setting up his Hellenistic empire; and provides the context of the wars of the Maccabees. Hellenism was Alexander’s vehicle for making the whole world Greek. Greek culture and philosophy provided the *lingua franca* of the then known world. Christianity used the Greek language to produce the Septuagint and write the New Testament. Many early Christians used Greek philosophical categories to communicate their faith. Hellenism gave Christianity Greek head and feet.

After reigning for twelve years, Alexander became ill, divided his empire among his generals and died (1:1-7). Antiochus Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the Third, King of Syria, descended from one of Alexander’s generals. Antiochus

Epiphanes was a “wicked ruler” (1:10). After successfully capturing and plundering Ptolemy’s Egypt (1:16-19), Antiochus, in blatant arrogance led a great army against Jerusalem, entered the Temple and desecrated it. He also slaughtered many Jews and left great mourning and sorrow in his path (1:20-28). Alexander’s global hellenization philosophy and the violent activities of Antiochus IV, Epiphanes against the Jews, may underlie subsequent racial purity ideologies ever since, including the German Nazis and the holocaust, and even the ethnic cleansing wars of the 20th and 21st centuries. The Jewish response to Antiochus IV, Ephiphanes, led to the bloody resistance movements generally known as the “Maccabean revolt” or “Maccabean wars.” When provocation threatens existence as it does in these cases of violence, the natural human instinct is to respond with violence.

In the Maccabean situation, the Jews were divided in their responses. One group compromised and collaborated with the structures of violence; another upheld a nonviolent, nonresistant ethic, preferring to all “die with a clear conscience” (2:35-37). That response led to the death of a thousand people in one day. The other, represented by Mattathias and his sons, upheld active resistance, violent and nonviolent approaches to violence, depending on the circumstances at hand; although much of their story is of violence for survival. This group lived through violence spirals and died in combating violence. Throughout their struggles for survival, the Jews in the Maccabean tradition fought bitter battles, engaged in fervent prayers, participated in various diplomatic missions to broker peace, and motivated their people to keep the welfare of the Jewish people and the honor of God before them.

4.2 EVALUATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

4.2.1 Some Observations

Here are some observations that seem true of violence.

Violence invites, and breeds more violence. Responding to violence with violence, invites subsequent occasions of even more severe forms of violence.

Violence may lead to temporal peace and progress, but more often than not, it creates a violence spiral that continues ruins those involved.

A response of violence predicated on the assumption that nonviolence is open invitation for certain extermination may appear logical and realistic. But it undermines the truth that God is sovereign over violence. Survivals of the Nazi holocaust and similar systematic violence like those of Eastern Europe (former U.S.S.R.), China and recent global violence in Islamic countries, terrorist wars and Africa's bloodbaths, generally do not support the logic of violence in responding to violence. These experiences are increasingly defeating the logic of violence to deal with violence. Had the Maccabeans not begun this revolt, maybe God would have vindicated the Jewish nation through other means.

1. It is often difficult to know when God approves of a violent response and when He disapproves of it unless His people consult Him prior to such response. But constant fellowship and communion with Him are necessary to reveal His will.

Violent responses are an indication of willingness to prepare for more violence.

Prayer, fasting and diplomatic dialogue are significant nonviolent, proactive responses to violence.

4.2.2 Evaluation of Violence in the Deutero-canonical Books

The period before the New Testament showed different responses to violence.

Violence for self-defense. On the overall, the Jews believed in qualified self-defense under the guidance of Yahweh. Violent revolutionary action was necessary not just to procure peace, but also to ensure national survival. The isolated Modein massacre of a thousand Sabbath-observing Jews who offered no resistance to enemy assault was not the Jewish norm. But, it is clear that the Jews did not begin violence except in isolated cases. They responded to extreme provocation bent on dishonoring their God, as well as abusing their dignity. While they tolerated inhumane treatments done to them, some hard liners among them could hardly tolerate defamation of the name of the Holy God and of His temple. These represented the holy war tradition that justified war under conditions of religious defamation or provocation.

Submission to authority. The Jews were generally law abiding people who submitted to the powers over them. They knew that pagan powers ruled them because of their sin. During such periods, the Jews were generally peaceful and nonviolent. Instead of being violent, they were more involved with political maneuvers and diplomacy as further responses to violence. They realized that even if violence could save them, nonviolent peaceful settlements were more preferable.

Prayers, fasts and complete reliance on God. Under the Maccabees, prayer, fasting and complete dependence on God were critical responses to violence among the Jews. This tradition must have dated back to Moses, Joshua and King David who always inquired of the Lord before engaging in battles. That way, they were sure if the Lord commanded such battle, or if He would be with them to give them victory. Almost every time that happened, God fought for them, and they gave Him the credit.

A certain limited violence response also existed among the Jews. With few exceptions, they did not fight for the sake of fighting, or for supremacy. Neither did they fight because they hated their enemies and would do everything to get rid of them. But when the enemies forced a battle on them, they generally did not withdraw.

4.3 SUMMARY

Violence sometimes brought short periods of peace for the Jews. Like their Old Testament counterparts, Jews living during much of the intertestamental period did not make violence a way of life. However, whenever provoked beyond their abilities to bear, revolutionary Jews, under able leaders, sought to liberate themselves and the honor of their God from the claws of heathen powers—even if that meant using violence. War and violence for them were a matter of last resort, to be entered into with much prayers, fasting and guidance from God. Individuals like Judith and Esther took personal responsibility and great risks to respond to threats against the Jewish nation. While Judith combined piety with violence to deliver her people, Esther combined tact with diplomacy, not violence, to usher in an occasion of limited violence for self-defense to liberate her people.

The case of the Maccabees, though greatly extolled among the Jews, was probably an exception rather than the norm. In certain situations, God did allow the use of violence to respond to violence, even if He did not order it. Whenever He did, it was temporal. That violence was not the norm is demonstrated by the numerous occasions of peace brokering with various powers that the Jews undertook. Their determination to fight to death instead of running away from a battle was in realization of what the enemy might certainly do if they so easily gave in. Also, once they decided on violent responses, they automatically indicated their readiness for continued violence and counter-violence. That was why they had standing resistance armies. The social and political context of the Jewish homeland during this time

precipitated and actually preserved the culture of violence. Anti-Semitism with campaigns of racial superiority or ethnic cleansing, the Jews being the targets, often met stiff active violent responses. This tradition that colored much of the New Testament backgrounds, may, in fact, still be the major factor in current Israeli-Palestinian nationalistic violence in the Middle East. Even today, after so many years of violent armed conflicts, peaceful settlements in that part of the world are far from coming through violence. Negotiations and dialogues hold more promise.

CHAPTER FIVE

JESUS CHRIST'S TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES ON VIOLENCE

How men live, like what they believe, depends wholly on their response to the unceasing activity of the living God in their midst¹

It is common today to read about murder and violence in the name of God. This also existed in the time of Jesus, and some contemporary scholars suggest that Jesus was also a revolutionary...Jesus was a revolutionary—a spiritual revolutionary offering people a whole new life, for both time and eternity (Elwell and Yarbrough 142).

5.1 VIOLENCE AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) speak on violence, further demonstrating the “Yahweh as warrior” motif of the Old Testament.² So are those Christians justified who see in the Synoptic Gospels reasons to embrace and use violence when and if possible and necessary? What about those who disclaim any use of violence—physical and non-physical? What did Jesus teach and practice about violence? This work adopted the Markan chronology and because John’s Gospel is in many ways different from the Synoptics and written much later, it was treated together with his other writings as Johannine literature or writings. The basic question this chapter attempted to answer is: “what did Jesus teach and practice concerning violence—and why?”³ The chapter presented two specific types of violence: spiritual and physical but began with the spiritual because spiritual violence underlies the physical violence, and physical violence is a manifestation of spiritual violence. A text-critical analysis of variant readings of the passages studied was done and the conclusions of this work are based on the readings of the most reliable manuscripts.

5.1.1 Early Occasions of Violence

(Matthew 2:3-18)—Violence in Jesus’ pre-ministry experience: Herodian—Infanticide.⁴ The first context of physical violence in the New Testament is by Herod

the Great against baby Jesus. In executing baby boys under two years of age (Mt 2:16-18) Herod undertook an infanticide that fulfilled God's prophecy (Jer 31:15).⁵ Hendriksen described Herod as "capable, crafty, and cruel" (159). Neither the Bible nor profane history reports the response of the Jewish communities apart from their widespread mourning and weeping for their children. Protevangelion XVI.9-16 tells how Herod, having sought after baby John the Baptist and not found him, murdered John's father Zacharias, who was also a ministering priest in the Lord's temple. All Israel heard about the murder and "mourned for him, and lamented three days" (XVI.25). There could have been no better reason for insurrection against the government at this time. Yet, Matthew denounced "a ruler's injustice," and revealed Herod's senseless brutality by mentioning "the child and his mother" five times (Keener 110). Craig Keener noted that the "narrative laments injustice (2:18) rather than creates an ideal story world in which it does not exist" (110). But Hendriksen rejects the view that Herod slaughtered thousands of infants as "erroneous" and as "wrong" the notion that the event was punishment for the sins of the parents; and argued that Herod always allowed himself a very wide margin when it came to killing (181, 183). Even if Herod did not slaughter thousands of infants, as Hendriksen argued, that he order the slaughter some infants still occasioned violence and injustice to which some Jews might have considered reacting in violence. Ancient communities are known to have sometimes resorted to violence when a member of a community was violated. Israel's alleged response to Zacharias' murder and Zacharias' own remarks that if Herod shed his blood, God will receive his soul appear to fall between passivity and active reliance upon God, in realizing that He is in charge of situations.

In Mark 6:14-29, King Herod detained and executed John the Baptist.⁶ Herod Antipas was working violence against a helpless, innocent victim who had, in the

spirit of the witnesses of Yahweh, stood up for justice and truth against an unjust and immoral system. John's disciples and Jesus and His disciples seemed to have seen the incident as another of those sets of events "in God's sovereign will." There is no suggestion that John or his disciples here attempted any form of violence. When John's disciples heard what had happened to their master, they "came and took his body and laid it in a tomb" (6:29).

5.1.2 Jesus' Mission Statement (Luke 4:18-19)

(Luke 4: 18-19)—Jesus' mission statement. Following His temptation and victory of Satan, Jesus made a significant self-disclosure in Nazareth about His self-understanding.⁷ In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus stated as it were, His *mission statement*, an abridged version of Isaiah 61:1-11:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.⁸

Jesus' priorities were to *preach the gospel*, free the *oppressed*, and *heal* the sick. The *poor* implied what it did in the Beatitudes, that is, "poor in spirit," but it included the materially poor as well. Liberating the *oppressed* and the *prisoners* was not limited to the political and social agenda of liberation and political theologies. In fact, Jesus hardly released any political prisoner directly. He prefaced His mission to the oppressed and the prisoners in His desire to *proclaim freedom* to them. That will be His method of securing their freedom. In the same way, He will *proclaim sight recovery* to the blind and a message of *release* for the oppressed. The anointed preaching and proclamation of salvation, hope, redemption, recovery, and liberation, according to Jesus, constituted the sum total of His method of ministry or mission. All these seem to come together in what Jesus means by "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor," (Lk 4:19). In the Gospels, He executed this mission statement in

preaching deliverance from sin and reconciliation to God, exorcism and healing miracles, teaching kingdom ethics and living out His teaching right to the cross. In Him, a new battlefield was clearly demarcated and the strategies spelled out.

What began is an exulting worship service, with all the worshipers being “amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips” (4:22), quickly turned into an occasion of heightened tension, with the worshipers becoming “furious” (4:28) when they heard Jesus’ denunciation of their disposition toward Him and toward God (4:22b-27). In their fury, the people “got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff” (4:29). Beginning first with force, they were set on doing violence to Jesus next. But Jesus “walked right through the crowd and went on his way” (4:30). His own had rejected Him out rightly, once they knew His stand. The divine-warrior continued to press the battle against the enemy in graphic demonstration of His mission, by driving out evil spirits (4:31-37; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; 11:14-16); healing the sick (4:38-41; 5:6-26; 7:1-10; 8:40-49; 14:1-6; 17:11-19); raising the dead (7:11-17; 8:49-56); giving back sight to the blind (18:35-43); feeding the physically hungry (9:10-17); acting on behalf of the oppressed (7:36-50), and forgiving sinners their sins (5:8-11 [implied], 20); associating with the socially deviant (7:33-39); all of which are in keeping with His mission. Jesus also kept His focus of preaching the good news of the kingdom of God (4:43) and teaching the people God’s ways (5:1-3).

Even in instances like Simon’s encounter with Jesus, before Jesus could enlist him as His disciple (5:4-11), Jesus demonstrated that He had power over nature. There Jesus, understanding the frustrations of a hard working fisherman who had worked all night and caught nothing, made them to catch “such a large number of fish that their nets began to break” (5:6), and incident that made Peter fall on his knees at

Jesus' feet and proclaimed "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (5:8). Jesus continued to teach, preach and do miracles all in keeping with His focus. Once He had gathered a following, He taught them the meaning of His mission statement.

5.1.3 Spiritual Violence

(Lk 11:14-28)—The Beelzebub controversy.⁹ The Beelzebub controversy is another clear illustration of Jesus' mind on violence and warfare. Some Jews were already accusing Jesus of using magic or sorcery to achieve exorcism. Jesus defended Himself by pointing out that He drove out demons "by the finger of God," an expression equivalent to the "power of God." He, in effect, was arguing that it was God, rather than Satan, who was fighting against the kingdom of Satan because Satan would only break his own kingdom if he were fighting against himself. Jesus understood Himself as the warrior of Yahweh to rout the devil and his kingdom.

Satan is the strong man fully armed who guards his own house, and possession to ensure their safety. The language suggests that the strong man guards his possession jealously; his status as a fully armed man also points to his preparedness to use force to defend and keep his property (which he may also have gained by force). To overpower the strong man required a much stronger man and a battle. But when the stronger man overpowers the strong one, the previous divides up the latter's spoils (11:21-22). Longman III and Reid have argued convincingly that the metaphorical sense of this statement speaks about human souls in the grips of Satan and his demons (*cf.* 1 Infancy XIII.5 that refers to Satan as "this murderer"). It is in this hostile environment that Jesus, Yahweh's warrior, the stronger man, comes in, wages war on Satan and defeats him. After the defeat, He sets the prisoners (spoils) loose.

What is the significance of this controversy to the discussion of violence? It is that God, through Jesus Christ, is already at war with the forces of evil. Christ has

won the battle over the devil, although mopping-up operations will continue until He comes back to complete the entire operation. If Satan has kept humanity under the firm control of his grip, and uses them to do what he pleases, the duty of His followers is to join in that battle—not with the people who are already prisoners to Satan, but directly against Satan himself and his hordes of demons. Christ does not require His follows to engage in violent clashes with other human creatures. Instead, He enjoins them to enlist, as it were, in the mopping-up battles against the kingdom of Satan—this is a spiritual warfare. Beneath the physical manifestations of violence, Jesus identifies the root cause. The violence is a symbol of the problem. It requires violence of a different sort to counter act the manifested violence in the physical. No wonder Jesus continued, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters” (11:23). Christians are engaging the devil himself as they perform their duties for their master here on earth. Already, there is an ongoing battle against the kingdom of Satan that Jesus Himself is fighting. He has not instructed His followers to “scatter” the already scattered victims of Satanic oppression. Instead, they are to be salt and light in those places and to those people. Again, Jesus concluded this controversy with the words, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” It is highly improbable, again, to contend that Jesus wished His hearers to obey God’s word here by engaging in violence against other human creatures. Satan, not people, is the enemy.

The exorcisms, healings, and miracles must be understood in the paradigm of spiritual violence against the powers of Satan. They established fully that Christ is the Victor and is in charge. Jesus’ splendid demonstrations of power and authority over Satan and over nature show the divine prerogative in violence. His power over evil spirits (Mark 1:24-239; 3:15-22, 27; 5:3-7; 6:13; 9:17, 26); His healing of various

diseases; His authority over nature forces (calming the storm; raising the dead; multiplying bread and walking on the water), while not all in the spiritual violence discussion, nevertheless demonstrate His sovereignty over creation and are in keeping with His mission statement in Luke 4:18-19.

5.1.4 Physical Violence

(Matthew 5-7)—Violence in the Olivet Discourse.¹⁰ Jesus' first teaching on physical violence is His discourse in Matthew 5:10-12 about persecution for the kingdom of God. The response to violence He taught there was not active violence or passive submission, but active nonviolence—"rejoice and be glad." His first major teaching block on kingdom citizenship and ethics is Matthew 5-7. The Beatitudes about peace making and peacemakers suggest a violent context in which His disciples would make peace. The hallmark of the disciple of Christ seemed to be the disciple's life of self-denial, cross bearing and the actual following of the Master (Mk 8:34). The word order in the construction does not appear to order sequential stages in the walk of the disciple of Christ. Such would mean that a disciple would practice self-denial, then bear the cross and finally, upon completion of stages one and two, follow Christ. It would further imply that one did not become a true disciple of Christ until one had completed sequences one and two. Rather, in keeping with Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and the need to repent, this three-aspect formula of discipleship was really an all time, one-time ongoing process of growing in Him. Self-denial was both an attitude and activity of volition, in which the disciple began to walk as Christ walked. Such life was "hidden" in Christ and the disciple's only priority in life was the will and pleasure of the Lord Jesus Christ, in such a way that the cross of Christ was the sure way to the crown He would give.¹¹ A "now crown, no cross" theology guided the lives of Jesus' disciples (Cole 207). Jesus was summarizing the cost of

following Him and was not teaching that the disciple ‘throw’ away his or her life unimportant in a show of piety. But that the disciple’s priority remained the master’s pleasure. Jesus was teaching that if a disciple who had learned to deny self will certainly practice this virtue in the face of provocation to indulge in violence.

Jesus explained this principle much fuller in His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 5-7, when He taught that His disciples were to demonstrate a righteousness higher than that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law (5:20). His disciples were to be *salt* and *light* of the earth. They were to excel in service and influence their world. Excellence in service began with excellence in relationship with Christ and people. Self-denial, cross bearing and following Christ come alive in the disciple’s dealing with those who consider him or her an enemy. So Matthew 5:38-48 is the first major block to deal with violence and the disciple’s response in the New Testament.¹² Jesus first warned against legal retribution (5:38-39), then “undercut legal resistance altogether with a verse that, if followed literally, would leave most disciples stark naked (5:40)” and advocated compliance and “cooperation with a member of the occupying army who might be borrowing a worker from his livelihood” (Keener 195).

Was Jesus teaching retaliation or passivity? He taught neither of these in the passage cited. He taught nonresistance: “But you, Do not resist an evil person.” But why were the “you” (His disciples) to act different from all other people? What was Jesus teaching His disciples in this passage? Could His disciples choose to be equally violent, docile or non-violent? If non-violent, then, a significant element—forgiveness, comes into play immediately. Forgiveness and justice, in the mind of many, do not go together. There is tension between the two, to be sure. Justice demands that things be put straight and people get what they deserve. Forgiveness also demands that things be put straight, but that people get what they do not deserve.

Table 2**The Old Testament Context of *Lex Talionis***

NEW TESTAMENT	OLD TESTAMENT PARALLELS
<p>Matthew 5:38-48 You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.</p>	<p>Exodus 21:22-25 If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.</p> <p>Leviticus 24:17-20 If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. Anyone who takes the life of someone’s animal must make restitution—life for life. If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured.</p>

That is why Gregory L. Jones describes forgiveness as involving a profound disorienting yet life-giving transformation of people's life, their world, and their capacity for truthful communication.¹³ He observes that "forgiveness is an innovative gesture that breaks apart the logic of vengeance and violence, of repression and depression" (Jones xvi). This embodied way of life, Jones continues, unlearns violence by "habits and practices of forgiveness in the service of holiness" (Jones: 98). That means forgiveness breaks the logic of violence. How? By adopting a way of life that remembers the history of the sin, in order to be able one to renew the future, and recovers the memory by "moving initially from a third person stance of *holding* people (or oneself) responsible to a first person stance of *accepting* responsibility" (Jones 147). Jones observed that:

Christian forgiveness is not simply an activity, an emotional judgment, or a declarative utterance—though Christian forgiveness includes all those dimensions. Rather, forgiveness is a habit that must be practiced over time within the disciplines of Christian community (163).

Going back to Jesus, not that $\alpha\lambda\lambda\upsilon \ \omicron[stij] \ \sigma\epsilon$ in Matthew 5:39 is a very strong contraction that is antithetical in force, distinguishing between what everyone else heard and thought on the one hand, and what Christ's disciples as a different group were to be and do, on the other hand. This contraction forms a critical link in Jesus' teaching concerning various issues and how they related to His followers. The phrase "but you" pointed backward and forward simultaneously: backward to Christ's mandate that His disciples be salt of the earth and light of the world (5:13, 14) and forward to their nature as salt and light who would bring glory to their Father in heaven by not only their professions, but also by their deeds (5:16).

Lex talionis in context. The Jews did not originate the "eye for eye" and "tooth for tooth" tradition. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., showed that the Code of Hammurabi (206) and the Hittite Laws (10) prescribe a similar situation (Expositor's 2: 433).¹⁴ It limited

retaliation and put “an end to interminable blood feuds by precisely defining the amount of revenge permitted,” thereby making any repayment of injuries “at compound interest” (Connick 224). But the context of the “eye for eye” and “tooth for tooth” conclusion, earlier shown in Exodus 21:22-25, concerned injury inflicted on a pregnant woman or her baby where either a premature delivery or miscarriage (abortion) occurred as a result of men fighting or striving with one and not to a war situation or some violent clash of communities. In situations depicted by the context of Exodus 21:22-25, an independent authority (either husband or court) was to carry out the verdict already decided upon. Jesus knew that His hearers were very knowledgeable in these matters. But what was this “enemy” if which He spoke?

(Mt 5:39)—Understanding “resisting an evil person.” Adam Clarke’s interpretation of τὸ μὴ ἀποκρίσθαι, is in the spirit of the Lord’s teaching. “Do not repel one outrage by another,” thereby making yourself “precisely what the other is, *a wicked person* (Clarke 176). Jesus wanted to impress this truth that His disciples should never allow another person’s words, actions or dispositions to *determine* who they are. Myron S. Augsburger thinks similarly, that here, Christ’s call “frees one to live by His direction. We are free from having our behavior determined by the way we are treated” (76).¹⁵ Walter Wink charged the misunderstanding of the injunction, not to Jesus, but to the translators of the King James Version who made μή ἀντισθῆναι τῷ ἁποκρίσθαι to mean “Resist not evil,” adding that by doing so, they were more than translating Greek into English; they “were translating nonviolent resistance into docility. Jesus did not tell his oppressed hearers not to resist evil. That would have been absurd” (Wink 10). The right translation of the phrase, Wink insists is, “Don’t strike back at evil (or, one who has done you evil) in kind” (11). Of course, Jesus would not have been consistent Himself if He meant that His

hearers should not resist evil because He resisted evil all through His own life. How did He do it?

Jesus' next instruction about turning the other cheek should equally be interpreted in the same light. While Clarke observed that these exhortations "belong to those principally who are persecuted for righteousness' sake," it nevertheless extends to all Christ's disciples (76). For Augsburger, such action on the part of the disciple is proper because the disciple's life is propelled by a higher law, the law of Christ's love and freedom. If properly understood then, He means that for His disciples, retaliation is not an option. R.T. France elucidates this meaning even further in his interpretation of Matthew 5:39.

Do not resist is wider than 'do not retaliate'; it involves acceptance of ill-treatment, even...willing compliance. The verb *anthistemi* is sometimes used for 'take legal action against'. These verses are not, therefore, a prescription for non-violent resistance (as they are often interpreted), but for no resistance at all, even by legal means (126).

France's emphasis on the disciple's "willing compliance" and "no resistance at all, even by legal means," appears very problematic, though. The problem is not with the interpretation, but its significance, as the reader's response to the text. The principle of resenting every outrage was predominantly Jewish, and that fostered the "spirit of hatred and strife," as Clarke observed (76). Such social, cultural and even religious context is likely to interfere with a proper disposition to Jesus' meaning, which is why the verses are often interpreted in the lenses of non-violence only. Illustrating his point further, France compares the wording of verses 39-40 with Luke 6:29-30 and concludes that "Matthew's concern is particularly with cases of litigation rather than with violence, and verse 41 is also concerned with legal rights" (126). By restricting Jesus' meaning to personal rights, France does not see how these verses can be a "warrant for applying these principles to social ethics, still less to politics,"

nor how the identity of the evil one can be “the Evil One” (126). France is clearly overstating the case because the principles Jesus taught here can in fact be used in social ethics when the violation of personal rights involves more than a few persons at a time, although this is often difficult, as is the case when the rights of a group of people are abused or taken away by another.

Jesus spoke about the disciples’ reaction towards an evil person who strikes one of them on the cheek. To strike a person on the right cheek, one had to ordinarily use the left hand, and that was humiliating. In those days, the left hand was considered offensive because it was used to do unclean tasks, just as groups influenced by Islam and other African ethnic groups think of the left hand. How was a disciple to respond to this insult? Again, understand that Matthew’s context does not speak strictly to large-scale conflicts that employ violence, but it necessarily does not exclude that, either. It speaks to personal, individual matters as a person’s involvement with violence. The strike on the cheek understandably, is an example of a situation requiring one’s reaction— either of retaliation or otherwise. Assuming that the strike on the cheek did not result to serious injury or death, any of which disallowed the disciple to turn the other cheek, which made the option impossible, what was the disciple to do? Did Jesus in fact imply a situation in which the disciple was in a position to retaliate against the enemy? The context shows that this is the case. The one slapped or smitten was assumed capable of retaliating on similar or even worse terms because, were that not the case, Jesus would probably have no need to command or admonish His followers “not to resist” the evil person. It’s like telling a weak person not to confront a stronger one especially, where the stronger one would obviously overpower the weak. But who is this evil one?

Identifying an evil person. Tw/| ponhrw/| (dat.), ponhroj, refers to an evil person in absolute terms. Such person was generally regarded as capable of inflicting great damage on the victim. Literally, Jesus meant situations where an aggressor manhandled another in a fit of rage or where the aggressor simply took advantage of the victim. But if Jesus were addressing His disciples with an understanding that their reaction of nonresistance was in light of their helplessness against the wicked who inflicted suffering on them, it would then be very difficult to understand why He would in fact admonish them not to resist the wicked person. The outcome of such resistance was obvious, and He need not state it. That they were to act otherwise instead, demonstrates clearly that Jesus' disciples stood in a position of some advantage or at least, that they were capable of retaliating. But again, one must ask whether Jesus' meaning implied a group's action or reaction as well, or both. It does not appear to have concerted group effort in mind, but that may not be exceptional.

Turning the other cheek was not a sign of resignation or cowardice in the face of violence or aggression. It was not inaction as in the saying, "that sometimes the risk of inaction is greater than the risk of action" (Thomas 23). Rather, it was a demonstration of a much tougher and higher virtue than what Christ's hearers knew.¹⁶ The very normal and natural human response is not to turn the other cheek but to defend and resist the person from repeating that act which would further cement the aggressor's sense of arrogance, superiority or control over the victim, and the rendering of the victim hopeless, helpless and even useless! When Jesus admonished His hearers to turn the other cheek, He was largely instructing them to do something unnatural to human beings, but something very natural to God's nature and purpose. France warns against envisaging physical violence here, and accepts Jeremias'

explanation that leaves this in the concerns of religious persecution. But that too, does not seem to be the entire matter.

Why would the God of all creation, the Righteous Judge, admonish one group of people to act in such dangerous manner when He Himself had repeatedly revealed the high premium He places on human life? Or, must Jesus be read as speaking ironically? The very words and spirit of the Beatitudes betray such understanding. So, what then did Jesus mean? What if a person took advantage of another in ways other than smacking the cheek? If one person forced a law suit upon another, or snatched the tunic of the other, the one being sued was not only to allow the proceeding to go on, but was to also give up any right of ownership to his or her cloak. Of course, on the surface, that is ridiculous. Earlier, in Matthew 5:25, Jesus had instructed the disciples to settle matters quickly with their adversary who was taking them to court. Understandably, one is likely to object to this on grounds of injustice and probably cowardice. But viewed from Jesus' perspective, it is not. The way to conquer or prohibit violence and confrontation, Jesus seemed to be saying, is to be and do the opposite—the unexpected. Did Jesus make much sense to His Palestinian Jews under Roman authority? Their conclusion in Matthew 7:28-29, about the crowd's amazement and recognition of Jesus' extraordinary authority to teach revealed much.

Jesus illustrated His intention with the situation of forced labor. Using the prevailing Roman soldier's practice of "commandeering civilian labor in an occupied country" which the Jews fiercely resented, Jesus deliberately dissociated Himself "from militant nationalists. Rather than resisting, or even resenting, the disciple should volunteer for a further *mile* (the Roman term for 1,000 paces, rather less than our mile" and closer to a kilometer) (France 127). The next issue (Mt 5:43-48) intensified the tenor of the discourse. If the evil person in the first instance were not

specifically an enemy, the second instance made her or him an enemy. Yet, the evil person, adversary, and the enemy could be equated as holding the same place in Jesus' mind. Who was an enemy and how did one respond to an enemy? Jesus' classic formula set forth first the normal human response hinged on resentment, hatred, selfishness, fear, self-centeredness and self-preservation. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) explains Jesus' ideal of neighborliness. The neighbor was not just the person one knew next door, but the person in need of one's help. The enemy at once became one's neighbor. While the enemy's purpose (opposition and destruction of the people of God's community) was different, the disciple of Jesus was to still be a neighbor to the enemy. Jesus then contrasted the normal human tendency to love those who love us and hate our enemy with His ideal. "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." Love for the enemy is unnatural, probably abnormal and illogical, at least to a mind that is seethed in the customs of humanity. If one in a glass house threw stone at passers-by, the latter's response seemed very normal and reasonable—roll a boulder on the glass building! But no, Jesus was not going to uphold such ethic of cowardice. Clarke remarks:

This is the most sublime piece of morality ever given to man. Has it appeared *unreasonable* and *absurd* to some? It has. And why? Because it is *natural* to man to avenge himself, and plague those who plague him; and he will ever find abundant excuse for his conduct, in the repeated evils he receives from others; for men are naturally hostile to each other. Jesus designs to make men *happy*. Now he is necessarily miserable who *hates* another (77).

Unlike the Greeks who did not exclude even the enemy from the term *plhision*, the Jews considered only other Jews as neighbors and anyone else a natural enemy. Jews thought they had authority to kill an apostate Jew. But they could not harm the Gentiles in whose land they dwelled, although they felt compulsion to let Gentiles perish if they saw them in danger of death. Clarke presented this evidence:

“A Jew sees a Gentile fall into the sea, let him by no means lift him out; for it is written, *Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbour*:—but this is not thy *neighbour*” (Clarke 77).

(Mt 5: 43-47 cf. Lk 6:35-36)—Loving the enemy.¹⁷ A more mature and truly godly response is to first of all regard the enemy as a neighbor. What was Jesus’ justification for such response? Christ’s reason in this admonition is “so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” Eduard Schweizer cited Augburger as locating something utterly new in this ethic of Jesus, and noted that there was nothing unprecedented about the actual content of His message that could not find parallels in Judaism. Jesus’ ‘*But now I...*’ was something utterly new, and His call to love one’s enemies is not found in the same blunt terms elsewhere, either. Schweizer conceded that not only does this passage contain “the essence of the Christian ethic,” but it “is the distinguishing characteristic of Christian conduct (Augsburger 78-79). Jesus’ hearers knew the word (*αγαπα*) He used here.

Were Jesus’ hearers already not God’s children? And if they were not, would such action on their part alone make them become God’s children? But if the purpose was to make one become God’s child, what about those who were already God’s children—how were they to respond? No, Jesus must have meant something else. Not that behaving as such made anyone God’s child, but that being God’s children demanded such responses. He was saying something like, in your doing so, you continue to demonstrate that you are indeed God’s children. Here, Augsburger points to “the most important element in this passage” as “the strategy that moves from negativism to a positive course of action” (Augsburger 79). That is what being Christ’s disciple is all about. That is Jesus’ meaning of denying oneself, taking up one’s cross and following Him. The child of God lives like the Father, by showing strength and

heroism in overcoming evil with goodness. Does God's generous dispensing of grace to all mean that He is insensitive or unconcerned about wickedness and wicked people? Matthew does not make Jesus suggest this. The wicked or enemy and the child of God both had something in common which is not spelled out, but is equally implied in God's generosity to them. They are both created in God's image and therefore, have something very important in common. If the enemy and God's child both have something of God's nature in them (*imago-dei*), then one needs to look beyond the actions of another especially, when they are detrimental. Since the wicked was already by nature devoid of this God perspective, the child of God was required to uphold it and thereby show the enemy what it really is like to be human. R. T. France notes that, "Undiscriminating love will mark disciples out as *sons of your Father*, for the son shares the father's character, and it is the character of God to dispense his natural blessings on all alike"; and adds that the disciple "must not just be on a level with other men; he must do more..." (France 129).

What Jesus laid down in this teaching then, is, "not a surrender but a strategy of operation" (Augsburger 79). The highest goal of the child of God is to become like the Father and live in such a way as to glorify the Father. This seems to be best shown in a context hostile to God's way, purpose and intention in the same way that the lone North Star's brilliance is most commanding from earth during the darkest night. The whole point of God loving and saving sinful humanity through the death of His Son is the grandest demonstration of this admonition. Thus, it was unprofitable, inconsequential and ungodly to love one's neighbor and hate one's enemy. Jesus instructed that His disciples should instead love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them without discrimination.

A protester may object to this and ask, ‘if that is the case, what will the world be like if God’s children loved their enemies and prayed for their persecutors and did not oppose, resist or fight against them physically? Will that not strengthen the arms of wickedness and evil?’ Admittedly, that is a difficult question to answer and there are no simple answers either. But if the Creator and Sustainer of all creation meant these words as they are, He must then have some way of dealing with the perplexities that go with them. Keener pointed that Jesus demanded nonresistance toward evil people who assault the honor or possessions of Christ’s children. But more than that, Christ’s disciples should actively love their enemies, who probably consisted of various kinds—personal and corporate.

Understanding what Jesus meant by an enemy is very significant to employing His method of dealing with such a one. In plain language, an enemy was someone set to destroy another and not one working in one’s interest. The enemy had various options at his or her disposal to destroy the disciple of Jesus. Yet, Jesus said His disciple was to love not only the neighbor, but particularly, the enemy. To argue however, that a slap on the cheek is not as grave as say, an attack with swords and machetes, rifles or grenades, appears legitimate. But, in the mean, the same principle or set of principles that govern the one govern the others, and that is more crucial.

(Lk 10:25-37)—Illustrating love for enemy. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was such an effective illustration of the loving enemy principle. In the parable, a certain man from a tribe the Jews considered ‘ungodly’, fell into the ambush of highway robbers who beat him almost to death. The parable does not say whether the victim of this violence was a Jew or non-Jew, but there are hints that he might have been a Jew. Anyway, it was a Samaritan who saw one in need of him; felt his agony, and acted *unnaturally* to demonstrate something uncommon in human experience. He should

have been the one to pretend not to have seen the victim of the robbers just as the two Jewish religious leaders before him did. But the Samaritan chose to act differently, to love an enemy or more positively, to be a neighbor. Thus, the Good Samaritan parable provides a paradigm for responding to such issues as violence, although in a different context. In the story, Jesus shows how the determined action of one person can span a schism of hatred and intolerance such as was between Jews and Samaritans. Such action could restore trust and warmth to the hostile relationships between Jews and their Samaritan neighbors. Jesus concluded with a simple, but pointed instruction in response to the legal expert's question (10:25): "Go and do likewise." (10:37b)

5.1.5 (Matthew 10:34-36; cf. Luke 12:49-53)—Meaning of the Sword

Matthew 10:34-36 is, properly understood, not in the tradition of the violence discourse. But some people quote and misapply this passage to derive biblical grounds for their convictions. The passage parallels what Prophet Micah wrote (Micah 7:6) only in part, and may also have Exodus 32:26-28, the Golden Calf slaughter in mind—"Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." The choice to serve the LORD is the choice to die to self. Jesus fulfilled an aspect of Micah's prophecy.

For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her other-in-law—a man's enemies are the members of his own household (Micah 7:6).

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

Matthew 10:34-36 may not be properly understood without going right back to Matthew 10:1ff, where Jesus began his second major block of teaching. First, He called the Twelve, gave them authority and sent them out to do ministry. This chapter is more like the sort of briefing a general would give his soldiers before they take off for some special operation. In this briefing lecture, Jesus warned His followers about

what they should expect, both good and bad. As they experienced the joy of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healed the sick and performed miracles, they were also to expect their subjection to hostility from fellow human creatures who would oppose them *for the sake of Christ*. In this teaching about persecution and difficulties, which would come upon them, Jesus intensified the discourse by warning them of the tendency of the gospel to rift family members and set them against each other morally, simply because of their different convictions. This is how Clarke envisages the import of the Lord's teaching at this point:

Do not imagine, as the Jews in general vainly do, that I am come to *send forth*, (ballein,) by *forcing* out the Roman power, that *temporal prosperity* which they long for; I am not come for this purpose, but to send forth (ballein) the Roman *sword*, to cut off a disobedient and rebellious nation, the cup of whose iniquity is already full, and whose crimes cry aloud for speedy vengeance (125).

But there is a certain element of Christ's teaching that extends beyond the Jewish land for which Clarke's statement of the import of the teaching does not account. It misses an important transition between it and the point of verses 35-39. If verse 34 is limited to the Jews and their land only, what follows could hardly be binding on all Christians. While accepting εἰρήνην as an expression of "all possible blessings, temporal and spiritual; but especially the *former*," we must understand that the Messiah's peace "is much more than the absence of fighting, which men dignify with the name of 'peace'; it is a restored relationship with God" (Clarke 125; France 188). France and Augsburg are right in not identifying the *sword* here with military conflict, as Clarke intimated.

When a member of a household became a believer in Jesus Christ, the household did not necessarily convert to Christ. And particularly, for a Jew who left Judaism for this newer sect that the Jews regarded as illegitimate, there was bound to be religious dichotomy, and hence, differences of interests and loyalties in the same

household. The teachings of Jesus required a radical (not physically violent) separation from sin and the world system in as much as it was opposed to God and to His cause. It was to embrace God's righteousness, justice, mercy, love—virtues that the world system could hardly offer in any significant quantities or understand. The fanatical religionist would be the very betrayer of family members, even if that meant their death. Thus, in so doing, a status quo of instability, frustrations and problems which disrupted the calm of the family's life would ensure—all *because* of Jesus Christ. So while Jesus brought peace (restored relationship and fellowship back with God) into the life of another, His presence in the one was the absence of that peace in another who did not yet know Christ. That way, Christ would be bringing a sword (an instrument of instability as well as of judgment) in the family, thereby making a person's enemy to be the members of his or her household. Augsburg captured this meaning well in stating that,

Jesus Christ is the most divisive Person in the world. When we know about Him we are either for Him or against Him...While the Messiah had been announced as the Prince of Peace in Isaiah's prophecy (9:6), a new element is introduced with the Messiah as an agent of division. It should be understood that when God confronts us in the person of Christ it is not by law or philosophy from which we can select parts which we accept and reject others. When confronted with a Person we must either accept or reject Him (140).

To this, France added:

...Jesus speaks here, as in the preceding and following verses, more of a division in men's personal response to him. As long as some men refuse the Lordship of God, to follow the Prince of peace will always be a way of conflict (188).

Jesus illustrated that the "harmless" agents of God will proclaim the kingdom uncompromisingly, and that will be the cause of their persecution by others (Keener 330). That being the case, we should interpret Matthew 10:34-39 together with 32-33 because they address similar subject matter. Jesus did not place a sword in the hands of His disciples for either defending themselves, or waging offensive militant

conflicts against their “enemies.” As a matter of fact, while others hostile to the Christian may label the Christian as an “enemy,” Christ does not give His followers the pleasure of calling any human being an enemy, apart from where the later opposed Christ, His gospel and cross. These the apostles termed “enemies of the cross of Christ” or similar descriptions. These enemies were largely encountered in the realm of false teaching and anti-Christian propagations behind which stood the Devil himself. A brief look at the *ma, cairra*, sword, would clarify the matter further.

Ma, cairra in Jesus’ mind: The Greeks used two words for the sword: *ma, cairra* and *ρομφαία*. Jesus used the former in the passage above.

The *ma, cairra* was a *large knife* or a *short sword*, a common weapon among the Greeks. The *ρομφαία* on the other hand was a large *broadsword*, little used among the Greeks though often used by other nations (Custer 69).¹⁸

The Greeks used the *ma, cairra* in battle. Abraham took it when he went to offer Isaac as sacrifice to God (Ge 22:6). The psalmist in 57:4 spoke of the wicked as “men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.” The point of this metaphor is obvious. We cannot carry on personal revenge, nor are nations to do legitimate aggressive or offensive wars. However, we may and should defend against robbers and murderers as individuals and groups.

Hating the enemy is more a rabbinical inference not in Leviticus 19:18; and not in the Talmud. Hate (Lk 14:26)— Jesus could not have meant that He delivered a sword (a weapon for fighting, and destruction) into the world, thereby taking away the peace of the world. Such wooden literalism would clearly contradict His earlier and other teaching concerning how His followers should live with other people. In the household where Christ becomes Lord and Savior of some and not of the others, it is the non-believers who would become enemies of the believing family members. Jesus here was simply warning His followers as to what to expect as they proclaim the

gospel. He cannot now be putting a sword into the hands of His disciples for the sole purpose of taking away the peace of the earth when He had expressly taught that those who make peace are blessed (Mt 5:9). Nor, how should His followers love their enemies when they are also expected to use Jesus' sword to take away the peace of those enemies? When Jesus said that He had come to turn members of a household against themselves, we must understand this in the context of what the gospel causes in a family where some members believe and others reject.

He buttressed this conviction further on the teaching of verses 37-39, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me..." Macairan then, must be understood first of all, in a moral-metaphorical sense, although the believer's enemy could also use it literally to inflict the real injury—in and through persecution. The paradoxical statements of verses 37-39 certainly betray any interpretation of this teaching of Jesus as meaning His authorizing His followers to use His sword to take away peace from their enemies, or establish that peace for themselves through the use of the sword. Also, if we maintain that by the sword Jesus meant His disciples should now engage in self-defense, how do we align that with the assurance in 10:20-31 that His disciples "can trust God's sovereignty in their protection or their death?" (Keener 327). We must understand Jesus literally as meaning just what He said: *on account of Him and His teaching, people will naturally divide in opinions, lifestyles, purposes and actions*. The believer in Jesus would live contrary to the expectations of the non-believer and vice versa.

Furthermore, Jesus made no mention regarding what the hated one (i.e., the believer) should do. But we can still infer His response to this to the teaching to rely on God's sovereignty, no matter what the situation. Now, if Jesus' purpose was to place swords at the disposal of his disciples, He would have also clearly instructed

them on when to use them. Instead, Jesus followed up the statement with injunctions that make certain ethical and spiritual demands on the faithful disciple of Christ. Arching over to verse 34, and bending forward again to verses 37-42 leaves us with one legitimate conclusion: that Jesus was teaching His disciples about what it would cost them to follow Him—everything they valued, including their lives.

(Luke 12:49-53)—Not peace but division. This passage is essentially identical to, and elaborates on the discussion immediately above. When Jesus had taught and exhibited peace as a result of His gospel and as a significant part of the kingdom of God, does He now contradict Himself? What fire has He come to cast upon the earth (12:49) and why? If He did not come to bring peace, but division, did He also come to bring all that came along with the division?

A careful reading of this passage is necessary to locate the sense of Jesus' utterance. Although Luke 12:49-53 could have well fitted immediately after 12:12 (the Holy Spirit defending the believers), in which case 12:13-48 would have been parenthetical, it nevertheless fits well where it is. Jesus had completed demonstrating the futility of life hung on earthly possessions only (in the Parable of the Rich Fool, 12:13-21); had warned His hearers against worrying about the mundane necessities of life (12:22-34) and had encouraged them to confide in God because He is pleased to give them the kingdom. Rather than being foolish (*cf.* Parable of the Rich Fool) and anxious (distractions from faith in God), Jesus' hearers were to be wise. Jesus selected the best method to illustrate what this wisdom was like, with another parable about "men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet" (12:35-40). Because these servants did not know when their master would return, either early or late in the night (12:38), they were better off staying alert and watchful. That is the meaning of Jesus' "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning" language (12:35a).

The Good News Version's, "Be ready for whatever comes" rendering captures the heart of the implied "service." That this service (or "whatever comes") did not exclude violence by thieves, which only a well prepared and ready group of watchful men could avert or put down is clear later on in the passage (12:39). No house owner would ever let thieves break into his house and plunder his goods if he knows when the thieves would come. Part of the responsibilities of the watchful servants was to put down any threat to the interest of their master, and if necessary, use forceful (and perhaps, counter-violent means). However, the point of their being ready with their lamps burning is sufficient proactive measure which if taken, may actually eliminate the need for force or violence. No enemy, fully aware of the true state of preparedness of an opponent, will venture into attacking unless it was sufficiently clear that the opponent was ill-prepared and inert.

Peter wanted to know who these prepared and well-dressed servants were. "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" (12:41) He inquired. In His response, Jesus then posed another question—a common but effective teaching method. The well-dressed and watchful servant was the faithful and wise manager of his master's house, Jesus narrated. Such a servant supervised the affairs of the other servants and made sure that everyone remained focused on course, doing the master's will. On the contrary, the ill-prepared and not alert servant was the one who presumed that his master would not return early, and who consequently began to live as he pleased—beating the others, eating and drinking. Such servant is wicked, unready, unwatchful, and therefore, a suitable candidate for the master's wrath. Jesus ended His explanation with the often quoted "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (12:48b).

The lesson about the two types of servants (the prepared and unprepared) is further intensified by the teaching in verses 49-53, which follow verse 48 immediately. There Jesus envisages two categories of people again—His followers and those who are not His. And, in the same family, where there are those who follow Christ and those who do not, there can be nothing like a simple, common perspective. The two groups of people would perceive reality differently and order their priorities and lifestyles differently. Dale Yocum's Creeds in Contrast discusses the Calvinist—Armenian doctrinal controversy. This “creeds in contrast” perspective is what creates a natural division between the allegiances of the various members of the family where some are Christians and others are not.¹⁹ Those who follow Christ will want to please Him and those who do not, will be loyal to their own priorities. Their division may or may not lead to lethal physical violence, although that is not excluded, either.

It is probably best to understand Jesus' utterances as paradoxical rather than ironical or contradictory because embracing the gospel of Christ opens one to a certain degree of estrangement from one's family and relatives, where the later are not believers. At the same time, the same gospel that gives peace to the believing family member condemns the unbelieving one, giving them no peace. It does not rob them of their peace because to begin with, they simply did not have any peace. With the gospel comes peace and that is why the same family can experience a situation of the simultaneous presence and absence of peace in the lives of its different members.

Even here, as before, Jesus continued to prepare the minds of His followers against what was awaiting them. Peace was to be found only in union with Him. Outside Him was no peace. Therefore, Jesus was warning about strife, division, hatred and violence that will sure come because one is a Christian. His use of future perfect tense only reports the result of future situations in the present, and the division He

speaks about is neither about the believer's response to, or engagement in violence of any sort apart from that already discussed against Satan, and about the watchful servants. This is simply a true description of a family with members that follow Christ and others that do not, and may be extended to a community, society or nation. The center of such family is divided, and so is the family. They can agree on many common things but not on the fundamental issues of truth, reality and how to relate to those truths. To that extent, the gospel of peace is at once the gospel of division—a division that does not necessarily imply violence or the absence of it. Jesus is therefore not advocating violence when He said, "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (12:49).

5.1.6 (Mark 8:34-38; 10:29-31; Mt 16: 24-26; Lk 9:23-25)—The Cost of Discipleship

Following Jesus, then, meant that the disciple would prefer Christ to self. Only then, and because of that would a person put Christ in the center stage of his or her life. A father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, relations, and possessions would not hold center together. To do so was to put the cart before the horse and the implications of such action was the same as putting self in center stage. Christ spoke about occupying that center stage, having no other rival loyalties. Matthew 5:39 particularly, argues forcefully against any interpretation of the use of some sword that Jesus supposedly placed at the disposal of His followers to avert this cost of discipleship. The sword, as a weapon of defense, if properly used saves one's body from harm. Jesus would then be absolutely contradicting Himself to quickly turn around and tell His followers that if they sought to save their lives by use of the sword, they would lose the very lives they sought to save, with the very sword He supposedly gave them. *Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life*

for my sake will find it (Mt 16:25) then, must be understood as this: the disciple whose focus is to protect or save his or her life, will be unable to do so. Yet, the one who will sacrifice all that he or she has and is, for Christ, will have no need to defend his or her life, or property. Christ will keep such a one secure or protected—in life or in death.

If misinterpreted, the verse would make a wonderful support for a campaign of Christian conquest for Christ, where the warrior sought to defend the cause of Christ and even lose his life in the battlefield, if need be, in order to save it. However, the good news is that, Jesus simply did not teach this, nor did Matthew imply it.

5.1.7 (Matthew 11:12)—Violence Against the Kingdom of God

Matthew 11:12 speaks of violence against the kingdom of God. “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.” It is legitimate to ask about the forceful advancement of the kingdom of God since the time of John, and how forceful men have laid hold of it. The context of this verse would hardly suggest that Jesus is here teaching about the kingdom’s use of physical violence to spread or grow. The forceful advancement of the gospel or kingdom of heaven must be understood in its struggle, victory and advancement over and in a wicked system that holds human beings captive in their sin. The gospel breaks the force of sin in people’s lives and sets them free. As the note in the NIV Study Bible on Matthew 11:12 notes, those set free then become disciples of Christ, employing all the “spiritual courage, vigor, power and determination” they can muscle up “because of ever-present persecution.”

John Fletcher looked at the nature of the kingdom and how the violent take it by force. He rightly observed that the context of the word allude to taking of a fortified town by strength or force, the most dangerous of all military expeditions (263). In his work, Fletcher identified the kingdom as that of “grace, which brings

down a heavenly nature and felicity into the believing soul” (262). Within the believer, the kingdom is “righteousness and peace, and joy. It is Jesus apprehended by faith, as given for us; as felt by love, as living in us. In a word, it is the image of God lost in Adam and restored by Christ;—pardon, holiness, and happiness issuing in eternal glory” (Fletcher 262). What kind of violence then, does the kingdom suffer? Fletcher lists that to lords who reign over us: “the world, the devil, and the flesh”—rebels that must be “turned out”: our own wills that must be overcome, and our selves surrendered to God as our “lawful and chosen sovereign”; and “humble, holy, sacred violence” in prayer” (262).

Therefore, the violence spoken of here cannot mean any military campaign, offensive or defensive, except in spiritual warfare. It is here that the citizens of the kingdom, like Jacob of old, wrestled “violently” with God in prayer, not with weapons of destruction, but with the ammunition of total self-surrender to the sovereignty and purpose of God.

(Lk 12:1-12)—The one to fear. When Jesus had reprimanded the religious leaders (11:33-52), fierce opposition grew against Him (11:53). He then began chapter 12 with admonitions for His followers to begin to anticipate what was awaiting them. Beginning with 12:4, Jesus instructed His disciples not to fear “those who kill the body and after that can do no more.” Instead, they were to fear “him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell” (12:5). These were early hints on the sort of life the disciples should expect. The full force of this comes in verses 11 and 12. The disciples would be brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities. At such times, they were not to worry about how to “defend” themselves or what they will say. The Holy Spirit would be their teacher, to tell them what to say—not what to do. The stress of the passage is not “doing” but “being.” The context is opposition

against the believers because of Christ, with persecution in mind. Jesus instructed that His disciples were to rely not upon themselves, but upon His Spirit for their defense.

5.1.8 (Luke 22:36)—Buy One Sword

Jesus not only taught about violence, He also experienced violence unjustly. Jesus spoke often about violence against Him (His soon coming passion, Mark 10:32-34; Luke 9:21-22, 44; 18:31-32), in order to put them in a proper frame of mind to deal with the situation in keeping with His teaching. He taught about violence against Him in the Parable of Tenants (Mk 12:1-12; Mt 21:33-44; Lk 20:9-19). The Parable revealed the injustices of organized religion against Christ because the Jewish leaders who considered God as their God were the very ones who were doing violence to God. It also showed that God will overthrow injustice, by enthroning justice, but does not teach that Christians will do so with violence. Luke records how the people remarked, “May this never be!” when they heard the parable. Responding, Jesus asked, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (Lk 20:17-18).

How did His hearers understand this parable? Matthew 21:45-46 and Luke 20:19 confirm that the teachers of the law and the chief priest realized that Jesus was referring to them in the parable, but that did not break their resolve to get rid of Him. They sought for ways to arrest and kill Him just as He had predicted of them.

Mark 14; Matthew 26; Luke 22 and 23 discuss the fulfillment of violence against Jesus, beginning with His betrayal by Judas. The evening Jesus instituted the Last Supper with His disciples, He clearly stated that His body had been given and His blood poured out for them. Then He continued on to encourage His disciples with what would be His final discourse with them before His crucifixion. To Simon, Jesus

pointed out how Satan had desired to sift him as wheat, but that He had prayed for Simon. Peter understood Jesus and declared vehemently that he was ready to go with Jesus into prison and death (Lk 22:33). Again, Jesus told Peter what would happen to him that night. Then He turned to the disciples and spoke very briefly but crucially. “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” Jesus asked. Clearly, He was referring to His sending the Twelve and the Seventy-two. When they replied that they lacked nothing, Jesus gave them this instruction in Luke 22:36-37:

But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.”

At first glance, Jesus seemed to have authorized His disciples to change the methods and means of their ministry. Before, He was with them and they needed nothing apart from what He had given them or allowed for their use. “But now” is a phrase that clearly points to a shift in emphasis. Doing ministry when Jesus was gone would present new and complex challenges for which the disciples had to take up personal responsibility. Where a disciple had a purse and a bag, he needed to take them in the new method of ministry context. He was saying that if they did not need any longer to depend on what others would give to sustain them in ministry, then they had better learn to take care of their own needs. Furthermore, those who did not have a sword were to sell their cloaks and obtain for themselves one. The instructions about provision of needs do not pose much problem. If Jesus' instructions had stopped at that point, there would be no further discussion on the issue. But He went further to instruct them to buy swords. For what purpose? What did His physical presence do that would be lacking when He was gone for which they needed swords? Was He in effect putting in place a little band of revolutionaries who would continue the ministry in the spirit of the new instructions? Did Jesus expect the disciples to defend their

lives with the swords and at the same time preach a gospel of love and liberation? And, if He meant that the Twelve should live their lives by the sword, did He also imply that His later followers should do the same? Had this been the case, a theology of self-defense and violence would have easily been built from the lips of Jesus Himself, not minding how that would have contradicted all His previous teachings.

Albert Barnes acknowledged the difficulty in interpreting why Jesus gave instructions for His disciples to arm themselves. Were they to arm themselves against Judas? According to Barnes, Jesus' "directives about the purse, the scrip, and the sword were not made with reference to his *being taken* in the garden, but with reference to their *future life*" (150). But of what future life was Barnes speaking? There is no doubt that the countryside was infested with robbers and wild beasts—dangerous; and that it was customary to travel about armed, but were those situations any different than they were when Jesus was with them? Although Barnes thinks that by arming the disciples were prepared in the unusual way to meet the obvious dangers, he quickly warns that Jesus was not giving a specific, positive *command* to procure a sword. Instead, Jesus was warning them about the great dangers ahead such that they needed provisions suited for their changed manner of life. But this interpretation does not answer how the sword will enhance their ministry. If Jesus required these Galilean fishermen who were adroit at fishing to leave their profession and follow Him, why would He now ask them to arm with swords? How were the swords "appropriate" to the new life they would lead? Barnes adds that it was

a *prediction* that they would soon leave the places which they had been accustomed to, and go into scenes of poverty, want, and danger, where they would feel the necessity of money, provisions, and the means of defense. All, therefore, that the passage justifies is—1st. That it is proper for men to provide beforehand for their wants, and for ministers and missionaries as well as any others. 2nd. That self-defense is lawful. Men encompassed with danger may lawfully *defend* their lives. It does not prove that it is lawful to make *offensive* war on a nation or on an individual (150).

Barnes maintains that those disciples who did not have a sword were to procure one at any expense, such that even if it meant selling their garments. All of this was to stress the urgency of the dangerous situation which would be their new ministry context. However, if self-defense was lawful as Barnes sustains, it is difficult to understand why Jesus would prohibit Peter and the disciples from exercising this lawful duty at the arrest scene. Or, was this a literary device of omission whereby the hearers were to automatically understand the desired conclusion of the statement or an irony? Unless this interpretation is one of the “all things” the Counselor would teach (Jn 14:26) after the departure of Jesus, there is need to consider the entire passage.

5.1.9 (Luke 22:38)—The Meaning of the Two Swords

What did the disciples think two swords would do? Or, were they trying to arm Jesus so that the prophecy can really be fulfilled? That is unlikely. They probably believed that Jesus would present thanks to God, holding up the two swords as He did the two pieces of fish and five loaves of bread, and pray for God to multiply the weapons for their use. That could not have been too far from their minds, otherwise, what did they expect two swords to accomplish among them? The disciples wanted to arm for what was ahead. Jesus’ response to their gesture is most revealing. “It is enough” (Lk 22:38). Scholars differ over how to interpret this. Some think of it as an irony that rebukes the disciples for thinking two swords were enough among twelve, against the challenges that would face them. Others hold that it was a rebuke for their misunderstanding Jesus too literally. Two swords in this situation were simply absurd. Barnes draws attention to Jesus’ statement, “it is enough,” not that “*two swords*” were enough (151). Granted. This is why the NIV and NLT translations of “That is enough” and “That’s enough” respectively are better than the KJV’s “It is enough.” Between the ironical and literal interpretations lie the thrust of Jesus’ comment. Jesus

was saying something like, “are you so dumb to think that I am speaking about two pieces of metal blades for weapons? How can you ever think that I am asking you to arm yourselves with literal swords? Enough of your dumbness to understand spiritual things! Didn’t you understand what I have just said about being counted among transgressors? Friends, I do not mean what you mean.” The three-word statement, “that is enough” means “drop the discussion and let’s move on to something else.”

If that does not seem convincing that Jesus had no intention for His disciples to arm for a self-defense or offensive guerrilla warfare, at least, He would have demonstrated His real intention at the scene of His arrest in Luke 22:47-53. Judas led the arresting party and when the rest realize their predicament, they sought Jesus’ permission or command to engage the enemy not in self-defense, but offensively. “Lord, should we strike with our swords?” They asked (22:49). Without waiting for His response, one of the disciples (Peter, Jn 18:10) struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear (22:50). He was battle ready. At least from that action, it is not likely that the disciples had only two swords because they knew that with only two swords, they were virtually at a loss because Matthew 26:47 shows that the arresting party was well armed. Or, did this disciple who struck the servant’s ear act out of fear or prematurely, without waiting for Jesus’ instruction for them to attack? Or did he expect the others to join him in a unified attack on the arresting party? These questions are difficult to answer. But, we must once more look at the commander-in-chief, Jesus. What did He expect and what did He do at that moment? Hours before this moment, Jesus had not briefed His disciples about any battle attack, even if someone argued that He had suggested the need fight. At least He would have mapped out some sort of strategy. Besides, instead of discussing battle plans with the disciples, Jesus had been praying His soul to God and asking the disciples to pray

with Him, although they were too tired to pray. They just slept (22:40-46). A troop of warriors who even pray before they fight would not continue to pray until the battle is upon them. Next, had Jesus intended His followers to use their swords why did He order: “No more of this!”? (22:51) and restored the man’s ear, fully healed after Peter had cut it? If He had the power to heal an ear cut fresh that moment, didn’t He also have power to get away from the arresting party as He had so often done before when the religious system tried to arrest and kill Him? Can it be that Jesus was providing a forum whereby His disciples can work out plausible solutions and responses when faced with such crisis? What was Jesus’ problem?

There can be one and only one proper interpretation of this narrative. There is nothing the redactors wanted to hide and there is no *sensus plenior* issue at stake here. All of Jesus’ predictions about His soon coming death, His pointing to scriptures about the same event and His prayers moments before the arrest clearly reveal that it was His time to fulfill all that had been written about Him. He had to die and He had no intention of putting up a defense team to strike His opponents with swords and clubs. The meek and compassionate Christ had come to earth for this very purpose and moment. That is exactly why in Luke 22:52-53 and Mark 14:48 He asked the arresting party if He was “leading a rebellion?” Also, that throughout the process of His interrogation no charge of insurrection was raised against Him strengthens further the argument that Jesus had no inkling of violence in His mind. This was the hour of His opponents—”when darkness reigns,” Jesus reminded them (22:53). In John’s gospel, Jesus simply asks Peter, “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” to argue the same case. Even if He had thought about violence, a higher priority now controlled Him, the Father’s will. John 18:5 reports that the arresting party “fell to the ground” when Jesus showed Himself to them. This alone is enough to establish that

He did not need swords to defend Him. If that is not convincing either, Matthew 26:53 has Jesus asking Peter: “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

Even after His death, burial and resurrection, His disciples were still confused about all that had happened and their part in it. Jesus again reminded them how the messiah “must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again” (24:7; *cf.* 24:25, 26, 44-46). His message was consistent: He had come to give His life in order to redeem the world. That was the mission He had announced in Luke 4:18-19, in the Synagogue worship.

Finally, had Jesus meant that His followers should continue or even anticipate some sort of military activity to which they as a group or a portion of a group must respond with violence, His last words in Luke 24:47-49 would have contained some instruction about this, too. Their new mission was to be His witnesses. He had come to suffer and rise from the dead for repentance and forgiveness of sins to be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. His best friends were to witness to these truths. Then He promised that He would send them what His Father had promised; but they were to remain in the city until they had been clothed with power from on high. Nothing about resorting to violence because Christ would no longer be with them is suggested in these last words. They were to be heralds of the good news of God’s redemption through Christ. That was their new mission and the mission of all those who would come after them. And it would be characterized by persecution, pain, suffering and death. But they were to persist until the end.

Luther’s method of resolving the violence problem. Martin Luther’s spiritual and secular man or *two kingdoms, two citizens* principle distinguished between the

spiritual and secular person. As a Christian, a person would act one way rather than the other. But as an officer in government, the Christian government person (secular to some extent) was to execute the functions of government, thereby acting not in self-interest but in the interest of others. Such a person may go to court if he or she could not bear the weight of some offense, but could not resort to self-defense because the civil law did not allow for self-defense as it not only interfered in the judge's office, but also a usurped the judge's right for the victim. By making self-defense unlawful, Luther had actually provided recourse to legal settlements. "In opposition to violence and malice, we certainly may appeal to the law."

Thus you are not forbidden to go to court and lodge a complaint against injustice or violence, just so long as you do not have a false heart, but one that remains as patient as it was before, one that is doing this only to maintain the right and to avoid the wrong, out of a genuine love for righteousness (Luther Works 21: 111).

Luther's conclusion that a "Christian should not resist any evil; but within the limits of his office, a secular person should oppose every evil" is logically consistent with his premises, as is clearly stated below.

In short, the rule in the kingdom of Christ is the toleration of everything, forgiveness and the recompense of evil with good. On the other hand, in the realm of the emperor, there should be no toleration shown toward any injustice, but rather a defense against wrong and a punishment of it, and an effort to defend and maintain the right, according to what each one's office or station may require (Luther Works 21: 105-106).

5.1.10 (Mk 11:15-18; Mt 21:12-13; Lk 19:45-48; Jn 2:15)—Was Jesus Violent?

In defending the self-defense tradition, some Christians have tended to use the temple cleansing narratives as indictments against Jesus for using violence. In Matthew 21:12-13, Jesus "drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the benches of those selling doves" to fulfill prophecies in Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 about His zeal for His Father. The only other detail that Mark has that is absent in Matthew's account is Mark 11:16,

“and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple.” Mark and Luke add how the Jewish authority wanted to kill Jesus. Otherwise, the reading is pretty much the same in all the Gospels. Luke’s account is the briefest. In Mark and Luke, violence was directed against Jesus. John’s addition to the manner and agent by which Jesus drove the people from the temple is that He “made a whip out of cords” and used it on them (Jn 2:15).

In reading all four accounts, it is difficult and unnaturally strenuous to locate violence in the purpose and actions of Jesus. But it is clear that Jesus did use “force” to accomplish this cleansing, in overturning the tables of the marketers and whipping them out. He also may have pushed some out of His way. Force is not necessarily violent, although it can be. But the texts speak clearly. Notice that Jesus alone, and not assisted by His disciples, drove the people out of the temple. It is possible to use force without being violent, in which case, the force is positive. Used negatively, it can be violent. For example, a police officer or market inspector in a typical West African market that spreads over on the main streets uses force to disperse the violators. Sometimes such officers use canes or whips to threaten, but never actually hit anyone, unless the very stubborn. Other times, they turn over market stalls and tables without hurting anyone. They would shout, scream, push, and even use a whip to force enforce compliance. When they overrun, whip and injure people, then, they are violent. It is a way to display their authority to violators and warn them of possible consequences if they persist in their noncompliance attitudes. Whenever that sort of thing happens, people do not normally accuse the police of brutality or violence unless, of course, where it results to violence. The people normally relocate hurriedly, although in annoyance and anger. No one files a lawsuit against the officer, either, or complains about abusing their rights. Even in the cases where police brutality occurs,

the people hardly consider self-defense mechanisms other than the obvious one—run away from the scene, at least while the operation lasts. It will therefore be asking too much of the text, if we see Jesus enforcing violence here.

Besides, even if He did employ violence, it can only be understood in the “warrior of Yahweh” tradition to demonstrate and fulfill the prophecy of the Messiah’s burning zeal to honor God. That prophecy is not about believers in Christ and so they cannot use the temple cleansing narratives as grounds to be violent. But Jesus had repeatedly demonstrated that He did not come to hurt, but to heal; not to condemn, but to redeem and not to destroy, but to deliver people from their sins and bring them into the kingdom of His Father. He could therefore not be charged with any negative, destructive revolutionary activity; unless the answer to the question, “Was Jesus a Revolutionary?” claims a positive response (Elwell and Yarbrough 142). Some contemporary scholars think that Jesus had some social or political agenda that included violently overthrowing the Romans if necessary. These scholars hold that Jesus did not establish His political “kingdom of God” before He was crucified. Against this view, Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough argue for Jesus as a spiritual, not political or social revolutionary, whose agenda targets the inner condition of humanity:

Jesus was a revolutionary—a spiritual revolutionary offering people a whole new life, for both time and eternity. And yes, it is difficult not to see how a spiritual revolution will not affect physical situations. He was crucified as a king, and King he was, but as he told Pilate, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (Jn 18:36) (142).

The Jesus as political and social revolutionary view misunderstands Jesus and, is ironically, not radical enough. Jesus did not want to change society politically; he wanted to change people positively. The only way society will change is when the

people experience positive changes put their new life into action. Jesus used a symbolic demonstration to illustrate the need to uphold the honor of God.

5.2 EVALUATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Mark treats violence from the perspective of the Divine Warrior, Jesus Christ Himself engaging Satan and his powers. That makes violence a divine prerogative. Jesus' splendid manifestations of power and authority over nature (4:36); His numerous encounters with evil spirits that are the epitome of violence (1:24-39; 3:15-22, 27; 5:3-7, 13; 6:13; 9:17, 22, 26); His healing diseases still in the spirit of God's warrior (5:25/34) and all other experiences that limit human beings constantly revealed the intensity of this battle. But Christ Himself was the chief warrior. His battle was never against flesh and blood. Whenever He spoke of any situation of violence, including that in the parable of the wicked servants, Jesus made it very clear that human violence (in this case against the Son), was violence against the Father Himself. He would avenge the blood of the righteous on the wicked. His instructions to His followers were to preach, teach, baptize and engage in the warfare with Satan. Mark is clear on the principle that violence against a person is violence against God.

Furthermore, the synoptic gospels demonstrate how to live on the cutting-edge in the face of violence. The cutting-edge is non-violence, nonresistance, non-retaliation, and proactivity, all of which made nonsense of violence. Unless He meant otherwise, Jesus should be understood from His life and attitudes toward violence both from His teaching and examples when He faced injustice and violence.

5.3 PROACTIVE PRINCIPLES AND RESPONSES IN THE SYNOPTICS

The Synoptic Gospels do contain proactive principles in responding to violence. Here are some significant ones.

1. **Mediating peace.** Peacemaking presupposes a breakdown in conditions that make for peace. While the other principles can be achieved individually, without necessarily involving another person physically, peacemaking must bring opposing persons or groups together and mediate between them. Because peace does not just happen, the principle of peacemaking is wholly proactive as it not only reconciles and restores broken relationships, but sets in place the framework needed to perpetuate reconciliation and restoration. No wonder peacemakers will be called the sons of God. The peacemaker cannot logically and realistically be the master of violence.

2. **Exerting positive influence.** Jesus' teaching on being *salt* and *light* is about exerting positive influence in community. Especially before and during times of violence, the witness of disciples who have and continue to impress, exert and demonstrate positive lifestyles will certainly make a difference in the outcome of violent situations. Effective, positive influence in all human endeavors cannot easily accommodate violence while at the same time being *salt* and *light* of the community. In fact, in events of violence, people will run in the direction of those who before the violence consistently lived as *salt* and *light*.

3. **Recognizing imago-dei** (*image of God*). Murder is the greatest possible act of violence against a person's life because every human being is made in the image and likeness of God. To do violence to another person is to violate a divine aspect of the person. Human dignity and respect for life are all on account of this creation principle. Even if some persons did not think that human beings possess the image of God, they at least understand that life is precious, for that reason, demands great care.

4. **Cultivating Non-retaliation.** The victim of violence who understandably is capable of retaliation of sorts, should choose the way of a hero rather than that of a coward. Retaliation and a violence-for-violence ethic seemed to be the greatest mark

of cowardice and weakness, although normal human tendencies consider these as heroic and bravery. Only cowards, it seemed, could not restrain their capacities to vent up magma when they could equally well up from the springs of freshness inside them. Jesus proposed and preferred the latter, of non-retaliation. Love for the neighbor and enemy alike, and a very high view of human life and worth are distinguishing marks of the disciple of Christ's in relation with humanity.

5. **Understanding reciprocation.** At Jesus' arrest, one of His disciples, clearly in an attempt to hinder the arrest, drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear (Mt 26:50-51).²⁰ This incident, probably more than any other, crystallized Jesus practicing His teaching on self-defense against what Morison describes as "a motley and miscellaneous contingent (armed, one might say, to the teeth) (Morison 34)." There, Jesus disclosed before His enemies and friends that there was to be no fighting back to defend either Him or themselves. "Put your sword back in its place," was His simple but clear command to the defender of self.

Of course, it is interesting to note that these disciples of Jesus (or at least this one) carried a weapon on him. If we assume that each of the eleven bore a sword ordinarily, or on that night, why would Jesus not allow them to defend Him or themselves against the arresting party? Were the latter too sophisticated for the dozen Galilean men? If we follow the narrative closely, especially the last few chapters of Matthew, it becomes clear that Jesus Himself was totally given over to a preoccupation of His soon coming death. He predicted it and while in Gethsemane, He seemed to linger on much too longer than usual, such that His friends were exhausted and fell to sleep—all that on purpose. If Jesus had wished His disciples to put up a defense, He probably would not have lingered on in the Garden, knowing

fully well what was to soon happen. Thus, instead of fighting, He healed the wounded member of the arrest party.

Jesus' reasons for hindering his disciple from the use of violence in verses 52 and 53 provide further insight into the working of His mind concerning the issue. Why did He not want His disciple to use a sword to defend either Him or them at this critical stage? "For all who draw the sword will die by the sword" was Jesus' first explanation against allowing His followers use violence. This is a reciprocal principle that claims to issue to one what that person issues to another.

6. **Thinking non-resistance.** France does not think this was just a proverbial maxim because it would generally be untrue as an observation, but probably echoes the interpretation of Isaiah 50:11. Addressing the use of this passage to support professional pacifism, France corrects:

Jesus thus lives out the principle of non-resistance which he has required of his disciples in 5:39-42. It is this issue of Jesus' non-resistance which is the context of this statement; a blanket endorsement of pacifism requires wider support than this one specific instance (France 375-376).

France then charged the disciple who attempted armed resistance with simply misreading the situation. That disciple thought Jesus was a helpless victim who needed human help. To this Keener adds that "Disciples often wish to fight the kingdom's battles the traditional mortal way or not at all (642)" Jesus' conquest would occur in his suffering on the cross, and not by wielding the sword. To employ the sword as a means of resolving the crisis was therefore, to set the precedence equal in spirit to taking things into one's own hands, thereby neglecting God's wisdom and method. The one doing so will have to face the long hands of the law of the land or of God. It is as if Jesus were saying, "if you do not want to be caught breaking the law and paying the penalty due, then, put your sword back in its place." His second reason was that had He need for such help, His Father's provisions were far more superior to

any human invention and they were available at His disposal. He would rather employ His Father's provision of legions of angels than depend on the arms of flesh for His defense. Third, in submitting to this arrest and all that would follow it, Jesus was enacting the fulfillment of long written prophecies concerning Him and His mission. Jesus did what He did so that in so doing, the scriptures concerning Him will come to realization. All in all, His Gethsamene prayer, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done," (Mt 26:38, 41, 42) put His action and decision under God's will. It was God's will for Jesus to hinder His followers from using any swords when everything else suggest that they do, even if it meant they would later pay dearly for their decision at the hands of some Roman executioner. Such rebellions were not very strange among the Galileans.

It could be argued that Jesus knew what we do not know and for that reason understood that it was time to give up His life, and that putting up any resistance would offset this goal. But this argument cannot be sustained much further than proposing it because when Jesus and His disciples could have responded with violence to some previous situations, He pursued non-violent ways. If He did not employ violence or instigate it when He most likely could have, what else was He teaching by such behavior? Jesus did not approve the use of the sword. "Jesus is the prototype of His followers who renounce violence"(Augsburger 299).

7. **Loving especially the enemy.** The statements "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them' And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you?...And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment..." (Lk 6:32-34) do in fact teach that the Christian is under obligation to be different from other people in every way. Jesus' reasons for this are that 1) it attracts reward from God and 2) it represents God's

character and person, and so demonstrates that God is indeed in the disciple. However, while loving the enemy, the disciple must also acknowledge the moral force of anger, hatred and vengeance.

8. **Being discerning and smart.** There is something to say about the need for Christians to read the situation and be “smart” about what to do and what not to do. In Lk 9:51-56, Samaritan villagers rejected to Jesus coming to their village because He was headed for Jerusalem. This is a typical Jewish-Samaritan hatred was at work here. What the villagers did was not as striking as the response by Jesus’ disciples, James and John. Thinking that the villages had insulted their Lord and Master and should therefore be made to pay for their disrespect, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” The question presupposes that they could cause fire to rain upon the poor villages and were prepared do so. The logic of violence was at work in them, but they needed Jesus’ permission for their action. Jesus’ response was a rebuke. Surely this was a great opportunity to prove who Jesus was to these villagers—the powerful Messiah of Israel who deserved their respect. But Jesus rejected their request, indicating clearly that He did not support violence. His leaving the villagers alone and passing on into another village demonstrates instead the proactive response of being smart to know what to do at the moment and what to avoid. Raining fire on the Samaritans would have probably publicized Jesus more, it it would have also given Him bad publicity. Even after Jesus had rebuked His disciples He did not force the Samaritans to accept Him. Instead, He and His team went to another village. He was discerning or “smart” to know when to walk away from violence. And there is nothing wrong with running away from a scene of violence if only to avoid being party to the violence. It is in the same spirit of the moral exhortations to “flee” the evil desires of youth (2Ti 2:22) and “avoid every kind

of evil” (1Th 5:22). Jesus charged His disciples to “flee to another” town or village if they were persecuted in one place (Mt 10:23); He withdrew from where He restored the hand withered hand of a man on the Sabbath and got into trouble with the Pharisees for that (Mt 12:15); when He heard about the execution of John the Baptist (Mt 14:13); from discussing with the Pharisees and crowds to the region of Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21); once when the Pharisees and Herodians plotted to kill Him, Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the lake (Mk 3:7). Another time, the crowd wanted to make Jesus King by force. Of course, this action would have precipitated violence between the crowds and the political leaders. Jesus withdrew to a mountain by Himself to resist this forceful enthronement (Jn 6:15). Yes, there are times when we must withdraw from, flee and avoid high pressure or potentially violent areas and move to regions of low pressure.

9. **Being prepared.** Preparedness pervades Jesus’ teachings in the Gospels. His disciples were to prepare themselves to serve Him; serve one another and prepare against sufferings and persecutions that would certainly come upon them as they ministered in the world. They were also to prepare for His Second Coming and prepare to be in the kingdom. He used the Parables of the Ten Virgins, thieves in the night and the watchmen and many others to press this point. Preparing against anticipated violence puts believers in a much better position to be proactive. Incidents of violence or anticipated violence gives violence a missiological dimension that urges Christians to preach, teach and lead people to repentance. “Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices,” (13:1) describe Pilate’s act of violence against them. Also, 18 persons died as a result of the Siloam tower falling on them in Luke 13:4. Twice (13:3 and 5), Jesus stressed the need to repent or perish. So violence helps one prepare better and so is proactive even against violence.

10. **Being self-disciplined.** Jesus knew all that was going to happen to Him and His disciples the night of His arrest. But instead of letting the situation put Him to flight, He composed Himself and took complete authority over Himself so that He would be able to address properly whomever He needed to address.

11. **Rejecting the logic of violence.** "...all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Mt 26:52). Peter, James and John at different times demonstrated the logic of violence, a logic that makes violence to breed more violence. He became violent because the crowd was violent. He drew his sword because they were going to arrest his Master. Jesus on the other hand, rejected that logic and its conclusion. He ordered Peter to put back his sword in its place, quickly reminding him that to draw the sword is an expression of one's willingness to also die by the sword. Violence sweeps away both perpetrator and victim and therefore, becomes meaningless, in the long run.

12. **Obeying Christ.** Although only Luke reports the disciples seeking Jesus' permission to fight back (Lk 22:49), this act on their part in the face of violence is significant. Proactive non-violence training would require the cultivation of an attitude of asking Christ what to do with and in violence situations. One it is clear the Jesus has spoken, then, the disciple of Christ must obey the Master's instruction. To obey Christ even when we do not understand Him is faith, and is borne out of complete reliance upon Him and upon what He can do.

13. **Completely relying upon God.** Matthew informs that Jesus urged his lawless disciple to withdraw his sword because He had access to a better alternative. His Father could send Him more than twelve legions of angels to take care of the entire situation, if He wanted to (Mt 26:53). This may be an allusion to God's unseen hosts in 2 Kings 6:14-17 particularly, that came to protect Prophet Elisha when the king of Aram sent "horses and chariots and a great army" (6:14) to arrest the prophet at night.

When the prophet's attendant saw that "an army with horses and chariots was circling the city" and knew they were in trouble, he asked his master: "What shall we do?" (6:15). Elisha urged him not to be afraid because "those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (6:16). The attendant did not understand this. Elisha prayed that God will open the attendant's eyes. God did and he saw "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (6:17). God has spiritual soldiers that protect His children in times of violence that they may not even realize. Jesus may have had this in mind. But more than that, He wanted His disciples to see how He was demonstrating the non-violent methods He had always taught and lived. And even more, He wanted them to learn to rely completely upon God even in situations when their natural impulses dictated that they employ the arms of flesh. That God can deliver by many and by few and even by no human help is an established Old Testament principle that runs through the New. To rely completely on God in times of violence is to allow God to put His legions to work for one's safety.

14. **Losing a battle to win the war.** In Gethsemane, Jesus demonstrated that one can lose a battle in order to win the war. His war was God's mission—His cosmic plan to conquer Satan, sin, evil, death and all their forces for all time, and reclaim fallen humanity to Himself. But He would not win that war without enduring the bitter throes of submitting to arrest, humiliation, disgrace, torture and death. This was like enduring the Father's anger that lasts only a moment, in light of His favor that lasts a lifetime because while weeping may remain for a night, rejoicing comes in the morning (Ps 30:5). Also Hebrews 12:2 reminds that the author of life set His gaze upon the joy set before Him, the joy of the conquering Victor, and for that, endured the cross, scorning its shame, so that the Father's eternal purpose will finally be accomplished. So in Gethsamene, Jesus lost a battle, the battle of disarming or

resisting the arresting party by violence, or by miracle, as in fact, He began to do in John 18:6, that at His initial response, the armed men drew back and fell to the ground. No, they were not worshipping Him; they were scared to death. He had already overcome them merely by speaking directly to them. But Jesus knew better that the joy of winning this battle was only momentary, compared to that of winning the war for which He came to earth. Nothing would now stop Him from losing the war just to win a battle. The Church must learn to do the same when faced with violent situations. It must distinguish between the battle and the war and be willing to lose a battle in order to win the war. Focus must be the war, not the battles, even if they are sure of winning them. But if winning a battle is detrimental to winning the war, then, the Church must give up the battle for the war.

15. **Putting up verbal defense.** The arresting party had come fully armed to get Jesus, a law-abiding citizen in the Roman Empire. That the very nature of this arrest was unlawful and unjust is seen in the manner and time of the arrest. If Jesus had led a rebellion, then would be necessary to lead a fully armed crowd to arrest Him. But the arresting party thought that Jesus and His disciples would put up resistance, something that probably would have given the party some further grounds on which to testify against Jesus. They had set out to arrest on the presumption that Jesus was guilty. Now at Gethsemane, Jesus calmly, but sternly turns the table on these lawless enforcers of justice. “What is my crime? Teaching publicly in the temple court area? Why did you not arrest me there and then? Why now and in this manner?” By these questions, Jesus was forcing His captors to prove their innocence as they established His guilt. He was pushing them to realize that they, not Him, were the guilty ones who should be arrested and maltreated. He had already demonstrated to them by this action, that they were the very perpetrators of injustice and criminal intention. They

were the leaders of the rebellion and it was up to them to prove Him wrong. By doing so, Jesus had shown them that even though He did not retaliate physically, He was willing to defend Himself at least verbally on this occasion. In violent situations where the opportunity to speak to those who perpetrate the violence arises, this is a very effective principle that cuts at the very heart of the perpetrators of violence. They may still insist as they did here, but they will never forget that they, rather than their helpless victims, were the real criminals.

16. **Submitting to God's will.** When Jesus had completed addressing His disciples and captors, He emphasized that what was happening to Him was according to the planned will of God. For that reason rather than fight against it, He would submit Himself voluntarily to His captors so that He will fulfill Scriptures. He had come to earth for this very purpose. Because He was in His Father and the Father in Him, He knew that all things were in the hands of His Father and in His hands, He had nothing to fear, not even brutal arrest, torture and crucifixion. In abandoning Himself into the hand and will of God (you see, this is the point), Jesus left us an example to follow in His steps (1Pe 2:21). Christians today must learn this virtue of self-abandonment in the hands of God for the glory and honor of God, Christ and His kingdom. This is not blind fatalism that makes everything some form of God's will, but a productive faith.

17. **Shaking off the dust.** This principle goes back to Nehemiah 5:13 where Nehemiah shook out the folds of his robe to describe how God would shake and empty all who do not keep the promise. In Jesus' ministry, He commanded His disciples to shake the dust off their sandals against any person, household or town did not accept them and their message. This was a nonviolent protest to illustrate that they

had missed their chance of God's visit and can therefore, only hold themselves responsible (Mt 10:14; Mk 6:11; Lk 9:5; 10:11).

5.4 SOME ESSENTIAL QUALITIES FOR PROACTIVE RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The following qualities are essential to any proactive response to violence.

1. **Meekness.** In the Beatitudes, Jesus taught about meekness and that is all about learning to control one's energies even if one appears weak by so doing. In being meek, Jesus' disciples have would already learn to control their energies so that even when provoked, they can still transform the provocation into more creative energies and not resort to violence.
2. **Peacemaking.** Peacemaking is an extremely proactive operation. It looks back on a state of conflict and violence, draws upon the negatives and positives of the experience and plans creatively to avoid those situations that caused the violence so that whenever a situation of violence would breed, the effect of peacemaking would already guard those involved.
3. **Positive influence.** Living as salt and light means influencing our world positively. It requires conscious living that does not put off the light and make the salt tasteless. Being salt and light of the world implies that Jesus' disciples stay on the cutting-edge of society and provide quality leadership and impact. Violence is a poor witness of this lifestyle.
4. **Forgiveness.** Forgiveness is proactive because it does not forget the hurt one does to another, but remembers it creatively, and transforms it by absorbing, confronting positively and talking the issues that led to breakdown in relationships. Christian disciples who learn to forgive are being proactive against violence that could otherwise result in the absence of such forgiveness.

5. **Non-retaliation.** Jesus taught against retaliation. In its place, the Christian disciple is to actively love, not tolerate the enemy, and cooperate with the enemy primarily the enemy's own sake. To retaliate is to allow an enemy to drag one on the floor, to his or her own level. But to pray for, and do good to the enemy not only disarms the enemy, it confronts her or him with a new and better alternative to violence. It is a healthy demonstration of love.

6. **Obedience.** Because the logic of violence is that violence breeds more violence, Jesus taught His disciples to glorify the Father before the world by not participating in the logic of violence. The one who lives by the sword dies by it and therefore, such a one may not witness to the power of God as effectively. The disciple lives by the Word of God and not the sword. Jesus reminded the Devil that "Man does not live on bread alone; but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4).

7. **Victory of spiritual violence.** There is such a thing as a Christian soldier, but it is only in respect to destroying the power of the enemy, the Devil in the lives of people. It is proactive to defend the Christian position against the Devil and so destroy the manifestation of his schemes in the spiritual, which may be violent in the physical.

8. **Prayer.** Prayer is an essential proactive tool. It looks at a difficult situation or person, but looks beyond the situation and focuses on the Lord who can change the situation for better. It is hardly possible to pray for and with a person or group constantly, and then turn around to do violence to them.

9. **Good neighborliness.** Good neighborliness is a proactive response to violence because it fosters and cements such concrete relationships that are bound to stand in the face of violence.

10. **Effective preaching and teaching.** Jesus taught and preached His ideals constantly, faithfully and clearly. This is in line with the Old Testament ideal that knowledge of the Lord will cause people to cease from violence. Teaching requires time and other resources, but if done effectively, it will help Christians learn and can understand for themselves what they need to know about responding to violence, their attitudes and actions to violence will also change. Consistent and persistent teaching and preaching about the kingdom of heaven is proactive because it brings God's program and will into the hearts of men and women and teaches them to give up their violence and learn God's way of live. But it also helps or forces people to develop attitudes and (probably skills) to deal with violence. Thus, teaching and preaching were at the heart of Jesus' ministry.

11. **Preparedness and alertness.** Being prepared and ready or alert to understand, see and report situations that could breed violence is proactive because it provides a check on people's activities. Preparedness anticipates the problem against which it is necessary to prepare. Christians must anticipate violence by either non-Christians or even Christians of shallower understanding. This anticipation helps the believer develop a set of attitudes and actions to deal with violence long before any actual occurrence of violence.

12. **Responding unnaturally to violence.** In the case of the Good Samaritan, the natural thing to do was what the religious Jews did. But the despised Samaritan showed an unnatural concern and compassion for the Jewish victim of robbery instead of doing the usual, expected thing.

Had Jesus taught His disciples to use violence when necessary or appropriate, His arrest scene provided a perfect opportunity for them to exercise their training. That they failed to do so, except one; Jesus' remarks about not using the sword,

coupled with His unexpected exhibition of love and compassion for His enemies, suggests that the way of violence was not His. Therefore, it is does not seem proper or biblical, to use Jesus' teachings and practices as the ground for our use of violence.

The Church of Christ will do well to begin to arm itself with the mentality of proactive responses to violence if it must gain or regain lost territories and continue to live on the cutting edge of ministering the gospel of Christ to a violent humanity. This way seems hard, but it is debatable whether the alternatives are any easier or better, and most of all, pleasing to God and His program for the Church.

5.5 SUMMARY OF JESUS' TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES ON VIOLENCE IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Jesus lived, ministered, died and resurrected in a violent world. Although not violent, He, more than any other human person, has experienced the venom of violence at its worst. He consistently taught and practiced a life committed to a different logic of violence. His logic accepted, bore and transformed violence and in so doing, defeated it. Whether in the spiritual or physical realm, Jesus constantly engaged violence proactively yet, remained nonviolent and left that logic for all His followers to follow in His step. In a violent world, Christ's teachings and examples, more than anything else, is the Christian's best guide on how to respond to violence. The two tables below show how Jesus responded to violence moments before His violent death and the principles that informed His actions, attitudes and disposition.

Table 3**A Comparison of the Evangelists' Accounts of the Arrest of Jesus**

	MATTHEW 26:47-56	MARK 14:43-51	LUKE 22:47-53	JOHN 18:1-11
1.	A crowd well armed with swords and clubs set from the chief priests, but Jesus asks the party about their purpose, and addressed them as "Friends."	A crowd well-armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priest, the teachers of the law, and the elders arrive.	A crowd appears (no arms are mentioned yet).	A detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees, carrying lanterns and weapons.
2.	They arrest Jesus.	They arrest Jesus.	Jesus' disciples saw what was happening after Judas kissed Him. But Luke does not say that the crowd had already arrested Jesus, but he implies this.	Jesus speaks the arresting party about what they want. They fall to the ground. He offers himself and requests that they let His disciples go.
3.	Same as in Mark.	A companion of Jesus strikes off the high priest's servant's ear.	Jesus' disciples ask His permission to strike with their swords.	Simon Peter draws his sword and cuts off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest.
4.	Jesus rebukes his violent companion asks him to put away his weapon.	Jesus addresses the arresting party on their intent and actions.	One of them was faster than the rest and he struck as in (3) in Mark and Matthew.	Jesus orders Peter to put his weapon away because He must drink the Father's cup.
5.	Jesus gives a brief lecture on why there should be no fight.		Jesus forbade His disciples.	
6.	Jesus assures His disciples that His Father's help is on His side, but He must do His will.		Then he addressed the arresting party.	
7.	Jesus addresses the arresting party.			

Table 4**Outstanding Proactive Responses in the Synoptic Gospels**

	THE PRINCIPLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
1.	Positive influence (good works are included)	5:13-15		
2.	Re-humanizing the enemy (to become the neighbor, to able one to love him or her)	5:38-48; 22:37-40		6:27-36
3.	Forgiveness	6:14-15; 18:21-35		23:34
4.	Smartness (knowing when to “run” away or “flee” to avoid violence)	10:23; 12:15; 14:13; 15:21		
5.	Selective battle (which to fight and which to leave)	21:12-13		
6.	Loosing a battle to win a war	26:50-56		
7.	Verbal defense	26:55-56, 64	14:48-49, 62	22:52-53, 67-69
8.	Law abiding citizenship	17:24-27; 22:15-22		
9.	Prayer	26:36-46	14:36	22:42
10.	Silence	26:62,63; 27:12, 14	15:5	
11.	Patient endurance	26:67; 27:14, 26, 32-50	15:16-20	22:63-65
12.	Protesting by shaking off the dust of their sandals	10:14	6:11	9:4-5

Table 5

**References of Major Violence Related Scriptures in the Synoptic Gospels that
Were Discussed**

	Reference	Main Idea
1.	Matthew 2:3-18	Violence in Jesus' pre-ministry experience: Herodian—Infanticide
2.	Luke 4: 18-19	Jesus' mission statement
3.	Lk 11:14-28	The Beelzebub controversy
4.	Matthew 5-7	Violence in the Olivet Discourse
5.	Mt 5:39	Understanding "resisting an evil person
6.	Mt 5: 43-47 <i>cf.</i> Lk 6:35-36	Loving the enemy
7.	Lk 10:25-37	Illustrating love for enemy
8.	Matthew 10:34-36; <i>cf.</i> Luke 12:49-53	Meaning of the Sword
9.	Luke 12:49-53	Not peace but division
10.	Mark 8:34-38; 10:29-31; Mt 16: 24-26; Lk 9:23-25	The Cost of Discipleship
11.	Matthew 11:12	Violence against the Kingdom of God
12.	Lk 12:1-12	The one to fear
13.	Luke 22:36	Buy One Sword
14.	Luke 22:38	The Meaning of the Two Swords
15.	Mk 11:15-18; Mt 21:12-13; Lk 19:45-48; Jn 2:15	Was Jesus Violent?

CHAPTER SIX

VIOLENCE AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Christ has no other sword than the sword of his mouth (Rev 2:16). Those who wish to fight for him must in like manner have no other. (Luther qtd. in Broadus 541).

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Rev 12:11).

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. The destruction of the flower is the scattering of its pollen. The hammer is broken on its anvil. The power of the persecutor is overcome by the patience of his victims (Meyer 36).

6.1 THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH'S UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS' TEACHING ON VIOLENCE

More than anyone else, Jesus' earliest followers would have understood Him best; they would have interpreted and lived out the implications of His life and teachings the way they understood and interpreted them. For that reason, the Acts of the Apostles is very significant in understanding how Jesus' closest friends and brothers understood the Master on violence.¹

The records not only the early beginnings of the Christian Church and of Christianity in the Roman Empire, but also summarizes Jesus' life and ministry (1:1-3); His final instructions to His disciples (1:4-7) which reechoed the promise of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5, *cf.* Jn 14:15-26) and their commission to mission—"the missionary mandate" (1:7, *cf.* Mt 28:18-20). The commission to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" promised Jesus' presence with the disciples "to the very end of the age" (Mt 28:19-20).² To succeed at this commission, they needed the Holy Spirit's baptism,³ for "power" to become Jesus' "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world"

(Ac 1:8), a promise Powell calls “The Famous Promise” (23).⁴ To bear witness about Christ was the main concern here. James M. Boice is right on target when he notes that, the “church that is not witnessing is not obeying its Lord”(Boice 19). But this mission was not to be accomplished without great struggles—mostly persecution violence that claimed the lives of some of them—James and Stephen. As seen in the previous chapter, Jesus warned His disciples sufficiently about what lay ahead.

6.1.1 Great Expectation

The small band of about 120 disciples (1:15) understood Jesus’ final instructions well and set out to obey them. “They all joined together constantly in prayer” (1:14), and under the leadership of Peter, reasoned from the Scriptures that in Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of long awaited messianic prophecies had in fact taken place.⁵ The group grew steadily to three thousand people (2:41). A five-pillar pivot (2:42-47) was established around which the disciples would weave their life and ministry. These pillars would also become significant for later Christians. They taught scripture as what is described as the apostles’ teaching (th/| didach/| tw/n avposto,lwn, *didache*), fellowship at the Lord’s table, fellowship (th/| koinwni,a|, *koinonia*), prayed, shared their possessions and provided for the needy among them, and praised God with glad and sincere hearts. B. W. Johnson points out that most members of this Jerusalem community were strangers. As sojourners, they pulled their common resources together.⁶ Alford notes that this community was only found in the Jerusalem Church.⁷ How did this growing Church develop attitudes and skills to respond to violence they would suffer?

Beginning with the third chapter of Acts (3:1-10), the battle for which the disciples had constantly prepared and anticipated began. It was in the spirit of the Beelzebub controversy (see Lk 11:14-28) that the disciples now stood to bind the

strong man and overpower him. Now that Jesus was gone from them physically, the disciples were left to practice what they knew best. Peter and John routed the kingdom of Beelzebub and freed a crippled man who constantly sat at the temple gate through a healing miracle.⁸ “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” was the battle cry and the enemy had to surrender. This “name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” became their most potent assault weapon on the enemy’s kingdom because, “Name and power are parallel concepts” (Dillon 735).⁹ To the amazed crowd, Peter witnessed to Christ’s life and ministry, again, emphasizing the violence the Jews and their leaders had done by killing Him—the author of life (3:15).¹⁰ The larger war—to turn sinful hearts back to God through repentance (3:19, 26) at once became the task and honor of the apostles. But this healing of the crippled would have far reaching effects. Apart from the people praising God, and Peter’s sermon, the incident greatly disturbed the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees (4:1).¹¹ Preaching Jesus Christ, His resurrection and appealing to Israel turn to Christ caused the great disturbance.¹² But why did their teaching disturb the authorities? Did they fear that this band of ‘fanatics’ would stir up trouble for the Jewish population incite them to armed rebellion (as did the Egyptian who led four thousand terrorists in the desert—Ac 21:38)? The Romans knew how to quell that sort of situation. Their disturbance was more theological and political than military.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the body.¹³ Being a very powerful force in the Sanhedrin meant in part that if they did not act decisively, their opponents, the Pharisees would win the people over because the Pharisees believed in the resurrection.¹⁴ Note here how Luke presents the leaders and the people separately. There was probably a more profound reason for their fear. The apostles’ Easter *kerygma* may have suddenly fueled the long standing and bitter quarrel over the

hermeneutics of the Torah between Jewish leadership factions.¹⁵ The Sadducees, primarily of the aristocratic level, wielded tremendous authority over the people; opposed the doctrine of resurrection as “un-scriptural” and became the severest repressors of the new religious movement. It is unclear why the Sanhedrin thought itself the proper authority to arrest the apostles and for what, except that they believed they were dealing with an unorthodox group in the midst. Even though these men “felt they had the authority over religious matters in the nation, they had neither power nor authority comparable to what these uneducated laymen had” (Fernando 152). Nor is it clear why they later set them free (4:13-22) especially, when the apostles remained steadfast in their stance to honor God rather than men. The Holy Spirit was the secret. He had filled the apostles for this task.

These experiences confirm that while Christians may plunge into the Lord’s with expectations of great things, they must also remember that their expectations could, and sometimes are accompanied by serious difficulties. “Prosperity” or “Health and Wealth” Christians must learn this truth. Some difficulties may include violence toward them or against members of their families or ministry personnel. So Christians must learn from the apostles responses that are biblical and Christian. To remain steadfast in devotion to the Lord, and unswerving in determination to uphold the dignity and integrity of Christ, even under ‘mild threats’ as what the apostles experienced is a proactive and active non-violent response. And so is any attempt to maintain discipline and respect for authority as did the apostles and the Church at the first wave of trouble. Starting out well (with disciplined responses) is often, but not always, a good indication of hope for great future improvement in responses to similar or even worse situations. More importantly, Christians should learn that the Holy

Spirit plays a very significant role in their response to violence. Christians, like these apostles, need Holy Spirit anointing—something indispensable for Christian witness.

6.1.2 Violence Outbreak

Soon, the disciples began to incur the wrath of their religious leaders. By now the group numbered nearly 5,000 members (4:4).¹⁶ The religious leaders met and questioned Peter and John about the authority behind their activities. The difficult times Jesus predicted were already upon them. Luke describes the Sanhedrin as “the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law” (Lk 22:66). The word Sanhedrin is the Aramaic form of the Greek *Sunedrion*, “council, assembly session” (New Unger’s Bible Dictionary 1126). Jewish rabbis trace the origin of this group to the college of seventy elders Moses named, but the group rose to prominence at the time of Greek supremacy. Its members were the high priests (i.e., the acting high priest, those who had been high priests, and members of the privileged families from which the high priests were taken), elders (i.e., tribal and family heads of the people and the priesthood), and scribes (i.e., legal assessors), Pharisees, and Sadducees alike (*cf.* Acts 4:1, 5-6); 5:17, 34). The Mishna put the number of members at seventy, with a president, a vice president, and servants of the court (John 18:22; Mark 14:65; etc.).¹⁷

In Jesus’ time, the group had restricted jurisdiction to the eleven districts of Judea proper but exercised authority over “*every* Jewish community in the world” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary 1127). Brian Rapske confirms its importance in describing it as the “principal juridical body of the ruling elite in Jerusalem” (100). Its orders were generally binding on Jewish communities. It could issue warrants to synagogues to apprehend groups like the Christians, but the extent to which people obeyed it really depended on the people. The Sanhedrin was a

supreme native court...the final court of appeal for questions connected with the Mosaic law, but not in the sense that it was open to anyone to appeal to it against the decision of the inferior courts but rather in so far as it was called upon to intervene in every case in which the lower courts could not agree as to their judgment (Schurer, History of the Jewish People div. 2, 1:185ff. qtd. in Unger's Bible Dictionary 1127-28).

Its members sat according to seniority and were selected based on their merits (Rapske 104). The jurisdiction of the group went only as far as the Roman authorities allowed it. Acts 22:30; 23:15, 20, 28 show how Roman authorities could take the initiative to convene the Sanhedrin, confirming their supremacy over it. The arrest of the apostles by the Sanhedrin did not quite amount to an arrest or custody by a Roman officer, although they would have some backing from Rome in matters inconsequential to Rome. The methods both groups employed were different in degree and extent particularly, in Paul and Silas' Philippian jail experience (Ac 16:16-40).

The Jewish authorities jailed Peter and John until the next day (Ac 4:3).¹⁸ The phrase, *and because it was evening*, indicates the purpose of their imprisonment—detention. Custody in the Roman Empire served to protect, remand, execute, coerce, punish a prisoner or detain him while awaiting his sentence.¹⁹ If Peter and John were put in jail *because it was evening*, this suggests that they were being held on remand [at this point] so that the authorities can be sure the prisoners will appear at their trial. Imprisonment on remand was a precautionary measure to make sure the *reus* (accused) appeared at the trial (Rapske 10). That is why the next day, the Sanhedrin sat to try Peter and John (Ac 4:5-7). But why the arrest? Charles Carter suggested four reasons: 1) “jealousy”; 2) “teaching without formal education or rabbinical ordination”; 3) “fear of the multitude’s enthusiastic response which might be interpreted as a revolution by Rome”; and 4) “the mention of the resurrection which the Sadducees rejected” (57).

Defending not their lives, Peter presented the gospel of salvation to the Jewish leaders with incredible boldness and increasing emphasis on Jesus being the exclusive means to obtain God's salvation (4:12).²⁰ The leaders resolved to stop these men from spreading their message further among the people with many threats (possibly of incarceration and flagellation, 4:21). Execution may not have been an immediate threat. The disciples resolved that they had nothing to defend. Why? Possibly as a result of Jesus' teaching about the cost of following Him: *and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it* (Mt 10:38-39). Maybe a backlash in Peter's mind of his woeful denial of Jesus (Lk 22:54-62), his undeserved reinstatement and commission (Jn 21:15-22), coupled with his desire to prove faithful, constrained him to prefer to obey God rather than human beings—even in threats and obvious dangers (4:18-22). Their response here raises the issue of Christian obedience or civil disobedience. Although Romans 13 instructs obedience to governments, the apostles' response shows that Christians must be careful in how they live out this passage. To insist that Christians must obey government, no matter what, is to make the state one's god. James M. Boice argues for when Christians should hold to this notion: "Unless the state is as wise and perfect as God, always expressing the perfect will of God..." (82). But no state meets this condition. The state sometimes makes demands that are contrary to God's laws. The Bible does teach various levels of authorities, as Danny K. McCain notes. They include "divine authority, ecclesiastical authority, civil authority, parental authority, marriage authority and employer authority" (Acts 78). Whenever one authority contradicts the divine one, the way out is to obey the higher authority, that is, God. Caught in this uncomfortable situation, the Church resorted to praying, asking God for His way, will and direction.

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus (Acts 4:27-30).

The boldness and splendid presentation of gospel truth by these “unschooled, ordinary men” (4:13) startled the Sanhedrin, nevertheless. Being “unschooled” does not mean they were ignorant; but that they did not attain formal rabbinic education, the type that would have made them “someone” to look up to (Boice 80). The Sanhedrin became furious because some ordinary men were pitching one authority against another—the Sanhedrin’s against Christ’s. They frequently set themselves against Jesus on the one hand. On the other, Christ commanded the apostles to be his witnesses. To compound matters, the man who was healed was standing right there, and no one could deny that Jesus had healed him.

Noticing the mounting pressure on them, the disciples prayed earnestly for God to do something new in their ministry. They did not pray for their lives, but for great boldness to preach the message—the very thing they were forbidden to do, and the power to combat Satan’s kingdom effectively and overturn it (4:27-32). This first recorded prayer session shows that, the disciples now truly knew the meaning of following Christ. They would not abandon or forsake Christ and their mission and flee, or deny that they ever knew Him. Nor would they pray for God to punish their enemies. They saw in their difficulties even greater opportunities to make Christ known. They exemplified some principles of proactive responses to violence.

Obeying the higher authority in the face of violence. It is important to obey earthly governments. But uncritical obedience to governments especially, when they do not

represent the mind of God, is dangerous. Christians should obey God, the higher authority, when His mandates conflict with those of earthly government.

Prayer. While the men were in custody, the Church prayed and God answered their prayer. If praying before a conflict arrives does not stop the situation from arising, then praying during it is still being proactive.

Verbal defense. As Peter probably saw Jesus did during His trials by the Sanhedrin and Pilate, and as they witnessed Him do many times before His arrest and death, they too, learned the place for verbal defense. The apostles were not silent, but made their accusers to wrestle with the impact of their verbal utterances.

6.1.3 First Major Wave of Violence

The fast progress of the gospel and its transforming power in the lives of the people became the cause of the first major wave of persecution against the apostles. In Acts 5:17, the high priest and all his associates became jealous, arrested the apostles and locked them up in the public jail. The motives and methods were probably not very different here from what they were in the previous custody situation but that the apostles were here held in the public jail intensifies the tension. The first arrest, they were kept in the custody of temple guards, probably at some detention unit just overnight. Now, they were in the general prison, and not detention in a private house. Wardens in such prisons were often public slaves, although some may have had military officers.²¹ God miraculously set the men free that night and dumbfounded the Sanhedrin, which was in session, and reinforced the truth that even prisons cannot limit God. (5:19-25). McCain remarks that the new Christians were “successfully confusing and confounding the rulers of the land” and that, “without any weapons, propaganda or even a plan” (Acts 77). The miraculous deliverance did not deter further arrests because the morning after they were re-arrested and queried, but

without using force (5:25-28). The apostles, bold and firm, preached a more simplified version of the gospel to the Sanhedrin, which reacted very sharply in fury and “wanted to put them to death” (5:33). At this point, the “threats” of chapter 4 became more specific—death threats. The three-fold charges are 1) violating previous Sanhedrin prohibition; 2) filling Jerusalem with their doctrine and 3) making the Sanhedrin responsible for the death of Jesus Christ.

Supernatural deliverance. God’s response to deliver Peter and John from jail (5:19-20); move the disciples to lower Paul over the wall in a basket (9:23-25); release Peter from prison (12:6-11); move Gamaliel to persuade the Sanhedrin to free the apostles (5:34-40); visit Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail (16:25-28); immediately dispatch Paul out of Berea to Athens for fear of harm by jealous Jews in Thessalonica (17:14-15); proconsul Gallio of Achaia’s deaf ear to Jewish accusations of Paul (18:12-17); the Ephesus city clerk’s timely intervention to quell a riot and possible injury to Paul (19:35-41); Paul’s arrest by the Roman commander when the Jews were just about to kill him (20:30-36); God’s intervention to save Paul more flogging (22:25-29); and Paul’s nephew’s unearthing a plot to kill Paul that led to his transfer to Caesarea and then on to Rome (23:12ff.)—all point out one truth: that *God delivers supernaturally from violence directly*. This may or may not be conditioned on the prayers of believers, but usually, when they pray, God moves. However, it is God’s response, not ours, although He acts on our behalf. In the Gospels, Jesus at the scene of His arrest revealed that His Father could send more than twelve legions of angels to deliver Him supernaturally, if He wished (Mt 26:53). The principle of supernatural deliverance is an excellent motivation for obedience, reliance, trust and prayer as proactive principles, but they are not depended on prayer in all cases.

When Rabbi Gamaliel had assuaged their fury with a prudent appeal (Ac 5:34-40) the Sanhedrin had the apostles flogged and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus (5:40).²² There was an element of humiliation in this method.²³ James M. Boice thinks that Gamaliel's advice, good as it was, was worldly. According to him, Gamaliel should have gone further to get the Sanhedrin to deal with the real issue—investigate the veracity of the claims of the apostles (109). Did Jesus really die and rise again as the apostles were teaching? Was Jesus' death truly substitutionary, and if so, what are the implications of these claims for us? Can we remain aloof or neutral with respect to the teaching of the apostles? These are the issues Gamaliel should have made the Sanhedrin investigate (Boice 109-110). After all, the Sanhedrin was the custodian of the body of Jewish religious truth. He also observed something here about anger especially in matters of religion. "If we are very angry about something, especially in religion, it is probably a sign that we are on the wrong track" (Boice 107). But McCain thinks that Gamaliel's advice was good, but insists that it is not "true in every instance"(Acts 81). Keener IVP Background Commentary thinks that Gamaliel preferred to leave matters in the hands of Rome who knew how to take care of the revolutionaries themselves, and that he misunderstood the Jesus movement in "merely political terms" (337). Powell probably thinks similarly when he describes Gamaliel as "the doubtful, the careful and the fearful" (93). But Gamaliel put himself in a somewhat awkward position. He knew very well the evidence in favour of the apostles' ministry overwhelmed that against them. A man of his standing ought to have been more straightforward in stating the issues as they were. Gamaliel wanted to play safe and still get the apostles out of trouble. So he evaded the issue—the leaders' responsibility to God and to His Christ, which the apostles' gospel so clearly stated.

To flog or scourge generally meant to “whip” and “flogging” was also the same as the noun, a “whip.”²⁴ It was a common public punishment in the East (as it still is in some Islamic states). Usually, the stick was the instrument applied to the soles of the feet. The method of the Romans was different. They stripped the culprit, stretched him with cords or thongs on a frame and beat him with rods. The judge who issued the sentence of stripes in Jewish communities limited it to forty at most, in order not to degrade the culprit any further (Deut 25:1-3). Two types of scourging are reported in the New Testament. One was done with thongs or whips made of rope ends or straps of leather, and the other with twigs or rods, and kept the number of stripes to thirty-nine, except in the case of the “scorpion,” which was a severer instrument (Unger 1141). Where flogging was applied to the apostles, it served as “punitive measures to dissuade Jews from following the Way and specifically mandate the extraction of individuals to answer charges before the chief priests in Jerusalem” (Rapske 100-101). This method brought much shame upon the prisoner. In the process, forced public nakedness was a degradation ritual that affected the prisoner’s self-perception.

But instead of appealing to the government for justice and protection, the apostles rejoiced “because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (5:41). Neither did they quit preaching and teaching (5:42). They were becoming Jesus’ witnesses (1:8) and *salt* and *light* of their world (Mt 5:13, 14). What changed was not their situations, but their perspectives of both themselves and their situations. William Wilberforce comments that, “Faith’s cause requires zeal” (294).

Christian experience in some parts of the world has not changed drastically since then but because Christians are citizens under the constitutional jurisdictions of their respective governments, they can, and may appeal to government for protection

against unjust treatment meted against them. But, they may also choose, as did Paul, John and the Apostolic Church, to forego their rights and instead press on with their mission of presenting Christ to even their enemies and in adverse situations. Where persecution lashes out against them in one form or another, they should recall the paradigm set out by the early Apostles. A violent context only made them better.

Violence against Stephen (Acts 6:8-60). The gospel spread fast and converted more Jerusalemites (6:7). Already, two types of Jewish Christians were now in the Church: the Palestinian Jews who had left their homeland, but clung to the “Old Testament culture, doctrines and customs,” and “Jews of the Dispersion, who had left Palestine to live in other countries” (Powell 96, 97). Just when everything seemed to be going on well, the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia, v. 9) rose up in bitter opposition against one of the community’s first and finest deacons, Stephen (6:8-9). When they realized that they could not withstand Stephen’s wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke (6:10), they hired some men secretly, to accuse Stephen of blasphemy against Moses and God (7:11). A kangaroo-court convened to hear Stephen’s defense.²⁵ All of Acts 7 is the most moving apology in the Bible of comparable length. But Stephen’s exposition only maddened the Jews. They charged Stephen, but he counter-charged them for being stiff-necked, having uncircumcised hearts and ears, always resisting the Spirit, and ever persecuting their prophets (7:51-52). In intense fury, they dragged Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death. But before Stephen died, he prayed, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (7:60). This confrontation and subsequent execution of Stephen illustrated the bitter animosity between the two ages or kingdoms—Jesus’ and the world’s and the methods of warfare Christ’s disciples were to engage in

keeping with the Lord's teachings. Stephen and the apostles had learned to love their enemies just as Christ taught His followers to do (*cf.* Mt 5:43-44).

Stephen's martyrdom climaxed persecutions against the Church from Acts 4 up to this point. First, the apostles were arrested, detained and threatened. Next, they were flogged and threatened with death. Now the death threats became actualized.

But why did Stephen's speech attract such violent reaction? It recapitulated Jewish history. Did he say or do something false, wrong or illegal? What about the action against Stephen—was it legal or illegal? There is no account of the Jewish authorities being held responsible for this behavior. Only Roman authorities were responsible for such executions of any subjects, but there seemed to be instances where Jewish communities decided the fate of certain people if they thought such people were interfering too far into the religious heritage of the people (*cf.* Jn 8:1-11). This was totally illegal under Roman law, but these Jewish zealots lynched Stephen because he had outraged them. Their action here does not parallel Phinehas', when he killed a Jewish male and his Midianite woman for their gross act of indolence (Nu 25:6-13); because the zeal of Stephen's executors had very little to do with God's honor, although they presumed it to be so, falsely labeling Stephen as a blasphemer against God (Ac 6:11). They took up their own laws instead of the Roman law and were doing exactly what their leaders had done to Jesus Christ Himself. How did the Church respond to this miscarriage of justice? Although the early Christians did not appeal to for Roman to intervene, Christians should proact in such cases, if possible, by getting to the relevant agencies of justice in society involved in such matters. Miscarrying justice is to violate God—what Prophets Amos and Habakkuk decried.

The Jewish opponents were so enraged that instead of stripping the *criminal* before execution as was their custom, they stripped themselves. "The witnesses laid

their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul” (Ac 7:58). The Jewish custom was to drag the convict outside the city and have the witnesses be the first to stone him (her), aiming for the chest, and then everyone else would follow. Aiming at the chest normally presented difficulties and so the criminal would be stoned until he/she died. By their actions, they revealed the real culprits—they, not Stephen. He, like his Master, had done nothing unlawful or anything deserving death. Acts 6:11-14 show how all this was a dirty plot to get rid of Stephen.

The case of Stephen, like all other similar ones, presents difficulties. If Stephen was a law abiding citizen known to be filled with the Holy Spirit and power, and who was doing great wonders and miraculous signs (Ac 6:8); why would anyone execute without with no reference to the government? Did the Rome approve of such behavior? Why did his own Christian community not resist at least, to protect him, or ward off the enemies bring a stir to the city to attract government’s attention and intervention? In Jerusalem by this time, there were more than five thousand Christian men and the Roman authorities would not take any riot lightly. Stephen’s very witness responds to all the whys. His death would open the door to the spread of the kingdom of God and the message of Christ—the very message his opponents hated to hear! But Christ’s disciples were living not by human, but God’s standard.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:46-48).

To respond with violence was a choice open to them. But they wanted to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48) in being unnatural and not pragmatic. Stephen and the Christians here understood perfectly Jesus’ principle of proactive nonviolence. That is why Stephen prayed that God forgive his executioners.

Courage and boldness in the face of violence. Stephen knew how Jesus, Peter and John demonstrated this response and when he had opportunity, he took full advantage of it. His response also demonstrates the *principle of verbal defense* that Jesus, Peter and John used. Paul would use much of this response later on. He also exhibited *non-retaliation* (9:60). The proactive aspect was the effective Christian witness before and after this persecution. Although it did not forestall the persecution, yet, it did not demand a proportionate part of what it received. The believers also *loved the enemy* instead of cursing and hating. Stephen prayed for the Lord to forgive them. He, like Jesus, had demonstrated that it is possible to love and pray for one's enemy. It is possible to forgive one's enemy and hold nothing against them. The Book of Acts teaches Christians to learn to pray, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Ac 7:60), whenever confronted with the evil of violence.

6.2 VIOLENCE AGAINST THE CHURCH (8:1-3; 12:1ff.)

A young zealous Jew, Saul had already earned himself a reputation being one of the authority's right-hand men. The day of Stephen's martyrdom was the day "a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem" (8:1)—scattering all but the apostles throughout Judea and Samaria. While godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him (8:2), Saul "began to destroy the church" (8:3), going from house to house, dragging men and women and putting them in jail. Like the Synagogue of the Freedmen, this young religious zealot thought himself clothed with the authority to arrest and punish members of this new sect. But why did he think so?

Saul was a Pharisee. His teacher, Gamaliel, also belonged to the same party. The Pharisees were intensely religious and believed themselves to be in some special covenant relationship with God through Abraham. F. B. Meyer describes them thus:

Like their forefathers in Jeremiah's days, they trusted in lying words, saying, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are

these”; but had no thought of amending their ways and their doings. Narrow, casuistical, bigoted, intensely fanatical; priding themselves on their national privilege as the chosen people, but resentful against the appeals of the greatest of their prophets; counting on the efficacy of their system, but careless of personal character—such was the orthodox and conservative Jewish party of the time (31).

Saul’s group was one of three main currents of thought that converged upon the Jerusalem of the time. The other two were the Christian Church and the various Hellenist or Grecian Jews (*cf.* Ac 6:9). They all shared in Judaism. Meyer traces the origin of Hellenist Jews to the returnees from captivity with Ezra and Nehemiah. The Jerusalem Jews intensified the separation between them and others, including dispersed Jews, while the dispersed Jews, with their much contact with other cultures, became more liberal in their perspectives. These Jews spoke Greek instead of Hebrew and read the Septuagint. They had built synagogues in the lands of their dispersion and participated in the Jerusalem Temple worship only on major occasions. Their view of God was more comprehensive (or liberal); they realized that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had not left Himself without witness among the nations. Special synagogues represented the different countries they came from: “one of the Libertines who had been freed from slavery, one of the Cyrenians, one of the Alexandrians, one of the them of Cilicia and of Asia” (Meyers 33). Tarsus being the chief city of Cilicia, Saul of Tarsus would have significant ties to the group from there or at least he would know something about them that would explain his participation in the martyrdom of Stephen and his subsequent campaign of violence against the Church. Like Saul, many other Jews who had lived elsewhere and done business settled in Jerusalem once more. Meyers thinks that Saul may have so impressed the Sanhedrin with his devotion to Judaism that they appointed him to a position in that noble group. Otherwise, he would have had no voice against the followers of Christ (Ac 26:10). That such devout Pharisee would disfavor those who believed in the

crucified Nazarene to be Israel's long awaited messiah is wholly consistent with the Judaism of that day. To hold that this Jesus had risen was even more maddening. Placing Saul in debate with Stephen, with Saul establishing the traditions of the fathers (temple, circumcision, the prophets and the messiah), and Stephen refuting his positions (temple vs. spirit worship; circumcision vs. heart transformation; messiah vs. Jesus Christ), one can understand why Saul would no longer condone the rather passive or cowardly position of the apostles who lived basically in the vein and spirit of Judaism, with no thought of severing from it a new religious movement; but press a violent persecution against the Church. This was his way of quieting the Church.

The Blood of the Christians is the Seed of the Church

The principle that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" speaks about both the nature and life of the Church. The only reason why a pious Jew like Saul and all the others like him would settle on persecuting the Church was their gross misunderstanding of truths about God which, although they claimed to know, were truly ignorant of their workings. This same misunderstanding of basic Christian truths will be the reason for other pious religious persons and systems persecuting the Church. But, if Christians understand that their patience overcomes their persecutor, and accept that in doing and being the 'unnatural' their witness will turn the persecutor into propagator, as happened to Saul, then, proactive responses to violence will form a vital part of the core of Christian teaching.

Knowing when to run. Again, the church responded to persecution by simply dispersing throughout the surrounding countryside and regions, where they continued to preach the gospel (8:4ff.). Was that cowardice or inactivity? No, it was proactive. Jesus did just that and taught His disciples to leave hostile areas for more friendly or sympathetic ones. Did they not realize that once they began to flee into different

places, their numbers would become small in each new place they flee, and their place of origin will also have fewer Christians? Did they not realize also how such response could strengthen the hands of their oppressors? They did not seem to think so. How did they conceive of themselves and their ministry? Why did they flee and resist? First, they had seen Jesus do the same and realize it was a legitimate proactive response to violence. Second, they wanted to love Christ more than anything, by spreading the good news about Him, even loss of their lives. Yes, when the Church does not love its own life, but can give it up for Christ, its enemies quickly become paralyzed. They understood that they were engaged in bitter conflict with a system that was unsympathetic to them and to their cause. Yet, they resolved that nothing would stop them, not even persecution, from being the “salt and light” of the world. This persecution continued until Saul the persecutor of the gospel became Paul the propagator of the gift of grace (9:1-19). At his conversion, Jesus chose him for Himself (9:15-16): “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” The remainder of Acts is the fulfillment of that statement.

Non-cooperation with the enemy but cooperation with God. The church’s response, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name?” (9:21b) testified to what God can do when His people leave vengeance in His hands. Ananias and Barnabas specifically, cooperated with God to do His will in Saul’s life. Soon, the Church came to accept Saul as one of them. Had they resorted to militancy, the chances of fermenting the situation and breeding bitter hatred against their former persecutor would have been very high. They would have then cooperated with their enemy against a common enemy. In the end, they would have still lost their cutting edge as salt and light in a perverse world. From this time onward, persecution

against the church became a somewhat familiar aspect of its mission and witness. In spite of it, the church's witness grew stronger and stronger as they allowed God to lead them into all sorts of situations, to different types of people—all for His glory. The mission to the Gentile world had begun and persecution would only strengthen it rather than break it.

Prayer or divine intervention. In Acts 12, King Herod Agrippa I, attempting to please his Jewish citizens subjected the church to persecution.²⁶ He had earlier executed James, the brother of the John and arrested Peter, intending to kill him also, because the death of James amused the Jews. How did the church respond to James' execution and Peter's arrest? As was their custom, they "gathered and were praying" (12:13) for God to intervene. The church had by now learned that their master had but one sword to do battle—the one in His heart and mouth. They knew that their single most effective weapon against the system that oppressed them was not the same oppressive tools the system used—hatred, bitterness, brute force, aggression, and steel blades, but fervent, earnest wrestling against the kingdom of darkness, on their knees and hearts of love and compassion. God heard their plea and delivered Peter to them. But they did not forget that the God of James was the same God of Peter, and were willing to follow His leading in this matter. Difficult though, but the experiences of James and Peter teach a hard truth. Why did God not save James as He did Peter? In times of violence, some Christians will suffer and even die not through any fault of their own. Yet, God will deliver others from the same crisis. Even at such times, Christians should still cooperate with Him and let Him reveal His wisdom through His activities.

Therefore, to insist that Christians must respond in kind to violence done to them in order to show their oppressors that they too, are also human beings capable of

violence does not seem to be in the best interest of Christ. The sooner Christians realize that no human system can succeed to wipe out the Church of Christ on the face of the earth, the sooner the Christian community will learn to depend on God to fight for them. Hastening the non-Christian population into a Christ-like eternity is no mission of the Church of Christ, and any attempt by the Church to embark upon such response will make both Christians and non-Christians more unlike Christ.

6.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST THE APOSTOLIC TEAMS

Against Paul and Barnabas (First Missionary Journey)

Jesus' words that the world will hate and persecute His disciples were already being fulfilled. In Pisidian Antioch (13:44-52), Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel and "many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed" them, talking with, and urging "them to continue in the grace of God" (13:43). The whole city pulled together to listen to the apostles the following Sabbath. This greatly upset the Jews and filled them with jealousy (13:45), causing them to talk "abusively against what Paul was saying" (13:45). That was the turning point of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles (*cf.* 13:46-47). This announcement gladdened the hearts of the Gentiles, but infuriated the Jews who "incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city," and they "stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region" (13:50). Note how women not only spurred on, but also hindered Paul's ministry.

Again in Iconium (14:1-6), the Jews refused to believe and instead stirred up trouble against the apostles. They literally "poisoned" the minds of the Gentiles against the missionaries. This brought about division among the people, a situation typical of what Jesus earlier announced in the gospel about bringing a sword. The plot was to mistreat and stone the apostles—i.e., deal with them violently. The same thing

happened in Lystra and Derbe, where the apostles fled Iconium and went. Some Jews from Antioch and Iconium followed them there and incited the crowd against the missionaries. There the crowd “stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead” (14:19). Whenever and wherever truth confronts falsehood, the later often resorts to violence as a means of reasserting its position.

The Jews who had earlier spoken abusively because they were jealous of the missionaries (Ac 13:45) are represented by their colleagues from Antioch and Iconium who led the people of that city to persecute the apostles. However, the action of the mob here raises some questions. Did they act as a mob? Was their action justifiable, considering the limits of Jewish community authority? In stoning the apostles, were they in fact conducting a formal execution? In short, why did they do what they did? Jewish execution was by stoning as in the case of Stephen (Ac 7:58). Lystra and Antioch, though about a hundred miles (about 1,700 kilometers) distance apart, considered themselves sister cities. The Antiochene Jews succeeded in Lystra where they failed in Iconium. In spite of their success in persuading the mob to take sides against the apostles, the Jews had no legal authority to do what they did outside their own territory. Keener’s explanation for what happened here is persuasive.

A mob could change its views quickly (*cf.* Lk 23:18), especially in a case like this one: when Paul and Barnabas deny the gods, they would be considered impious and hence would appear to fit a different category of ancient paganism: they were not gods after all, but dangerous magician. (Whereas gods were popularly regarded as generally beneficent, sorcerers were viewed as secretive and usually harmful) (Keener, Background Commentary 363).

To succeed in their plans, these Jews presented the apostles in negative light, making the mob to easily demand the persecution of those they had just hailed as deity. Under the influence of the Jews, the Lystrains (Lycaonians) moved as a single unit to degrade the very persons they had just minutes earlier found difficulty not to honor.²⁷ It is also likely that this stoning of Paul patterned the formal Jewish

execution already dealt with in Acts 7:58. Their intention was not just to hurt Paul, but to kill him. Stoning and dragging him outside the city were acts of status degradation.

Most of the disciples in this narrative being Jews, or at least being very familiar with their rights under Jewish and Roman laws may not have seen it necessary to attempt to withstand the mob, but at least, they could have in some ways attempted to secure the intervention of the Roman authority. At worst, they would have resisted the mob, even if that meant simply stoning some of them in return. That would have been more pragmatic and natural. But what they do here is totally unexpected, and passive by much of contemporary standards. Very amazingly, the disciples did not fight back to avenge Paul or ward off further attacks on the apostles. They instead “gathered around him,” probably praying and nursing his wounds—but also, endangering their own lives should the crowd decide to descend not only on the missionaries, but those who sympathize with them as well. When people react this way in the face of violence, they manifest one truth: that they are indeed different from those who hurt them. The combined effects of the lifestyle, teaching and ministry of the apostles were that, the churches were “strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers” (16:5). Absolutely incredible! But it is true. An “if-you-strike-us-we-will-strike-back” response would hardly have produced such testimony.

Against Paul and Silas (second missionary journey). While in Philippi, Paul and Silas confronted the powers of darkness when they exorcised a powerful demon out of a slave girl whose owners used her for economic gain.²⁸ The owners of the girl “seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities” (16:19). The apostles’ activity may well have been termed ‘provocation’ by their opponents whose economic status they had just wrecked to liberate a life from satanic

oppression.²⁹ Instead of a standing ovation, this act earned the apostles an astounding degradation because they were “severely flogged” and thrown into prison (16:22-24). The severity of this flogging requires careful attention. The two different but related charges against the apostles were that 1) they had seriously upset the city (Ac 16:20)—civil disturbance and 2) they were advocating Jewish customs unacceptable to Romans (Ac 16:21). But why would Paul, a Roman citizen, be charged for his Jewishness? Brian Rapske has indicated that Paul’s impressive Jewish credentials posed a “severe liability in the latently anti-Semitic context” (120). The Philippians had basically pitched ‘them’ against ‘us,’—‘Jews’ against ‘Gentiles/Romans;’ and on that basis, it became easier for them to begin a prosecution session against the missionaries. The accusers assumed that they were socially and legally superior to the accused. Apart from this, the missionaries would not have been well-known to the magistrates and the entire community. They were recent arrivals for whom hardly anybody would vouch.

Enduring public flogging and imprisonment (16:22-24). The opposition led to severe flogging of the apostles. This flogging is different from the one Peter and John suffered earlier. Theirs was administered by the Sanhedrin, thus by Jewish authorities, and meant to serve as further deterrent. That of Paul and Silas was administered by Roman authorities (magistrates). Because Philippi was “extremely Romanized” its population benefited from the Roman law (Keener, Background Commentary 369).³⁰ Assuming Paul and Silas to be among the foreigners not necessarily covered by Roman law because Roman law was not automatically extended to a person by virtue of their residence in Philippi, the magistrates used the *coercitio*. Rapske (14-15) writes that the English “coercion” derives from this Latin *coercitio*. This was an instrument of coercion and included imprisonment (for citizens under Roman rule

before they were tried) and flogging (for lower status persons). Therefore, this flogging was in itself not the end of the process, but only the initial stages. After it, the missionaries were locked up in jail where they would await hearing. The flogging would have been replaced with imprisonment had the authorities ascertained beforehand that their prisoners were covered under Roman law. As Rapske puts it, *coercitio* was meant to “compel reluctant or recalcitrant individuals—particularly those of the ruling class—to obey the magistrate’s orders” (15). *Coercitio* also compelled people Romans thought to be lesser than themselves—foreigners, slaves, and women. The flogging in this case was a more severe form of *coercitio* and beyond the jurisdiction of the local Jewish authorities. This form did not only secure evidence, but it also degraded the person—a humiliation meant to discourage the followers of the punished. To administer the instrument, *lictors* (attendants of the Roman magistrates) carried rods in bundles with which to beat the foreigners involved.³¹ The person being beaten was not always stripped, but like in this case, it sometimes happened. In Acts 16:22, Paul and Silas were “stripped and beaten.” There were distinctions between the various instruments used for the flogging. First, the *fustigatio*, so named because it used the military staff (*fustis*), was applied to free civilians. It had replaced the rod (*virga*). The *flagellatio* used the scorge (*flagellum/flagrum*) and was meant for slaves. Second, *admonitio/castigatio* was a light corrective beating in which the *fustis* or *flagrum* was used. But the *veratio* used the *fustis* and was heavy. Third, the *pulsatio* used the fist (*pugnus*), while the *verberatio* used a rod or thong, even though it also used fists and chains. Both the *fustis* and *virga* were used for light and heavy beatings.

Their imprisonment was to further humiliate them because “strong associations of dishonor or shame” were attached to prisons in Paul’s time (Rapske

22). In prison, they were put in stocks to further confine them.³² This stage of imprisonment spelled severity or notoriety on the part of the prisoner. Stocks tortured and detained the prisoner. It had extra holes that forced the legs of the prisoner into “painful positions” (Keener, Background Commentary 370). The missionaries were kept in this position in the inner cell so that they would not escape. They also illustrated the *principle of silent endurance in the face of violence* at this point.

1. **Prayer and worship in spite of violence.** The determined apostles continued to fellowship with God and encourage one another even in prison, such that God used the situation to bring the jailer and his family to faith in Christ. Two issues are noteworthy here. First, it was praiseworthy in Jewish thought, for one to be able to glorify God in suffering and shame; while Greco-Roman philosophers were known to have praised “the wisdom of being content and thankful in one’s situation” (Keener, Background Commentary 370). Second, it was not customary for Jews to offer prayers at midnight when people were fast asleep. Keener notes how the attitude of Paul and Silas could have upset or gladden the other prisoners—upset at their timing or glad at their breaking the monotony of their custody. And although Paul pressed their case for Roman citizenry (16:37-39), the missionaries did not resent their persecutors, including the prison warden (*carcer*). They learned to turn the other cheek, not once, not twice, not thrice, but as a way of life, in order to be perfect as their heavenly Father. As a matter of fact, as the outcome of the case proved later, the apostles had been dealt with “illegally.” To publicly scourge a Roman citizen first without trial was forbidden under Julian law. Similarly, to lay false claims to Roman citizenship was high treason. Paul’s silence about any Roman citizenship prior to the flogging may have been purposeful. It would have thrown the magistrates in an awkward legal position that would make them initiate negotiations with the victims

instead. Furthermore, as Keener observes, it was a strategy to “help secure the future safety of the fledgling Christian community” (Keener, Background Commentary 371).³³ If that is the case, then, the strategy was proactive and effective where a reactionary one may not have yielded the same results.

2. **Divine intervention.** As the missionaries prayed and sang to God, He intervened through a violent earthquake, as if to show the Romans that He works violence, too. It shook the foundations of the prison, shattered the chains off the men and set all the prisoners free. Even an inner cell in a maximum security Roman jail could not stop God from intervening for His children; He knows why He did not intervene earlier.

3. **They beat us publicly...Let them come themselves and escort us out (16:37).** The missionaries had endured violence but were not ready to endure another of the authorities behaving as if they were in the right. Simply, Paul and Silas demonstrated the *principle of verbal defense*. But at this point, the principle is better described as that of *non-cooperation with the enemy*. They refused to cooperate with the magistrates who had clearly wronged them. That was not because they wanted to make trouble. They only desired to make their persecutors bear responsibility for their actions. The missionaries were not violent, but they applied a certain ‘political force’ or ‘pressure’ to which they were entitled. Again, they were using the principle of *smartness, knowing when to speak and when to remain silent*. They remained silent and endured unjust punishment. But they also refused to remain silent once they had built a case. Paul was skillful at using various non-violent techniques. What he did here worked because the magistrates came and appeased them and escorted them from the prison (16:38-39). It not only provided safety for them in that town, but also set a precedent for how the magistrates would treat future generations of Christians.

Purposeful verbal defense like this one is highly proactive especially when the victims know their rights that have been abused and demand reparations as deterrents against any future occurrence.

4. **Non-violence illustrated again.** Once released from prison, the missionaries met with the other Christians whom they encouraged (Ac 16:40). Again, if Roman law dutifully covered these missionaries and some of the disciples, this would have been one perfect time for the Christians under Roman law to call attention to the plight of their fellows. That they instead chose not to, does not deny their rights or privileges. It instead reinforces their understanding of Jesus' teaching about how they should live in relation to this system that would harm them. They too were capable of stirring up local riots if they so chose (as did the Jews of Thessalonica, Ac 17:1-9); and if their opponents could deal violence to them under the law, there was no reason why they also could not return violence by the same law, especially with Paul's violent past in mind. After all, the Thessalonian Jews had labeled the missionaries as "men who have caused trouble all over the world" (Ac 17:6); and further charged them with "defying Caesar's decrees" by claiming "another king, one called Jesus" (Ac 17:7). Of course, in their bid to get rid of the missionaries, the opposition had diverted the focus of the argument. Paul and Silas had proclaimed Christ as messiah, explaining His death, burial and resurrection. The issue was not so much the kingship of Christ, but since that seemed to provide evidence for their accusation, the jealous Jews took advantage of it and neglected the context of the apostolic gospel.

5. **Right of legitimate appeal.** Sometimes it is necessary and even more effective not to appeal to, or use one's rights when not doing so will accrue bigger dividends. Revealing their Roman citizenry prior to their flogging may have saved the missionaries' neck from this public disgrace, but it may not have provided evidence of

the type of Christianity the missionaries displayed here. Their active non-violent stance was at once proactive. It may not always be expedient to claim rights. Also, there are times when it is necessary to remain silent even when accused falsely.

6.4 WHY PERSECUTIONS AGAINST CHRISTIANS?

Why did different groups and persons persecute the Christians who were not violent to them? Apart from Jesus' prediction that people will hate His followers because of His name (Mt 10:22) and persecute them because of Him (Mt 10:17-18), the Bible provides reasons why people did in fact hate Jesus and His disciples. Understanding why they hated Him will help to also see why they hated His followers, and probably why they will still continue to do so.

6.4.1 Seven Reasons Why the Religious Leaders Hated Jesus

People hated Jesus for various reasons, but seven are conspicuous.

1. **Jesus taught authoritatively.** He taught authoritatively, unlike the teachers of the law and the scribes—religious authority. (Mt 7:29; Mk 11:18).
2. **Jesus held a higher perspective of people.** His perspective of people was totally different from, and opposed to theirs ((Mt 9:11; Mk 3:16; Lk 5:30).
3. **Jesus possessed unequalled authority and power.** He had such power and authority that they could not understand. This came up in different ways—the Beelzebub controversy (Mt 9:34; 12:24b; Mk 3:21; Lk 11:15); the source of His authority (Mt 21:23d) and more.
4. **Jesus had a holistic Sabbath perspective.** Jesus' perspective of the Sabbath was radically different from theirs. They were overly concerned with the letter of the Sabbath, and missed its spirit (Mt 12:2, 10b; Mk 3:24; Lk 6:2).
5. **Jesus demonstrated astounding wisdom.** He possessed astounding wisdom and power (Mt 13:57).

6. **Jesus enforced God's will.** The Pharisees and Sadducees were more concerned with guarding the traditions of their ancestors than with obeying God and Jesus rebuked them for their double-standard (Mt 15:1-2).

7. **The Jewish leaders were envious and jealous of Jesus.** They sought to trap Him through different means—questions about His tax payment (Mt 17:24); legality of divorce (Mt 19:3); His popularity (Mt 21:15); taxes to Caesar (Mt 22:15-17); the greatest commandment in the law (Mt 22:34-36); His parables that spoke to them directly (Mt 21:45-46; Mk 12:12); His denunciations of their ways of life, the seven woes of Matthew 23 (Mt 23); for doing good (Mk 3:6) and more. So they plotted and looked for ways to kill Him (Mt 26:3-5); false evidence against Him (Mt 26:59); about His identity as the Christ, the Son of God (Mt 26:63; 27:22-23, 54; Mk 14:61; 15:9-10); and charges of blasphemy (Mt 26:65; Lk 5:21).

6.4.2 Sixteen Reasons Why People Hated the Christians

In Acts, violence against Christians was not without reasons. Here are some outstanding ones.

1. **The apostles taught the essentials of the gospel.** They taught in the name of Jesus and proclaimed the resurrection of the dead (Ac 4:1-3).

2. **The apostles demonstrated authority.** The Jewish leaders wanted to know the authority and power behind the apostles' ministry (Ac 4:7).

3. **The apostles preached and taught in the name of Jesus.** The apostles preached a “no other way” salvation message, emphasizing Jesus and the “only” way; and demanded repentance (Ac 4:12, 17, 18).

4. **The apostles exhibited remarkable boldness and courage.** The ‘unschooled’ Peter and John so astounded the Sanhedrin by their remarkable boldness and courage that only their having been with Jesus could explain (Ac 4:13, 19).

5. **The apostles were the envy and target for jealousy by the Jews.** The religious readers were jealous of the apostles' preaching Jesus Christ and arrested and imprisoned them (Ac 5:17). The Jews in Pisidian Antioch were jealous of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas and incited persecution against them (Ac 13:44-50). In Thessalonica, jealous Jews stirred up persecution against Paul, accusing the missionaries of preaching another king called Jesus (Ac 17:1-9). The root of all this jealousy was that faithful Jews were converting to the teachings and religion of the apostles and that hurt the sensibilities of the guardians of the traditions of Judaism.

6. **The apostles demonstrated staunch obedience to God rather than to human authorities.** In spite of orders not to preach in Jesus' name, the apostles obeyed God and demanded the religious leaders to judge what was right (Ac 5:26-29).

7. **The apostles possessed remarkable wisdom.** Stephen's martyrdom began when Jews from the Synagogue of the Freedmen could not defeat his argument on the truth of God. Where reason fails violence flourishes (Ac 6:10).

8. **The people told malicious lies on the apostles.** Stephen's opponents lied on him when they could not win over him as a way of stirring up the people against him (Ac 6:11). They charged him with blasphemy, their normal favorite punch line.

9. **The apostles determined to show forth the glory of God.** Jesus revealed to Saul that he would suffer for His sake in becoming God's instrument to carry His name before Gentile kings (Ac 9:15-16).

10. **Herod wanted to do a political favor to the Jews.** Herod wanted to please the Jews by persecuting the Church. He executed James and that pleased the Jews. He now proceeded to do the same with Peter (Ac 12:1-2).

11. **The apostles liberated victims from oppressive bondage.** Paul and Silas delivered a slave girl from her bondage to Satan and her earthly captors. That led to

great economic loss on their part for which they stirred up opposition against the missionaries. This landed Paul and Silas in jail (Ac 16:1-24). A similar thing happened in Ephesus when preaching Christ was an economic damage to silversmith Demetrius and his fellow smiths who raised opposition against Paul (Ac 19:23ff.).

12. **The apostles taught that Jesus is the Christ.** Judaism did not accept Jesus as the Christ. To preach Him so was blasphemy. That could only be blasphemy because of the true understanding of the Christ's deity. For attempting to persuade Jews to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, the missionaries got into more trouble (Ac 18:5-6).

13. **A strong desire to guard Judaism ate at the Jews.** The Jews in Jerusalem stirred up opposition against Paul by overstating the case that he was teaching people everywhere against their people, their law and their temple, and even defiling the temple by bringing an uncircumcised Gentile in the temple area (Ac 21: 27-31).

14. **The apostles displayed an outstanding living testimony of life in Christ.** Before the Sanhedrin, Paul affirmed that he had fulfilled his duty to God in all good conscience to the very day of his address (Ac 23:1). For that statement, the high priest ordered those standing near Paul to slap him on his mouth (Ac 23:2).

15. **The Jews falsely accused Paul as ringleader of a notorious group of "troublers," the Nazarene sect.** They accused Paul of being a ringleader, trouble shooter and one guilty of sacrilege—temple desecration. Paul challenged them before Felix to prove these charges (Ac 24:5-17).

16. **The Jews feared that they were losing ground to the Christians.** At the bottom of all these reasons is the fear that vibrant Christian witness challenges any false and unfounded beliefs about God and His working in human lives. Where other faiths fear Christians, they will likely find ways to persecute and weaken their witness and frustrate their mission.

6.5 VIOLENCE AGAINST PAUL

After the Philippi experience, most of the violence was against Paul. But the risen Lord had earlier said of Saul: “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name” (Ac 9:15-16). This prophecy by Jesus was being fulfilled in Paul’s life and ministry. Was Paul’s suffering retributive justice? First, the persecutor turned propagator. Now the persecutor is persecuted, reaping what he had sown. God may not have been punishing Paul for Saul’s wickedness in his days of ignorance. Yet, the just God has repeatedly said that He will not let the wicked go unpunished. However, Paul was Saul regenerated and now under grace. So God could not have been punishing him. He had only allowed him to understand the natural consequences of certain choices people make—how it felt to be in the right and yet be falsely accused and abused. This new perspective would make Paul’s witness to the Jews even more effective because he once stood where they now stood. His level of compassion for the ignorant Jews grew considerably (Ro 9-11). That may probably not have happened had God not allowed Paul to be on the receiving end of untold pain, suffering and persecution.

Besides, persecution of the persecutor was God’s way of getting Paul to reach where his influence had never previously reached—Rome, so that he can preach the gospel there in keeping with the prophecy. When God forgives, He does not punish what He has forgiven; but He lets certain natural consequences of people’s actions and lives go with them. That may have been Paul’s “thorn in the flesh,” the desire to be delivered from constant harassment and persecution which the Lord, in keeping with this prophecy, denied but promised, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Co 12:9). Beginning with Act 17, where the

Jews incited the crowd against the missionaries (and ended up dragging Jason and some other Christian brothers before the city officials, Ac 17:6), a number of minor and major incidents of violence against the apostle have been revealed. In Thessalonica, Jason and the other Christians posted bond before the release of the missionaries was secured and the city turned to normalcy. This action was a legal nonviolent and proactive strategy. Again, the few Christians here did not demand their rights or plot a counter attack on their Jewish opponents. The Jews in Thessalonica followed Paul and Silas to Berea to agitate the crowds and stir them up against the missionaries (Ac 17:13). Jewish populations in most of these places (including Thessalonica) were a minority. For them to be so influential as to enlist the support of much of the idle unemployed (“bad characters,” Ac 17:5) would require tact. But they often were able to persuade the crowds in their direction, although Thessalonians did not have legal jurisdiction in Berea (Keener, Background Commentary 372). At this, the believers in Berea dispatched Paul immediately to the coast and left Silas and Timothy behind (Ac 17:14). This was only a temporary measure after which the team would reunite later. The strategy the Church used here was not confrontation but separation so that there would be no further immediate problem. They could have insisted that Paul also remain with them, and work with the authorities to secure his safety. But, at this time, the Church believed the best option was not to confront the opposition, but to remove Paul and send him somewhere else. Paul was a significant figure to them. It would be foolish on their part to let him remain and be hurt or killed in their attempt to hold on to their rights. This introduces the strategy of weighing present actions against possible future consequences, prioritizing responses.

1. Principle of fleeing or running away, that is, knowing when to run. Paul and Silas again this principle here. They left Pisidian Antioch for Iconium (Ac 13:51)

and they fled Iconium to Lystra and Derbe (Ac 14:6). From Berea Paul went to Athens where some Athenian Epicurean and Stoic philosophers insulted him as a “babbler” (Ac 17:18), to humiliate him. Paul did not so much defend his integrity against the philosophers here. Instead, he used their own context to proclaim the gospel of which they were ignorant. A few persons in that town converted to Christ as a result. Had Paul paid more attention to this verbal assault, he probably would have missed the focus of his mission. Later on, Paul moved to Corinth where he continued to proclaim Christ in Jewish synagogues, “trying to persuade Jews and Greeks” (Ac 18:4). David Gill in Acts in its First Century Setting concurs to the establishment of Jewish communities with synagogues in the places that Paul taught (2: 450) The Jews opposed and abused (Ac 18:6).

2. Principle of Shaking off the dust off one’s feet as testimony against.

Instead of resisting the opposition and calling for Corinthian Christians to follow him in his fight against the them, Paul did what Jesus instructed His disciples—a symbolic protest—removal of the sandals and shaking off the dust against them, or as did Paul in this case, the shaking out of his clothes accompanying the declaration, “Your blood be on your own head!” (Ac 18:6). Jesus had taught in Matthew 10:14-16, how this action constituted a transfer of responsibility from the preacher to those involved. When Paul did this here, (*cf.* Ac 13:51, Paul’s protest against Pisidian Antioch), he was announcing judgment on those who had rejected his message and also authenticating his Gentile ministry. The first place the missionaries did this in this book is Acts at 13:51. They were making the opposition responsible for their own standing before God. It is like a symbolized form of the verbal defense principle.

3. Principle of Involving the proper political authorities. Paul’s year and a half stay in Corinth (Ac 18:11) witnessed a “united attack” on him by the Jews (Ac

18:12) who brought him to court. The charge was that he was “persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law” (Ac 18:13). By this charge they meant to render Judaism a *religio licita* to the Romans, but not so with Christianity. This declaration would at once make Christianity a non-Jewish movement and that had implications as W. Ward Gasque shows in his “The Challenge to Faith,” History of Christianity. Luke had been very keen on legal precedents that favored Christianity.³⁴ Bruce W. Winter discusses in his “The Imperial Cult and Gallio’s Judgment,” Acts in its First Century Setting (2:98-103). But Luke basically did not include the reasons for the Jewish expulsion from Rome under Claudius (Ac 18:2), although Winter thinks that Governor Gallio’s indifference to the Jews here was in harmony with the spirit of the action of Claudius (100). But the Roman historian Suetonius proposed disturbances about the Messiah (Keener, Background Commentary 375). The Proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, saw no seriousness in the accusation against Paul and advised the Jews to settle the matter according to their laws because it was an issue of internal religious dispute having no reference to the establishment of any local provincial or imperial cult (Winter 100). A governor in the Roman empire, under the authority of the *imperium*, was answerable only to the emperor and the senate. Provincial governors had “absolute authority of imperium,” and determined the verdict of cases as they saw fit, as C. S. Wansink argued in Dictionary of New Testament Background (986). The crime, rather than the alleged criminal, determined the type of penalty even though the defendant and plaintiff’s ranks had some weight also on the case.

When Gallio ejected them from the court on the basis of his *imperium*, the Jews turned instead on Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court (Ac 18:17). That Gallio showed no concern in even this later development

reveals how Roman authorities sometimes dealt with Jewish interests. C. S. Wansink showed that *extra ordinem* gave a magistrate the right to obtain knowledge (*cognitio*) of a crime, without any limit (986). Proconsul Gallio, under *extra ordinem*, chose not to listen to the case against Paul because he was not obliged to. His choice considered political matters. Tribune Claudius Lysias' information gathering on Paul was possible under *extra ordinem* (Wansink 986).

4. Principle of effective preaching and persuasive arguing. The Apollosian strategy (Ac 18:28) of vigorous public refutation of opposition views and beliefs in debate (apology) was not unique to Apollos. Stephen used it and Paul was a master at it. This principle has been one of the best proactive strategies of the Church, although certain contexts would not allow it. By it, differences are settled through dialogue and understanding is achieved not by violence. It is one of the finest ways of combating matters of faith where canons, clubs and spears do not affect the heart and mind.

Paul later came to Ephesus where he preached and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God in Christ (Ac 19:8).³⁵ There also some Jews grew obstinate, refused to believe and “publicly maligned the Way” (Ac 19:9). If not believing Paul’s gospel was no reason for Christians’ violent reaction against the Jews, probably maligning the Way was offensive enough to require some sort of proportionate reprisal. Even in the Roman empire, as seen in Ephesus (Acts 19), to malign divinities was a serious offence; and if the abuse pitched the imperial cult against some local religion, then it would be a capital crime because such attitude, Gasque explains, was believed to threaten the peace and prosperity associated with the divinities (84).³⁶ But that was not the way of the Way, and the Christians knew the more excellent way. What Paul did instead was to leave the obstinate batch and move on to teach the disciples the essentials of the Christian faith.

5. Principle of selective battles. Selective battles means choosing which battles to fight, when, and how. Paul knew³⁷ and accepted that a significant aspect of his Christian ministry would involve the sort of persecution and violence he was experiencing, as S. J. Hafemann's Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit discussed. So he concentrated his efforts on equipping the disciples to understand their faith and live with its consequences. This explains why after the rioting ended, Paul encouraged the disciples (Ac 20:1). Again, had they believed in a violent self-defence theology, the disciples would at least have tried it out. Or, was Luke selective in leaving out such detail because it might put the new movement in an awkward position? That is not the case. Though highly selective in the material he reports, Luke was not doing propagandist. Had these Christians pressed for their rights (as did Paul after the Philippian jail experience), Luke would have said so. Paul established that distinguishing mark of the early followers of Jesus—"their clear convictions about doctrine and ethics" (Gasque 82).

6.5.1 The Ephesus Riot

In Ephesus, Paul dealt violent blows to the powers of evil. Handkerchiefs and aprons that had come in contact with his body were taken to sick and demon-possessed persons who were healed. About *souda,ria h' simiki,nqia* (handkerchiefs and aprons), Paul Trebilco Acts in its First Century Setting noted that *souda,rion* is not attested by the LXX or any pre-Christian source, but is based on the Latin *sudarium* and was a "face cloth for wiping perspiration, or handkerchief" (2: 313). He observes further how the occurrence of the word in the NT does not tell much about its meaning. Although found in Graeco-Roman magical works, the word never was understood as a technical term for something that effected cures. So also is the case of *simiki,nqion* (apron) which is a hapax legomenon in the NT and

based on the Latin *semicinctium*, a belt, but that meaning is difficult to ascertain. The ancient world believed that evil spirits often caused sicknesses and that healing could be effected by particular gods or goddesses. Also, they held that certain people possessed “thaumaturgical powers” and that whatever touched them held the same powers (Trebilco, 2: 313). That explains why in Acts 19:11-12, Paul’s body was thought to have thaumaturgical powers.

While still in Ephesus, demonic violence occurred when an evil spirit overpowered the seven impersonating sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest who were using the name of Jesus to exorcise demons. Their formula was, “In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out” (Ac 19:13). They probably succeeded in previous times, but on a certain day, the spirit attested to knowing Jesus and Paul but not them, and asked that they identify themselves. The spirit beat them so badly that they fled naked and bleeding (Ac 19:15-16). This suggests that although demons know and fear the name of Jesus, the demonic world must also know the agents (human vessels) who use Jesus’ name to wage war against the demonic world. That is, they must be legitimate members of the community of faith in Christ and not impostors. The name of Christ is not a magical formula to ward off evil spirits.

What followed this account was the fear that the name of Jesus incident brought on the people, as well as, the honour that name received from them. Many who believed publicly confessed their evil deeds and sorcerers brought out their magical books and burned them publicly. The significance of this incident lies in the understanding in antiquity that such books were found to be “offensive, seditious, or dangerous” (Trebilco 315). The difference in the handling of these books and the general practice in antiquity was that the sorcerers themselves volunteered their books

to be burnt publicly instead their being taken away forcibly. The public burning of such books indicated a repudiation of their contents as well. That is conversion.

The great Artemis riot in Ephesus occurred about this time (Ac 19:23-41). A silversmith, Demetrius incited the artisans against Paul, whom he charged had ruined their business and led practically the whole region of Asia astray (Ac 19:25-26). Keener's Background Commentary thinks these were probably shrine makers and not silverworkers. Furthermore, the "*collegia* or professional guilds" were formed by members of the same trade and set standards for the trade and united its members to defend their economic interests (380). From this perspective, it is easy to understand why Demetrius would agitate these people against the missionaries. Understanding very well that people are more united by such bonds as faith, Demetrius climaxed his accusation with the charge that Paul had also dishonoured their goddess Artemis. Trebilco explained that Artemis got her name because she made people "safe and sound and ...healthy" (316-317). Nothing suggests that she was benevolent to her followers, although she was thought to listen to prayer. She gave oracles in which she advised her followers. She was believed to be lord over supernatural powers, and acclaimed to be Lady, Savior, a heavenly goddess and Queen of the Cosmos. Her worshipers also ascribed such attributes to her as the "greatest...holiest...most manifest...as fertility goddess" (p. 318, 319). Trebilco does not subscribe to the view that Artemis was a goddess of fertility, a view he credits to Christian polemical sources because of the egg-shaped object on the front of the cult that are interpreted as Artemis' breasts. Trebilco (319-320) argues that modern scholarship has not reached consensus on the exact nature of these objects, so it is safe to say they are not breasts.

Demetrius argued that as a consequence of Paul's ministry, Artemis would be robbed of her divine majesty. The case was simple. These craftsmen produced articles

for use in the worship of Artemis. If a new god (now Christ whom Paul preached) be shown to be superior to Artemis who is really no god/goddess at all, then, not only will the artisans' revenue fall, but the people's allegiance to her will go as well. But more than that, the people will put their trust in the new God. This is one clear example of how an economic (or political) situation can be given religious overtones for the express purpose of creating social upheaval. Professor Keener remarks here that "religious piety becomes a thin cloak for personal economic interests" (379). With Artemis' temple serving as the world bank, politics and economics were heavily interwoven in Ephesus (Keener 380).

Ephesus so upset, the crowd acted with a singleness of purpose against Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, Aristarchus and Gaius (Ac 19:29), and rushed them into the theatre. The disciples forbade Paul to go to the scene of the uproar. The ensuing confusion was so great that the city clerk had to intervene. The crowd had put Ephesus in danger of being charged with rioting for reasons they could not clearly articulate (Ac 19:40). The clerk's prompt intervention averted possible further trouble for the missionaries.

6.5.2 Paul Determined to Die in Jerusalem

Paul left Ephesus and returned to Jerusalem accompanied by some believers. His entourage was larger this time because a plot against him by the Jews had been unearthed (Ac 20:3). When the plot was discovered, Paul changed his travel plan and instead went back through Macedonia instead of through Syria. Trophimus of Asia was one of those who accompanied Paul. But Paul remembered and reminded the Ephesian Church leaders about his tears and labour in Ephesus (Ac 20:19), where he also wrote the epistle to the Romans. Firmly set to reach Jerusalem, Paul remarked that although he had no idea what awaited him, he nevertheless feared nothing

because he considered his life worth nothing to him, if only he may finish his race and complete the task the Lord Jesus had assigned him—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” (Ac 20:24). Paul’s resolution of readiness “not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13) is very significant to his overall understanding of his mission and ministry. It explains an aspect of his proactive, active non-violent position. Paul was a crowd puller. Had he advocated self-defence or violence, he would not have lacked a following.

In Jerusalem, news of Paul’s missionary activities received different reactions. The Jerusalem Church acknowledged that thousands of Jews had believed. But these Jewish believers were “zealous for the law” (Ac 21:20). How would the Church handle this new situation of Jewish and Gentile believers being together in Jerusalem? Here was a typical conflict of culture. But who were the zealots? Were they part of the formal sect labelled by that name? These zealots had heard that Paul was teaching believers to abandon Jewish customs if they should be real Christians (Ac 21:21). It was left to Paul to establish his Jewish identity and still remain a culturally relevant Christian without compromising the essentials of either his cultural heritage or his Christian faith. Jerusalem was at this time more volatile. It was different from the Jerusalem of Acts 2. Assassins (*sicarii*) had begun to murder aristocrats they suspected of taking sides with Gentiles. Vaughan’s Acts explained “*sikarioi*” as “dagger-men” (131). These were Jewish nationalist efforts to establish Jewish nationalism. W. J. Heard and C. A. Evans described the *sicarii* as “urban assassins, or terrorists (not rural bandits), who, because of their secrecy, could live apparently normal lives (without fleeing to a hideout)” (936). Their agenda was characterized by assassination of Jewish aristocracy, beginning in the reign of Felix in the 50s (selective assassinations of the ruling elite—high priest Jonathan); slaughter of pro-Roman

members of the Jewish aristocracy who lived in the countryside and terrorist hostage taking. G. L. Thompson described Jewish attitude toward Rome as “not always favourable” (967). He continues that Rome meant different things to different first-century provincials. To some, it was “a master with whom one could live;” to others, it was “a satanic oppressor” (967). Christians saw things differently. Rome was not the problem. Sin was the universal predicament of humankind, and the Christian message was that liberating agent that would emancipate life in the present and future.

Such situation would naturally make it difficult for Jews who had any alliance to any other party or interest group other than that of the nationalists. In order not to jeopardize the Gentile mission, Paul accepted to participate in Jewish ceremonial cleansing rituals without compromising his Christian faith. The choice was not whether Paul and the Jewish Christians would be Jews or Christians. They were Jewish Christians and would therefore practice Jewish customs that did not contradict their Christian faith. But the suggestion by the Jerusalem Church leaders were more precautionary, to absolve Paul of any false accusation and to allow him worship freely in the temple. A missiological and context-relevant principle is right here.

These Jews had earlier seen Trophimus the Ephesian with Paul (Ac 21:29) and simply assumed that he had brought him into their temple. To bring an uncircumcised Gentile into the temple was gross sacrilege to the Jews. In their zeal to fight for God, they aroused the whole city, and charged Paul with teaching anti-Jewish customs and beliefs (Ac 21:27-28). But they had twisted the issue. Paul respected the Jewish law, although he taught that Gentiles could be saved without the law. They seized Paul, dragged him from the temple (Ac 21:30), beat him (Ac 21:32) and tried to kill him (Ac 21:31). Had news not reached the Roman commander in time, they would have killed Paul long before any help would have come.

Paul rescued but arrested. But when the commander (Cladius Lysias) arrived, he instead had Paul arrested and bound with two chains (Ac 21:33) and began some preliminary investigations. The violent mob interrupted the proceeding, leaving even the commander confused about the identity and crime of Paul. The soldiers had to carry him to safety (Ac 21:34-36). The commander had assumed that Paul was a certain Egyptian rebel who had revolted and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert (Ac 21:38). This Egyptian was probably the one Josephus wrote of as a false prophet who had some thirty thousand people following him. Although the Roman governor Felix (Ac 23:24) defeated him, the rebel ringleader escaped. Keener's Background Commentary observed that this figure is less realistic as compared to that reported in Acts (388). The desert was often associated with these messianic deliverers and attests to the context of violence in Christianity's birthplace.

Of all places, Jerusalem would have been the hottest spot filled with religious zealots from all walks. These Jewish zealots, assuming that some of them were believers, could have acted as they did out of two considerations: first, that they were not prepared to handle any collaboration between Jews and Gentiles because of Jewish nationalistic tendencies in them; second, they had not fully understood the gospel, at least, Paul's version, and supposed that he was breaking up the foundations of Jewish spirituality. But what Paul was preaching was Gentile inclusivism into God's grand salvation plan. That is something these Jewish elements did not wish to accept. Possibly also, some of these zealots were driven by more nationalistic concerns than religious ones.

Jewish nationalism had mounted tension so much at the time of Cumanus, the Roman governor immediately before Felix (Ac 23:24), that ten thousand Jews were reportedly trampled to death in a riot that resulted from a Roman soldier lewdly

exposing himself in the temple area. Tacitus claims that Felix “exercised the power of a king with the mind of a slave” (qtd. in Munck 231; Keener 387). The Jews of Jerusalem at this time were ready to give fire for water and death for insult. Bounded with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul, more than forty such men conspired to kill Paul—a further indication that these were not Christians who had understood Christ’s message (Ac 23:12-15). They were officially to be classified under the Zealots sect of Jewish activists or “fanatical patriots” whose presence had become so common place in Palestine before the war years (New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary 761). These “revolutionary-minded Jews” thought certain assassinations to be pious. They believed themselves to be “those zealous for God” and came to call themselves Zealots “within eight years of Paul’s speech” (Keener 389). These men, like Phinehas (Nu 25:7), were fanatical defenders of Jewish theocracy. But in taking vengeance on those who wronged the Jewish nation, the Zealots committed many excesses. Although the Zealots were anti-Roman, they should not for that reason be grouped as a “*unified* revolutionary movement in the first-century” because the term applied strictly “only to some rather than to most early Jewish revolutionaries” (Keener, Mathew 58).

They refused to pay taxes to Rome, regarded acknowledgment of loyalty to Caesar as sin, and sparked several uprisings, including the Jewish revolt that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. They may be viewed as being to the extreme left of the Pharisees and were religiously strict but very active politically, at least anti-politically. No means was too severe for them to use. Often they are identified with the *sicarii* (assassins) who carried concealed daggers and used them to kill Roman officials and sympathizers. McCain’s Notes on New Testament Introduction and Background Commentary, these terrorists “carried curved daggers

under their cloaks and brutally stabbed to death aristocrats in the midst of crowds in the temple, then slipped away unseen” (Keener 388; McCain 35).

Having so thoroughly misunderstood Paul, it is no wonder that these Jewish elements so opposed him. Paul was very zealous for God, but his zeal was out of knowledge of God in Christ. These Jews, though zealous, had a different focus. In Pauline Christian understanding, God was reconciling the whole world—Jews and Gentiles to Himself in Christ Jesus (2Co 5:19). The Jews saw God working only for the Jewish nation. Thus, Paul and his fellow Jews had different perspectives of God’s activity in human sphere. To the Jews, the two perspectives were irreconcilable as long as Paul remained alive. They understood themselves as purging Jewish orthodoxy by so reacting.

6.5.3 The Church in Non-violence Struggles

Most likely, there also were the most militant believers who could have easily countered the constant harassment of individuals and groups of people about religious matters. But there is nothing like those believers putting up any sort of defense against the assailants who even were trying to murder Paul in the name of devotion to God’s cause. Had the church fought back, they probably would have ruined the open door God set before Paul to get the gospel to Felix, Festus and right into Rome to Agrippa. The decision by the Jerusalem church not to fight the battle of God with mortal means became a grand opportunity for the gospel to spread further. In Paul’s defenses (22:1ff), one thing is obvious: a one time religious fanatic had understood that no human being can fight God’s battle effectively, unless through God’s means and by His will. Yet, God’s real battle is not against people, but against the system of evil. The Jerusalem crowd listened patiently to Paul’s defense until he mentioned God’s change of plan to save the Gentiles (22:21-22). Again, the crowd became furious,

raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!” (22:22). Powell’s Amazing Acts summarized these verses under the three headings, “How *foolish, futile, fatal*” (380). They showed they were foolish when they rejected what God has said because it “challenged their pride and preconceived ideas,” in spite of their knowledge of God’s workings among them. Their efforts were futile because they lost their prisoner, in spite of all they did. They failed to realize that no matter how hard they tried, they would never stop the gospel. Their persistent rejection of God’s way led to the destruction of their nation (380). Their reaction is predictable.

1. **Illegal flogging.** The commander (Gk. *chiliarch*), Claudius Lysias, (see Ac 23:26) ordered a centurion to flog Paul— something that was not really part of his prosecution, but one that has arisen because of it. This beating would have been severe. Claudius Lysias was left in Jerusalem at the Fortress of Antonia (the barracks of Acts 22:24) in order to keep order in the city. The crowd had probably given him the impression that Paul had committed some grievous crime and refused to confess or admit. At that, he must have despaired in the execution of his duty. The only option he thought he had at this moment was the dreaded *flagellum*. Boice’s Acts noted that Jesus received this dreadfully cruel flogging before his crucifixion (372).

Commander Claudius Lysias had to be a citizen in order to be part of the legion. He could not understand Aramaic, the language Paul spoke, but he realized the seriousness of the commotion. The dialogue between him and Paul in Acts 22:27-29 revealed that Paul had a higher standing as a born Roman citizen than did the tribune who must have been a freed slave who bought his freedom, or one who bought his citizenship by a bribe. “I had to pay a big price for my citizenship,” (Acts 22:28) was his confession. But contrary to a commentator whose interpretation of this verse makes Paul’s citizenship doubtful because, according to him, “Roman citizenship had

become so cheap that even a disreputable person like Paul could earn it,” Paul was a born Roman citizen (qtd. in Powell 382). In the second century, the influence of the Roman empire had declined, but being a Roman citizen was still the desire of many people because of its “significant advantages to the holder” (Rapske 47). So a man of Claudius Lysias’ either had worked his way very hard up the ranks of military life or, as Keener remarks, he must have had a “powerful patron” (Powell 391). The flogging Paul was about to receive here is different from the previous ones in Jewish synagogues and those with the *lictor’s* rods. Here, the leather thongs into which were woven metal pieces or bones—*flagellum*, was used. This instrument was quick to cause death or maiming of the victim. Under Julian law, Paul was exempted from this punishment, as Powell pointed out (390).

2. **Paul’s appeal to his rights.** Being in a civilized society, Paul dutifully pressed for his rights as a Roman citizen (22:25-29). *Lex Valeria* (Valerian law) was the earliest legislation to make a Roman citizen to appeal against judicial abuse or heavy-handedness. Brian Rapske’s Paul in Roman Custody discusses how under this law, it was a wicked act to scourge or behead anyone who had thus appealed for a hearing. It was an appeal to the people to witness what was happening so that they can offer help, but it did not provide any concrete sanctions against magistrates who disregarded it. But another law, ‘the Porcian law’ did protect the citizens with a heavy penalty demanded of anyone who scourged or put a Roman citizen to death without due process. It is not known whether the penalty was financial or capital (48-49). The centurion to execute the flogging stiffened at Paul’s question: “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?” Powell lists five ways one could achieve Roman citizenship: 1) being born to a Roman father (that was Paul’s situation); 2) being a citizen of a Roman colony (not just a resident); 3) being a retired

auxiliary soldier; 4) being part of a municipal aristocracy or other group honored by Rome; 5) being a slave freed by the slave master or owner (390-91). Paul, the centurion and the commander knew the legal implications of this action and that is why the procedure was quickly halted. Although Claudius assumed Paul could prove his citizenship, what was already done to Paul further alarmed him. He had arrested and put a Roman citizen in chains before any trial hearing (Ac 22:29). This new data Paul brought into the case made even his accusers and those who were about to question him to withdraw. An implication of this is that Christians may, if necessary, appeal to national or citizenry rights when they are being unjustly oppressed by an evil system either for their faith or for other reasons. Christians are also citizens of countries and those countries have certain responsibilities for their security.

Brian Rapske records a typical scene on coins that celebrated the Porcian law and its provisions:

This law and its provisions are celebrated on coins...minted by P. Porcius Laeca. Above the head of Roma on the obverse side is the word ROMA; behind the head, P.LAECA; below the chin, X. The three figures on the coin's reverse side are from left to right, a citizen wearing a toga, a magistrate wearing military cuirass and sword with right arm upraised, and a lictor approaching with rods in hand. The legend below these figures reads PROVOCO. The scene depicts the moment in a trial just after the magistrate has ordered his lictor to administer a beating. As the lictor approaches with rod drawn from the bundle in his left hand, the citizen defendant cries out 'Provoco!' (I appeal). The magistrate extends his right hand to the citizen in a gesture of intervention and the proceedings immediately stop (49).

Paul's point is clear. As a Roman citizen, he should first be tried by due process and found guilty before being punished. The type of punishment the commander ordered the centurion to give Paul would publicly degrade his personhood and bring shame upon him. The reason Paul revealed his Roman citizenship here was more than saving the fledgling Church. His very person was involved. The *flagellum* could cause his death or some other form of permanent injury. Having already suffered similar fate in

Philippi, Paul did not wish to go through it again if he could avoid it. To avoid possible shame and death, too, may not have been the immediate reasons for Paul's appeal because his appeal could be turned down. N. Sherwin-White has shown that there were cases where citizenship was disregarded but others had grave consequences, including the loss of Roman citizenship by the one violating the Roman citizen (51-54). C. S. Wansink notes that Paul's appeal was "the best example of a Roman citizen's right of appeal" (*provocatio*) (988). There was a divine purpose in his appeal because Paul already considered his life nothing (Ac 20:24). By so appealing, (Lat. *Caesarem appello* or *proucatio ad Caesarem*) it was also possible that Paul wanted to avoid both the punishment as well as incarceration. Rapske reports that Cicero on one occasion asserted that: "To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him is an abomination, to slay him is almost an act of murder; to crucify him is—what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed" (qtd. in Rapske 50).

The Julian law (*lex Julia*) provided for the punishment of a public officer who, while holding office violates the rights of a Roman citizen by flogging or executing the citizen. Even under threat of harsh punishment, as was the case here with Paul, Roman citizens were regarded. Citizens (*cives Romani*) and aliens (*peregrini*) were differentiated. Rome did not punish higher ranking persons (*honestiores*) as severely as lower ranking ones (*humiliores*). *Honestiores* were frequently exiled than executed. Where the death sentence was required, the authorities affected a death that was as painless as possible. There were also occasions where status did not matter.

But there were other advantages in appealing to the Emperor against a threatening penalty. The appeal "could interrupt what might otherwise be an inexorable progress to personal disaster, remove one from a biased or hostile court and, finally, perhaps put the defendant before a more favorably inclined tribunal" (Rapske 55). Wansink identifies

further advantages of the Roman citizen: 1) Voting rights in popular assemblies 2) Certain tax exemptions 3) Trial by local or Roman courts 4) Appeal of capital sentences 5) Protection from scourging, whipping, torture and injury 6) Right to appeal (*provocatio*) in capital cases 7) Different treatment between slave and free people. Slaves could be crucified and treated like property (987). However, Rapske notes that in spite of these advantages, appealing to the Emperor could be hindered by cost implications because although the appellant had the right to appeal, that right did not imply the means to execute the appeal. The costs included travel expenses and the cost of carrying along witnesses. Thus, “appeal was a costly business” (Rapske 55). Reaching Rome was one thing. Obtaining a hearing by the Emperor was another. Even before that, “the governor’s sense of legal propriety and discreteness” was first and foremost important to a successful appeal to Rome (Rapske 55). Once in Rome, getting the Emperor to hear an appellant’s case largely depended upon the appellant’s contacts. So, rather than appealing to the Emperor, a citizen who had no or little contact with highly placed people in Rome might first submit to a magistrate’s decision of flogging or imprisonment, and then dispatch a written appeal to Rome to seek justice (Rapske 56).

But for Paul, this thoughtful appeal may have suggested that he saw no hope of justice in Caesarea and especially not in Jerusalem where the Jews could smartly take advantage of a new governor who knew nothing of the dimensions of the case and so convince him of Paul’s guilt. He also became increasingly aware that by going back up to Jerusalem, he could be assassinated. He saw an excellent opportunity to visit Rome on Caesar’s account and then being able to witness to the Emperor. McCain Notes on the Acts of the Apostles thinks Paul appealed with “great reluctance” (303). Also, Paul was by so appealing “forever breaking the ties between himself and his own people, the Jews of Jerusalem” who would think him a heretic for rejecting Israel’s theocracy for Caesar’s

corrupt heathen court (McCain 303). Paul's appeal provides an important example and incentive to what law abiding believers can do when faced with such problems. Meanwhile, the commander's order was still hovering over Paul's head. Claudius Lysias must have been quite an impressive military officer to get the Jewish Sanhedrin to sit and interrogate Paul. He did now what he should have done earlier—"to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews" (Ac 22:28). He released Paul and handed him over to the Sanhedrin for further interrogation because as Keener observes, Paul's offense was religious and related to the temple (Keener, Background Commentary 391). Paul's first comment before this high body made Ananias, the high priest order those standing by him strike him on the mouth (Ac 23:2). Ananias was high priest A. D. 47-52, a Roman vassal known to be greedy and who stole tithes that belonged to poorer priests. In A.D. 66, (about eight years after this hearing), Keener in Background Commentary noted how the Zealot revolutionaries killed him. But was the Jewish high priest also going the way of the crowd? Paul had only declared that he had fulfilled his duty to God in all good conscience to that very day (Ac 23:1).

3. **The principle of law.** Paul and the others did not always appeal to the protection and rights they had under the law. But Paul did so when he thought it necessary. He taught that it was sometimes legitimate and proper to use one's rights through the legal system. He sewed no one but when he was taken to court, he never failed to appear to defend himself and his cause. This was actually helpful for the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Probably as a result of this, Paul was able to live long enough to write the Prison Epistles. His actions may have also protected the young Church.

At the high priest's order, Paul offered a timely and sternly worded rebuke. "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet

you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!” (Ac 23:3). He was not being arrogant in describing Ananias as a “whitewashed wall!” Often, eastern Mediterranean walls facing the street were whitewashed. Keener’s Background Commentary observed that when used of a person, it referred to one “whose weakness or ugliness might be concealed—but not changed—by a veneer of whitewash” (391). Jesus also used a similar label to condemn Israel’s leaders (Mt 23:27, ‘whitewashed tombs’); and so did Ezekiel (Eze 13:10-11). Paul was charging him as a law-breaker, he who should have upheld the law. When told that he had insulted God’s high priest (Ac 23:4), Paul said he did not know if Ananias was the high priest either because Ananias was not seated and clothed as the high priest would, and thereby making it difficult for Paul to recognize him; or Paul was being ironical. Paul presented the gospel to the Sanhedrin, argued the resurrection and so divided the Sadducees and the Pharisees on the issue.

4. **Paul defended himself further away from home.** Following this incidence, the Jews conspired to kill Paul (Ac 22:12-15), but the plot was revealed before it had time to succeed. That led them to transfer Paul’s case for Felix to hear. The opposition made up spurious charges that Paul had to defend against (Ac 24:1ff.). C. S. Wansink observed that Paul’s trial before Felix followed the *cognitio* process. The plaintiffs had to prosecute for the accused to defend himself. “The charges (Ac 24:5-7) were framed in political terms, intending to show Paul as an agitator and a threat to the government, and designed to appeal to Roman concerns about security” (Wansink 988). Paul’s defence was consistently that he had done nothing wrong apart from preaching the gospel that Christ had entrusted into his charge.³⁸ Even Felix left Paul in jail simply to do the Jews a favour (Ac 24:27), thus denying Paul justice. Porcius Festus succeeded Felix and he too, heard Paul’s case. Festus was a little known, honorable and upright man who undertook to correct some of the gruesome abuses of his predecessors. He did this by “purging the

assassins and putting down civil disturbances” (McCain, Acts of the Apostles 301). Before Festus, in Caesarea, Paul appealed to Caesar (Ac 25:11), and after Festus consulted King Agrippa II who was visiting him on the matter, they agreed to send Paul to Rome; but only after Agrippa had first heard him. Agrippa’s verdict after hearing Paul’s defence was, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar” (Ac 26:32). During the Republican period, Romas could appeal to the *plebs* (*provocatio*) or their tribunes (*appellatio*). In the Imperial period, they could appeal to the Emperor to protect them from either heavy-handed magistrates or capital punishment. In Rome, God opened doors of ministry to Paul, though he never defended himself before Caesar because he did not wish to charge his people (Ac 28:19). He was under house arrest in Rome, yet, Paul preached the gospel for two years without hindrance to Jews and Romans.

6.6 EVALUATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The story of the church in the Book of Acts is a story of growth in violence. Fully aware of the volatile political and social context that formed the background of the early Christian community in the Roman Empire at this time, it is highly unlikely that this Christian community was unable to use violence to expand its cause and influence. Contrarily, the early Christians were proactive to violence from three perspectives: 1) confrontation with authorial political powers as represented by Peter and John; 2) persecution and martyrdom as in the case of Stephen the Martyr; and 3) the combination of 1) and 2) in a thorough-going campaign to quell the message and influence of the Church as in Saul and later in the missionaries. A combination of these perspectives gives a fuller perspective of proactive biblical responses to violence. Calvin observed Satan’s activities at this early stage of the Church and God’s response on behalf of His children more aptly:

First, that as soon as the truth of the Gospel comes to light, Satan sets himself in opposition to it by every means in his power, and uses every endeavor to crush it in its earliest beginnings. Secondly, that God furnishes His children with unconquerable fortitude, so that they may stand firm and unmoved against all the devices of Satan and may not yield to the violence of the wicked. Finally, we must note the outcome, that however completely the enemy may appear to be dominant and in control of events, leaving no stone unturned to blot out the Name of Christ, and however much on the other hand the ministers of sound doctrine be as sheep in the mouths of wolves, God none the less spreads abroad the Kingdom of His Son, keeps alive the light of His Gospel, and looks to the safety of His children 111).

Peter and John dealt basically with local Jewish religious leaders and religious system. They showed that while Christians must submit to authorities over them, their fullest loyalty is first and foremost to God and to His Christ. In their action, these leaders demonstrated that a response of violence to counter violence is *not* the way of their Master. He is able to defend His own against any amount of danger. Stephen also came against the full wrath of vengeful religious zealotry. His humble submission to martyrdom demonstrates the courage and resilience of a true follower of Christ who does not spread the faith through violence, even when that requires the life of the witness. More than this, the reaction of the Church whose composition was no doubt of men of various persuasions, including zealous militants, to remain calm and not repay evil with evil or attempt any settling of scores apart from burying and mourning their dead and doing what they knew best (depending on God), strengthens further the proposition that Christ and His followers can, and do often overcome violence with proactive, active non-violence responses. This is the logic of violence the Church should learn.

6.6.1 Some Proactive Principles in the Book of Acts

At this formative stage, the apostles and Church used the following proactive principles against violence:

1. **Bold, consistent, persistent public teaching and preaching the gospel.** The gospel not only saves from sin, but transforms the saved persons' perspectives about life. Consistent teaching about the truth of God enable Christ's followers to prepare the Church for difficult times that might be ahead of them.
2. **Personal examples of suffering for Jesus.** The leaders did not only teach. They lived what they preached before the people. Peter and John, when confronted and humiliated, showed what Christian leaders and their followers should do when experiencing similar situations.
3. **Fervent praying.** Jesus taught His people to pray and not sleep. The disciples prayed and taught their people to pray. So when the Church was in trouble, it prayed about the immediate problem, but beyond that, they prayed for future opportunities to do greater, more powerful ministries. Prayers broke the chains off Peter and set him free. Prayers and praises moved God to break through the Philippian jail to set Paul and Silas free. Prayers can do what Christians cannot do and go where they cannot go. Prayer is an extremely potent proactive response to violence.
4. **Reasoned dialogue with the opposition.** Although Stephen died for reasoning out and arguing for his faith with men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen, his method set an important proactive principle for all generations of Christians. Rather than being violent about religious passion, Christians should use their intellect and will to overcome their enemies. That is where thoughtful apologetics becomes proactive against violence. God invited His people to now and "reason together." Christians should extend the same invitation to the world around them because in reasoning there is power to transform.
5. **Embodying forgiveness.** Stephen prayed for his executioners. He forgave them and did not hold their crime against them. What that did was to disarm even

members of the Church who may have wished to fight back because they saw Stephen reinforcing the Lord's teaching about not retaliating. Jesus Himself prayed for God for "forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34).

6. **Non-retaliation.** The Church did not retaliate for Stephen's death. There no doubt were among them those capable of retaliating before the law enforcers arrived at the scene. Or, mob violence could have erupted. But nothing like that happened. The disciples did what they knew best, they left retaliation to God and moved on.

7. **Moving on.** Violence helped to spread the Church. The Church did not begin its expansion into the ends of the then known world until after Stephen's death and the persecution that followed. But as they fled, they preached and witnessed to the truth of Christ and His message. In dying, the Church was growing beyond its expectations. Usually, this works in a little strange way. While the enemy is consumed with exterminating the Church, many onlookers become critical about both groups. They begin to see more strength and depth of character, more sincerity of life and speech and more truth in the persecuted party. Then, they decide to join the Church and not their persecutors. In all cases, the Church simply moved on to the next assignment and did not allow violence to stop it from achieving its goals.

8. **The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.** Martyrdom is very difficult. But throughout the history of the Church, Christian martyrs have given up their lives so that the Church will achieve what it must. If the faith was worth living for, it was worth dying for, not through some suicidal method. Then, the benefit of dying was that others may come to faith in Christ. In fact, the very Lord of the Church had to be lifted up in order for Him to draw the world to Himself.

In the experiences of the Apostle Paul, is encounter a man of significant influence; capable of pulling at least a band of militants behind him, had he

understood the fulfillment of His Master's mission to be with swords and violence. Instead, Paul promoted proactive strategies and examples within the confines of citizen rights to overcome evil. He represents nothing like pacifism, nor crass militancy of the sort that requires evening the scores. C. Barton's concluding comments state this more succinctly, "For Paul, the lordship of the crucified Christ and the imperative of serving Christ as his slave implied a reordering of social relations that put him at odds with the world around him" (1134). Although these early Christians could have employed violent responses to violence, their method of self-defence remained totally consistent with the will, examples and demands of their Lord. They understood what Jesus had taught the crowds and His disciples several times about how to respond to the world system. They realised that Christ had a mission they would fulfil—one not to animals, but to human beings. The disciples of Jesus would triumph over their enemies not by revolutionary violence, no matter how justifiable, but through redemptive attitudes and actions in various exacting situations. Theirs was to love in spite of. In every situation, the disciples saw an opportunity demonstrate real Christianity, to pray and spread the gospel. Their leaders were very committed to the way of life of this community. Christ's battle, Peter now realised, could never be won with swords, clubs, abuses, insults, bitterness, envy, jealousy and hatred—not even if these were done in the name of Yahweh, as the Jews did to their Roman lords. Stephen and Paul realised that this battle was not to be fought by excessive concern for self, but through seasoned arguments, refutations of opposition positions and confirmation of Christ's position and place. In this early Christian community, violence was no option because divine warfare does not require profane warhead.

6.6.2 Some Elements Essential for a Proactive Response to Violence

Apart from the principles, the following elements or characteristics are significant where proactive responses to violence must succeed.

Demonstrating courage. To shrink under violence is to be overpowered by it. The Church stood firm and never conceded ground by not preaching and teaching about Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul blazed this trail very well. The Church needs to be courageous and remain firm even in the face of violence.

1. **Forfeiting rights and privileges.** In Philippa especially, Paul and Silas forfeited their legal rights and accepted merciless whipping without once mentioning those rights. That moved God to act powerfully on their behalf and the result was that the jailer, his family and other prisoners came to faith. They were reinforcing Jesus' teaching and example because He also forfeited His rights and privileges so that humanity will be reconciled to God. Sometimes, not appealing for one's rights honours God more, and provides better opportunities to see Him at work in situations.

2. **Selecting battles.** The Church was wise in how it used its resources and opportunities for ministry. It knew how much damage a violent encounter would cause to its image, reputation and ministry opportunities. Rather than expend their time and lives fighting back to defend themselves, they simply chose the battles to fight and those to leave. Interestingly, they did not choose violence as part of their strategies. Rather, they chose to counter violence with various pro-active measures. Christians may not be able to fight all the battles that face the Church today and at all fronts. But they will do better to invest much of their time and resources to fight only selected battles like preaching and teaching the truth without compromise; contending for justice; transforming communities and people; praying for the Church and its ministries; and social action.

3. **Living transformed lives.** Paul had a violent background. That he would drop violence and submit to non-violence even when seriously confronted with violence is sufficient to stress the need for living transformed Christian lives. Paul was transformed from the violent Saul to the non-violent proactive Paul. He lived that transformation out for all to see and evaluate.

4. **Confronting violence with wisdom.** Respond to violence, the Church confronted their opponents prudently, sometimes through demanding that the authorities do what is right, thereby putting the burden of proof upon them. Other times, as in the case of Paul, they accepted the intervention of the ruling authorities after they had made their case. But they never once became violent against their opponents, at least not physically.

6.7 SUMMARY OF PROACTIVE RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE IN THE BOOK OF ACTS THAT ARE ALSO FOUND IN THE GOSPELS

Responses to violence in the Synoptic and Acts demonstrated that the disciples understood what Jesus taught and were consistent with His teaching and examples.

The principle of fleeing or knowing when to run.
The principle of non-retaliation.

The principle of losing a battle to win a war. The apostles illustrated this principle many times when they submitted to obvious defeating situations only to be able to win the entire cause they represented.

The principle of love for the enemy.
The principle selective battle.

The principle of forgiveness.
The principle of verbal defence.
The principle of shaking the dust off one's feet.

The principle of prayer.

Table 6**Violence and Responses in the Book of Acts**

TEXT	TYPE OF VIOLENCE	VICTIMS	AGENTS	RESPONSE	REMARKS
1:3	Crucifixion	Christ	Jewish and Roman leaders	Christ submitted voluntarily to death on the cross.	We should always strive to first locate God's will in our situations.
1:13	Mockery	Christ's apostles and disciples	Some God-fearing Jews at Jerusalem	Peter and his company pro-acted and turned the mockery into a major evangelistic sermon.	Watch out for rare opportunities in violent situations and turn them into moments to honor God.
4:1-4, 18, 21	Arrest, jail on remand, prohibition and threats	Peter and John	Sadducees and the captain of the temple guard	"Who should we obey? You or God?" (4:19-20); Joy and praise to God, Prayers (4:21-31)	While taking every care to remain good citizens, God's priority must remain the Church's priority.
5:17, 27	Arrest, and jail	The apostles	The high priest and his associates	"We must obey God rather than men!" (5:29)	Christians should not compromise with systems that set themselves against God and demand the allegiance due God. God can deliver.
5:30-42	Fury of the leaders, flogging and prohibition to speak in the name of Jesus	The apostles	The Jewish Sanhedrin	Submission to flogging (5:40); rejoicing in suffering disgrace (5:41); constant, ceaseless teaching and preaching the forbidden gospel (5:42)	The Church may protest unjust suffering against it. But more importantly, it should consider the persecution as an opportunity for effective witnessing about the Lord Jesus Christ.
6:9,	Opposition,	Deacon	Members of the	Stephen offered no	The Church should always strive to

11, 13-14	accusation on false charges and arrest	Stephen	Synagogue of the freedmen	resistance to his arrest (forceful seizure). Nor is anything said about the reaction of any part of the Christian community.	show forth Christ even in the most trying of situations. Stephen's method here was reasoned argumentation.
7:54, 57-60	Fury of the opposition; anger, annoyance, forceful dragging and stoning, death, martyrdom	Stephen	Sanhedrin and the opposition Jews in Jerusalem	Stephen seized the opportunity to preach one of the most impressive early Christian sermons. He prayed God to forgive his executioners their sin, and then submitted to martyrdom.	The Church whose numbers were now large, did not resort to retaliation. They did not even appeal to government—Roman citizens among them had that privilege. It is safe to assume that even the Church forgave their enemies. Members of the Church buried Stephen without any recourse to violence (8:2), in spite of their great grief and sorrow.
8:1-4	Persecution, prison, injury, attempts to destroy the church	The Jerusalem Church	Saul of Tarsus, with consent of the ruling Jewish authorities	The believers dispersed without any fight into the surrounding territories of Judea and Samaria. The Church continued to witness to Christ wherever they went.	The persecuted Church considered their new situation as an opportunity to fulfill Jesus' instruction to be witnesses for Him. In every situation of violence against the Church
8:7-8	Exorcism	Philip	Samaritans	Philip confronted the forces of spiritual darkness and defeated them. Saul's followers smuggled him out of the town in a basket through an opening in the	Jesus gave authority to His followers to battle with Satan and evil forces violently and set their victims free. However, none of this included them doing violence to any human subjects.

				wall (9:25).	
9:23-25	Conspiracy to kill Saul	Saul	Damascus Jewish Community	Saul's followers smuggled him out of the town in a basket through an opening in the wall (9:25).	Even where it is possible to return force for force and violence for violence
12:1-5	Arrest, jail and execution	James and Peter	Herod Agrippa I	Herod beheaded James and the Church prayed. He imprisoned Peter and the Church 'was earnestly praying to God for him' (12:5). Even in the most difficult situation, the Church relied on God.	The Church did not seek legal counsel, although some of its members would have successfully done so. The God of James is the same as Peter's. He is always in charge. As in 5:19, God sent His angel to release Peter (12:6-10). God will fight for His people if and when He so chooses.
13:4-12	Confronting Elymas the sorcerer	Elymas	Saul (Paul)	The apostle confronted head-on this sorcerer in a demonstration of power that left Elymas blind (13:11).	Whenever a human being opposes God and what God is doing to save people from their sins, God knows how to deal with the culprit.
13:45	Jealousy, abusive language	Paul and Barnabas	Some Pisidian Antiochene Jews	Barnabas announced the apostles' decision to turn to the Gentiles with the Gospel (13:46-47).	The apostles simply turned their focus to those who were eager to hear their message.
13:50-52	Persecution and expulsion	Paul and Barnabas	Some Pisidian Antiochene Jews	"So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium" (13:51). The disciples were also filled	Jesus provided His disciples with a principle. If people do not accept you and your message, move on. Christians need to only change their

				with joy (13:52)	perspectives of their world and call.
14:1-7	Division, hostility, and a plot to mistreat and stone the missionaries	Paul and Barnabas	Jews in Iconium who refused to believe	First, bold proclamation of the gospel (14:3); then, flight to Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding region with preaching the word (14:6)	The missionaries could have argued that they too, were residents of Palestine and for that reason would not flee harm. They did not. Jesus taught His followers to be wise and serpent and harmless as dove.
14:19-20	Injury, and stoning	Paul	Some unbelieving Antiochene and Iconian Jews	The disciples did not resist Paul's dragging and stoning but waited until after the event to help Paul (14:20). The missionaries left for Derbe.	Constantly weigh actions against Christ's command or will; and against their implications for Gospel propagating and Christian witness.
16:19-28	Public humiliation, flogging, nakedness, jail in chains, false accusations	Paul and Silas	Some owners of a fortune-telling slave girl and their Philippian followers	Submission to unjust suffering, disgrace and shame; praying and singing hymns to God (16:25). When the magistrates ordered their release the day, Paul revealed their identity and required their captors to do what was proper and just (16:37-39).	This is the third time God had intervened when His servants were imprisoned. The violent earthquake was a reminder that not even the carefully guarded Roman prison could keep God out. The attitude of the missionaries here brought salvation to the jailer and his family.
17:5-9	Jealousy, mob riot, false accusations		Jealous Jews in Thessalonica	Jason and others posted bond to let the missionaries go.	Resort to other legal and proactive means to deal with opponents and still remain nonviolent.

17:13	Agitating and stirring the Bereans against the missionaries	Paul and Silas	Thessalonian Jews in Berea	Separation of Paul and Silas, with Paul leaving Berea	Often, a proactive way of handling violence is to look beyond it and press for the opportunities the violent situation will deny.
18:6-7	Opposition and abuse	Paul	Some Jews in Corinth	Paul here, as before, protested their opposition by shaking out his clothes and making them responsible for their own blood (18:6); then leaving the volatile scene (18:7)	A proactive measure to violence is to make those instigating and spearheading the violence to realize their responsibility and guilt. This absolves oneself of the consequences.
18:12-17	United attack; false charges; court action	Paul	Some Corinthian Jews	Paul prepared to speak but proconsul Gallio interrupted him and he remained silent.	God may not always intervene to take away a particular situation, but He sovereignly controls its conduct.
18:28	Jewish opposition	Believers in Achaia	Jews	Apollos vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate (18:28)	This vigorous refutation in public debate to substantiate the claims of Scripture remains one of the leading proactive responses to opposition and violence that Christians have.
19:8-10	Public maligning of Christ (19:9)	Ephesian Christians and Paul	Some obstinate Jews in Ephesus	Paul left the maligning Jews alone and spent more time teaching the believers in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (19:9-10).	Squash falsehood by presenting the truth. Rigorous training of the intellect and will in God's word is a proactive for combating violence.

19:11-16	Beating	Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest	Evil spirit	The disciples let the evil spirit deal with the imposter.	This was a case of Satan fighting against himself.
19:23-41	False charges, opposition, fury, confusion	Paul's traveling companions Gaius and Aristarchus	Demetrius and some Ephesian artisans	The disciples forbid Paul to appear at the theater, and refused to resort to any use of violence, verbally or otherwise. They let the city clerk handle the issue.	Legal means in civilized societies are meant to settle cases that normally result in violence. This means is available to Christians if they so wish to use it.
21:27-40	False charges; Arrest; chains; beating	Paul	Some zealous Jerusalem Jews	Paul obtained commander Claudius Lysias' permission to address the Jews.	Often, violent situations afford believers an opportunity to showcase their Christianity.
22:23-29	Threat of flogging	Paul	Roman centurion under the command of commander Claudius Lysias	Paul revealed his Roman citizenship before this flogging could be administered.	Sometimes it is better to appeal to available constitutional rights in the face of life-threatening situations.
23:2	Striking on the mouth	Paul	Sanhedrin	Paul rebuked the high priest.	Proper, thoughtful and carefully chosen words can forestall violence.
23:12-22	Conspiracy to assassinate Paul	Paul	Opposition Jews	Paul had his nephew who unearthed the plot meet with the commander and reveal the plot.	Volunteering useful information to the proper authorities often serve as a proactive measure against violence.
24:1-8	False accusations by	Paul	Ananias the high priest and the Jews	Paul offered a defense of himself before Felix.	In his defense, Paul witnessed to Christ.

	opposition Jews				
25:1-7	Plot to ambush Paul; more serious charges	Paul	Opposition Jews	Paul defended himself again before Festus and appealed to Caesar.	Government must protect its helpless citizens against the powerful. Christians can appeal to government to help where they are threatened with violence.
26:1-32	Trial again, but under King Agrippa II	Paul	Jewish opposition	Paul's defense before King Agrippa II	God superintends even the most unfortunate situations to His own glory. Paul would now go to Rome as a result of the Jews' incessant hatred and opposition toward him.
27:1ff.	Disastrous voyage; prisoner	Paul	Jewish opposition	Prayed and depended on God for whatever lay ahead in Rome	Prayed and depended on God for whatever lay ahead in Rome
28:17-31	Widespread Jewish opposition to the early Christian community (28:22)	Paul, Christians	Jews throughout the Roman Empire	Paul used this time to meet the Jewish community in Rome and witness to them.	The aim of all Christians should be the glory and honor God receives as a result of their witness, no matter what the situation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

VIOLENCE IN THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION

(ROMANS TO REVELATION)

The biblical logic of redemption, viewed through the canonical lens of the incarnation and the cross, allows no other course for its plot line than to run the gauntlet of human violence. But the outcome is a divine and dramatic resolution of violence, and the world-transforming power of the gospel (Reed 832).

Violence and power are the dominating values of our society. The easy way in which bloodshed is justified as a lawful way of maintaining justice seems to make the two inseparable....Such violence is 'redemptive violence'... (Bredin 217).

7.1 APPROACHING THE EPISTLES

Development of Violence and Proactive Responses

The epistles provide limited details on the nature of violence within and outside the Christian community. They also show a marked development in Christian understanding on various issues relating to the faith, including violence, and how to respond to it. But the development is consistent in perspectives and approaches. Because the epistles are the final commentaries on God's word, what they teach about any subject is very significant. Mostly written many years after the events in the Gospels, they are an excellent standard for evaluating the development of perspectives on Christian living. That is why this chapter treated the books in this session following their composition date or very nearly that order. This approach helped to gauge the progress the Church made in its understanding of how to respond to violence since the days of Jesus Christ. However, only selected bits of introductory materials are discussed.

Beginning with James' epistle, believed to be the earliest of them and ending with the Johannine writings have provided the type of telescopic perspective this work sought. The Gospel of Saint John and John's other writings are placed at the end of

this chapter because John was at this time an old man who wrote on the events of his lifetime during Jesus' ministry reflectively. His ability to remember the details of some of those events with such accuracy implies that the understanding of the Christian community had in part not drifted very much from what Christ Himself taught. For instance, John's memory of the arrest and crucifixion was so vivid at least sixty years after the events he even remembered how Peter struck off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant.¹ No other evangelist provided the names of these two persons. John must have remembered the details of the violence dealt to Jesus very vividly and painfully at the time of his writing. Therefore, his perspectives and the epistles ought to inform authentic Christian perspectives on violence significantly.

The Book of Revelation, while depicting physical violence as a major motif, also offers a profound proactive antiviolence perspective not often noticed. The epistles undoubtedly focus more on spiritual violence, but they also address physical violence and Christian responses. Christian violence is avowedly not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of the present dark world (Eph 6:12). The warfare has clearly defined methods and weapons. Understanding the operation of this spiritual warfare will provide greater insights for dealing with the manifestations of physical violence that are not unconnected with the prior.

The slain-Lamb of Revelation is the violence crushing and vanquishing warrior-God who puts an end to all violence once and for all at a future time. He will put an end to death and all human violence, and will wipe away tears from the eyes of His children. After comforting them, He will welcome them into His lavish abode where they will live with Him forever. But He will punish eternally His enemies in the lake of fire. The story of human salvation is the story of violence from beginning to end. It began with human violence but will end with divine violence, with God

Himself dealing violence to those who reject Him—forever. What do these reveal to the Christian? How should the Christian perceive violence and respond to it?

7.2 VIOLENCE AND PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

7.2.1 Background

James, the author of this letter, was a prominent leader in the Jerusalem Church. He was also a brother to the Lord Jesus Christ. Internal evidences suggest that James wrote this epistle somewhere in the early 60s A.D., although it could have been written before the 50s. First, James makes no reference to the Jerusalem Council's decision in the Gentile circumcision controversy. Besides, the Church order he presents is very simple, compared to that in Paul's letters. Then James calls the Church leaders simply, "elders" (5:14) and "teachers" (3:1). Lastly, the letter is very Jewish in character, suggesting that James wrote when Gentiles were not yet a vital part of the Church. The Church in James is still meeting in Jewish synagogues or "meeting" (2:2).

James wrote to believers in dispersion due to persecution. That they had scattered "among the nations" (1:1) is suggestive of the first wave of persecution that scattered the believers from Jerusalem to the surrounding lands, at the time of Stephen's martyrdom (*cf.* Acts 7, 8f.). Faced with violent situations, James wrote to encourage the believers to accept their situations and transform them into creative ministry opportunities that characterize vital Christianity and promotes itself through its faith and good works of faith.

7.2.2 A Framework for Proactive Responses to Violence

James does not mention specific instances of physical violence but provides sufficient information to construct a framework for proactive responses to violence.

For instance, he decried the oppression of the poor and weak by the rich and powerful, which is a form of social injustice that can lead to violence (2:1-13; 5:1-6). He upholds especially the cause of widows and orphans (1:26, 27); and advises against anger (1:19-20); and verbal and possibly, moral violence connected with the misuse of the tongue (1:19-21; 3:1-12; 4:13-17). Although not doing violence itself, the tongue can set up everything for violence.² Again, James 4:1-3 addresses fights and quarrels among believers, and locates the source of such behavior in the base passions of humanity, and this is instructive for why humanity engages in violence.

However, what James describes as “suffering” (5:10), a possible reference to the very thing that scattered them in the first place (1:1), which he also considers as “trials” and “temptations” (1:2), shed some light on the violence the Church was experiencing. The pastor did not focus on the problems. He was more concerned with what the believers might do with their problems, and admonished them to transform their situations into creative ministry opportunities, thereby becoming proactive. Maybe James’ greatest contribution to the violence debate is in helping to construct some sort of framework in which to create and use proactive responses to violence.

1. **A new perspective toward suffering (1:2-3; 5:7-11).** James seemed to be telling his audience that the first thing they needed to do in their situation was to change their perspectives on their persecution, dispersion and hardships. Instead of grumbling, complaining or even rioting, they should *consider* their many kinds of trials as *pure joy*. Why? Because such perspective change would help them to quickly realize the benefits of spiritual growth that those trying experiences bring. Their situations were mere “faith tests” that if endured, will produce *perseverance, maturity and completeness without lacking anything* (1:2-4). The way one looks at a particular situation can very much determine how the person relates to it.

2. **A new understanding of tests and temptations (1:2-3).** James made sure the believers knew how to distinguish between tests, trials and temptation. While trials and tests were divinely ordered to sharpen faith, temptations were borne within, in collaboration with the Devil, to destroy. This distinction is proactive because it helps the believer to put situations into perspective, and so respond to them adequately.

3. **A higher perspective on justice matters and their relationship to violence and nonviolence (1:26-2:13).** Violence easily erupts when people begin to create the “them” versus “us” categories—discriminations (2:1-13; 5:1-6). Where injustices abound, the tendency normally is to want to use “redemptive violence” to reinstate peace and nonviolence (Bredin 217). But establishing justice through violence is hardly a possibility, and if that happens, it is only because people are afraid of violence they would suffer if they did not cooperate with the masters of violence.

4. **A renewed commitment to principled speech (3:1-12).** The tongue is a small element of the body. But it is a “world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (3:6). How much violence unprincipled speech incites! Tongue taming and training are what James proposes, and they require skill. The art of learning to speak, knowing what to say, how, where, when and to whom, are absolutely crucial where violence must be countered without violence. James is asking his audience to learn to talk and not just open their mouths and utter whatever comes out of them. The art of principled speech requires much thinking and planning. And where it succeeds, it can eliminate or reduce much of the situations that cause violence. Inordinate speech is the exact opposite of principled speech, and produces violence. Slander is a particular case James points to (4:11-12). Jesus warned against the careless use of the tongue in calling another person (a brother) “Raca,” that is, an Aramaic term of contempt,

“Empty-head!” (Mt 5:22). He also warned that people will account for “every careless word they have spoken” and their words will either acquit or condemn them (Mt 12:36-37). However, the *principle of verbal abuse* is an improper function to which Christians can put the tongue, but learning its opposite requires tact.

5. **A robust desire for patient endurance and firmness in the face of violence (5:7-11).** James did not need to exhort his people to endure sufferings patiently if he wanted them to end those situations through violence. Even though he addressed the believers, the situations they were to so patiently endure did not always originate with them. Patient endurance caused them to focus on the Lord’s soon coming, at which time He would grant them His peace. In other words, James was teaching that believers should grow through their suffering as they patiently endure because those who persevere are considered “blessed” (5:11). All these teachings were to prepare the believers’ minds and bodies for whatever else was ahead of them, and is therefore, to that extent proactive.

6. **A renewed focus on praying against and, in troubles (5:13a).** James does not downplay the place of praying in pro-activity. He asks, “Is there any one of you in trouble?” Well, if violence is not trouble, then what is it? The apostles and their Church witnessed what God can do when His people pray effectively in their troubles. He set Peter free when they prayed. Paul and Silas prayed in prison and sang when God moved on their behalf. If by prayers Elijah shut up the heavens so that it did not rain, and then he prayed and it opened and rained, then, by prayer also, Christians can respond proactively to violence without being violent.

7. **A heartfelt commitment to do what is right (4:17).** James had a simple test for deciding between difficult options: Do the good you know you must do. But he had spent his time discussing the good to do and therefore, his readers were not going

to charge him for leaving it to them to decide the good. He had not hinted at doing violence and terming it good for whatever reason. To James, failing to do the good that one knows is sin (4:17). That means that believers are responsible to think, plan and execute the good they know they must do. The Church may be sinning by not doing the good it knows it should do especially, if that will transform violence.

7.2.3 Summary

James, being one of the first interpreters of the teachings and examples of Jesus, upholds Jesus' non-violence, proactive tradition, and encourages it. He also urges believers to be willing to suffer for their faith if they must.

7.3 VIOLENCE AND PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN GALATIANS

7.3.1 Background

The Book of Galatians, Paul's first book to the Christians, is probably second to James' epistle in its date of composition. The North Galatia theory argues that the Churches in north-central Asia Minor (Pessinus, Ancyra and Tavium), were the recipients of this letter. Although Acts mentions nothing about this region, its proponents argue that Paul visited the place during his second missionary journey. So they date the letter between A.D. 53 and 57, maintaining the place of writing to be Ephesus or Macedonia. The South Galatia theory dates the letter between A.D. 51 and 53, and chooses Syrian Antioch or Corinth as the place of writing.

Paul's battle in this epistle was against Judaizers who were determined to make the Christian life unbearable for Gentile Christians by teaching that Gentile Christians must practice certain Old Testament ceremonial and food rites in addition to their faith in Christ. So while not much in the way of violence is in this epistle, Paul did certainly provide pro-active guidelines against violence. In a way, the influence of

Judaizers is similar to what some Christians may argue with reference to Christians using violence as a sign of their devotion to defending God's truth and people.

The violence that pervades this epistle is done by humanity against God Himself, through Christ. He gave Himself for humanity's sins. His action was God's will (1:3-5) as was the curse He endured by death on the cross (3:13). Paul also relates some events of his own life that were actually violent or potentially violent. The first is his testimony as Saul, the anti-Christian movement champion. In Judaism, he fiercely persecuted the Church, tried to destroy it; became extremely zealous for the Jewish tradition and not for God's glory and honor and became very violent against Christians (1:13-14). When Christ took hold of Saul He transformed the course of his life such that the persecutor became Paul the preacher (1:23). Next was Paul's public confrontation with Peter. Although they both were leaders, Paul opposed Peter to the face when he attempted to operate a double standard. The important point here is that Paul had violence in his background. Ordinarily, such opposition could have become violent, but that it did not, shows that Saul had truly become Paul. He had learned that violence is not the best way to settle differences.

At that time, Paul revealed that he had been crucified with Christ and had died, that is, the Saul in Paul had died. Paul was now a new man in whom Christ lived, making it possible for him to live the life of Christ (2:20). That leads to the principle of dying to live. Closely tied with this concept was Paul's notion of freedom in Christ (5:1). In Judaism, with all his zeal, education, violent disposition and power, Saul was in slavery to sin, unable to set himself free. Once in Christ, he discovered he had such great freedom that he was not willing to let anybody or anything deprive him again. All he could say was that believers learn to stand firm in their freedom in Christ. This is not only in matters of spiritual warfare, but also in dealing with violence. In Paul's

address to the Galatians, he demonstrated how he himself had broken free with the life of violence. But he went further to provide the Church with proactive principles on which to build their Christian ministry. Paul demonstrated that the spirit of proactive non-violence that Jesus taught in the Gospels was still operational and will continue to be as healthy as healthy can be. The Church's duty is to learn these truths and set them forth in Christian witness.

7.3.2 Two Principles for Proactive Response to Violence in Galatians

Galatians is a great Christian life book, but it is very short on proactive principles or responses that relate directly to violence. However, if believers live their transformed lives in the spirit of Christian freedom as Paul teaches in Galatians 5, it becomes easier to develop a life that will be separated from violence. This epistle and Romans were significant in sparking off the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Philip Schaff points out how Luther “under a secondary inspiration, reproduced Galatians in his war against the “Babylonian captivity of the church,” a battle for Christian freedom that he won just as he had in the Reformation (1:347). The book is so important that it is to date the “Gibraltar of evangelical Protestantism.” If Galatians (and Romans) inspired a movement like the Reformation, surely then, its principles can also inspire another movement to liberate humanity from the captivity of violence. Two outstanding proactive responses to violence in this epistle are non-commitment to violence and a commitment to non-cooperation and no compromise in fundamental issues when dealing with violence.

A commitment to confront violence without violence (2:1-11). In Galatians 2:11-21, Paul openly confronted Peter (and Barnabas) for their hypocrisy, but without violence. This teaches that confrontation or opposition need not be violent. Creative, constructive opposition produces healthy discourse and an opportunity to learn from

other people's perspectives and ways of life, and understand why they live and act as they do. Again, in doing so, Paul taught that Christians can overcome their passion for violence and become confrontational without being violent. Christians should work at not having internal violence because violence against the Church does not always come from outside. The Church is guilty of internal violence. But that Paul does not even hint at such possibility here ought to tell Christians something.

A spirit of non-compromise and non-cooperation with the enemy. In Galatians 2:2-6, Paul engaged in a major battle with the Judaizers who wanted to despoil Christian freedom. But because he had already developed a firm backbone, it was easy for Paul not to compromise or cooperate with the opposition. Yet, he remained non-violent. Developing a spirit of non-cooperation with the enemy is essential in achieving victory over violence. Jesus, Peter and Stephen had such spirit.

7.4 PROACTIVE PRINCIPLES IN THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES

7.4.1 1 Thessalonians

In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul encouraged recent converts who were left in the midst of persecution (3:3-5) with little external support (see Ac 17). He mentioned the severe suffering in which the Thessalonians received the gospel (1Th 1:6). These had turned from paganism to Christ and had built very impressive testimony (1Th 1:4-10). How did these converts respond to the trials they faced? First, note that no situation of violence as such is in this book. However, Paul urges the believers to model the Christian life as he had pointed them to the apostles as models (1:5, 7). The word translated as becoming examples is *tupos*, and it originally meant the "mark of a stroke or blow (the 'print' of John 20:25), then a figure formed by a blow, and impression left by a seal or die, an image ... (Acts 7:43), and so it came to

mean a pattern (Heb 8:5), which is its meaning here” (Morris, 1 Thessalonians 38). It is a very positive step for Christians to model proactive non-violence responses.

Love as the ultimate response to violence. Paul prayed for the love of the Christians at Thessalonica to increase and overflow for each other, as well as for everyone else (3:12). This is very important because when the Church loves its members and the unchurched, it paves the way for living in peace with each other (5:13b); providing opportunities for believers to work harder, minister more completely and sincerely (5:12-13a); engaging idle members (5:14; 2Th 3:6-15); being patient with everyone (5:14d); not paying back wrong for wrong, but always trying to be kind to each other and to everyone else (5:15); avoiding every kind of evil (5:22), and that includes preparing to deal with violence in the most positive ways.

7.4.2 2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians follows from the first on the issue of the *parousia*, the Second Coming of Christ and all the events associated with it. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 present subjects that also border on violence connected with the Lord’s Second Coming. In the contest with the “Man of Lawlessness,” the Lord will win and overthrow the lawless one and destroy him (2Th 2:7-12). But what appears as violence that the Lord executes is what John develops much fuller in Revelation. The Lord will overcome certainly, but only through His suffering. Even here, Paul does not admonish the believers to even consider being violent for whatever reason.

But does that not suggest that the world will continue to be violent against the Church until the Lord returns? It does, and if believers were to respond to that violence with violence, they would spend a substantial amount of their time just studying and doing violence. That was not in Paul’s mind.

7.5 VIOLENCE AND PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN THE CORINTHIAN EPISTLES

7.5.1 1 Corinthians

In 1 Corinthians 16:8, Paul writes, “But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost,” an indication that he was at Ephesus when he wrote this letter. The first mention of Paul in relation to Corinth was in Acts 18:18-21 when he visited there briefly and started the Church, but did not write the letter at that time. Instead, he wrote it on his third missionary journey, between three to five years after his first visit at Corinth (Yamsat 26). Paul must have written this epistle in the mid-fifties A.D., although it is difficult to date the epistle with precision.³

Why did Paul write this epistle? Leon Morris’ 1 Corinthians noted that the epistle is “very much an occasional letter, directed to the immediate local needs of Paul’s converts” (27). He had immediate and remote reasons for writing. Paul’s three purposes for writing: “to set right disorders which the Corinthians took lightly, but which he saw as grave sins,...to answer some questions put to him...to give doctrinal teaching, particularly on the resurrection” (Morris, 1 Corinthians 26-27). He had received report from Corinth about some issues and he needed to correct them (1:11-12). Danny McCain’s Notes on New Testament Introduction advances four Church problems that needed correction as the first reason Paul wrote. These were 1) Divisions in the Church (1-4); 2) A specific case of immorality (5); 3) Lawsuits between Christians (6:1-8) and 4) Immorality in general (6:9-20) (202). That is why Henry Clarence Thiessen remarks that 1 Corinthians “gives us the best picture of the life and problems of a primitive local church” (200).

The epistle addressed its readers as God’s church in Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy (1Co 1:2). Paul gave thanks to God for the spiritual

potency of the Corinthian church, and began to address their concerns, beginning with a division in the church caused by partisan spirit among its leaders. He discussed this leadership fracas in the first three chapters and presented God's wisdom and Christ's solution to their problem. Next, Paul focused briefly on the plight of the apostles of Christ—those who were on the firing line of the battle against. Their situation seemed like a contradiction. God had put them on display at the end of the procession, as if condemned to death (4:9); had become the spectacle of the whole universe (4:9); were fools for Christ, weak, and dishonored (4:10), hungry, thirsty, shabbily dressed, brutally treated and homeless (4:11) and had become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world (4:13). This is such an unimpressive description of the leaders of God's people. But what do these descriptions show? Dishonor, brutality, homelessness, and being a spectacle—all point to grave problems that the apostles suffered. The passage does not tell the causes of the sufferings, but these are obvious: 1) the situation of the apostles and 2) the responses of the apostles. In the first case, it is not an overstatement to say that their very persons were abused and their dignity down trodden. They should have been bitter and returned kind for kind, something that was not beyond them. Yet, in the second instance, they chose to follow God's path. It was a path of painful persecution and suffering. The apostle said, "We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly" (4:12-13). What other way is more Christian than this in dealing with violence? Is it possible to separate this sort of violence from the ones that Christians also suffer today? Being fully assured that he and the apostles were doing what was Christian, Paul urged his hearers to "imitate me" (4:16). He was admonished them to consider his and Christ's examples as a motivation to stand in a manner that glorifies Christ and flavors the tasteless and bitter

context of earth; and to brighten the earth with their testimonies. “It is possible to be different,” Paul seemed to be urging, in a world so filled with bitterness and strife. The one who takes Christ for all His word can be different, thus, “imitate me.” Believers in Christ were to be different in how they dealt with the faults of other believers, as well as, in their moral conduct (6:12-20) by honoring God with their bodies. Paul further illustrated by his life, that the believer can be different from what is expected, when he discussed his rights as an apostle (9:1-14), but added that he had not used any of these rights (9:15). His reason was that in so doing, he may “become all things to all men so that by all possible means” he “might save some”—all for the sake of the gospel, so that he may share in the blessings of the gospel (9:22-23). In 9:15-21, he explained just how he did that. Paul considered his ministry as a race to be run and won (9:24-27). In order to win the prize, he, like competitors in the Olympic Games, went into strict training, with a focus and method. He does not waste his time and energy, but like a boxer, he beats his body to make it subject to him. Why? He did not wish to disqualify himself after preaching the gospel to others (9:24-27). Paul’s comparison of his ministry to a race or game is very significant because in it he describes and prescribes for Christians the nature and method of Christian warfare, in part. This in turn, can affect how Christians respond to various issues.

After responding to various other issues, the apostle climaxed his responses with the discussion on love in 1 Corinthians 13. This exposition of the nature and display of love is directly related to Christian responses to violence. The characteristics of love: patience, kindness, humility, other-seeking, even-tempered (not easily angered), keeping no record of wrongs; having no delight in evil; rejoicing with the truth; always protecting, always trusting, always hoping, always persevering and never failing (13:4-8), shed light on what a community of love can be and do,

through Christ's grace. While admitting that the context of this love chapter is not violence, the discussion could imply violence as well. The virtues of patience, perseverance and cleaning the black slate suggest violent situations as well.

The love principle in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians does not specifically address violence that the Church faced or might face, although the partisan spirit that rifted it could lead to violent struggles. The *love principle* (1Co 13:4-7) can help Christians to promote the cause of proactive nonviolence significantly if learned and lived. Paul was speaking directly to Christians. But because he himself had learned to be all things to all people so that by all possible means he might save some (1Co 9:22), Paul had already learned to apply the love principle in and out of the Church. The aspects of the love principle that stand out for proactive response to violence are patience, kindness, not being envious, not boasting or boastful, or proud, not rude, not self-seeking but others-seeking, not easily angered and not keeping record of wrongs, not delighting in evil, but rejoicing in the truth (1Co 13:4-6). These characteristics of love, when practiced, will restrain violence in society.

7.5.2 2 Corinthians

Second Corinthians began with encouragement in God's comfort. While violence is not necessarily in mind, God's comfort extends to victims of violence. In his ministry some time in Asia, Paul and his party were pressed by some great pressures that were beyond their ability to endure. They despaired of life and their hearts felt the sentence of death (1:8-9). Whatever this "deadly peril" was, God delivered the team and continued to do so at the time of Paul's writing (1:10). He also comforted them in their grief with the comfort he was here relating to the Corinthians. Behind all their distresses, Paul saw not the human agents, but God, who had allowed what happened to them so that they can rely on Him themselves (1:9).

The Corinthian Christians had also prayed for the apostle's team (1:10-11). It is probably likely that some sort of violence was directed against the apostle's team, a situation that made them despair of life (1:8), which probably also was included in some of his later admissions of sufferings especially, as one displayed in triumphal procession in Christ (2:14), although he possessed the treasure of Christ in jars of clay (4:7). In keeping with the tone of the suffering motif, Paul described their situation vividly: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (4:8). The apostles daily carried in them the death of Jesus (4:10). Paul's emphasis concerning their situation continued in 4:11, where he asserted that they who were alive were "always being given over to death for Jesus' sake." No wonder he could simply summarize this as, "death is at work in us, but life is at work in you" (4:11). This death made their bodies to "waste" outwardly (4:16), though inwardly they were "being renewed daily" (4:16). In spite of it all, Paul described their situation as "light and momentary troubles" that are achieving for them "an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (4:17).

Paul's sufferings must be properly understood as forms of persecution. Nevertheless, they were often associated with violence against him. His catalogues of hardships in 6:3-10 and 11:16-33 are instructive. In 10:4, he expressly confirmed their engagement in warfare—yet, of a different sort. Theirs was a warfare that did not require weapons of the world, but weapons that possess divine power. In this respect, God is again involved with the believer's warfare, which is spiritual. The real enemy is fought, not in what is experienced in the sense world, but in the spiritual realm. All that happened to him served constantly to ruin his body and weaken him, including the "messenger of Satan" who had come to humble the apostle (12:7). Having

understood God's purpose in his situations, Paul concluded that for Christ's sake, he delighted in the insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties (12:10). However, God's response to Paul's request is most revealing: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (12:8). Could this not suggest also that even when faced with the most brutal situation of violence before which the Christian is helpless and weak, that God's grace is sufficient to not only deliver, but also to strengthen proactive resolves? Is this not a legitimate application of that verse?

7.5.3 Summary of Proactive Responses in 2 Corinthians

In 2 Corinthians, whatever can be classified as violence against the apostle Paul or his team falls largely in the confines of persecution because of faith in Christ. Rather than what he (they) suffered, the apostle's focus was more on God's purpose in all that befell them. He saw his plight as "necessary" means in propagating the good news of salvation. As such, his responses were determined by his understanding of his worldview. While admitting to involvement in combat, it is nevertheless obvious that the battle is highly spiritual, and requires spiritual weapons; although manifestations of the battle are physical—the hardships and sufferings which the apostle and others experienced. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 is a significant key to understanding Paul's worldview and how that related to his response to violence. Violent thoughts can be subdued to obedience to Christ long before they produce violent actions.

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Leading by leading the way (2Co 6:4-10). Rather than commanding others to do something, excellent leaders lead by leading, not by talking only. Paul and his team here spoke about commending themselves in every way. What they commended

themselves for is ‘shocking.’ The apostles led the way and by their examples, could admonish their followers to do the same. This is proactive. Notice that most of what Paul and his team endured at the hands of other people was among the very reasons people cite for being violent.

in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distress; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything (2Co 6:4-10).

From another angle, the principles of sowing and reaping and accessibility combine to produce that of losing a battle to win a war. In both, Christians will expend their resources, energies, gifts and everything.

7.6 VIOLENCE AND PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN ROMANS

7.6.1 Violence and Human Nature

The Epistle of Romans, like the other Pauline epistles, locates violence in humanity as a function of their fallen nature. Paul identified a grand principle—*of sin* (1-3) as the forerunner and reason for humanity’s violence. This sin factor makes humanity to be filled with *every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice...they invent ways of doing evil...are heartless, ruthless* (1:29-21). This is really something to be ashamed of, but humanity is not ashamed of their depravity. They are instead ashamed of the gospel.

Unlike them, so certain is Paul about the Christian faith that he is not ashamed of the Gospel because it is God’s power to save (du,namij ga.r qeou/ evstin eivj swthri,an) humanity. The verb evpaiscuvnomai, is a compound of the preposition evpi, used 888 times in the New Testament with

various words and by itself, and *aivscro, j*, an adjective used four times to mean “disgraceful, shameful.” It can also mean disgraceful, shameful or dishonest. The noun *aivscroth, j* appears once to mean obscenity, while the noun *aivscuvnh*, used six times, means shameful, shame, shameful or humiliated. The verb *aivscuvnomai* occurs four times with the meaning, “ashamed” and once, meaning “unashamed.” Why would Paul introduce shame here if it were not for the violence that accompanies it? The only other appearance of the form of this word as it is in Romans 1:16, is, 2 Timothy 1:12, where Paul boldly declares that he is not ashamed of (*evpaiscuvnomai*) his suffering because “I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.” Again, this stresses the truth that the Gospel attracts a certain amount and type of suffering that ordinarily humiliates and disgraces a believer, unless the believer resolves that no disgrace or humiliation is worth embarrassing a believer in Christ. Are there proactive principles in Romans?

7.6.2 Some Proactive Responses to Violence in Romans

Here are some few proactive responses to violence in the book of Romans.

1. **Sharing our faith in boldness (Ro 1:16).** This attitude is that Christians are not ashamed to share their faith with any and everybody in spite of oppositions. That a way to build bridges between different people. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.
2. **Being reconciled and learning to reconcile (Ro 5:9-11).** God reconciled humanity to Him while they were still rebelling violently against Him, while still His enemies (5:9). That realization should spur Christians on to seek reconciliation with their enemies even while the enmity lasts. The character of the Father must reflect in the children. One who seeks to be reconciled to another or to reconcile others does not

at the same time think about being violent. Reconciliation presupposes the giving up of violence. This is connected with the doctrines of reconciliation and redemption, both of which are products of the believer's justification through faith. God justified and redeemed Christians, and reconciled them to Himself. His coming down to human level to become human so that He can restore the broken relationship and fellowship with Him should guide believers to live out their justified lives by striving to reconcile those who make them their enemies, by seeking their reconciling with God, so that God reconciles all of them to Himself.

3. **Living victorious Christian lives.** Paul teaches that Christians are more than conquerors in all their lives. Well, if they are that, then they ought to learn to put those situations under their feet that make them look as if they are victims of circumstances. Conquerors do not give up so easily. More than conquerors just do not give up and they do not give in. They give out. This perspective is capable of transforming an entire community's outlook and lifestyle. Those factors that combine to produce violence against Christians: people, trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword and spiritual forces (8:35-38) cannot overpower the Church. Not even angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, (8:38-39). That is why the redeemed are indomitable in Christ.

4. **Upholding a commitment to non-reciprocation (Ro 12:14-21).** There are many laws or principles of reciprocation, like that in sowing and reaping, reproduction of kind and more. But reciprocation in kind breaks down at one level when it concerns the conduct of Christ's people and evil or violence. Rather than return evil for evil, and violence for violence, Romans 12:9-21 contains parallels or

echoes of Jesus' teaching about relating to those who are bent on hurting the Redeemed.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible. Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written, "I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it," says the Lord. Instead, do what the Scriptures say: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink, and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you." Don't let evil get the best of you, but conquer evil by doing good (12:17-21 NLT).

The text teaches Christians not to reciprocate evil because vengeance is God's business. Instead, they are to treat their enemies in the most humane of manners. Why? Because they are more than conquerors and by doing so, they will conquer evil without violence. This is absolutely revolutionary! It means that Christians should plan and choose their actions wisely. They should stay ahead of their enemies and conquer them through works of genuine love, not pretense. There is nothing like a *doctrine of toleration* or *tolerance* here. Not even *peaceful co-existence* will do. If the goal of Christian ministry is to tolerate and live peacefully, Christians can do that by waging an all out violent war and subduing their enemies. Once subdued and oppressed, peaceful coexistence and tolerance can follow. But Christ did not teach or command "peaceful coexistence" and "toleration or tolerance" in relating to enemies. Neither did Paul. Mark Bredin considering Jesus as a nonviolent teacher and activist, believes Romans 12:14-21, especially verses 14 and 17, are Paul's echoes of Jesus' teaching that are applicable to the discussion on responding to one's persecutor (15).

5. **The principle of law-abiding citizenship.** Romans 13 deals with the believer's relationship to the state. It instructs submission to governments because they are God's ministers to do His will. He charged them to punish evildoers and commend those who do right. If Christians become law-abiding citizens in their countries, they enhance government's ability to do its job properly. To rebel against

government is to rebel against God. Of course, if government sets itself against God, then, the Church must remind it of a higher principle, that of absolute allegiance only to God. Realizing that the laws of most countries prohibit violence, if Christians abide by the laws of their countries, they will actually be proactive against violence.

7.6.3 Further Discussion of Church-State Relationship

The discussion is probably in response to the hypothetical question Paul anticipated a reader to ask. “But what should we do regarding this teaching on loving our enemies, doing our best to live at peace with them and not revenging or letting evil to have the best of us, when government breaks down either through complacency or by being the real enemy?” The Bible does not seem to qualify the Christian response on condition that a responsible government is the requirement for such Christian submission. In fact, it is hardly difficult for a person or people to resort to vengeance, retaliation and brutality where a responsible government is in place. Such admonition is more significant in the context of bad governance. Under a responsible government, not many law-abiding citizens think of remitting evil for evil to another because the law, the agent of justice in the hands of the government, will be functional. Where that is not the case, it is probably more readily understandable to say, “leave the matter with God,” on the one hand, either in consolation of self, or in true Christian spirit; or, to resort to retribution, on the other hand.

Alan F. Johnson observed that this passage is “highly controversial” and “appears somewhat abruptly (without connecting particle) between two exhortations pertaining to the exercise of Christian love and peace (12:9-21 and 13:8-10) (231)”. Johnson argues for adopting an historical explanation for the passage instead of conjectural ones. Arguments can be advanced for a *logical* connection with the preceding in either the idea of “revenge” and “wrath” (12:19 with 13:4); or with the

thought of not being conformed to the world or any of its institutions (12:2); or as answering the question of whether the Christian is to view the state as evil because it renders evil for evil, which the Christian is not to do. Although these logical connections may not be absent, they are largely matters of conjecture. Actually the local historical conditions in Rome may have had more to do with the inclusions of this section on civil authorities than the previous subject material, as Johnson argues.

Why does Johnson adopt an historical explanation? First, because at the time of Paul's writing (early A.D. 57), hostility between Rome and the Jews was mounting considerably. Claudius expelled Jews from Rome in A.D. 49 for their continuous rioting and disturbances. Rome knew about revolutionary activities among the Zealots. And since Jesus was a Jewish Messiah, Rome may have become suspicious of the entire Christian community and interpreted any insubordination to local Roman authorities as a revolutionary threat. Second, Johnson's Romans thinks that the alleged robbery of Jesus' body story (Mt 28:11-15) led to disturbances between Jewish Christians and non-believing Jews to such extent that Cladius wrote an ordinance forbidding tampering with graves at about the same time (231). No wonder that the apostle Paul here repeats Jesus' summary of God's law: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (13:9), and further interprets this in concrete terms in verse 10: "Love does no harm to its neighbor," with all of Jesus' connotations of the neighbor in mind at this point. In 13:11, the Bible urges the Redeemed to "understand the present time" (*NIV*), that is, its shortness and lateness—this knowledge of the time will spur the Redeemed into real Christ-like action, not only in morality and ethics, but also in the overall conduct of their lives and affairs here on earth. All this is because believers live or die to the Lord, not to themselves (14:8).

However, the issue in this chapter and how it affects Christians is probably not so rushed through or discussed with facility. There are still few knotty matters. Romans 13:1-2 advances fundamental premises if, the subject of the section be regarded as an argument. Cast as a simple syllogism, the verse can be understood thus:

Premise 1: God has established every government.

Premise 2: Every government asks submission of its subjects.

Conclusion: Therefore, God asks everyone under an established government to submit to it. Premise one, that God has established every governing authority over every group of people (civil authority and spiritual), without exception, does not distinguish between types of governments; and understandably, that presents a problem. Did God also establish a government that is despotic, corrupt, unjust, ungodly, immoral and overbearing? If He did, how does He expect Christians to submit to it? Under what conditions may submission not be necessary? It is much easier to accept a government that is the opposite of these characteristics and term it as “good,” and probably, as truly of God. Care must be taken not to allow political, theological or hermeneutical presuppositions dictate the meaning of the text. The second premise, like the first, tends to make no distinction between the levels of submission expected of citizens under a government. “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities” is the simple, straightforward statement. The “But what if...?” objections raise their heads again. What in fact, is this submission to government? And in the cases that this study is concerned, how can anyone submit to government when government is the chief instrument of oppression and injustice? Or, in the case of civil strife, where one group of people supposedly under the same government breaks away to set up a government that opposes the one whose authority they have defied, and what results is civil war, to which must Christians in such

situation submit? This is often the situation that has consumed much of Africa where large-scale occurrences of violence have resulted. The same has been true, although on comparatively minor scales, where there are events of communal, ethnic or religious violence. But it is in these situations that the force of violence is felt worst because of the characteristic tendency of this sort of violence to become recurrent. While it may not last many days and may not cover a large extent of territory and involve as many people as a normal civil war would, the cumulative impact of this sort of violence is probably more devastating than expected. It is also here that the issue of Christian submission to government must be understood in perspective.

The situation Romans 13:1-7 addresses the event where an individual or groups of individuals decidedly set up rebellion against instituted authority, and thus, disrupt the smooth operations of a society. These range from minor offenses by individuals to major ones that require government to use the sword of justice. Such offenders are the “rebels” of 13:2, who in effect, rebel against God when they set themselves against governing authorities. In the ideal state, “rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong;” but in many instances, the opposite is the case. Rulers hold terror not for wrong doers, but for those who uphold the law and submit to their authority. Again, a study of the historical context of this passage reveals that those living in the ancient Roman Empire were not living under such “ideal” government that did not oppress or suppress its citizens, or in which there were no instances of civil disturbances and occasions of violence. *Pax Romana*, though highly visible throughout the empire, was far from “perfect.” Another consideration in Romans 13 worth noting is the subject of verse 4, that the governing authority is “God’s servant, an agent of wrath.” Which servant of God was the Bible referring to here, if not the rulers in Paul’s days? But again, the situations depicted in

Romans 13 do not say very much about what is happening to Christians in many parts of Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Of course, with Scripture interpreting Scripture, if a governing authority sets itself against God and demands submission to it to mean anything that steals the believers' allegiance to God, then Acts 4:19-20 requires Christians to advance God's perspective on submission as originally intended in defense: "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." Actually, Paul did define what he meant by submission in verses 3-7 as 1) doing right as opposed to wrong, maintaining a proper conscience, and paying obligations to government (taxes, revenue, respect, and honor). If Christians meet their responsibilities, a government that turns against them because or in spite of that will, face the wrath of the highest authority, God.

7.6.4 Summary of Proactive Responses in the Book of Romans

Paul's concluding admonitions in Romans 16:17-20 are probably a relevant summary of his teachings on violence in this book. The *principles of reconciliation, love, non-reciprocation and law-abiding*, among others, are at the heart of this admonition and remain consistent with Christ's teaching and practices in the gospels.

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet (Ro 16:17-20).

The Bible warns believers to be "wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (16:19), meaning that while they should go all out to do good. They should nevertheless not allow evil to have the better of them. The affirmation that the "God of peace will soon crush Satan" (16:20) under the feet of the believers is a refreshing

confirmation that evil cannot, and will not win in the final analysis. God is not asleep. He is in the midst of the battle, fighting the real enemy, and constantly subduing him under His children's feet. But the Church must be bold in its witness, learn to reconcile those at variance with it wherever possible, give up its own evil and violence, abide by the laws in their lands as long as the laws do not dishonor God and pray for, and treat their enemies with Christ's love.

7.7 PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

The Christian Spiritual Battle

In Ephesians, the discussion on warfare is vivid but limited to spiritual warfare that comes at the end of the book (6:10-20). The passage describes the weaponry of spiritual warfare in which Christians are engaged. The devil and the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" are the enemies. The battle line is drawn and the Christian's warfare is clearly affirmed. It is not one against "flesh and blood," and therefore, cannot be directed against human beings primarily. Each Christian is to be fitted with the Lord's armor in order to be able to stand against the devil's schemes (6:11). The only offensive piece of weapon in the armory is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:17), with every piece of armor worn with prayer (6:18-20). Harold W. Hoehner, after commenting on the three questions that arise from Ephesians 6:10-13 (first, what the believer is to do—be strong in the Lord (6:10); second, how? By putting on God's armor (6:11a) and why put on God's armor? To stand against the devil's strategy (6:11b-13), notes that,

Christians are not to attack Satan, or advance against him; they are only to "stand" or hold the territory Christ and His body, the church, have conquered. Without God's armor believers will be defeated by the "schemes" of the devil which have been effective for thousands of years (643).

In his instructions to young Timothy, Apostle Paul focused on battles with false teachers whose onslaught concerned the beliefs of Christianity. Even then, when

he admonished Timothy to endure as a good soldier (2Ti 2:3), it was in light of standing strong in the Christian faith. This was what Paul so beautifully described as having “fought the good fight” (2Ti 4:7). His use of metaphors of warfare was to make the singular point that the Christian life is a type of warfare; yet, it’s a different type. In this warfare, the Christian does not destroy the human enemy. Instead, the warrior wins back, at every attempt, the enemy, to the throne of God, through Jesus Christ. The military metaphors aptly describe the rigors of the battle the Christian is engaged in, but distinguish between the plan, method and means of the Christian battle. A. Duane Litfin comments on Paul’s euphemistic expression, a commonly used traveler’s term about his death (4:6) and then brings together Paul’s life.

Looking back over his life, the apostle offered a remarkable description few could honestly echo. He had *fought the good fight* (cf. 1Ti 6:12) *finished the race* (cf. Acts 20:24), and *kept the faith* (cf. 1Ti 6:20). The first two are common Pauline athletic images (cf. 1Co 9:24-27), while the third draws again on the image of faithfulness in one’s stewardship of Christian truth (cf. 2Ti 1:14) (758).

7.8 PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN THE PRISON EPISTLES

7.8.1 Philippians

Philippians is very passionate, full of exhortations for Christian living. It relates Paul violence experiences. However, Paul’s perspectives on Christian ministry in the book are excellent proactive responses that Christians can use against perceived violence. Here is a significant principle.

The attitude of Christ (Phil 2:1-5). Christ’s attitude was selfless love and service, and humility. Paul admonished believers to do away with selfish ambition and instead put the interests of others ahead of theirs (2:1-5). Jesus submitted to violent death and did not think highly of His life. But even then, He did not resort to violence. This is also part of the attitude of Christ Paul spoke of here. Cultivating Christ’s attitude is learning the way of non-violence, and is proactive.

7.8.2 Colossians

Like the other epistles, Colossians does not deal so much with violence, but teaches principles that Christians can use to unlearn and counter-act violence. Here are some of the most striking.

The principle of forgiveness. Forgiveness in Colossians springs directly out of God's act through Christ to make peace through His blood shed on the cross, and to reconcile everything to Him (Col 1:20-21). Herbert M. Carson explained it this way:

This reconciliation was a decisive act ...and there was a once-for-all element too about the making of *peace* which God effected. This was accomplished by *the blood of his cross*. This speaks first of the death of Christ in terms of a violent end. His death was due to the shedding of His blood. But blood speaks also of a sacrifice offered and so we have the thought that the sacrificial death of Christ is the means of reconciliation (46).

God's forgiving and reconciling activity forms the ground for Christians forgiving whatever grievances they have against others (3:13). This will in turn encourage living a life of love, in which the peace of Christ reigns in people's hearts because they are called to peace (3:15). Paul calls it the *peace of Christ* and exhorts that this peace should rule in the hearts of Christians because they were *called to peace* (3:15). What Paul does here is to arch on the Lord's teaching about His disciples being *peacemakers* (Mt 5:9). Peacemaking is a major proactive response to violence. With the much quarreling and fighting today in the Church, Paul reminds Christians to be peacemakers and forgive one another to be proactive activists against violence.

7.9 PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

7.9.1 1 Timothy

This book, written about A.D. 63-65, to Paul's young assistant, Timothy, is important to the development of doctrines in the Church. By this time, the concept of

Church had developed fully, away from James' synagogue. In Ephesus, the NIV Study Bible notes how false teachers combined Gnosticism, “decadent Judaism (1:3-7) and false asceticism (4:1-5)” (1833). Political and social conditions were much different for the Church, although most of what Paul instructed Timothy to teach the Church formed proactive responses to different challenges, including violence.

1. **The law as proactive instrument against violence (1Ti 1:8-11).** The Jewish legal code had merits just as constitutions have today if people know and live what they require. Paul upheld the law. He wrote:

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law breakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. (1Ti 1:8-11).

Paul's point is that if people use the law properly, they will not break it by doing what is unlawful. Against rebellion (armed rebellion), murder (of parents) and other forms of evil and violence the law must be “restricted to its primary purpose—the restraint of evil-doing” (Guthrie 60). If the Church instructs its members on issues concerning their constitution, it could make it difficult for a few persons to engage in acts of violence that are clearly against the constitution and drag others in it without some kind of alarm going off. This way, some of the acts of violence in society can be checked because people have constitutional knowledge of them.

2. **A determination to pray for government.** Paul instructed Timothy to teach the Ephesian Christians about their responsibility to civil government. It went beyond being law abiding and tax paying. It involved praying for those in government positions: “kings and all those in authority” (2:2a). The reasons for this are so that believers “may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” and because it “pleases God.” (2:2b-4). Paul did not distinguish between which government

authorities to pray for and which not to pray for. Praying for national governments so that they rule under the fear of God is proactive because when governments rule well, the chances of political instability caused by violence are greatly reduced and the Church benefits from the peaceful environment they create. This is probably an aspect of Paul's emphasis in Romans 13.

3. **Striving for excellence.** This principle combines those of diligence, constancy, progress, alertness and self-examination (4:15-16). By it, a person strives for the very best option among any given set of options. A culture of excellence is not utopian, but will take all the precaution necessary not to drop into the levels of mediocrity. And if people strive to do things excellently, they cut down on the amount of criticisms and negative publicity they attract. The ripple effect of this is reduction in violence.

7.9.2 2 Timothy

Like 1 Timothy, this epistle contains proactive responses that can also work in any human society, if people follow them closely. Here is a significant principle.

The principle of thorough equipping. Training in proactive non-violence responses is necessary because simply desiring to be non-violent does not automatically translate into being proactive or nonviolent. Also, because humanity tends to be violent, they must be trained to unlearn violence. Proper training and equipping with skills in proactive and active non-violence techniques require time, money and planning. Most non-violent campaigns have succeeded because those involved in them received some training in skills and techniques. Here, Paul provides biblical grounds for such training, although his focus was not primarily violence. The realization that godliness attracts persecution (3:12) itself calls for this sort of training and equipping against wrong attitudes and actions against violence. Proper attitudes

must replace improper ones and most of these are better learned through training. With that, Christians can, like the apostle Paul, shout the victor's song: "I have fought the good fight (1Ti 4:7).

7.9.3 Titus

Most of the principles in the Book of Titus have already occurred in the epistles to Timothy. For example, effective leadership (Ti 1:6-9); sound teaching (2:1ff.); and law abiding (3:1-2). But because Cretans were generally rebellious, mere talkers and deceivers and had earned themselves a reputation that read, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons," (1:12), a basic principle from this book will be proactive against violence.

Rebuking and correcting openly (Tit 1:13-14). There are moments when the truth must be spoken in tough love. Among a people known for moral flaws as perennial liars, lazy gluttons and evil brutes, the principle of rebuke is necessary to first of all, openly reveal the flaw in their thinking and acting; and second, to provide a corrective approach through teaching and equipping for fruitful living. Paul instructed Titus to "rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth" (1:13-14). The reference is to the Christians among the Cretans. This step was necessary to create moral and even intellectual sanity.

Today, it is necessary to apply this principle to deal with persons with similar characteristics because their idle talk and lying deceptions create and spread rumor mongering, slander and all sorts of malicious talks that easily lead to violent confrontations between persons and groups of people. Sharp, corrective public rebuke will bring these to their senses.

7.9.4 **Philemon**

The single most significant proactive principle in this book is *the principle of reconciliation, restoration and non-retaliation*. Philemon's slave, Onesimus, had wronged his master and fled to Rome. God brought him in contact with Paul, possibly in jail, and Onesimus became a believer in Christ, just as his master. What is more is that both men had Paul as spiritual father. Seeing two of his spiritual sons in a strained relationship, Paul offered to mediate the terms and conditions for harmonious reconciliation and restoration, without Philemon avenging himself of the wrong his slave had done to him. Paul buttressed his appeal on the grounds that Christ had reconciled all of them in Himself and that he Paul would take personal responsibility for any damage Philemon may want to claim. Paul also required Philemon to reinstate Onesimus to his former position as house slave, without harming him. Always when relationships break down among people, there is need for reconciliation and restoration. When Christians get in the forefront of preaching, teaching and reconciling and restoring lives in conflict prone areas, they will be establishing concrete foundations for durable peace and progress. Although the Church is striving hard in this direction, but it has left this critical task mostly to governments, the United Nations and other philanthropic groups. There is need to exert more effort in peacemaking in the world today, and the Church must consider leading the way.

7.9.5 Summary of Proactive Responses in Paul' Epistles

Paul's epistles conform to the pattern of proactive non-violent responses Jesus taught and practiced, and the other apostles practiced. While not seeking martyrdom and suffering, he and other apostles with him remained proactive against violence. Table 7 below shows recurrent proactive principles in Paul's epistles and gospels.

Table 7

Proactive Responses in the Epistles of Paul

S/N	REFERENCE	PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE
1.	Galatians 2:1-11	Confronting violence without violence
2.	Galatians 2:2-6	Non-cooperation with evil and agents of violence
3.	1 Corinthians 13:3-4	Love for even the enemy
4.	2 Corinthians 6:4-10	Leading by example
5.	Romans 5:9-11	Reconciliation
6.	Romans 12:14-21	Non-reciprocation of evil, but a radical lavishing of love and good will
7.	Romans 13:1-7	Law-abiding
8.	Philippians 2:1-5	Learning and imitating Christ's examples and teachings
9.	Colossians 1:20-21	Forgiveness
10.	1 Timothy 2:2	Praying for government and those in positions of authority
11.	Philemon	Reconciliation, restoration and non-retaliation

7.10 PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

The New Testament books generally described as “Catholic” or “General” Epistles were written not to specific known congregations, although they address specific issues that confronted their Christian audiences. These books also provide valuable proactive principles against violence today.

7.10.1 Hebrews

This book is a major treatise on the Person and Works of Christ. He is the architect of new and better things. The ethical admonitions of the book also provide excellent proactive responses to violence. Hebrews 9:27 warns of God’s judgment of wrath that will follow death. If Christians are concerned about the plight of non-Christians at this judgment, would they indulge in violence that will certainly lead many into a Christ-less eternity? *The principle of God’s judgment* does not seem to agree with such reasoning. The Church’s specific mission is to call out people from all nations and prepare them for the Lord. How then, can it neglect that mission through its use of violence against the people it is to save? And even in cases where it is Christians that do the violence to each other, they still violate something in this principle. Each person is destined to die once, for sure. But the Bible has not specifically called Christians to be the agents that cause the death of others, has it?

But probably more than any other passage, Hebrews 11:34-38 bears directly on violence that Old Testaments saints endured without giving up. In spite of their

sufferings, these maintained their faith in God and He commended them for that. *The commendation of God*, then, is an incentive for keeping faith and that may also span to commendation in doing what He requires concerning violence. Hebrews 12:2 admonishes the believer to focus on Jesus in not only living the Christian life, but also in striving or struggling against sin which could lead to violence and death (*cf.* 12:4). However, Hebrews speaks more specifically about violence only with respect to Christ's death on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

7.10.2 1 Peter

Peter wrote his epistles to "refugee" Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. In their severe suffering, they needed hope to still hold on and Peter, being the Overseer, wrote to encourage their faith in the Lord. Henry C. Theissen calls this book "the Epistle of Hope in the Midst of Suffering," noting that "Peter wrote to encourage the believers in their present trial, to admonish them to live the life befitting so great a salvation and to magnify the grace of God in their salvation" (287). Some of Peter's readers were wondering how much longer they could endure their persecution. Peter reminded them of the need to refocus their gaze, and instead of asking how much longer, to affirm that it will not be much longer. "Just a little while then our redemption will come." And even if they are not saved from the situation, it was still only temporal. Realizing that conditions are temporal increases the desire to be more patient until a near ideal situation occurs. The principle of temporality assumes James' principle of "faith tests" that Peter reproduced when he reminded the believers that their trials come to test their faith and refine it to the glory and honor of Jesus Christ (1:6-7).

Violent situations against Christians are only temporal. They will not last forever. The Nazi concentration camps and Nazi slaughterhouses, for example, are all

history now. Even the more recent Rwanda and Burundi genocide and the civil wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire are all showing signs that these are temporary. So is the terrorist chase that now consumes most of America's international policies. If people and nations can be a little more patient and live by the principles of law, they can achieve non-violent settlements of their grievances. All of these will pass away because they are temporal. Here are some proactive principles.

Imitating Christ. Christ called believers not only to enjoy His benefits, but also to share in His suffering. He left an example to imitate. Christ endured unjust suffering without retaliating or threatening (2:23), but entrusted Himself to the just Judge, God.

When they hurled their *insults* at him, he did not *retaliate*; when he *suffered*, he made no *threats*. Instead, he *entrusted* himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (1Pe 2:23 *emphasis added*).

In dying for humanity, Christ made it possible for believers to die to sin but live for righteousness (2:24). Peter does not intend his readers to add violence to their living for righteousness. But why did Jesus not retaliate at all? And what exactly did Jesus do in *entrusting* Himself to God? Wayne Grudem offers some valuable help here, beginning with humanity's instinctive response to humiliation.

The instinctive response of human beings when so abused is to try to get even, to hurt in return for being hurt. Or if that is impossible people will *threaten* to get even later, trying to give their enemies at least the anxiety that revenge may be taken sometime in the future (130).

Our instinctive responses, Grudem continues, "are natural only to people who depend on themselves and believe that God does not have control of the situation" (130). But how does this kind of response measure up with Christ's standard? What does it require? Again, Grudem writes:

To the suffering person who trusts deeply in God and believes that God is indeed in control of every situation, there is another response, one perfectly exhibited by Jesus: *he trusted to him who judges justly* (130).

But in *entrusting* Himself to God, [the Greek (*paradidomi*) means ‘handed over, delivered, committed’ and therefore is better translated as *entrusted* (NIV) rather than ‘trusted,’] Jesus did more, as Grudem well noticed:

The Greek text does not specify what Jesus entrusted to God, but since the options of threatening and reviling in return both have effects on the wrongdoers as well as the one suffering, we are incorrect to limit the thought just to ‘entrusting himself’ to God (as NIV, NASB). He entrusted not only himself but also the wrongdoers, and his followers, and indeed the entire situation ‘to the one who judges justly’. The imperfect tense here implies repeated action in the past, well rendered by the NASB: ‘kept entrusting’. Once again faith is seen as the attitude necessary in righteous suffering. Rather than depending on his own abilities to retaliate (which were far greater than the powers of his opponents), when Jesus was suffering he kept entrusting the situation to God the Father, knowing that God would be just and fair, for he is the one *who judges rightly* (130).

This is significant in responding to violence. In also entrusting the evildoers and the violent situation to God, Jesus demonstrated that 1) He could retaliate because He had what it took 2) His decision not to retaliate, however, was a way of ‘considering’ the evildoers as not isolated from their actions, but as part of it; 3) He was willing voluntarily, to bear with the violence situation and its perpetrators so that He can teach them a new and totally opposite reaction to violence. Jesus demonstrated that the way to break the logic of violence is to remain actively and progressively non-violent. “Leaving our own to God” as Liberians are often fond of saying is a proper proactive attitude and response to violence if by it, is not meant to present wrongdoers to God for His judgment *because* the victims are too weak to retaliate. But because God *knows* best how to deal with the situation and those involved in it, including the sufferers. Once more, Jesus showed that He is a revolutionary activist for proactive nonviolence. Imitating Him, then, is highly proactive. Similar to imitating Christ is what Peter admonishes in 1 Peter 4:1, “Therefore, since Christ

suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude...” With the attitude of Christ, Christians can do what He did with violence.

Suffering for being a Christian and for doing good. Being a Christian is no immunity against suffering, and sometimes, that even brings suffering. In such cases, Peter instructed believers to accept their lot and “commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” because what is happening to them is according to God’s will (4:19). This principle presupposes that the believer is in fact doing good. Ordinarily, one who does good should not suffer for it. But in a crooked and perverse world, the righteous suffer for their righteousness. Now Peter is saying that it is good, in fact, honorable for one to suffer for doing good, and not for evil. In this exhortation, Peter reinforces Jesus’ teachings. Listen to Peter:

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing *because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing*. Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it (1Pe 3:8-11 *emphasis added*).

Peter again hammers the point of proactive non-violence response. Jesus rebuked, “If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing *more than others?*” (Mt 5:46-47a *emphasis added*). For Christ, it is not good enough that His disciples live *as* others do. They must do *more than* others. Where others curse, they bless; where others fight, they make peace; where others hate, they love; where others do evil works, they do good works; where others are wicked, they are righteous; where others cut corners, they go the right way. That is what genuine Christianity is. Peter added that believers were *called* to this sort of living because by it, they inherit blessings both here and in the life in heaven. A very strange perspective, isn’t it? By being non-retaliating but actively blessing, loving and doing

good works even when everything else says, “that is impossible,” is the very heart and essence of Christian living. It brings blessings. Yes, a life of proactive nonviolence brings blessings to those who live it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This does not sound like an exhortation to violence because it is part of doing good. Even the once violent Peter had experienced transformation and was speaking out of his wealth of experience. His point is that whether or not Christians suffer for doing good should not stop them from doing good.

Steadfastness in the faith in spite of violence (1Pe 4:12-19). Peter’s exhortation to ‘rejoice’ in participating ‘in the sufferings of Christ’ (4:13) because the suffering experience is not strange (4:12); and especially verse 19, that urged those “who suffer according to God’s will” to “commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good,” greatly encourages steadfastness in the faith. Committing oneself to the Lord is following Christ’s example. Standing firm in the faith is an invitation to study the faith, understand it well and live it out persistently and consistently. This principle implies not doing things that will make the believer concede ground to the Devil, which may be difficult to reclaim later on. Because violence is a potential candidate in the factors that cause Christians to concede ground to the Devil, Christians need to be careful in handling this matter.

7.10.3 2 Peter

In his second epistle, Peter reinforced some of his previous principles and provided additional ones.⁴ Unlike 1 Peter that was written in the “later life of the apostle, when his ardent natural temper was deeply humbled, softened and sanctified by the work of grace,” 2 Peter was written “shortly before the author’s death, as a sort of last will or testament to the same churches as the first” (Schaff 1: 338-339). Philip Schaff notes of this epistle that:

It seems morally impossible that a forger should have produced a letter so full of spiritual beauty and unction, and expressly denouncing all cunning fabrications. It may have been enlarged by the editor after Peter's death. But the whole breathes an apostolic spirit, and could not well be spared from the New Testament. It is a worthy valedictory of the aged apostle awaiting his martyrdom, and with its still valid warnings against internal dangers from false Christianity, it forms a suitable complement to the first Epistle, which comforts the Christians amidst external dangers from heathen and Jewish persecutors (339).

The debate about this book's authorship does not in any way detract from the significance of its subject matter. Although the book does not deal with violence in any specific way, the discussion on the "Day of the Lord" is the closest to anything violence in it. This violence is eschatological.

7.10.4 Jude 22-23

Jude is certainly not speaking about violence, but when the Church is concerned to show mercy to people and snatch sinners from eternal destruction through sharing the gospel of salvation, its evangelistic concerns will also affect its perspective on violence against those people. So a mission-minded Church will not also be violent. Therefore, one way to be proactive against violence is to have a deep concern for saving those who ordinarily create violence. The more people come into the kingdom of God and learn the way of Christ the greater their desire for nonviolence. So evangelizing non-Christians is proactive against violence, even though evangelism itself attracts violence from those resistant or opposed to Christ.

7.11 PROACTIVE RESPONSES IN THE JOHANINE LITERATURE

7.11.1 The Gospel of John

"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive (*parelabon*) him" (Jn 1:11). Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus challenged the Jewish religious and political system. Their response was a resistant unbelief in Jesus and His message, a resistance that grew to become hatred for Jesus, and led to His arrest and

crucifixion. In spite of the violence against Jesus, He never stopped to respond with nonviolence. When an opportune time arrived for His disciples to engage violence with violence—what at least Peter considered a legitimate self-defense strategy, Jesus rebuked Simon who led the way of violence, and instead interpreted what was happening as part of God’s purpose for His kingdom to come. His disciples not preventing His arrest suggests that they could have. In fact, they may have well been able to overpower their opponents and saved their Lord. But that was not His method and focus. If the Father’s kingdom would come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, Jesus had to die the death of the cross.⁵ Nicholas Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God delves into the thick and complex scholarly sources on the death of Christ question that comes down from Jewish and Roman cultures, to attempt to answer the question “Why did Jesus die?”, a question Wright admits as being among the most frequent yet “certainly the most fascinating – and, ...among the most frustrating” (540).

A part of the true testimony concerning the many other things Jesus did was to change the focus of His loyal disciples and friends. In His glorified, post-resurrection appearance and reinstatement of Peter, Jesus charged Peter not to “fight for His cause,” but to “feed” His “lambs” (21:15-18), and to “follow” Him (21:19, 22) in death as he did in life. Days earlier, He had ordered the same Peter to put his sword away (18:11) because He had to drink the cup the Father had given Him. Had Peter misunderstood Jesus, or had Jesus changed His strategy at the last moment? Maybe one of the many things Jesus did that was not written is His teaching on self-defense against violence, if He did teach any thing other than what is already known.

7.11.2 John’s Identity

Internal evidences show St. John, the apostle, sometimes called “the apostle whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24) as the author of this gospel. External evidences also point to him as Jesus’ cousin “according to the flesh” (Westcott xxxii). He was a son of Zebedee and Salome (Mk 15:40; 16:1) and Salome was probably a sister of Mary, the Mother of Jesus (19:25). He was probably the youngest disciple, a reason for his closeness to Jesus. John was the Apostle John, a Palestinian Jew and eye-witness of the events he describes (Schaff 1: 322-355; Morris 215ff.). This John was not the young man “wearing nothing but a linen garment” who was following Jesus and “fled naked, leaving his garment behind” when they arrested Jesus (Mk 14:51-52). This must have been John Mark.

7.11.3 The Johanine Problem

The Johanine problem concerns the differences in accounts between John’s gospel and Revelation, between his gospel and the Synoptics.⁶ In its relationship to the Synoptics, the Johanine problem deals with how and why John’s accounts differ from those of Matthew, Mark and Luke about the duration and setting of Jesus’ ministry; Jesus’ portrait, the extent and nature of Jesus’ discourses and other (Schaff 1: 325). Scholars have proposed three possibilities in resolving this problem. First, by admitting that all four gospels are historical and they present different aspects of the same events and person of Christ, and confirm and supplement each other’s perspectives. Second, that John’s gospel is more accurate than the Synoptists’ because he was closer to Christ. Third, that while John represents the ideal Christ of faith and fiction, the Synoptists represent mainly the Christ of history (Schaff 1:325). As to whether John relied on the Synoptic gospels to do his writing since he wrote after the Church had already read the Synoptics, or whether he wrote independently of them is

an issue scholars have wrestled with for some time now, with different scholars taking different positions, as Morris' The Gospel According to John discusses (50-55).

In the case of its relation to Revelation, the question is, "Did St. John also write the Book of Revelation?" Four possible responses to this question are: 1) Yes, John wrote both, but the differences in the two books are because they are separated by time and circumstances of the writer. 2) Yes, John wrote the Gospel, but not Revelation. Probably a contemporary of his did. 3) Yes, John wrote Revelation, but because of that, he could not have written the Gospel. 4) No, John did not write either of the books. The Gnostic Cerinthus or some other "anonymous forger" wrote the two books that are spurious (Schaff 1: 326). However, this work assumes Johanine authorship of both books and holds that the Gospel is genuine, authentic history of the life and person of Christ, written from John's experience. Essentially, it is characterized as the Gospel of Incarnation; of Love; and of Mystic Symbolism (Schaff 1: 315-316). But what does John's gospel have to do with violence and how the Christians of John's day considered it?

7.11.4 Violence in the Fourth Gospel

A few sections of John's gospel do relate to the issue of violence the way he saw and presented it.

Jesus cleanses the temple (2:13-22).⁷ Three aspects of the temple worth noting that N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God discussed are that it is 1) the dwelling of Yahweh; 2) the place for the accepted sacrificial system and 3) symbolic of the dignity of the Jewish people, that is, it possessed political significance (406-407, 411). Wright notes that since the Jews regarded the temple as God's dwelling, to come closer to it was to come closer to the most holy place or "Holy of Holies." There, worshippers obtained forgiveness for their sins and cleansing from defilement. That is

why the elaborate sacrifices based on Leviticus 1-7 became so important to the Jews. But the temple was also politically significant to them. It was the place on earth that God had chosen to dwell among His people, and nowhere else, although different Jewish groups regarded the Herodian temple differently. The Essenes did not believe that the Hasmonean high-priestly oppressors were the right people to run the temple and for that reason refused to be a part of it. The Pharisees and ordinary common people also thought differently as Wright Jesus and the Victory of God notes:

If the Essenes were ideologically to the present Temple on the grounds that the wrong people were running it, and the Pharisees were developing a theology in which the blessings normally available in the Temple could be had, by extension, through the Torah, there were also a more popular critique. The poorer classes evidently regarded the temple as symbolizing the oppression they suffered at the hands of the rich elite...when the revolutionaries took over the Temple at the start of the war, one of their first acts was to burn the record of debts. The unpopularity of the ruling class at this time is well documented, and the widespread dislike of them meant that the first-century Temple, and particularly the way in which it was being run, came in for regular criticism (412).

That is the social-religious or even political context surrounding the Jewish temple that Jesus cleansed in John 2. The text tells us something of what He did and why.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. Then he ordered those who sold doves, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!” (Jn 2:13-16).

What Jesus did here is to disband (though temporarily), the temple’s ‘normal’ business routine. But why did He do so? Why did He personalize the temple as “His Father’s house” rather than the dwelling place of the God of all the Jews? By protesting making Yahweh’s house into a market ground, Jesus was in effect protesting the desecration the Jewish people were already bringing to the temple that was supposed to be the place where they obtained cleansing from their defilements.

Jesus' action is a protest against the Jewish authorities. Westcott maintains that it was to abolish "the corruptions which the selfishness of the dominant and faithless hierarchy had introduced into the divine service" (40).

Regarding the meaning of His action, N. T. Wright, drawing upon the strengths of various alternatives settles on the following:

His action was symbolic of the destruction of the temple.

1. Israel's history had come to its climax and their God was judging and redeeming his people.
2. Yahweh's wrath upon the Jews would be accomplished through the Romans in the destruction of the temple.
3. Yahweh was destroying the temple because Israel did not obey His call to be His people; they as a nation were rebellious; and they practiced injustice in their society and the temple.
4. Jesus symbolized the destruction of the temple, but that this symbolism was more than a mere intention to create a new temple. It contained a critique of the present temple. (417).

The heart of Jesus' temple-cleansing issue is the *why*? And how does His action speak to violence in Him? Even though some have located violence in Jesus at this point, it is hard to understand why the temple police or even the Roman authorities did not arrest Him. N. T. Wright describes Jesus' action as "subversive and shocking" and affirms that His escape from arrest puzzles scholars (424). Wright thinks that Jesus' action was an intended dramatic symbol of the destruction of the temple. On this, he advances a hypothesis to answer why Jesus escaped arrest. He remarks that Jesus' action should be seen "as a swift and striking symbol, rather than either a would-be military coup or an attempt at controlling and reforming the whole

system” (424). In that case, it is unfair to charge Jesus of violence as destructive evil. True, His action was passionate and forceful, but violence as a characteristic element or factor in His ministry from which to buttress a violent attitude and activity is a misplaced priority.

Cleaning Up the Church as a Proactive Response. Jesus’ action, though not violent, nevertheless, sets forth a clear, proactive response in dealing with violence. If He was dramatically symbolizing Israel’s national disobedience to God, their corruption and injustice, then, like Prophets Amos, Habakkuk, Haggai, Hosea and Jeremiah, it is proactive to confront leaders and followers openly about their attitudes and actions that if left alone, will cause everyone to reap a bitter fruit. How may Christians proact ‘dramatically’ to symbolize God’s disapproval of an evil system? Because they are not Jesus, they cannot go around ‘throwing’ out people’s market stands and closing down shops to indicate disapproval. Nor can they undertake violent campaigns. The surest place to begin, however, is the Church itself. The Church should look at how it deals with its relationship to God and how it treats other human beings. It should check against the tendency to build and maintain a religious system devoid of Christ, and run purely by ecclesiastical authorities that are spiritually insensitive to God’s call and demands. The Church should address injustice, selfishness, greed and corruption within its ranks. Then and only then can it have the moral authority to help sanitize the larger society within which it exists and ministers.

Demonstrating genuine concern for those at variance with us. In John chapter four, Jesus responded to two groups. The first is the party of the Pharisees who had information about the Lord’s ministry. Learning about this, Jesus decided to leave Judea and get back to Galilee (4:1-3). According to Westcott, Jesus changed “the scene of His ministry that He may avoid a premature collision with the pharisaic

party” (66). This action of Jesus is not new or strange because the Synoptics record Him doing that whenever He thought there would be a premature or unnecessary confrontation with the Jewish leaders. He demonstrated here again the *principle or “smartness” or knowing when to walk away, or run*. This became significant because it gave Him more ministry time and opportunity.

The second group is represented by an individual that Merrill C. Tenney and Walter M. Dunnitt describe as a “sharp-tongued and cynical Samaritan woman” (195). Nicodemus in chapter 3 represented Orthodox Judaism, and this woman is a representative of a class of people that was “wholeheartedly despised by orthodox Judaism” (Morris 254). Why did the Jews despise the Samaritans? Leon Morris’ Gospel According to John offered this description of the situation:

The reason for the hostility of the Jews to the Samaritans goes back a long way. When the Assyrians took Samaria captive they deported large numbers of the inhabitants and replaced them by men from all over their empire (II Kings 17:23f.). These people brought their own gods with them (II Kings 17:29-31), but they added the worship of Jehovah to their other worships (II Kings 17:25, 28, 41). In time their polytheism disappeared, and they worshipped Jehovah alone, though their religion had its peculiarities. For example, they acknowledged as sacred Scripture only the Pentateuch. They thus cut themselves off from the riches in the Psalms and the prophets and other books. Their religion was also marked by a pronounced bitterness towards the Jews. When the Jews returned from exile in Babylon the Samaritans offered to help rebuild their temple but the offer was refused (Ezra 4:2f.). This naturally engendered great bitterness (256).

Josephus’ account described the Samaritans as “evil and enviously disposed to the Jews” and as people whom the Jews could not trust because they were mischievous. (Antiquities XI.iv. 9). They also desecrated the temple in Jerusalem when some Samaritans threw dead bodies in its cloisters. Because of that action, the Jews excluded the Samaritans from worshipping in the temple and kept more careful watch over the temple (Antiquities XVIII.ii.2). Besides, at a moment when Antiochus was suffering the Jews intensely, the Samaritans disassociated themselves from being

any relatives of the Jews. They even pleaded with him to name the Mount Gerizzim temple after the Greek Jupiter Hellenius, because when their ancestors built it, they gave it no name (Antiquities XII.v.5).

That is where John said Jesus “had to go” through (4:4) because it was the “natural route from Jerusalem to Galilee,” but certainly not the only one (Westcott 61). But there may be more in John’s mind than just that. Jesus’ meeting this Samaritan woman and dialoguing with her did more for the Samaritan village than probably any other Jewish person had been able to do for a long time. By risking His reputation and that of His team, Jesus spearheaded what appeared to be a grand restoration of relationships between Jews and Samaritans that went beyond the woman, although it began with her. At the end of His ministry there, John wrote that:

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” (Jn 4:39-43)

This is incredible. Jesus had just spanned a hostility gulf of several centuries in two days! This was a true demonstration of His *love your enemy principle*. He gave the hostile Samaritans an opportunity to reconsider their information about the Jews, but more especially, about God and His salvation plan for humanity.

Forgiving offenses and defending the helpless against violence (Jn 8:1-11).

Although the textual evidence for this narrative renders it inauthentic, the story itself adequately represents the “true character of Jesus” (Morris 883). Here was a woman about to be stoned to death for adultery. They brought her to Jesus to hear His verdict. To their total amazement and probably dismay, rather than holding up their interpretation of Moses’ law, Jesus actually defended the hapless woman against the

crowd. The woman was guilty of open sin, but Jesus gave them a project: “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her,” He responded. The point was not to condemn them of adultery. In fact, He said *sin*, with no specific act of sin attached. Westcott notes that by using this expression, Jesus’ words revealed the depths of the men’s own natures, forcing them to shrink back from the violence they otherwise would have inflicted on the lady (127).

Jesus was not fighting for the woman’s rights. He *forgave* the woman, but also made it in such a way that her captors did her no violence. He gave both parties an impartial opportunity to reconsider the true situation of their nature with respect to what they had before them. In a way, Jesus arbitrated non-violence as He dished out *forgiveness*. Being a woman and an adulterous one stood out very strongly against her in that culture. One way to respond to violence is to *forgive the offenses of others*. But also, Christians should, wherever possible, *arbitrate proactive non-violence*. They may never be able to stop a violence, but by intervening, they may avert some.

Withdrawing from the public in a potentially violent situation is wisdom and proactive against violence (Jn 11:45-54). At this point in Jesus’ ministry, the Jewish leaders again, being jealous that many Jews were putting their faith in Jesus, held a session of the Sanhedrin in the temple. Their agenda?

What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation...So from that day on they plotted to take his life (Jn 11:47-53).

At this meeting, the high priest Caiaphas prophesied Jesus’ substitutionary atoning death (11:49-52). Jesus knew their plot to take His life and realized that it was His personal responsibility to exercise the greatest possible care over His life, and prevent any occasion of premature death. He “no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim,

where he stayed with his disciples” (11:54). That was extremely proactive. He disengaged from public ministry at one place and “ran away” to another.

If 13 men could do that to save a potentially violent situation that could possibly involve more people than them, Christians need to consider the *running away principle* when dealing with certain violent issues. It is not wisdom to walk into a violent or potentially violent situation just to make a point when one can still make that same point even more impressively if one walked away. Even the Messiah and His team ran away when He thought it was the best option.

Multiplication through death (Jn 12:23-26). This principle of a grain of wheat producing seeds through falling on the ground and dying first, is agricultural. Seeds do not normally germinate, grow and yield fruit unless their seed form dies. Out of this death life springs forth. Jesus said this about His own soon coming death and resurrection and its effects on humanity. But the principle has also applied to the Church wherever Christians have had to die so that the seed of the gospel will spring forth and bear much fruit. For Jesus and those Christians who have so died, the principle has involved their lives. But this does not mean or suggest in any way that Christians should seek to die or that they should not be proactive against the system that works death in society. It is not passivity in disguise.

However, there are other legitimate applications of this principle, as for example, when Christians give up attitudes, opinions and actions and learn new ones in their place so that they counter foreseeable occasions of violence. Otherwise, the hard truth is that in situations of violence, some Christians will necessarily die because of their faith. But their dying is really like a kernel of wheat that falls to the ground and dies in order to give life to others through its death.

Disarmament as proactive response to violence (Jn 18:1-11). John was still a very young man when Jesus was arrested. After nearly 40 or so years, he still was impressed by the charm of Jesus' method that night and refused to leave it out of his accounts.⁸ His description is filled with precision and details that the other Evangelists lack. This is significant to John's overall purpose of writing about Jesus so that people will believe that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. He did not come to save by being violent, but by being nonviolent and proactive against violence.

His response to Peter was, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (Jn 18:11). Did He intend that Peter or the others would put their swords away just for that night or for good as in saying, "Put your sword *away from engaging it in violence?*" The sword was for fighting and killing. Putting it away was nothing short of complete disarmament. Jesus disarmed Peter that night, He in effect disarmed all His followers from pursuing the logic of violence. That was one of the greatest proactive responses to violence Jesus taught that night. This is in the spirit of Jesus' teaching about discipleship:

The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servants also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me (Jn 12:25-26).

To justify violence is easy and unless Christians respond differently, violence will necessarily consume them. However, that is far from what Jesus taught and practiced. Disarming oneself of the weapons of violence is *the* Christ-like method of experiencing victory over violence. This is a learned behavior that involves specific skills, perspectives, attitudes and actions. Disarming is an indication of voluntarily giving up one's rights to use weapons of violence. And if a violent person surrenders his or her attitudes, actions and weapons of violence that is a sure way to plant a seed against future violence and that is why disarmament is proactive.

The principle of verbal defense (Jn 18:19-24, 34, 36-37). At the trial before Caiaphas the high priest, Jesus did not keep silent. He responded to the high priest's questions in such a way that made one of the officials to strike Him in the face. Even before Pilate, except once (Jn 19:8-10), Jesus was not silent. There are times and places when Christians must speak out and there are times when they must be silent. The wisdom to know when to do which, believers must seek from God. But in all His speech, Jesus did not seek to defend Himself against His accusers. Jesus was demonstrating the logic of nonviolence that He desired His disciples to copy (18:10-11). There is every reason to believe that they did, as the remainder of the New Testament shows. Closely connected with this concept is Jesus' defense before Pilate in which He announced that if His kingdom were of this world, his servants would fight to prevent his arrest (18:36). In this world, fighting and violence are part and parcel of living. But His kingdom valued nonviolence and proactive violence. The difficulty Christians have is trying to live out Christ's kingdom in a kingdom that is against Him and all that He represents. Unless He had demonstrated the possibility for nonviolence so clearly, it would have been difficult for Christians come close to it.

If events of almost 60 years earlier were still so fresh on John's mind, and even affected his own perspectives as seen in his writings, then, there is need to realize what Jesus stood for on violence and how His disciples must respond.

7.12 THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES (1, 2, 3 JOHN) AND REVELATION

In his epistles, John wrote much about life "in community." That is, the effect of the believer's living has meaning only within a community. This community lives in fellowship with God and with one another. There they express their faith most profoundly and proactively. The epistles do not particularly address violence.

7.12.1 Violence and Proactive Responses in the Book of Revelation

The banished apostle John presented his encounter with the Risen, Glorified Christ, when alone on the Island of Patmos, on the Lord's day (Rev 1:9-10). In this apocalyptic material, John saw and heard many mysteries. Part of his description of the glorified Christ is that "a sharp double-edged sword" came out of His mouth (1:16). John said nothing about the purpose of this sword in the description. The sword of the Spirit, the word of God, is probably the most likely weapon illustrated here. Even if the sword prefigured Christ's war against the forces of evil, there are no indications that they are meant for Christians to use against their earthly enemies. The glorified Christ threatened to use that sword not against unbelievers, but against the Church in Pergamum if they did not repent of their sin (2:12, 16).

The next mention of any indication of violence is when the Lamb opened the scrolls and seals (Rev 6:1-16). At the opening of the first of seven seals, a white horse whose rider rode out holding a bow, a weapon of war, rode as a conqueror bent on conquest (6:1-2). The second seal revealed a fiery red horse whose rider was given power to "take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other"—thus, violence. He was given a large sword for his work (6:3-4). The rider of the pale horse in the fourth seal was named Death. Hades followed close behind him and they were given power to kill a fourth of the earth using the sword, famine, plague and the wild beasts of the earth (6:8). When He opened the fifth seal, the souls of martyrs who had suffered the severest violence cried to the Lord to avenge their blood (6:9-10). They were told to wait a little longer because others of their fellow servants had to taste of the violence of martyrdom before the Lord would act finally to avenge their blood on those who had killed them (6:11). It is important to notice here that it is the Lord who will avenge the blood of victims of violence done because of the name of Christ. The Lord would have otherwise told them that He has His Church in the world and that He

had given them the power to avenge the blood of their own. That He did not so instruct or inform is suggestive of His intention and desire. The sixth seal showed a display of the wrath of the Lamb (6:12-16) and the terror of it.

At the fifth angel's trumpet blast, locusts swarmed upon the earth and tortured unbelievers with great agony and suffering (9:3-11), as the first of three woes to come upon the earth (9:12). The second was the killing of a third of humankind (9:16ff.) by four angels and 200,000,000 mounted troops. In spite of the great slaughter of humankind, the survivors remained obstinate and unrepentant (9:20-21). The testimony and ministry of the two witnesses (10:3-14), which is the second woe, left much in the wake of the men's ministry that may count as violence against planet earth—God's judgment! The woman and the dragon (Rev 12) reveal the full fury of satanic violence against the Church of Christ in a cosmic event (12:17) that gradually builds up to what will be the final show down between the forces of good and evil, at the Battle of Armageddon (16:14-16). But Revelation 12:10-11 is important to understanding how the believers overcame their enemy, the "accuser of our brothers."

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

The critical element in their overcoming their accuser was the blood of the Lamb, that blood shed that depicts the violence He underwent. In a very unique way, these learned what Jesus taught earlier in the Gospel of John 12:25. "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." The writer of Hebrews also reminded his audience that in the struggle against sin, they had not yet resisted to the point of shedding their blood (Heb 12:4). Taking these together, one can understand that Jesus and the writer of Hebrews were

standing in the same tradition of nonviolence that may even result in martyrdom. That is why Bredin notes that the “nonviolent activist believes victory is gained through dying and not killing” (52). There is also a *principle of non-cooperation with the enemy* here. As it were, the believers were already beginning to breathe eternal hope, the arrival of the Lord’s salvation not only to save from sin, but also from all forms of violence. That was largely because they had not cooperated with the world’s value system. This brief passage stresses it:

Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, “It has happened at last—the salvation and power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ! For the Accuser has been thrown down to earth—the one who accused our brothers and sisters before our God day and night. And they have defeated him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony. And they were not afraid to die. Rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice! But terror will come on the earth and the sea. For the Devil has come down to you in great anger, and he knows that he has little time” (Revelation 12:10-12, NLT).

After these cataclysmic events, the Church will merge victorious for all time; the Redeemed of God will sing to the praise and honor of their Lord (19); enter into their millennial kingdom rule (20); witness the great separation judgment otherwise known as the Great White Throne Judgment (20:7-15) and finally enter into their final home—the New Jerusalem (21-22). At this time, the cross already borne, the crown will be worn. The eschatological battle is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; after which will come rest at last for all believers in Christ. But until then, the Church must endure, persevere, witness to God’s goodness, love and salvation; and continue in this world where it will be confronted constantly with the world system. It is to this Church triumphant that John the Revelator wrote:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away (Rev 21:3-4).

At such time, there will be no need to want to understand any Christian response to violence because there will be no violence in the new system. The blissful new Jerusalem (see 21:1f) will also have no cowardly, no unbelievers, no vile person, no murderers, no sexually immoral, no practitioner of magic arts, no idolaters and liars (21:8; 22:15). The Lord would have then made “everything new!” (21:5) and will announce that “It is done” (21:5). The everlasting peace envisioned by the prophets of old will then be realized by the pilgrim over comers because there will be the most desired commodity of all humankind, peace, forevermore. These in mind, the Church can expect to have reached its final destiny. Then it can now say with the Spirit, “come!” Lord Jesus, “Come!” (22:20).

7.12.2 Some Proactive Principles in Revelation

Violence in Revelation is confined to the great show down between the forces of the Lamb of God and the ancient Serpent. This battle which will usher in the *eschaton* and end all humankind’s misery and strife (for those who are in Christ), will also usher in an era of eternal peace—peace that the world has never known since Genesis 3. The violence of the final battles is strictly under the control of the Commanding Officer, Christ Himself. At the appointed time, the entire forces of wickedness will be broken once and for all time by God’s Conquering Lamb. Then a new order of things will settle in. This final battle will be bloody and extremely disastrous for planet earth and its inhabitants. But that will only be the beginning of the reign of eternal bliss and peace with God—the blessed hope of their salvation. Until then, the world will continue in violence. But that is no reason for the Church to resign from doing something about the situation. The Church must live Christianly.

There is basically one principle from this book because most of the other principles are already in the previous sections. It is *the principle of absorbing violence*

and transforming it into non-violence. This principle does not react to violence by other acts of violence, but by a total accepting, absorbing and transforming violence to produce what is not violent. It involves much suffering, but through it, comes victory. That is what Christ, the slain Lamb that become the Conquering Lamb did. When confronted with violence, He remained Himself. He took in violence upon Himself but was not passive. Then He transformed that violence into something far more beautiful, better and glorious than violence. This task of absorbing violence is a long and slow way, but it is the surest way to overcome the logic and spirit of violence. This may be the same principle that Bredin identified in Jesus when he noted that Jesus was “conquering through nonviolence expressed in suffering, witness and non-cooperation” (221).

7.13 SUMMARY

Violence is steeped in human experience. God’s Word has provided concrete, workable principles to counteract the spirit and logic of violence. However, overcoming violence is difficult and must begin with individuals. As each Christian learns these principles, overcoming the spirit and logic of violence becomes a ministry. Certain truths about responding to violence characterized their responses and dispositions. Recurrent responses probably more than any other, reveal the heart of Jesus’ teachings to His disciples and how they preserved that tradition of engaging and overcoming violence not with violence, but with something more and better than violence. Here are some recurrent proactive responses the New Testament teaches.

1. The early Christians developed radically new perspectives on their existence that enabled them to evaluate their lives and situations in light of God’s overall goals. They viewed violence against them from the perspective of God’s plan and purpose.
2. They taught the need to develop specific attitudes toward violence.

3. They determined to commit their lives to principled living. These included how they used their tongues and how they related to other people so much that they sought to avoid or minimize violent situations by actively engaging in lifestyles that did not encourage or sympathize with violence.
4. They lived their lives as law-abiding citizens in the Roman empire and within the Jewish communities, as long as those laws did not seek to contravene God's expressed desires for them.
5. The leaders of the Christian communities in the New Testament busied themselves teaching their followers the way of Christ, always drawing from Christ's examples. They learned to actively oppose violence by not cooperating with the agents or perpetrators of violence, no matter what.
6. Within their own circles, the Church demonstrated that it was possible to differ sharply on issues without being violent.
7. A radical view of the enemy as also a creature in God's image provided a new way to relate to the enemy in love. This view established an attitude that allowed the victim of violence to accept and transform violence in such a way that overcomes violence and the violent person. Jesus, Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the Church demonstrated this.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TOWARD A PROACTIVE THEOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker—Apostle Paul (Gal 2:18).

Evangelicals tend to do theology by summarizing biblical teaching—in contradistinction to scholastic reasoning from first principles and from modern attempts to begin theology from human experience (Harris 198).

Justice is part of the gospel (Stockwell 159).

8.1 THE NECESSITY OF A PROACTIVE THEOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

Deputy Speaker of the British House of Lords, Baroness Caroline Cox, after identifying three broad types of persecutions in the world today as those in countries run by totalitarian or communist ideologies, extremist fundamentalism and that associated with militant Islam, challenges the Church to “wake up.” She declares,

We are losing ground very fast in so many areas of the world spiritually, geographically, politically, legally and militarily. In Africa militant Islam is massively on the march. This was greatly emphasised at the last conference of African lawyers...As Christians we have to think spiritually and strategically, on how to develop a well-informed response to this threat (Toks and Funmi Olowu 21).

Commenting on the Nigerian situation, Baroness Cox observed that Christians have become “naïve by not really thinking about the nature of militant Islam.” She drew attention to the imposition of *Shari’a* Law in twelve states and the virtual absence of Christian Churches in the centers of Kaduna, Bauchi and Kano cities, and urged Nigerian Christians to “wake up!” What Baroness Cox observed here is true of many other places across the continent. The Christian response to any real or perceived threat must begin by first realizing the need to respond. Violence requires moving from critically studying the situation (experience) and its relationship to the people and God (faith), and going to the Bible and then relating these to each other, and

praying for wisdom to act proactively. The Church must act against the invading force of violence using the most “Christianly” ways that glorify God and consider the human being. How to do just that was the subject of this chapter.

This work has already established that the New Testament testifies to violence far more than most Christians have realized. They uncritically dismiss any serious claims for violence in the New Testament by stressing that it says little or nothing about it. On the contrary, the New Testament *does* speak very much about violence. But what does it say about violence and how should Christians understand its teachings on violence? To answer this question, this work proposes that the discussion be understood in light of the mind of Christ and (and or in) the will of God.

The Logic of a Proactive Theology of Violence

It is perfectly sound to ask: why proactive responses to violence? This work has sought to demonstrate that proactive responses to violence fit in with God’s logic of violence. That He hates violence has been established in both Old and New Testaments. But He who hates violence used the very violence so that He can overcome violence. He did this by making Christ who knew no violence, to experience violence on humanity’s behalf, so that He can make them not only nonviolent, but also proactive against violence. Thus, 2 Corinthians 5:21 teach that “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Why did God make Christ to know sin for humanity so that they can become God’s righteousness? Because as the righteousness of God, Christians too, standing in the example of Christ, learn to absorb and transform human violence in their experiences in order that others may live in a nonviolent context. It is a call and duty that requires the Christianity’s every effort and resources. He did not call Christians

to make the world totally and absolutely nonviolent, but to show the world that Christ presents the best alternative to violence. It is not passivity, or aggression or indifference. It is His transforming power at work in ordinary people to accomplish His will for all humanity, to liberate them from their culture of violence.

8.2 THE MIND OF CHRIST (AND OR IN) THE WILL OF GOD AS A STARTING POINT FOR A THEOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

How one interprets and uses the New Testament data on violence is significant in a New Testament theology of violence. Some scholars and Christians have seen in the New Testament ample reasons to dislodge violence with counter-violence, whether physical or moral. Others have used the same data and concluded that Christ decries violence for His followers, and for that reason, do all they can to avoid any willful or voluntary use of violence. These in view, this chapter investigated the possibility of a theology of proactive responses to violence that it loosely describes as a “theology of violence.” The term focuses not on the summon for Christians to take up the arms of violence on proactive non-violent responses as the means God and Christ have provided for the Church to engage, disable and dispossess violence of its venom and make it more creative than destructive.

Nous Christou

This begins within the framework of locating and living in what Paul passionately described as the *mind of Christ* and *mind of the Lord* (1Co 2:16) and applies to God in the “mind of God” language. What is this mind of Christ of which Paul speaks? *Nous* has a basic meaning of pointing or directing a person’s inner sense to an object. Four uses of the phrase include (1) as the faculty of intelligence, that is, *understanding, mind, intellect* (1Co 14:15); (2) as the faculty of moral perception: *(practical) reason, insight, awareness* (Ro 7:25); (3) as the total inner orientation or

moral attitude: *way of thinking, mind (set), disposition* (Ro 1:28); and (4) as the result of mental activity: *thought, judgment, resolve, opinion* (Ro 14:5) (BibleWorks 5). The mind of the Lord is further demonstrated by Christ's life of obedience to His Father in every situation. To please His Father and do His good pleasure was Christ's prime objective. In this framework, He stopped at nothing that brought glory to God. Thus, *the mind of Christ* is the framework within which God achieves His purpose for humanity. And put very simply, the *mind of Christ* is another way of asking "what would Christ do, say, be and so forth?"

Qe, lhma, atoj. (Thelēma, will). An organic relationship exists between the mind of Christ and the will (*qe, lhma, atoj, to,*) of God. *Qe, lhma,* generally refers to the *will*, as the result of what one has decided either objectively or subjectively. Its objective meanings are *will, design, purpose, what is willed*; and is (a) used predominately of what God has willed: creation (Rev 4:11), redemption (Eph 1:5), callings (Col 1:9), and others; (b) of what one intends to bring about by one's own action: *purpose* (Lu 22:42); (c) of one's sensual or sexual impulse: *desire* (Jn 1:13; Eph 2:3); (d) of what a person intends to bring about through the action of another: *purpose* (Lk 12:47); The subjective meaning of the word speaks of an *act of willing* or *wishing*; (a) predominately of the exercise of God's *will* (Gal 1:4); (b) of the exercise of the human will: *desire, wish* (2Pe 1:21). The relationship between the two concepts is that the *mind of Christ* is deeply situated within the *will of God* and in fact, is the most graphic exhibition of that will, with Calvary as its context. It is that will of God and the mind of Christ acting in harmony that constitute the content of the Gospel of the kingdom of God that Christ preached, taught, lived and continues to spread all over the world through His Holy Spirit and Church. The will of God made Him to redeem humanity through the mind of Christ that would do nothing else but

the Father's will. His will does not wish that any should perish, but that all should repent; it wills that Christians live in the Spirit and walk in Christ's steps. It urges them to do the "abnormal,"—loving, caring and praying for one's enemies. It forces the Christian to place a much higher value on the human being as a creature in God's image, one for whom God stopped at nothing to redeem. And, in a very real and impressive way, the mind of Christ is the means by which God achieves His will through humanity and for them. Given the *mind of Christ in the will of God* paradigm, proactive theology of violence must proceed on from there to thinking theologically.

8.3 THINKING THEOLOGICALLY

David Atkinson could not be much further from the truth about the task at hand when he remarked that "the primary task for Christians engaged in discussion of moral issues is to think theologically" (6). Atkinson contributes to the peace and violence debate in providing a theological foundation on which Christians can respond to the biblical and traditional perspectives on the issue. Thinking theologically, no matter how slow, has always been the tarmac on which vehicles of all sorts and weights have traveled. Without it, the practice of morality in general can run no further than the foundation on which it stands. In respect to violence, which also has a serious moral dimension, thinking theologically points the way out. To think theologically, one must also consider at the sources of this theology.

8.4 SOURCES OF A NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

The question of the sources of a theology of violence is significant. This work has identified three general categories of sources for doing a Christian theology of violence. The first is the Bible (especially the New Testament); the second is the Christian Church and its experiences (tradition) and the third, the larger context of the non-Christian world in which the Christian must fashion and use such theology

(praxis). People's perspectives and common beliefs, thoughts and practices are important sources, whether they have analyzed them or not—worldview. But what justifies each source to be used to do a Christian theology of violence?

8.4.1 Justification of the Sources of a Theology of Violence

To qualify as a source for doing theology implies that the source possesses significance as far as the community that will use the end product, in this case, the Christian community is concerned.

1. **The New Testament as a source of a theology of violence.** The New Testament documents, that is, the twenty-seven canonical books, constitute the primary source for a theology of violence based on them. They first of all provide proper insights into the fundamental flaw in human nature, which flaw precipitates all incidents of violence in them. Next, they provide the fundamental basis for engaging in the task of theology because they reveal the mind of God and of Christ to His Church. The Christian Church generally accepts the New Testament as its primary instructor on the mind of Christ. Although there are differences in traditions regarding the extent of the New Testament's authority over particular Christian communities, the Church accepts these documents as the primary revelation of God in Christ. After all, the Apostles and early Christians accepted this corpus as God's very word to them on various issues. Furthermore, the corpus brings to bear the critical elements of the historical, political, social, economic and religious background of the Graeco-Roman world in which Christianity first took shape and in which it must be understood before any attempt to transmit its values and teachings across cultures far removed from this pivoting context. For these reasons, the New Testament qualifies as the primary source of a theology of violence for the Christian community.

2. **The experiences of the Church as a source of a theology of violence.**

Having accepted the authority of the New Testament Scriptures as its primary document for faith and practice, the Church through the ages has interpreted these documents and reinterpreted them in order to understand their contents—and especially, how these relate to the communities that must live what they teach. Much of this understanding has been further expanded so that they form part of their tradition (dogmas, liturgy and practice). Therefore, a theology of violence must also understand the contributions of these traditions and their subsequent use by the Church. Obviously, this is where most of the headache and trouble has been. Also, tradition has been among the Church's most thriving grounds for relevant theologizing for many reasons, one of which is the constantly changing historical-critical context of the Church. The historical contexts of Apostolic, Early, Medieval, Reformation and Modern and Christianity are in some ways very different from that of Postmodernism with its rainbow splendor. The information revolution places far too much information before humanity than the average person can handle. Globalization, secularization and pluralism are now more forceful upon humanity than they were before. The competition for people's attention, time and resources are enormous. Postmodern humanity is truly humanity in the post.

The interpretation of biblical material that does not evaluate the real life situations of the user-community in light of Jesus Christ, falls short of executing its function effectively. So also is the *under-*, *mis-* and *over-*interpretations of the same documents, or their unnatural relation to the user-community's status-quo. That is why it is important to realize, analyze and understand how the Church has used its primary source of theology to derive secondary and tertiary sources. The political, religious, social and philosophical context of a given period affects how they use the

biblical data available to them. The Bible mirrors their ideologies and practices. This has become clear in the major theological constructions within the Christian community, whether they focused on christology, soteriology, ethnicity, gender, harmatology, anthropology, theology, ethics or any other issue. These give color to the context of a theology. In Africa, this experience or context more often takes on physical (but also, spiritual) manifestations in the experience of violence.

3. **The non-Christian context—the world as a source for a theology of violence.** This third source is in many ways related to the second, although distinct. First, it represents the most significant external motivation for violence against the Church. Second, its opposition to the Church is largely the reason for a theology of violence. Third, its definitions and exhibitions of the praxis of violence has, in different ways affected the Church's understanding and interpretation of violence and how to respond to it. The history of violence in the Church in certain eras concerned how Christians pitched themselves against themselves; but also the pattern has usually been the larger non-Christian world in staunch opposition to the Church for one reason or the other. Here, what a theology of violence must seek to understand is why and how the world makes the Church its target for violence. Otherwise, responding biblically will continue to be an unsolved puzzle. Not that answering these questions will automatically achieve the desired goal, but at least, that will be one step closer to finding a more realistic and practical solution.

8.4.2 Presuppositions of a New Testament Theology of Violence

Apart from justifying the sources of a theology of violence, there are also three basic presuppositions concerning this theology.

1. **Humanity is fallen.** The first presupposition is humanity's state and nature. D. G. Reid commented on this in his article on violence, New Dictionary of Biblical

Theology, that, “the foundational premise that the fallen world, and humanity in particular, is violent” (Reid 832). The New Testament witnesses have already demonstrated in chapters five and six. Jesus reveals that the human heart is the seat of all evil and violence. An evil heart breeds and emits evil words and acts (Mt 12:35); the heart produces murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony and slander—the things that make a person unclean (Mt 15:18-20). This concurs with what Prophet Jeremiah earlier observed about the heart’s surpassing wickedness (Jer 17:9). The same evil heart will breed hatred in people and emit it against God’s people, in particular. Jesus made no secret of this when He announced to His disciples that the world will hate them because of Him (Mt 10:22; Mt 24:9; Mk 13:13; *cf.* Jn 15:18; 17:14). The exact expressions of this hatred He did not exhaust, but gave them sufficient information about the nature of the hatred. It will be brutal, and sometimes lethal (*cf.* Christ’s message to the Churches in Smyrna, Rev 2:10; and Pergamum, Rev 2:13). Already in His own lifetime, the world demonstrated this intense hatred against Him. The life of the Apostolic Church in Acts followed a similar path. Apostle Paul sounded the same call when he noted that the “last days” will be terrible, with people who are violent and Godless (2Ti 3:1-5). The New Testament does not pretend in any way about the sinful nature of humanity. It does not make humanity a good creature whose environment has rendered them bad. Nor does it dismiss them as being so depraved that they defy any efforts of redemption. But from their fallen nature, humanity’s thoughts and actions are better understood.

2. The Church is God’s agent for transforming the world. The second presupposition is that, just as Israel was God’s “finely articulated symbol of humanity enmeshed in a violent world,” so also is the Church, whose chief purposes are to glorify God (Ro 15:6; Eph 1:5); purify itself (Eph 5:26f); edify itself (Eph 4:12-13);

worship God (1Co 16:2; Heb 10:25); evangelize the very world that harms it (Mt 28:19) and promote whatever is good (Gal 6:6) (Reid 832). Being a part of humanity, and God's new humanity in Christ, the Church is that portion of humanity that God has lifted out of the miry clay to use as His agent to pull out the remainder of humanity up, and bring them closer to Himself. This is the Church's missionary duty. Thus, the Church is God's agent for transforming violent sinners into virtuous saints fitted for His glory. That is what Daniel G. Reid means by his reference to Matthew 5:43-44, where Jesus instructed His followers to be the exact opposite of their enemies, as a "new and transforming perspective on violence" that the New Testament introduced (834). On these two presuppositions (and ramifications of them) hang the total ministry of the Church to humanity, and its proactive, nonviolent witness that not only negates the violence of the world, but absorbs and transforms it in God's redemptive program. Reid encapsulates this violence transforming task in his remark that the cross of Christ embodied "Jesus' victory over violence is the climax of the biblical story of violence" (834). So, a theology of violence is both possible and justified.

3. The flood and fire of violence inundating and consuming the Church and desecrating its ministry. Violence in Africa seems to be calculated and purposeful. It strikes hardest where Christians are most densely populated or most focused on spreading the Lord's kingdom. It targets specific interests that are Christian. It makes the environment in which the Church must minister very much unbearable and presses the Church hard against the wall. It makes nonsense of Christian dignity and labor of love and seeks to make its Christ a thing of little or no consequence. It makes mockery of the Christian way of a life of peace and defies the Christian conscience of justice and mercy. It challenges the Christian resolve of equality of all people and therefore, their need to coexist legally. It redefines and insults many values the

Christian stands for and parades only its own options. It bullies the Christian sense of propriety and determines to extinguish anything and everything Christian (within its power), thereby making any sustained and meaningful Christian ministry extremely difficult or impossible in some cases. It hinders or delays God's plan for humanity in many instances and stands ready to thwart others, if that were possible. As God's agent on God's earth, dealing with the interest of God's people in God's time and way, God's Church must therefore act against violence. Simple and straightforward.

The question is no longer whether or not the Church should act, but what if it does not? Not why, but how? Not when? But which action or sets of actions? Not by whom? But for whom? The Church should awake out of its slumber for while it slept, the forces of violence sowed seeds of violence and destruction in its Master's field. Soon, violence might overtake it and make its ministry to humanity more difficult.

8.5 THE BASIS FOR A THEOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

The presuppositions above provide additional basis for doing a theology of violence. But, the most significant ground for such theology is God Himself, in His dealing with a violent humanity. At various periods of human history and experience, God dealt with violence differently, and will do so in the future, but the greatest blow He dealt to violence was to absorb it and transform it in the cross of Christ. For that reason, the greatest demonstration of His love toward rebellious humanity was to shower them with His love—while they were still in a state of repugnant rebellion against Him (Ro 5:8 *cf.* Jn 3:16-17), not after they had ceased their rebellion. Instead of returning violence for violence, God used violence to turn the table on violence, and thereby defeat it. He was not violent, He received violence, became the victim of humanity's most brutish show of violence and transformed violence by absorbing it. And that has ever since been the only legitimate reason and coherent logic behind any

theology of nonviolence that stems from the Bible, and especially the New Testament. It is obvious that God can employ violent means to achieve His will. But why He chose (and chooses) to absorb violence and transform it is what violent humanity has not fully understood. The “Man on the cross is the dying man who died that the world may live.”¹ By His action, He overcame violence with proactive nonviolence and forever wrote a new line in cosmic history, and, forever changed the face and configurations of violence in human experience.

8.6 BREEDING VIOLENCE WITH COUNTER-VIOLENCE

This work has demonstrated that the options against violence cannot be violence, although some periods of Church history believed that violence was the most effective deterrent against violence. The Maccabean revolt (166-63 B.C.) and much of intertestamental and New Testament Jewish anti-Roman nationalism came under the same influence. And although God did help the Jews in many of their wars during this period, it has now become clear that, the notion that unless a people resort to violence, their enemies will exterminate them, is not necessarily true nor is it logical or necessary. The conquest of Canaan in the Old Testament was decisively an affair God had determined to do to demonstrate His sovereignty; fulfill His promise to Abraham and his descendants; create a new people for Himself; preserve and purify Israel by exterminating the Canaanitic pagan influences around them and by using war violence as an offering to Him (Reid 833). Several times, even when Israel used violence, they lost the battle. The single most significant argument against the argument that unless one responds with violence, one will be exterminated is the very presence of an Israeli nation and Jewish peoples on earth today, and the extermination of many ancient powers and nations who were famous for their violence and brutality.

This does not in any way absolve Israel (ancient and modern) from violent encounters with their neighbors, nor does it support violence.

Besides these, the witness of the Church till today, in spite of its obvious weak and sometimes blind spots, illustrates that violence cannot extinguish it. Violence may threaten and frighten it; put some of its members to flight and reduce others to nothing, but it can never extinguish or exterminate the Church. The severe persecutions of the Church from its early beginnings, the chains of Communist lands (former Soviet Union and China); and the onslaught of both fundamentalist uncompromising and moderate Islamic lands that missiologists have identified as the 10/40 window countries, and the unmatched Christian witness in those lands till date, further strengthen the case against violence because of fear of extermination or of marginalization. Also, the severe persecution of Christians in many countries today with the resultant concretizing of their faith in Christ, together with the explosion in the spread of the Christian gospel and the strengthening of the faith of Christians elsewhere, all confirm that the gates of Hades will not overcome the Church (Mt 16:18). The kingdoms of this world and of the Devil have the power to lash out violence and terror on Christ's Church, but to overcome it is not in their power, no matter what they think and how they conceive of the Church and its Christ. The Bible has already foretold the end of all things—including violence. God and Christ will defeat the Devil and all enemy forces for all time at a predetermined period in history. After that catastrophic event in which violence will forever bow down to God's justice and majesty, and free humanity, there will be peace in the valley at last for all. That is the hopeful note on which both Old and New Testaments end. God and Christ will adorn the Church with the Victor's Crown and violence will be history.

The mere profession or realization of this truth does not settle the matter once and for all. Christians must still live in this world of evil and violence. They will still be plagued by the world's hatred and violence, and will constantly have to respond. There are good reasons to think that anti-Christian violence will gather momentum as history moves forward. At least Christ and His apostles said so, and current world events are pointing in that direction. Christians will continue to be the target of one sort of human violence or another, at different times in history, until Christ returns to receive His own. They must therefore respond. Christians have the same options they have always had: 1) Passivity 2) Counter-violence (total or limited) 3) Nonviolence (and active nonviolence) 4) Proactive nonviolence. There will always be "good" reasons to prefer one of these responses over the others. But what is most significant is this: which response best represents the mind of Christ and of God—responses that make the Church remain faithful to Christ, exalting Him and testifying to His goodness and greatness? How will they best function so that a violent humanity can see Christ in the Church and turn to Him? That is the watershed in the matter of Christian response to violence. To do so without ethnic, economic or politically vested interests is a Herculean task.

Thus far, this work has dismissed violence-violence responses as viable options because they frequently breed and escalate more violence, according to the logic of violence (violence breeds more violence). Even if it ushers in a period of "peaceful coexistence" between the Church and the world, that peace is short-lived, only awaiting the time when the enemy will consider itself strong again or stronger than the Church, to attack and subdue it. Violence in biblical perspective is a divine prerogative which the Church should be careful about employing.

Similarly, passivity has been found to be an inappropriate option and therefore, not viable because it presents a very skewed and warped perspective of both God and His Church, as well as, an unrealistic view of humanity in Christ and human experience in history. Such position presents a false Christianity, a false Christ and false gospel that make Christ and His Church insignificant to the violence debate. It fails to appreciate humanity because it represents a false humanity and shows a lack of understanding of the very nature of humanity and of God. That leaves the nonviolence options. What it further implies is that the Church must re-evaluate the data on violence in the New Testament not just in light of their context, but particularly in light of God's will, Christ's mind and the Church's ministry, and do a critical reappraisal of the various situations of violence in postmodernism. Obviously, in the affairs of humanity, restraining violence is first by God and second by self and third by constituted human authority. Like God, the Church must learn to transform violence by absorbing it. But unlike Him, it must do so not for redemptive purposes, but because of them. That means that the Church of Christ can hold sway over violence, and should do so.

8.7 TRANSFORMING VIOLENCE BY LIVING CHRISTIANLY

Tertullian, in the context of violence wrote that, "The blood of the Christians is the seed of the Church" (Schaff 2: 18). Similarly, Philip Schaff also wrote that, "The blood of persecution is also the seed of civil and religious liberty" (Schaff 2: 18). Schaff also observed that, "Christianity is primarily not merely doctrine, but life, a new moral creation, a saving fact, first personally embodied in Jesus Christ, (1: 237). These words express on concept: living Christianly. God transformed human violence by absorbing it in order to redeem humanity from the injustice of violence. This is the justice of God demonstrated by Christ on Calvary. Because violence

accelerates violence and worsens the vulnerability of its victims, and because God's program for the Church cannot be achieved by human violence or counter-violence against other human beings, the Church must learn to follow the lead of its Master and Savior, Jesus Christ, so that it can live Christianly. What 'living Christianly' means then, is to recognize that God's word and truth never change; to acknowledge that humanity lives in an ever-changing world and is subject to change; and learn to make the never-changing truth to bear on the ever-changing context on every issue in that context. The way Howard G. and William D. Hendricks suggested is that "we plug it [the Bible] into our particular set of circumstances... We do not change the truth to fit our cultural agenda. Rather, we change our application of the truth in light of our needs" (311). Francis A. Schaeffer makes a similar observation when he showed that God used "reason of justice" to defeat or destroy the work of the Devil instead of future force. Schaeffer in A Christian Manifesto thinks it is justice based on God's redemptive death in God's justice. So, Christ's example becomes the Church's standard, rule, or measure, because of who He is (27-28).

8.7.1 Some Hints About Living Christianly

Meaningful consultations. Right from the times of the Old Testament into the New, people and leaders have met to consult each other whenever a difficult situation arose. Herod and the leaders of Jerusalem, the Jewish Sanhedrin and Roman leaders often consulted with each other and acted only after. The Church has done the same and needs to learn to consult with others of its community and its leaders must plan to discuss issues of violence and how to respond to it well before the actual event of violence. Such consultations should form part of the agenda of their conventions.

Inter-faith dialogues. Christians and non-Christians should not be equally yoked together. But the Bible also shows how apostle Paul accommodated people of

different persuasions and became all things to all people so that he can win some for Christ. Constant and ongoing inter-faith dialogues are healthy proactive violence responses because they force all participants in the debate not to only think critically about their beliefs and perspectives and re-evaluate them, but they also provide opportunities to understand other people's faith, beliefs and practices. The Church that wants to make significant impact in the violence war will consider inter-faith dialogue opportunities highly.

Regular Bible teaching. Within the community of faith, Christians should teach their members the truths of the Bible on violence. This means that seminaries, Bible schools and institutions of Biblical training and the Church should work together to study and teach the mind of Christ on violence and related subjects. If the Church is growing in numbers, it must realize that a significant portion of the numbers needed to continue growing comes from the community of unsaved humanity. Christians living in hostility toward this community only dampen the effect of the gospel on the non-Christian world and hinder conversion and growth. Seasoned Bible teaching on the subject is one proactive response.

Prayer and fasting. Prayer has, and will always remain one of the Church's foremost proactive means against violence and all other troubles that come to the community. Prayer and fasting have been very potent in the experience of the Church. But they must not be the end of living Christianly, but enhance and facilitate the "projects" the prayer and fasting will lead to. The Roman government used politics and religion to respond to famine that was endemic. While the religions—Christianity and Judaism went to constant public prayers and fasts, the people consumed unfamiliar food stuffs; protested or emigrated (Garnsey ix, 27). Besides, every time the Church was threatened, it prayed intensely, sincerely and expectantly (Verbrugge 20).

Community Building. The Church's business is not just to win individuals to Christ, but also to transform them to transform entire communities for Christ. The Church has been involved in communities by building them through these five ways that Stockwell mentioned (164-165):

“Social capital” or building community Social capital (“the social glue that can be found in almost all communities. The extent that social capital is operative determines the ability of local communities and their associations to attract other forms of capital to their neighborhoods” 165).

1. Providing social services
2. Participating in activities of advocacy on behalf of poor and marginalized peoples
3. Developing community organization at the local level, including political activism in connection with all levels of government (local, regional, and national)
4. Doing community economic development

Stockwell further identified the following types of capital in a community (164-167; 178-181):

Physical capital (land, buildings, tools and the physical infrastructure)

1. Human capital (knowledge and skills of the people in the community)
2. Financial capital (economic resources held by communities or potentially available to them from banks, Churches, foundations, or other institutions).

Access to this capital is a problem for low-income earning communities.

3. Political capital (ability or capacity to exert influence over the political process)

With these, Christians and Churches can be pro-active against violence by building their communities through various social and economic campaigns. This

building process or transformation can be done through delivering social services to needy people, something the Catholic Church has mastered; advocating for the poor and weak in society; organizing people politically in such instances as the October 2005 scheduled presidential elections in Liberia; and by undertaking to build small units of viable economic activities on which the people can spend their energies more productively. What can Churches do? In discussing models of social change, Stockwell noted that what Churches do best is to build community, they “respond most naturally by delivering social services to the needy,” they “advocate for the poor,” “organize people politically and “rebuild the city through community economic development (166-181). Through these ministries, the Churches help communities to renew their minds and rethink their actions in favor of nonviolence. Various Liberian Churches and Christians like Living Water International, are involved the skills training for ex-combatants.

Defending Justice. Many violence related situations that hurt the Church and its non-Christian community centers on matters of justice. When those persons who feel or think that they can no longer bear the brunt of injustice in society decide that they have had enough, it takes only a small amount of coercion to win them over to the paths of violence. Like Prophet Amos, the Church must defend the cause of justice and truly represent the mind of Christ in the community.

Adrian A. Helleman and Caleb Ahima have offered the Church a good beginning on the defense of justice issue in their study guide on fighting injustice.² They warn: “We must not be afraid to speak out in the name of justice, otherwise injustice will multiply” (Helleman and Ahima 5). After lamenting Africa’s passivity in the face of glaring acts of injustice, they showed how the Bible deals with

accountability. They discussed the “Ten Commandments Against Injustice” that deal with the factors of injustice often connected with violence on the continent (61-74):

1. Bribery (Deut 16:19b); 2. Extortion (Ps 62:10); 3. Nepotism; 4. Tribalism;
5. Education fraud (admission fraud, examination fraud, plagiarism, employment or promotion fraud); 6. Poor work practices; 7. Honesty in business; 8. Misuse of government property; 9. Political crimes; 10. Partiality.

They not only identified issues of injustice, but also offered seven ways to deal with them on individual and community levels (92-99).

1. Bible study; 2. Analysis of current injustices the Bible alerts us because analysis deals with actual injustices, and to act without first analyzing the situation makes us appear foolish to others; 3. Planned actions because the perpetrators of injustices can be very cunning, and only an equal smartness or more will undo them; Action, not activism. Here, the authors cite the case in the Philippines in 1996 when the people acted to cause a non-violent revolution (People, Power, Revolution in Philippines, 1996); 5. Reflection upon our actions; 6. Prayer; 7. Suffering because if we desire justice, we must be prepared to also suffer.

Helleman and Ahima also propose political evangelism a requirement for defending justice, using Richard Mouw’s definition of the concept as

to share the Christian message with individual officeholders, with people who are experiencing political oppression, and with all those who experience the fears and frustrations that come through involvement in politics. Political evangelism is a neglected aspect of the evangelistic task of the people of God (132).

This may involve having dedicated Christians in government.

Following Christ. Effective discipleship by Christians is a must in proacting violence which Ronald F. Youngblood and others defined as:

the use of physical force, usually with an intent to violate or destroy. Violence is a violation of God’s perfect order. Thus the Greek word translated as

“violent force” applies to the disorderly mob of Acts 21:35. But if godly people are subject to the human instability that causes violence, they also have the hope of seeking refuge in God’s stability (2Sa 22:3). Faith in Him can lead to a quenching of the violence of fire (Heb 11:34) (1295).

This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote, “become like me” (Gal 4:12a). It is not enough to simply hate violence, but believers should also disciple others to walk in the same path. Violence is not divorced from the gospel, or from God’s elective purpose, (mind of God) as Richard B. Hayes observed.³ He makes the renunciation of violence as one of several compelling core issues in Christian discipleship today. That is why the questions Hayes and this work ask occupy the thought of all Christians on the issue: Is it “ever God’s will for Christians to employ violence in defense of justice?” “If the Church is to have any credibility, any integrity, we must seek to be a Scripture-sharpened community in *all* respects, not merely on selected issues of our own preference” (Hayes 315, 317). In Christian discipleship, believers must follow Christ as others follow them and so fulfill His plan and purpose for humanity.

8.7.2 Some Considerations That Favor a Proactive Theology of Violence

When a group of people is still small, insignificant and fragile, it is easy to get them to accept peaceful means of doing things. But when they become big and strong, it is easier for them to leave their peace side and slip over to violence for various reasons. Christianity, Islam and Judaism at different times have done just that. A proactive theology of violence will therefore remind these communities when they lived for peace and did not wish any other groups or persons to deal violence to them.

1. That Christianity and the ‘Christian lands’ are now very large and mighty, but have not pursued a unanimous violent approach to conflict suggests in part, that, recourse to violence is not native to the Christian faith. Christians may well choose to fight the enemy with violence and they could win a large portion of the world back to

themselves, if not all. But the method of spreading the gospel of Christ is not by power nor by might, but by the Spirit of the Lord Almighty.

2. That no wave of violence against the Church has succeeded to destroy it ever since the beginning of Christianity is a very strong indication that nothing in heaven and earth can, and will destroy, even if it could diminish the influence and spread of, the Church. The Apostle Paul's conviction that nothing will separate them from Christ's love because they were "more than conquerors" through Christ, is the conviction and testimony of Christianity even in the face of violence. So, Christians need not be violent out of fear. Even though God rescued the Jews from the madness of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, using Matthias and his sons, it is not likely that He would have left the entire nation and their faith to perish had the Jewish uprising not begun. He uses our errors and turns them into good, but it is always best to live in His perfect will. The very existence of the Jewish nation-state Israel today, indicates that nothing can thwart God's purpose—it may only delay it.

3. If believers believe in self-defense and in using violence to deal with violence, then they should be more logical and systematic at it. Teach self-defense techniques and some military science in seminaries and Churches. Pastors and Bible teachers should learn, teach and preach sermons and lessons on self-defense; give seminars on self-defense and violent counter-violence procedures. Let's prepare the people to fight back, even if they may actually never fight. That is exactly what national armies do. That way, the Church can do the work of the national armies. Does the fact that the Church is not doing this not suggest that it does not believe in fighting back sufficiently? What Christians do not believe in sufficiently, they had better not pretend about it. The Church should pursue the better and more biblical alternatives.

The Church should consider these three stages of proactivity in any anti-violence campaign.

Pre-violence stage. In this stage, Christians must pursue effective discipleship, social actions and teach members about how to respond to violence. They must realize the place of violence in the gospel of Christ and prepare their minds for action against it long before any actual event of violence hits them.

1. **Violence stage.** The Church should never allow what people do to it determine how it should react to them. The mind of Christ should dictate the Christian response. During the stage where violence has erupted, Christians should strive hard, depending on the Holy Spirit and understanding the mind of Christ, to enforce all the Christian principles and anti-violence perspectives they learned in the pre-violence stage. They should accept the possibility of suffering at this stage and ask God to give them grace for their moment of weakness. Viktor E. Frankl, a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, and the originator of logotherapy, demonstrated that Christians can make significant impact on the landscape of violence by their sheer strength of character. Alanzo L. McDonald says it better: “Circumstances do not control who we are or who we become” (Frankl 6).

3. **Post-violence stage.** The Church at this stage should study critically the entire situation, its responses to it and evaluate all in light of the mind of Christ. If they did not do well, they should repent and embark upon rebuilding their communities that they all destroyed because of their involvement in violence. They should continue to seek to be effective witnesses for Christ even after violent clashes just as much as they sought to be in the first two stages. Believers will not eliminate violence from the world, but they can make a significant difference in its configuration.

8.7.3 Biblical Principles to Counter Violence

The following are Biblical principles that will help Christians deal with violence proactively.

The principle of limited benefit. The Apostle Paul discussed a very important principle in relation to the freedom believers have in Christ. “Everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible—but not everything is constructive” (1Co 10:23). That Christians should respond to violence is a legitimate implication of the permissibility principle. While it may be permissible for Christians to fight back (sword with sword; slap with slap; gun with gun and so forth), this method is not necessarily profitable or beneficial or even desirable in the mind of Christ and of God.

If violence is permissible to a Christian or to the entire Christian community, under what conditions may it be or not be beneficial? This question is mainly for the sake of those who push the “fight back” theories in countering violence. The Church lost its witness and members in certain places because they refused to fight back against violence through passivity. However, in far too many instances, the witness of the Church has been marred so badly because it chose violence. After the fight, it had the challenge of explaining its actions or defending them or else, trying to make up for them. Whenever the latter has been the case, the Church’s righteousness had not surpassed that of the “Pharisees and teachers of the law” (Mt 5:20) and it had not done any differently or any more than others (Mt 5:47). Therefore, such response has only beclouded and misrepresented the Father; and prohibited His children from being perfect, even as He is perfect (Mt 5:48).

The principle of permissibility and non-beneficiality, if allowed, will suggest that Christians use violence if—it will be beneficial to them. But because of

violence's own nature, the benefits it brings more often than not do not match the disadvantages and destruction that accompany those benefits. Coupled with the sheer difficulty of sustaining this position for any appreciable period, and the lack of commitment to it because of the difficulty the Church must suffer in pursuing that option, the most reasonable alternative seems to give it up for a better one. If reason does not suffice, then Christ's explicit anti-violence teachings should. Violent responses to violence will not be beneficial to the Church and its overall witness. It will reduce its Christ to nothing more than a blood thirsty warrior, like all ordinary human creatures who do not have the strength of character to face violence in any better way than be reduced to the level of violence. But because the Christ of the Bible is greater than such portrait, He does not teach His followers to embrace physical violence to destroy their enemies. The kingdom of God and the Church of Christ do not spread by swords, guns and grenades, no, they spread in the hearts of humanity by permitting what is beneficial—proactive nonviolence.

The principle of caution. When Jesus had called, commissioned and enabled His apostles for their first mission, He warned that they were like “sheep to a pack of wolves” (Mt 10:16a). The imagery is vivid and makes at least three suggestions.

- a. That the context of ministry for the disciples would be hostile to them.
- b. That the disciples would be vulnerable in this context.
- c. That the disciples nevertheless had a mission to accomplish in spite of their dangerous ministry context. This held for both individuals and community.

The portrait Jesus paints here is serious, ironic and humorous at the same time. Imagine a flock of sheep sent to minister to a pack of wolves. What would one expect in this situation? It will require some kind of intervention for the ravenous wolves not to devour the sheep. By their nature, sheep are stupid, timid, weak, peaceful and

extremely vulnerable. By contrast, wolves are crafty, brave, strong, violent and extremely voluptuous. And while a pack of wolves may more likely use their might to break the mind and will of a flock of sheep, the reverse was not quite the case. It required far more to make a flock of sheep serve a pack of wolves. Yet, that was what Jesus required of His disciples. Their mission was obviously a challenge that put their lives on the line. Jesus showed them the way out.

“You must be cautious as snakes and as gentle as doves” (Good News Bible Mt 10:16b) He advised. The NIV rendering is “shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.” Again, Jesus presented a graphic situation that compared two characteristics of two completely unlike animals—snakes and doves. While the one was cautious, shrewd and deadly, the other was gentle and peaceful. The dove has become the emblem of peace. Shrewdness and peacefulness can go together if being shrewd does not imply a negative connotation. Shrewdness engages the mind and suggests that a critical thought process is in place. Caution and gentility then, would be the disciples’ critical password in dangerous situations. Jesus was not focusing on the lethal venom of the serpent, but on its cleverness and smartness. These characteristics implied that the disciples were to employ all their faculties, mental, spiritual and physical, and tame them to obey them. Besides, they were to be the complete opposite of the ways of life in the context where they would minister. Caution and gentility or better, shrewdness and innocence suggest further, a proactive non-violence perspective. Jesus desired His disciples to be gentle or innocent with respect to evil and violence. Yet, they were to be strategically disposed when it came to dealing with those He described as a “pack of wolves,” who are clearly those opposed to them and their ministry in one form or another.

The principle of watchfulness. The parables of the ten virgins (Mt 25:10-13) and that of the weeds (Mt 13:24-30) illustrate this principle. "...while everyone slept..." in Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus told how a certain man sowed his field with good seed and up till then, everything was fine. But after the sowing when the workers had retired to their homes and enjoyed their sleep, the man's enemy sowed weeds among his wheat and took off. Although the point of the parable is not to reprimand the servants who slept when it was natural to do so, that they slept at that particular moment was when the enemy sewed weeds among the wheat crop. Had "everyone" not slept, when they did, perhaps someone might have spotted and thwarted this wicked plot and then the wheat and the weeds would not have grown together until the harvest. But for the purpose of the parable, it was necessary for both weeds and wheat to grow side by side until the harvest so that the weeds may be rooted and burned out (judgment). This is the principle of inert or reactionary engagement because the good man's servants were ready to engage the enemy only after the damage had been done.

The Church should awake from sleep and engage the enemies of the gospel long before they have opportunity to wreck havoc on it. This requires alertness that is not only spiritual, but also physical. Christians should strive to understand the spirit of their times and not pay deaf ears to what is happening around them. The Church must learn to think beyond the obvious programs of its enemies and strive to get to the philosophies that inform their plans. Then it must be alert to signals that spell disaster and act decisively to stop them in non-violent ways long before their perpetrators can have a head start on them. That means, Christians must read the daily papers, listen to newscasts and participate in societal and civil forums at which they can learn more about particular situations from other people who may not share their perspectives. They must speak out, preach and write against those weeds that enemies are likely to

sow in the Church's farm because its members are unsuspecting of the enemy's plots. Inert engagement is not the best way out here.

Christians should act proactively by searching, finding, learning and knowing the actual and potential plans or capabilities of their enemies, and then take appropriate steps to deal with any unfavourable situations in keeping with the mind of Christ. This will mean far more work of direct involvement in the operations of civil society than Christians may be aware. Instead of having everyone sleeping, the Church should take steps to ensure that some people are awake as others sleep. Better still, let none sleep (metaphorically of not being alert). One way to do this is through vigorous prayer campaigns at unlikely times and decisive civil actions that are not violent, but apart from which violence is the most likely alternative for most people. An example is the May 2005 Prayer for the Peace of Liberia Crusade that Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary and concerned Christians led by Dr. James Graham of the United States held in Monrovia. Also the praying women at the Fish Market, Airfield, Monrovia, is another example. From the parable of the weeds, Connick C. Milo notes that peace making and living on earth as if it were heaven are required of Jesus' disciples (239, 241).

The principle of forgiveness. Jesus declared in Matthew 6:14-15:

If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

That is serious. It means that Christian life and relationship with God depends directly on one's ability to forgive people their sins. A lot is at stake that Christian forgiveness must resolve. Efforts at demobilisation, disarmament, reconciliation and reconstruction that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is carrying out in Liberia should concern the Church as it opens up an avenue to help people unlearn

violence and learn new and healthier alternatives. This is in the mind of Christ. Here, L. Gregory Jones makes a significant contribution on the role of forgiveness in breaking up violence. Forgiveness is possible if Christians understand exactly what Christ intends by it, though it is extremely costly .because it requires the very death of the disciple.⁴ Jones explains that "...forgiveness is not a word spoken, an action performed, or a feeling felt as it is an embodied way of life in an ever-deepening friendship with the Triune God and with others" (Jones xii).

He explains forgiveness variously as:

commitment to a way of life, the cruciform life of holiness in which we seek to 'unlearn sin and learn the ways of God, and a means of seeking reconciliation in the midst of particular sins, specific instances of brokenness (Jones xii).

Forgiveness must be embodied in specific habits and practices of Christian life, paradigmatically as we become part of Christ's life, the Church...an embodied way of life, at the very heart of Christian theology (Jones xii, 88).

And concerning the cost of forgiveness, Jones remarks that

Christian forgiveness requires our "death", in not just any death but as 'understood in the specific form and shape of Jesus Christ's dying—and rising (Ro 6:1-11)...It requires the disciplines of dying and rising with Christ, disciplines for which there are no shortcuts, no handy techniques to replace the risk and vulnerability of giving up "possession" of one's self, which is done through the practices of forgiveness and repentance (4-5).

Christian forgiveness is learned in communion with Christ and His body, the Church. Where non-Christians are involved, Jones declares that forgiveness is a "craft" to learn by participation (226). With this principle, the Church can influence the world by both exhibiting the virtue and teaching its enemies to do the same.

8.8 EXAMPLES OF PROACTIVE VIOLENCE RESPONSES IN LIBERIA

It is one thing to write on principles about proactive responses to violence. It is rather a different matter to demonstrate the practical workability of these principles to the ordinary person. Here are some demonstrations of how some proactive principles

are currently at work in Liberia. Numerous groups and individuals are involved in the peace of Liberia campaign by responding to the culture of violence at different levels.

Church-based Responses

The configuration of the Church in Liberia has changed significantly as a result of the civil war. In many places, its numbers have waned down, but in others, it has swelled significantly. More national initiatives in Church planting and growth are arising. The Church is involved at different levels in responding proactively to violence.

Preaching and teaching. Churches are preaching and teaching the need for Liberians to forgive one another. Although many have not done any serious and prolonged study of forgiveness and reconciliation, they nevertheless encourage members to forgive and move ahead.

Prayer. An interesting development in Liberian Christianity is rigorous praying. Churches hold prayer meetings more regularly than before, and pray for the peace of Liberia. Night vigils or “tarries” are regular end of month features in many Churches in Monrovia. Women prayer groups that devote a week day to prayer (and often fasting) are numerous. A certain group of Liberian women stationed themselves in the “Fish Market” area in Monrovia to pray for the peace of the nation. They remained there for more than a year praying. They prayed until Mr. Taylor left Liberia and continued to pray until the successful October/November presidential elections that brought in Africa’s first democratically elected female president, Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The contributions of women to Liberian Christianity are significant.

Leadership development. Church leaders meet regularly to pray for their congregations and the nation. At these meetings, they discuss how to get the Church

to deal with violence in Christian ways. Regular leadership training sessions hold to equip Church and Christian leaders for the various challenges before them.

Political involvement. More and more Liberian Christians are realizing the need for Christian involvement in national politics in more significant ways. They realize that in certain cases, public policies concerning elements that breed violence can be thwarted more potently than in private domain.

Christian social action. Local and international Christian non-governmental organizations and Churches are involved in social action: community empowerment, small-loans programs; education, orphanages, health care programs, HIV/AIDS education and various capacity building projects and programs.

Media. The Liberian mass media (print and electronic) are very proactive in dealing with violence. They do this through different programming schemes that engage different levels of society. Peace and reconciliation jingles fill the airways and radio broadcasters use live talk shows to discuss ways to deal with various societal issues; writers publish their views in the papers and reporters cover religious and non-religious events that relate to violence and health of the nation. Broadcasting offers an opportunity to educate and interact with the public, and impact people. Some Churches air programs and services that speak about forgiveness and reconciliation. However, these are not very strong because of financial difficulties facing these Churches. The researcher runs a 15-minute weekly broadcast tagged, “God, Bless Liberia” on Radio ELWA that urges Christians to pray for and get involved in the life of Liberia in meaningful ways daily. Its “Agenda Liberia” component raises and discusses pertinent issues that concern Liberia and the Liberian Church. Star Radio, Sky, UNMIL Radio and numerous other Frequency Modulation stations are impacting Liberia by their programming.

Skills acquisition and development organizations. Much is happening outside the Church to respond to the logic of violence. That is probably because para-Church and other organizations receive funding for their programs and ministries far more than do Churches. These groups provide skills acquisition and development for many young people and employment opportunities for others. By getting down to the population, they deal with some of the social and economic issues that the Church does not normally treat. Post-trauma counselling is another major aspect of this development.

Education. Pupils in elementary, junior and senior come to school with different backgrounds. Some pupils are ex-combatants. Most are not. The intermingling of ex-combatants and non-combatants in educational experiences though difficult is nevertheless, rewarding and can be very proactive if well planned to be so.

Emotional healing. Forgiveness and freedom are major components of spiritual and emotional healing. REAP (Restoration Educational Attainment Program), is one organization that is providing counselling services to help Liberians transform bitterness, unforgiveness, vengeance-seeking and other negative energies as a result of violence they suffered during the war, into creative healthy experiences. REAP does this through workshops and training sessions. The goal is to let victims of violence allow Christ heal them and give them freedom. REAP encourages victims of violence to transform their hurt and trauma through achieving forgiveness and then learning how to forgive those who have so hurt them. Other groups like Samaritan's Purse, Equip Liberia and numerous non-governmental organizations are involved in similar projects. Project Hannah is a new arrival, and is a radio program for women. It ministers to hurting women and teaches them to discover hope in Christ. Project Hannah promises to impact lives of Liberian women tremendously.

Disarmament. The United Nation's Disarmament, Demobilization and Re-deployment (DDR) program for ex-combatants is believed to have physically disarmed most ex-combatants and is seeking ways to re-deploy them into mainstream society. They are doing this through various training and capacity building programs. In some cases, ex-combatants are back in high school and others are engaged in various career opportunities, involving agriculture. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) runs a 24-hour radio station that broadcasts peace and reconciliation messages and jingles. Although not Christian, the UN supports national efforts to foster genuine forgiveness, peace and reconciliation in Liberia. The Talking Drum Studio, another non-governmental organization (NGO), in collaboration with other local and international organizations conducts workshops and trains Liberians in different aspects of peace building.

Cultural integration and entertainment. Although much needs to be done in this area, there are indications that cultural integration programs and trainings will be proactive. As more people from diverse cultural backgrounds, though in the same country, interact and strengthen their common traits, their differences will not pull them into violence against each other. The entertainment industry in Liberia is overtaken by video clubs that do not allow youngsters to think for themselves. Significant action needs to be taken to make the video club mentality proactive against violence because a very large portion of the active population spent much time at these clubs.

Networking. This is one area of proactive involvement that needs more work. But as Churches, schools, institutions and individuals network through casual and planned meetings like seminars and workshops and discuss their situations, they get to know

each other better and that tends to help people have different but healthy self-and-others-perception needed to resolve situations that normally lead to violence.

Government initiatives. Certainly, government itself is involved in finding ways to stop the violence, although it is too often the direct and immediate instigator of violence through ineffective leadership, maintaining unjust structures, legislations and corrupt living. Government can be proactive against violence mainly through its military or defence and economic agenda. It will need to rethink security and military training away from the logic of violence. The often visible agitations in security outfits like the Police and Army, with soldiers looking condescendingly on police officers is one place government's security proactive program should look. The same attitude exists in the security forces against the civilian population whom they expect to obey them almost unquestionably. When the security forces consider themselves as people in whose hands are entrusted the lives of citizens and resident aliens in their country rather than objects they can use and abuse as they wish, proactive violence theology meets with proactive sociology. When the security of the population, and not just of dignitaries and government officials and their interests becomes a priority for government, then it is easier to be proactive against violence. The Defence Ministry will have to learn to recruit, train and deploy personnel from a proactive mentality.

Commitment to the HIV/AIDS Battle. Government and Church will have to show serious commitment to fight the HIV/AIDS battle because its rapid spread is to a large extent is a result of war violence and related activities as Alastair Roderick discussed earlier in chapter 2.

8.9 CHURCH-BASED ADVOCACY FOR PROACTIVE NON-VIOLENT RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE

8.9.1 The Need for Church-based Advocacy for Proactive Non-violent Response Groups

The Church is the rallying point for very many people around the world. Although it has not demonstrated sufficiently its concern for dealing with violence in society, the frequent occurrences of violence in and around it gives it further opportunities to work at the problem. Violence decimates its members and reduces them to nothing. Violence depletes its financial resources and increases its need for more resources. Violence robs the Church of any peaceful environment for effective ministry although violence also prepares the Church to be ready to join its Lord. The Body of Christ can do more to help its members unlearn the logic and practice of violence that is so pervasive in its ministry context. The Church should begin to look in the direction of Church-based advocacy groups for proactive, non-violent responses to violence. This is a significant ministry area and will require serious education.

Benefits of a Church-based proactive non-violence responses advocacy. The Church, probably more than any other member of civil society, stands to benefit most from Church-based proactive advocacy. It is the only entity in society that believes that its primary reason for existing is to reconcile humanity back to God, and help foster more beautiful fellowship between God and humanity on the one hand, and between individual members of the race, on the other hand. If humanity persists in its logic of violence and does not know how to come out of it, the Church should come in with its liberating message of hope and help humanity accentuate that message in the core of their existence. When the Church gets on with this task, it will realize that:

Because violence threatens humanity's very existence and humanity is critical to the Church's existence on earth, anything that threatens humanity threatens the Church as well. Therefore, to engage in the battle against violence is a Christian.

1. Violence gives the Church a far greater opportunity to demonstrate the teachings and practices of Jesus Christ and His apostles on christianly living.
2. Violence is an avenue for the church to preach, teach, minister, illustrate and explain God's message of hope and reconciliation more powerfully and effectively; and expose God's logic of violence.
3. The logic of violence provokes the urge and need for serious evangelistic ministries that will usher people into the kingdom of God before they die at the hands of violence without salvation. In other words, violence has a direct missiological implication for the Church's evangelistic ministry.
4. By learning more about violence and especially, how to respond to it so that Christians please God, the Church will experience growth within its own body. This is important because very often, the Church is a target of violence.
5. While believers plan and commit themselves to study war no more, they must study *about* war so that they will succeed in *not* studying war anymore. The Church should think of discipleship with a focus—transformation and service.
6. Besides, many institutions and organizations are sympathetic with the cause of Christ. And, when the Church decides to perform a major political function for government by creating advocacy forums and groups, it will have much greater impact on present and future government policies. The Church in Kenya is showing that this is possible.
7. Church-based advocacy groups will provide opportunities for service to many individual Church members and society.

8.9.2 A Strategy for Church-based Proactive Non-violence Responses Advocacy

As the primary advocate for proactive non-violence responses in the world, the Church should:

Study about violence. Christians should carefully study Bible teachings and principles, Church traditions, the context of violence and how to respond to it. Here, theological seminaries, Bible colleges, schools, institutes and the various places that train Church workers and leaders should incorporate the study of violence and responses to it in their curriculum. This may be described variously: “Violence and Peace Studies”; “Studies in Conflict Management and Resolution”; “Proactive Nonviolence”; “The Church and Violence,” and many others. The academic study of violence should be extremely profitable to both academic institutions and the Church. Then, the Church should study the simplified versions of the findings of the academics, without oversimplifying the issue. The study should concentrate on practical ways to employ the principles of proactive non-violence, and lead congregations in workshops and even demonstrate the principles in situations in the context that require such demonstrations. It should consider seriously those factors in its own domain and in the larger context that usually cause violence: politics, economy, culture, religion, attitudes and worldview, and determine ways to minister proactively against these. Discover why and how violence affects the Church’s ministry and existence and what possibilities exist if the Church is not involved in seeking solution, or is part of the violence.

Decide on violence. Having studied the Bible, Christian beliefs and practices and other material on violence, the Church should decide a position (s) concerning its involvement in violence just as it has on other issues. Then it should work out a scheme by which to communicate and educate members about its position. This is

very significant because with an informed decision it is much easier to teach or command members on what to be and do when confronted with violence.

Prioritise educating members against violence. Disseminate with facility, the truth about violence and not just the fact of it through well-designed strategies. This is significant because in situations of violence, Christians are often the most confused about what to be and do, and why. This will enable the Church to speak with authority on the issue of violence. Church Education Departments and programs should design proactive non-violence curricula for lessons on proactive non-violence. They should study the lives of those who have learned to absorb violence and transmit not what they absorbed, but its exact opposite. Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation is a wonderful book to help here. Where they have no help, congregations should seek help from those who are already on that road and network with other Churches and individuals to achieve this goal.

While learning non-violence, Christians should remember also that proactive living is not living carelessly as though everyone around them were angels. They should be well informed about happenings in their environments, understand the chain of command that exists in their localities so that they help act as the watchdogs of their society. They should be alert to information that could enhance their cause and report situations that could cause great eruptions of violence to the relevant authorities. They should not take sides with ethnic or fraternal loyalties against the health and life of their people.

Carry out campaigns on proactive responses to violence. The same way the Church mounts evangelistic, miracles and healing, leadership, and other crusades, it should launch massive campaigns against the logic of violence and promote proactive non-violence both within and without.

Preach sermons and teach lessons that advocate and promote a theology of proactive responses to violence. Pastors, Church leaders and teachers should use their pulpits, offices and classes to teach and preach the Church's response to violence. These should not be the ones to incite their following into violence. There is much in the Bible that Christians need to understand and put into their experiences that relate to violence. The Church should help them do this properly.

Target the next generation of society. Children and young people quickly become the adults of the next generation. They also learn much faster than do most adults. Campaigns to promote a theology and orthopraxy of non-violence should target children and youth. Teach them with the right violence messages and help them develop more correct Bible-based mentality and worldview in responding to violence that will stick with them as they grow older. Help them see how violence destroys their chances of a better future and motivate them to seek to live non-violence in their daily routines. The lives they destroy may very well be theirs.

Involve significant government and non-governmental organizations. Because violence is a largely social-political issue, it is important to get government and other non-governmental groups and persons on this. The advocacy should, if possible, get government to include non-violence as part of social studies, civic and religious education in schools. Where that is not possible, the Church should do that civic education work for the state for Jesus' sake.

Create interactive forums to discuss debate, review, revise, evaluate and plan proactive advocacy measures. Let the Church be the center of studying and promoting proactive non-violence. A forum that allows frank discussions about violence, reviews and analyses of past and current situations of, and decisions on violence in light of the existing political, social and other factors that affect how

people respond to violence, is a further creative way to keep the message of Biblical proactive responses to violence in the psyche and actions of the people. Violence here will be broader than war violence. Domestic, sexual, workplace, school, football and entertainment, child-violence, women violence and different forms of violence should be treated. The Church can and should lead the way for transforming violence.

Pray, fast and work. No matter how much study and work the Church does, it will not make meaningful impact on the landscape of violence without much praying. It must pray, fast, and work towards the cause of non-violence. That is an implication of Paul's admonition to "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). The deceitful and false handling of the truth of violence will not help the Church or anyone else, except the perpetrators of violence. The Church should not also just spiritualize everything and pray and fast without doing the works of faith that God will direct it to do. "Faith without works is dead," argued James.

Expect God to instruct people's minds, transform their hearts and enable their bodies in an ethic of proactive non-violence. Like all good servants, the Church's duty is to sow the seed and water the crops. It is God's business to cause the needed transformation. This stage can come quickly or slowly. But the Church should not give up. It should depend on God, pray to Him and rely on Him to transform the hearts of people and enable their minds to learn to live their lives in light of His own will, goals and purposes. Then the Church should trust Him to touch societies and transform them through the faithful witness of the Bride of Christ.

8.10 A WORD FOR CHRISTIANS

Richard B. Hayes has observed that the entire New Testament witness is consistently against violence, with a calling for Christians to follow Christ's example

accepting suffering rather than *inflicting* it (332). He noted further that in *rule* mode, *principle* mode, *paradigm* mode and *symbolic* mode, “in all four modes, the evidence accumulates overwhelmingly against any justification for the use of violence” (339). Christians and adherents of other faiths will have conflicts concerning the person and works of Jesus Christ just as the Pharisees and Sadducees had with Jesus in the Gospels, and later with the Apostles, then the Roman Empire with the Church. The heart of the contention is the identity of Christ. In Matthew 22:41-46, Jesus’ questions, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he? And how is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him Lord?” (22:42, 43b), are at the heart of the conflict. So is Jesus’ question to His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”...But what about you?”...”Who do you say I am?” (Mt16:13-15). How Christians answer these questions will always make them appear odd to non-Christians and that is a sure cause of conflict. It has always been so since the day Jesus revealed Himself. But Jesus’ manner of dealing with opposition in sensitive matters, that is, how He pressed the opposition to “eat their words” and concede defeat and raise no further problems is a particular proactive method of dealing with violence. Here, the method thrives on its use of tact, and the force of reason in the hands of the Holy Spirit to transform a rather volatile situation. Christians should learn this art in dealing with sensitive issues when adherents of other faiths are concerned. Opposition need not lead to violence. But if it does, Christians should be able to maintain a proactive stance.

Hays is unequivocal in stating the problem Christians have when dealing with violence and the world, what they need to do to overcome:

One reason that the world finds the New Testament’s message of peacemaking and love of enemies incredible is the Church is so massively faithless. On the question of violence, the Church is deeply compromised and committed to nationalism, violence and idolatry...

Only when the Church renounces the way of violence will people see what the Gospel means, because then they will see the way of Jesus reenacted in the Church. Whenever God's people give up the predictable ways of violence and self-defense, they are forced to formulate imaginative new responses in particular historical settings, responses as startling as going the second mile to carry the burden of a soldier who had compelled the defenseless follower of Jesus to carry it one mile first (343).

8.11 CONCLUSION

Violence is certainly not the only evil in the world, but it is truly one of the most destructive forms of evil, and it is opposed to the Mind and Spirit of Christ. How to respond to it and still remain the *salt* and *light of the world* has been the Church's dilemma. Yet, in it also lies one of its greatest opportunities to transform humanity and the logic of violence. To counter violence with violence is possible and probably permissible and normal human culture. To meet it with non-violence seems to insult human sensibility and nature. The greatest challenge then, is how to win over violence without using violence. Proactive non-violence is what this work suggested.

This work has demonstrated that proactive non-violent responses to violence based on the New Testament have shown a remarkable consistency with the original teachings and practices of Jesus Christ and His apostles. He taught and practiced non-violence and was extremely proactive. The apostles ministered and followed a pattern of responses to violence that remained very similar to Jesus', in spite of their numerous difficulties in the face of different forms of violence against them. They lived in the mind of Christ. While the New Testament witnesses to much violence, it also reveals that proactive non-violence responses are not only possible, but practical and can be normal, though challenging. This is in the framework of the *mind of Christ* and is the basis for a biblical theology of violence.

The twenty-first century began with open exhibitions of violence globally—African civil wars, terrorist wars on the United States and America's justification of

resort to force and violence in the name of justice and peace seeking—demonstrations that the world still has more to learn about violence and how to manage it. Humanity has registered significant developments in science, religion, politics, technology, medicine, arts, agriculture and many other disciplines. But not much seems to have happened in humanity's understanding and ability to manage violence.

The Christian Bible and its Christ, however, have provided a paradigm for managing, even mastering violence in human experience, and that is located *in the mind of Christ*. This mind of Christ pervades Holy Scripture from redemptive history in the Old Testament to triumphant history in the person and works of Christ in the New Testament. Although violence appears to be so intertwined with human nature and experience, in the mind of Christ, it is possible for humanity to unlearn the logic of violence through proactive nonviolence, and become nonviolent. This mind of Christ presupposes humanity's inability to manage violence apart from the One who alone knows how to absorb and transform violence creatively. Yet, it recognizes humanity's ability to be transformed into His likeness through His Spirit.

Global and national military groups rely upon force and even violence to subdue violence. Violence is present everywhere and seems inescapable. And even if one cannot escape violence in this life because of humanity's fall and all the consequences of that fall, the Christian community can transform the energies of violence into healthy, peaceful and harmonious alternatives. Jesus Christ and God demonstrated that this is possible. Christ's earliest apostles did the same. The Church throughout the centuries, in spite of its many flaws, has indicated this possibility also. The Bible assures Christians that the way of Christ and of God, the way of willing submission to take the cross of violence and transform it into the crown of communion with Jesus and His community of followers through the deliberate choice

to forgive, suffer and even die for that choice, if need be, are the choices left to the Church. There shall be no crowns where no crosses are borne. Will Christian disciples take this option or remain in the spiral of the logic of violence?

Jesus' lecture on the great separation in Matthew 25:31-46 made it clear that His followers can transform a hostile world by their deliberate, planned proactive godly living. It is interesting that the basis for the separation is how each person in the two groups related to Jesus Christ directly through their relationship and fellowship with other people on earth. How people treat other people affects Christ directly especially, those whom He declares as His brothers and sisters. May the Church and Christianity live and strive like the Apostle Paul and all the holy saints, for the goal that one day, planet earth will see a new breed of humanity—those transformed by Christ to transform their world, all in the mind of Christ. May these look to the “author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame...endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb 12:2-3).

8.12 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

This work set forth five objectives, to: 1) seek biblically sound and theologically healthy responses to violence in contemporary Christian experience; 2) seek ways to unlearn the logic of violence; 3) construct a paradigm for a relevant theology of violence; 4) give voice to harassed, oppressed and helpless victims of violence and 5) contribute to the growing body of literature on violence and participate in the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) agenda. During the course of the study, the researcher discovered the following:

Like before, violence is placing the Church in a struggle for survival. Being followers of Jesus Christ and shunning violence does not insulate one against violence. Therefore, there is need for the Church to overcome the logic of violence.

1. The Bible, though presenting violent and nonviolent perspectives at different times and in different situations, does in fact show a marked progression from violence to nonviolence, although eschatological violence is still a major theme in the New Testament. That is, God's judgment against the wicked and the final overthrow of violence. This is an indication that God does not delight in violence in the hands of His children. He has given Christians the capacity to overcome violence.
2. It is possible and necessary to unlearn the logic of violence and replace it with that of proactive nonviolence, in order for the Church to remain the *salt* and *light* of the world. And this task will require concerted efforts and hard work, but it will be far more productive for the ministry of the Church.
3. A theological paradigm in the Mind of Christ can help Christians absorb violence and transform it into creative possibilities for the glory of God and the redemption of violent humanity. There is no passivity here.
4. Proactive nonviolence strategies place victims of violence in positions of power to overcome violence without violence. It re-humanizes the harassed, liberates the oppressed and empowers the helpless against violence.
5. A consistent pattern of responses to violence appears from the life of Jesus Christ and traverses into those of His disciples and apostles Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Silas, John, and others. All these sought to live lives that did not operate on humanity's logic of violence, as much as was possible.

6. The logic of violence justifies violence but often does not prepare or equip Christians to be violent. The Church has many other recourses to violence in society, unless of course, the violence comes from government.
7. Even though violence is prevalent in African experience, writers on the worldview and religions of Africa have not yet fully accounted for how violence operates in the worldviews and how those worldviews can participate in the quest for an Africa less burdened by violence.
8. If the Church will make headways in overcoming violence, it must remain on the proactive edge against violence at different levels. Many Churches do not have any seriously thought through responses to violence and so often fall to the impulsive drag to use violence when violence comes against them.
9. The Church and Christianity, not the state, have the key to overcoming violence, and should therefore, begin to work in this direction.

8.13 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The study of violence is not new to scholarship. However, this study makes four specific contributions to the violence discussion and other disciplines.

1. It proposed a paradigm for doing a biblical theology of violence located in the *mind of Christ*, as its major contribution to New Testament studies. In this paradigm, it lifted up proactive principles from the Bible with which to respond to violence.
2. The biblical analysis of violence in Christian experience has implications for other disciplines, that need to be researched further—for Biblical Christianity in Africa; missions and evangelism, especially in Christian-Muslim relationships; Church ministries and practical Christian living; Christian and national

education curriculum, philosophies, policies and practices; and for political and economic policies and practices that invite violence.

3. It established the need to create Church-based proactive advocacy groups and get government to reconsider the needs, goals and perspectives of future armed forces training so as not to encourage structural violence. There is also need to explore the unknown implications of a proactive nonviolence theology to academic disciplines and practical issues in business, ethics and philosophy.
4. An important finding of this work, though not directly related to biblical studies, is its observation of how writers on African traditional religions have not establish sufficient relationship between violence so prevalent in African existence to the religions and worldviews they study and even describe as “peaceful.” Nor have they shown how African traditional religions can help Africans unlearn the logic of violence. Writers who describe traditional religions as peaceful have not explained how this peaceful religion can help bridge the gap of violence. A similar study should explore the relationship between violence and African traditional religions.

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NOTES

Notes on Chapter 1

¹ See Wale Banks and Wale Olaniyan, Nigerian Indigenous Missions: Pioneers Behind the Scene. Ibadan: Alliance Research Network International, 2005 for further insights into indigenous missions activity in Nigeria. The CAPRO Research Office publications listed in chapter two of this work also attest to this truth.

² A back cover remark on Out of Africa reads: “Only yesterday, Nigeria was a hopelessly plagued society on the verge of anarchy and genocide. Today, the impact of Christianity is visible wherever you go.” This assessment is a good sign of Africa’s hope and recovery led by its most populous country and its Christians. Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS) of Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), an indigenous mission body in Nigeria, is the largest missionary recruiting and sending agency in Africa. Many other Nigerian missionary sending groups and Churches are sending missionaries out of Nigeria and planting Churches as they go.

³ Kenny Rogers, “Coward of the County,” The Best of Kenny Rogers. Also see Lyrics World: Kenny Rogers @ ntl.matrix.com.br/pfilho/html/main_index/by_artist/rogers_kenny.html or visit Roger’s website: www.kennyrogers.com.

⁴ See Acts chapters 1-8, particularly for details of the internal and external problems.

⁵ Cf. Geoffrey Hanks, 70 Great Christians: The Story of the Christian Church (Kaduna, Nigeria: Evangel Publication, 1992); Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, eds., The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979), especially “Part I: Classical Roots: Developing Understandings of the Foundation, Form and Function of Scripture.”

⁶ See Matthew Man-oso Ndagoso, “Christian Unity in the Quest for Relevant and Credible Evangelization in Nigeria in the Light of Pertinent Church Documents Especially Ecclesia in Africa.” Diss. Rome:1998, 3-23 for fuller discussion.

⁷ See Victor Ogene, “I raise the Dead.” Source 9 July 2001. At the time, the exchange rate was roughly U.S. \$1.00 to ₦ 120.00 or higher on the black market.

⁸ A full page advertisement in Punch 8 Mar. 2002.

⁹ These websites have information on the details of violence in some of these countries. Violence on TV: Sierra Leone—Why Show Such Violence? www.cryfreetown.org/violence.html; Wars in Africa South Africa: 1976, civilian uprising; 1983-1994: political violence: Sudan 1963-1972, 1984—civil war; Togo: 1991; www.ppu.org.uk/war/countries/africa/africa_index.html; www.iansa.org/regions/wafrica/wafrica.htm;www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?objectid=BE061F07-955B-CE44-5F648905B87E0E57&compo...

¹⁰ **Racism:** Kelly Brown Douglas, The Black Christ (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994) has gone through its seventh printing by 1999! Craig S. Keener and Pastor Glenn Usry, Defending Black Faith: Answers to Tough Questions About

African-American Christianity (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997) and Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity Be Afrocentric? (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Gayraud S. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People. 2nd rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1983). **Feminism:** Jacquelyn Grant, White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response. American Academy of Religion Ser. 64 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.); Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994); Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse eds. Women In Ministry: Four Views (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981) and Craig S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992). **Biotech Revolution:** David P. Gushee, "A Matter of Life and Death: Why Shouldn't We use our Embryos and Genes to Make our Lives Better? The world awaits a Christian answer," Christianity Today 1 Oct. (2001) 34-40; Lori B. Andrew, "Gen-etiquette," Christianity Today 1 Oct. (2001) 52-55; M. B. T. Umar, J. O. Ogunranti & Aliyu, "Cloning and Human Ethics," Humanity Jos Journal of General Studies. 3.2 November, 2001; N. Boyce "Go Forth and Multiply," New Scientist. 25 July 1998: 4-5; M. D. Lemmonick, "Could a Clone ever run for President?," Time Magazine 16 Nov. 1999.

¹¹ See Bradley Nassif, "Orthodox Mission Movements" (713-714) and James J. Stamoolis, "Orthodox Theology of Mission" (714-714), Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions Ed. A. Scott Moreau et al. (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks and Paternoster) 2000 for further discussions on orthodoxy and mission.

¹² See Paul R. Stevens, "Living Theologically: Toward a Theology of Christian Practice." Themelios. 20.3 (3 May 1995) 4-6.

¹³ Dallas Willard. Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002).

¹⁴ Hansulrich Gerber, "The Spirit and Logic of Violence," Ecumenical Review 55.2 2 April (2003) 146.

¹⁵ Uppsala 1968, cited in Ecumenical Review 55.2 3 July (2003) 194.

¹⁶ See Adrian Helleman, "Active Non-violence, The Only Viable Alternative." An unpublished paper presented at a departmental seminar, Department of Religious Studies, University of Jos, Nigeria, 22 October, 2002, for the development of Helleman's arguments for nonviolence responses from contemporary examples.

¹⁷ Michel Desjardins, Peace, Violence and the New Testament. Biblical Seminar 46 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 18. Desjardins is Associate Professor of Religion and Culture at Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. She is a lesbian and Ellen is her 'life partner' (preface).

Notes on Chapter 2

¹ Scott Cunningham, Through Many Tribulations: The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts (Journal) For The Study of the New Testament Supplement Ser. 142 Stanley E. Porter, ed., (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), discussed Christian understanding of persecution suffering in a compelling manner. Also see John Foxe, The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs 2001 (Gainesville, Fl.: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 2001), rewritten and updated by Harold J. Chadwick, for an overview of martyrdom in the Church from its first century to contemporary times; Scott Kenneth Latourette (ed.) A History of Christianity, Vol I Beginnings to 1500 rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco); Jerry H. Combee, The History of the World in Christian Perspective vol. I Since the Beginning (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Book Publications, 1979) for further discussion.

² For violence in Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Christianity, the following selections from Ecumenical Review 55.2 Apr. 2003, are valuable. A. Rashied Omar, "Islam and Violence," 151-157; Deborah Weissman, "The Co-existence of Violence and Nonviolence in Judaism," 132-135; Mahinda Deegalle, "Is Violence Justified in Theravada Buddhism,?" 122-131; Anantanand Rambachan, "The Co-Existence of Violence and Non-Violence in Hinduism," 115-121; S. Wesley Ariarajah's "Religion and Violence: A Protestant Christian Perspective," 136-143. For interpretations, perspectives and uses of violence in the "Just War" and "Jihād" traditions, see James Turner Johnson, First Things June/July 2002, 12-14 and Don Richardson, Secrets of the Koran (Ventura, California: Gospel Light 2000), for comparisons between interpretations of "Just War" and "Jihād" and the Qur'an's teachings on war and violence. Richardson (245) identified these war verses in the Qur'an: 2:178-179; 2:190-191, 193, 216, 217-18 and 244; 3:121-125, 140, 155, 165-167, 169, 173 and 195; 4:71-72, 74-77, 84, 89, 91, 94-95, 100, 102, and 104; 5:33, 34, 38; 8:5, 7, 9, 12, 15-17, 39, 42, 45, 59, 65, 67, 67, 71-72, 74-75. 9:5, 12-14, 16, 19-20, 24-26, 29, 36, 38-39, 41, 44, 52, 73, 81, 83, 86, 88, 92, 111, 120, 122, and 123; 16:110; 22:39, 78; 29:6, 69; 33:7, 18, 20, 25-26; 47:20; 48:16, 22; 59:2, 5-8, 14; 60:9; 61:4; 63:4; 64:14; 66:9 and 73:20. Mark A. Gabriel, Islam and Terrorism: What the Quran Really Teaches About Christianity, Violence and the Goals of the Islamic Jihād (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2002) is an incredible revelation of Islam's true nature. Gabriel is former professor of Islamic history at the most prestigious Islamic university in the world. He graduated from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, lived Islam, taught Islam, preached Islam in Middle East mosques, and is an authority in Islamic studies. Gabriel was a former imam of a mosque in Giza, Egypt.

³ David I. Seiple, "War," Ethics Applied Eds. Michael L. Richardson with Karen K. White (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993, 1995), 425-435 provides illustrations of the theory to American wars.

⁴ This and other CAPRO Office Research publications are indigenous missiological works on various unreached people groups in Nigerian ethnic groups that provide valuable first hand information on the people they research.

⁵ Kunhiyop needs to clarify the ambiguity of this last sentence. Also see William Robert Miller, Nonviolence. A Christian Interpretation (New York: Schocken Books, 1966); John Ferguson, The Politics of Love: The New Testament & Nonviolent Revolution (Cambridge, James Clarke Publishers, 1979); David A. Hoekema, "A

Practical Christian Pacifism.” Christian Century (Oct. 22, 1986) and Helder Camara, Spiral of Violence (London: Sheed & Ward, 1971), for further reading.

⁶ Kunhiyop’s five components needed to develop a Christian solution to ethnic and religious conflicts. are: 1) “A Christian concept of healing and reconciliation,” 2) an “inclusive ecclesiology,” 3) allowing “Christian principles to guide the approach to politics,” 4) promoting “justice in the nation” and 5) practicing “love of enemy and forgiveness” (162-165).

⁷ See Jean-Paul Azam, “The Redistributive State and Conflicts in Africa,” Journal of Peace Research 38.4 (July 2000): 429-432.

⁸ See Alastair Roderick, “Governance, Violence and AIDS in West Africa,” Justice Africa Feb 2005, www.justiceafrica.org/gain_westafrica.htm.; and Francois Vrèy, “Eradicating African Wars: From Political Ambitions to Military Leadership and Constructive Military Forces,” Africa Journal on Conflict Resolution 5.2 (2005) <<http://www.iansa.org/regions/wafrica/wafrica.htm>; Information on training in conflict management can be obtained at ian@thinkteam.co.za.

⁹ Johnson is currently senior Senator of Nimba County, in the Ellen-Johnson government. He is a founding member of the revolutionary National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), and the founder and leader of the splinter Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) that captured former president Samuel K. Doe, and in whose custody the Liberian leader died barely a day after his capture.

¹⁰ See Ecumenical Review 55.2 (2003), 144-150.

¹¹ See World Council of Churches. Why Violence? Why Not Peace? WCC: 2002, 146.

¹² Guillermo Kerber, “Overcoming Violence and Pursuing Justice: An Introduction to Restorative Justice Procedures,” Ecumenical Review 55.2 (2003), 151-157.

¹³ See Tikva Frymer, “Religions and Violence: An Analytical Synthesis,” Ecumenical Review 55.2 (2003), 164.

¹⁴ Thomas M. Thangaraj, “Thinking Together: A Narrative,” Ecumenical Review 55.2 (2003), 113-114.

Notes on Chapter 3

¹ The verb, ‘created,’ [Heb. ar’äB’,(Bārā’)(Gk. *evpoi*, *hsen*] of Ge 1:1, used to summarize God’s creative act is not used in 1:31. Rather, hfêl’, (‘āsāh, do, make) is used to describe His accomplished act. The conjunctive phrase dao+m. bAjß-hNEhiw> [very good] of 1:31, standing in the attributive position, is best understood as perfect or “exceedingly” good. This notion of goodness is not ethical but speaks to the excellence of quality, and not in a moral sense. Even the French *très bon* does not quite grasp the heart and spirit of the Hebrew expression. The Hausa *ya kyau*; German *sehr gut*; Greek *kala*. *li, an//kalo, j li, an*, all attempt to translate this concept. The concept of “goodness” however, as used in Scriptures, must be

investigated in context since it often carries with it ethical connotations of kindness (Ps 33:5) and other times as expressions of “the supreme benevolence, holiness and excellence of the divine character, the sum of all God’s attributes...(Ex 33:19). *Goodness* more commonly contrasts *badness*, the quality of character that makes its possessor lovable; excellence more particularly of a religious kind, virtue, righteousness” R. K. Harrison, ed. The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody, 1957) 492.

² See G. G. Reid, “Violence,” New Dictionary of Biblical Theology (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 832 and Carol Midgley “The Evil That Men Choose To Do,” T2 Times 20 November 2002: 4 in the wake of the death of Myra Hindley, popularly described as the “personification of evil,” for a Biblical and psychological contrast of evil. Psychologists think evil is a state of mind but the Bible does not even suggest that. How one understands evil and violence will greatly affect how one responds to them.

Notes on Chapter 5

¹ See William H. Lazareth, qtd. in James Atkinson, Luther Works 44: The Christian in Society I. Ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), xi.

² Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, God Is A Warrior (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995). Also Ephraim Stern, “Pagan Yahwism: The Folk Religion of Ancient Israel,” Biblical Archaeology Review 27.3 May/June 2001, 28 where Stern shows that the cults of Judah’s neighbors had warrior gods, too.

³ See Enrique Dussell, A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation 1492-1979 trans. Alan Neely. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981 for a fuller discussion of how Latin American theological discussion proceeded “not from the theological status but from the real status of the situation” that is, from praxy, 3.

⁴ Kurt Aland et al., The Greek New Testament 2nd ed. United Bible Societies, 1966, 1968. Matthew 2:3-18: The phrase *klauthmos kai odurmos* (bitter crying or wailing, and lamentation, mourning, grieving) in 2:18 is very doubtful as to whether the superior reading is what is in the text. This reading is supported by Sinaiticus, Vaticanus (Rome), Justin, Jerome, Augustine and others as opposed to the *thrēnos kai klauthmos* (dirge, lament and lamentation) variant that Ephraemi Rescriptus, Claromontanus, St. Gall, Leningrad and others support. Origen is the only Church Father who supports this reading. The NIV translates the phrase as *weeping and mourning*. (Also see Liddell and Scott 956, 1199). In any case, the conclusion of the narrative is not different: the Jews in Ramah whose children Herod slaughtered were in distress as a result of the infanticide.

⁵ Cf. Protevangelion XIV.1; 1 Infancy V.1.

⁶ Mark 6:14-29: Mark 6:14. ...*kai elegon* is supported by Vaticanus, the Freer gospels, Augustine and others although a doubtful reading as opposed to *kai elegen* that Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Ephraemi Rescriptus, Moscow, Rome, St. Gall, the majority of Byzantine manuscripts and many others support. However, only Bezae Cantabrigiensis (Greek) supports the *kai elegosan* variant. The Georgian Vaticanus

omits this phrase. This verb of *saying* does not in any way alter the truth of violence against John that the passage narrates. But Herod Antipas' interest in Jesus out of that which was said about him and his comment about beheading John speak well of violence and injustice in him. Was Herod delighted that John somehow had resurrected as a way to calm his guilty conscience (*cf.* v. 26)? Mark 6:20, 22 and 23 have variant readings but they are unrelated to violence in any significant ways.

⁷ Mark's version of the temptation is a verse summary (see Mk 1:12-13), with no details about what happened at this time. Matthew's account gives more details (*cf.* "tell these *stones* to become bread", 4:3 to "this *stone*" in Lk 4:3; the description of the devil as "tempter," in 4:3, a description that Luke does not use. In Mark, "Satan" is the agent of Jesus' temptation (1:13; so also Mt 4:10); In Matthew 4:4, Jesus responds, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, *but on every word that comes from the mouth of God,*'" and Luke's "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone,'" (4:4) omits the addition, 'but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'; and the switching of the second and third temptation scenes between Matthew and Luke. But the main details remain the same in both accounts, as is Jesus' response formula "It is written."

⁸ This abbreviated version of Prophet Isaiah's message of the Lord's favour to Israel (61:1-11, and even beyond), captured the heart of the prophecy. All that followed the first two verses are detailed listings of specific benefits that will accrue to Israel when the Lord restores His favor on them

⁹ Lk 11:14-28: Verses 14, 23, 24 and 25 show evidence of textual variants on words that do not affect the reading of this passage in light of the Beelzebub controversy and violence. To that extent, the reading of Kurt Aland et al. The Greek New Testament 2nd ed., as is the case of NASB and NIV were what this work used.

¹⁰ Matthew 5-7: The passage that needs attention here is 5:38-48 where verses 44 and 47 attest to variant readings. Matthew 5:44. The variant occurs in the readings of *agapate tous echthrous humōn* (love your enemies) and *kai proseuchesthe huper tōn diōkontōn humas* (and pray for those who persecute you), respectively. In 44a, the reading to "love your enemies" is much certain and supported by Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Theophilus, Origen, Cyprian, Adamantius, Irenaeus and others against the variant *humōn, eulogeite tous katarōmenous humas* (you, bless or bestow blessing upon those who curse you) that is supported by Clement, Cassiodorus, Vulgate, Bohairic (Horner; Kasser); Athenagoras omits *humas* in this second reading. A third reading, less certain, is supported by Moscow, Rome and Paris: Regius, Washington Freer Gospels, Leningrad, the Aphraates Apostolic Constitutions and Chrysostom and others. An even fourth less supported reading has *humōn, kai eulogeite tous katarōmenous humas kai kalōs poieite tois epēreazousin humas* (you, bless those who curse you and do good to those who mistreat or insult you). In 44b, "pray for those who persecute you," the reading is more certain and supported by Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Theophilus, Athenagoras who omits the "*kai*", Origen, Cyprian, Adamantius and Coptic version, Sahidic dialect and others. Against this are three other variant readings. In spite of the variant readings, all the variants do support the idea that Christians should be and do something different from what is done to them.

¹¹ Alan R. Cole, Mark: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Ed. Leon Morris rev. ed. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 207, notes that a “no cross, no crown” theology was always present in the minds of the early Christians. In footnote 1, he speaks about a “selfism” cult that is strange to the gospel but characteristic of the so-called “me-generation” which this passages simply does not support

¹² See footnote 10 above.

¹³ Gregory L. Jones, Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), xiii.

¹⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., showed that the Code of Hammurabi (206) and the Hittite Laws (10) prescribe a similar situation. See Exodus, in Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 2 (Genesis—Numbers), 1990, 433.

¹⁵ Myron S. Augsburger, The Communicator’s Commentary: Matthew. Ed. Lloyd Ogilvie (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1982). Augsburger summarized the contents of verses 38-42 under “The Disciples Freedom,” and translated verse 39 a little more freer: *Do not resist injury*, or, *Do not resist the one who injures you*.

¹⁶ Josephus, The Life of Flavius Josephus or Life. In Life 4, Josephus endeavored to persuade revolutionary Jewish elements from revolting against Rome. His reason was mainly that the Romans were far too superior to his countrymen, the Jews “not only in martial skill but also in good fortune,” and that revolting against them was simply foolish, dangerous and a sure way of inviting the most terrible mischief upon themselves. Josephus’ vehement exhortation to his countrymen because he foresaw that the end of such a revolt would be most unfortunate to them, must be distinguished from Jesus’ admonition. Of course, it can be argued also that Jesus would have still warned the disciples on this “foolishness” principle.

¹⁷ It is best to read this passage from Lk 6:29-35. *Mēden* in verse 35 can be an adverb meaning not at all, in no way; or an adjective meaning no. Otherwise, as a noun, it means no one, nothing, Kurt Aland et al. “Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament,” Greek New Testament, 116. The variant with this word is very doubtful as to whether the text or the apparatus contains the superior reading. Sinaiticus does not support this reading. However, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Cambridge: Bezae Cantabrigiensis, Paris, Moscow, Wolfenbüttel, St. Gall, Tiflis: Koridethi, majority of Byzantine manuscripts with reading of the “majority of lectionaries in the Synaxarion (the so-called movable year” beginning with Easter) and in the Menologion (the “fixed year” beginning September 1), when these agree” and other manuscripts support it (qtd. from Kurt Aland, xxv). Ambrose also supports this reading. However, Sinaiticus, Washington: Freer Gospels, Munich, London: Zacynthius and few others support *mēdena*. A major Georgian tradition manuscript omits the word altogether. As stated earlier, these variants do not affect in any way the meaning of the passage with relation to the disciple of Christ’s attitude towards people, they are to be like their heavenly Father in dealing with people.

¹⁸ Stewart Custer, A Treasury of New Testament Synonyms (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, Inc., 1975), 69. With this ‘usual military weapon and a common personal implement, among Greeks and Romans, the Greeks

in their war with the Persians defended themselves (Homer, *Illiad* 7.225). Sword-bearers, have been attested in papyrus P. Oxy., II, 294.20.

¹⁹ The late Dr. Dale Yocum titled his study in Calvinism and Arminianism, Creeds In Contrast. This work borrowed the phrase to describe the constantly opposing and possible violent antagonism which would result in a situation where people adhered to different perspectives of reality, include their allegiance to God; rather than comparing any two creeds in one religious system as Dr. Yocum did. See Creeds In Contrast: A Study in Calvinism and Arminianism (Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., Inc., 1986).

²⁰ Cole, Mark, 300, thinks that either Peter, the two ‘sons of thunder,’ or Simon the Zealot seemed the likely candidate, although John 18:10 tells us it was Peter.

Notes on Chapter 6

¹ Curtis Vaughan, Bible Study Commentary: ACTS (Grand Rapids: Lamplighter Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 12, quotes Walker as saying that the gospel “contains an epitome of the Saviour’s work on earth,” the Acts, “an epitome of His work from heaven.” Ivor Powell, The Amazing Acts: A Distinctively Different Commentary (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1987), 12 remarks that this book “is probably the most important document ever written; its value to the Christian church is beyond calculation.” His appraisal continues thus: “If it were necessary to eliminate any book from the canon of the New Testament, the Book of Acts would almost be the last choice.”

² James Montgomery Boice, Acts: An Expository Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), 1997, 22, provides a helpful distinction between the emphases of the Great Commission in the Gospels and in Acts. John’s version stresses the “nature of Christian witness: *As you sent me* into the world, I have sent them into the world” (Jn 17:18). Matthew’s stress is on the “authority of Jesus on the basis of which they were to make disciples of all nations: *All authority* in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). In Acts, the emphasis is on 1) the Holy Spirit’s empowering the disciples to be Christ’s witnesses and 2) the empowered disciples as “agents of a world-wide geographical expansion of Christianity.” These two however, go together.

³ Cf. John’s language in Mk 1:8: I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Matthew: “fire” to Mark’s, the Holy Spirit and with fire (Mt 3:11).

⁴ Did Jesus command His disciples to be His witnesses or was His statement a prophecy? Boice, Acts, 28 says Jesus’ words are both prophecy (You are going to be my witnesses) because His disciples “were going to be Christ’s witnesses.” They are also command (Be my witnesses) because “Jesus was telling his followers what they had to do.”

⁵ What Peter did was to expose Scripture. Ivor Power, Amazing Acts, observes that “true preaching is an exposition of the word of God, 40; “inspired preaching presents Christ as Lord and Savior,” 42; and “successful preaching produces repentance and

faith,” 43. Peter did all in his sermon. The outcome of such Spirit-filled preaching was the conversion and confession that followed.

⁶ B. W. Johnson, The Peoples’ New Testament Commentary: Acts, 1891, commentary on Acts 2:44 on Christian Classics Ethereal Library Version 4.

⁷ B. W. Johnson, Peoples’ New Testament Commentary: Acts quotes Alford. In Paul’s writings, no such community is known; Paul speaks about the poor and rich in the other churches. See 1Ti 6:17; Gal 2:10; 2Co 8:13, 15; 9:6, 7; 1Co 16:2 and Jas 2:1-5; 4:13.

⁸ Luke presents John here rather inactive, with Peter being the center of activity. So Ivor Powell, Amazing Acts, 14, thinks the name Acts of the Apostles is unfortunate and misleading because the book is mostly about Paul. The book begins with mention of eleven apostles. But it casually named James and John (12:2; another James, 15:13); and then mentions some events in Peter’s life.

⁹ Dillon, New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary, 735. To draw this parallel between “blood” used of the shed blood of Jesus does not appear to convey the same meaning.

¹⁰ The expression “author of life” or “prince of life,” *avrchgo.n th/j zwh/j* (from *avrchgo, j, ou, o`* (1) strictly *one who goes first on the path*; hence *leader, prince, pioneer* (Heb 2:10); (2) as one who causes something to begin *originator, founder, initiator* (Heb 12:2), BibleWorks 5. Peter may be referring to Jesus as “the chief leader; one who takes the lead in anything; the author; the beginner,” (Powell, Amazing Acts, 57, citing Thayer’s definition). But *avrchgo.n* occurs in this form in Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10 and 12:2. This indictment was not meant to condemn, but to convict and convert. The Prince of Life was there to help even those who had hated Him, and Peter wanted to make sure the people understood this amazing grace of God. That was their secret power.

¹¹ Ajith Fernando, ACTS: The NIV Application Commentary—From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 151 notes that this officer, captain of the temple guard, was powerful and commanded the temple police.

¹² The healing, resurrection message (4:2) had implications for the people (*laos*: the word appears five times before and after Peter’s speech). The Church was popular with the people at first. Then, they turned against the Church and later at Paul’s arrest, they are there calling for his death (21:36; 22:22). The behavior of the people makes very interesting study and should caution Christians about always riding where the horse is heading. The people should not always determine the Church’s witness.

¹³ They believed many things differently from the Pharisees, *cf.* Antiquities, Bk. xiii. ch. x.6; War 2:164-165. As the most conservative element in Judaism, the Sadducees rejected extrapolations and “doctrinal innovations of the Pharisees.” The letter of the Torah was for them sufficient guide for daily living. They believed in freedom of individual choice, without intervention from God; held to more stricter observances of the Torah and did not accommodate the law to their changing times; rejected the

doctrine of resurrection of the dead, angels and demons; final judgment; and left what the Torah did not address to the individual to decide. Also see David M. Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6-74 C.E. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 39-42.

¹⁴ The Pharisees were wealthy aristocrats whose origin probably came from Zaddok, a high priest during the times of Solomon. See David M. Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6-74 C.E., 39 and Antiquities 18:17.

¹⁵ New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary, 737. Most of this concerned what would be ‘liberal’ vs. ‘conservative’ interpretation of the Torah. The major Jewish sects included the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. By the time of the New Testament, Danny McCain, Notes on New Testament Introduction (fourth printing, Jos: African Christian Textbooks (ACTS), 1996, 2002), 31-37 identifies at least six Jewish sects: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, Zadokites and Herodians.

¹⁶ New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary, 737. Dillon describes this as an “extravagant headcount” that “amplifies the contrast between persecuting leaders and believing common folk). One truth remains obvious—that this rapid growth of the first generation of Christians through mostly unlearned men and women has continued to baffle Church historians. James M. Boice’s citation of German historian Adolf Harnack, offers a better explanation: “...the great mission of Christianity was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries,” (as quoted on p. 22 of Acts). Danny McCain, Notes on the Acts of the Apostles (Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2001), argues that an assumed 2000 more converts to the already 3,000 (Ac 2:41) is not ‘unreasonable,’ 58. References to numerical growth in the church (Ac 2:41, 47; 5:14; 11:24) imply that “God is interested in numbers, though not as a badge of success, for that would yield a triumphalist attitude alien to the gospel.” Ajith Fernando, ACTS: The NIV Application Commentary—From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life, 154, adds that the interest God has in numbers represent people He has saved from damnation.

¹⁷ New Unger’s Bible Dictionary, 1127.

¹⁸ Annas, the high priest who officiated between A.D. 6-14 or 15 led them. He was not the high priest by this time, but still kept the title. The text seems to make him the officiating high priest at the time. Johannes Munck, William Foxwell Albright and C. S. Mann say ‘this is not correct.’ Caiaphas is the officiating high priest here, as known from Jesus’ passion narrative. But Annas held the power because we see Caiaphas sending Jesus to him first. Annas had at least five sons who became high priests. The John mentioned in Acts 4:5 may have been one of them. John or Jonathan was high priest in A.S. 36-37 when he replaced Caiaphas who was Annas’ son-in-law. Alexander is unknown. See Johannes Munck, William Foxwell Albright and C. S. Lann, The Acts of the Apostles. The Anchor Bible (Introduction, Translation and Notes, revised) (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), 34 and Danny McCain, Notes on the Acts of the Apostles, 59. Another possibility might have been that because Jonathan was Anna’s son, ‘the son was called by the father’s name,’ as held by John Calvin in Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: The Acts of the Apostles Vol. 1. Trans. by W. J. G. McDonald. A New Translation. Eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 114.

¹⁹ See Rapske, pages 10-20 for fuller discussion of the “Purposes of Custody.”

²⁰ See McCain, Notes on the Acts of the Apostles, 59 for a detailed discussion of an array of Jewish leaders shown in Acts 4:5 who were part of this body. There were *rulers* (a ‘ten foremost men’ executive committee comprising priests and laymen, and chaired by the high priest); *elders* (lay leaders of wealthy, Palestinian landowners. Luke 19:47 also refers to them as *leaders among the people; teachers of the law* (KJV, *scribes*: professional students of the Mosaic law). These ‘Doctors of the Law’ studied the Torah for a number of years under a distinguished rabbi, and acted as judges, legal advisers, elders in the synagogue, teachers and copiers of the manuscripts of the word of God.

²¹ Rapske, Paul in Roman Custody, has argued against the notion held by most commentators that prison wardens in the Roman Empire were active or retired military personnel. He favors public slaves as wardens instead, especially when dealing with “Paul and his keepers in Acts,” 261-276.

²² Gamaliel: “most learned and influential Jewish teacher of his day, grandson of the famous Hillel and teacher of Saul of Tarsus,” Curtis Vaughan, Acts, 40. David M. Rhoads, Israel in Revolution: 6-74 C.E., 47ff. discusses the significance of Judas the Galilean and his 6 C. E. revolt. War 2:118 also mentions this Galilean who incited his countrymen against Roman rule. By this time, the Jewish territory under Archelaus had fallen to Rome. Judas and his followers were revolting in opposition to the census, according to Jewish traditional understanding that assessment implies ownership (2Sa 24:1-17; 1Ch 21). He had certainly interpreted the first commandment in a radical way to mean illegitimate human authority over them was forbidden because Judea was already a province of Rome when he rebelled. Judas’ datum, “no Lord but God,” is what Josephus describes as the “fourth philosophy” (Antiquities 18:9, 23) to distinguish it from the three previous philosophies or the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. Munck, Albright and Mann, The Acts of the Apostles, 48-49 show that this Judas started the Zealots movement that outlived his death. In that case, Gamaliel’s advice was not necessarily true, and for him to press that the Jesus movement could also go into oblivion because its leader had been executed was not a good argument. Judas was active during the period Quirinius took the census and taxes (A. D. 6; cf. Jewish War II.8.1). As for Theudas, he had persuaded a large crowd to follow him to the Jordan, claiming to part its water for his followers to cross over on dry land (around A. D. 44-46, as did Moses). Fadus the procurator killed him and his followers dispersed. Gamaliel may have been against persecuting the Christians. Boice, Acts, 107, the Sanhedrin had failed to contend with the apostles on the level of truth and were left with the option of “naked authority and force.”

²³ Rapske, Paul in Roman Custody, 298 reiterates that “prison in the ancient world—whether it meant wearing bonds or simply being confined—was publicly degrading.”

²⁴ There is a figurative use of the word, but that is not what is in mind here. Cf. Job 5:21; Ps 31:20 and Heb 12:6. Rapske, Paul in Roman Custody, 15 notes that scourging sometimes preceded execution.

²⁵ See F. B. Meyer's Paul: A Servant of Jesus Christ (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade), Chapter IV, "Thy Martyr Stephen," 30-36 introduction of Stephen as one of God's greatest servants whom He "charges...with a message, and launches him forth suddenly and irresistibly," p. 30 as the only introduction of the man. But Dr. Abram Spiro's article, "Stephen's Samaritan Background," (Appendix V, Munck, Albright and Mann, The Acts of the Apostles, 285-300), argues that Stephen's views in Acts 7:2-50 depend on the Samaritan Pentateuch and reflect the Samaritan perspective of OT history. Word studies showed that because the word 'Hebrews' is not found in the Gospels and elsewhere in Acts apart from here, as well as 'Hellenists,' Stephen could not have been speaking from a Jewish perspective. What he did was to transform the OT account, taking it out from the merely trivial, and recasting it typologically, thereby bringing to it a messianic significance (290). Also, it is noted that Samaritans called themselves 'Hebrews' for centuries, whereas first century Jews did not call themselves 'Hebrews,' nor did Gentiles call them so. It was second century Christian writers that made 'Hebrews' synonymous with 'Jews.' On this evidence, the article makes the Hebrews of Acts 6:1 Samaritan Christians.

²⁶ Son of Aristobulus and grandson of Herod the Great, Agrippa I lived in Jerusalem and worshiped regularly in the Temple, observing strictly the rituals of Judaism. Early in his political career, Emperor Tiberius to imprison Agrippa I. Later under Emperor Claudius, he was released and given the reunited territory of his grandfather, Herod the Great. Also see Danny McCain, Notes on New Testament Introduction, 15.

²⁷ Rapske, Paul in Roman Custody, 57 explains honor as that which denotes "the regard, respect or esteem in which a person is held and the underlying reasons for that high esteem."

²⁸ According to Keener, this very young girl possessed literally a "spirit of a pythoness"—the same sort of spirit that stood behind the most famous of all Greek oracles, the delphic oracle of Apollo whose priestess was called a pythoness," Background Commentary, 369. From the text, the departing of this python spirit also left the girl incapable of fortune-telling, thus, the economic menace of her owners. Robertson quotes Furneaux as noting two significant revolutions Christianity has brought about as the abolition of slavery and the elevation of women; and that both these are seen here in the slave girl and Lydia. Word Pictures, BibleWorks 5.

²⁹ They were accused of teaching customs abominable to the Jews. See Rapske, Paul in Roman Custody, 116-119. Jewish customs included Sabbath observance, circumcision, monotheism, food regulations and others, but these did not constitute any chargeable offense under Roman law as these craftsmen were alleging.

³⁰ See David W. J. Gill's discussion of "The Cities of Macedonia," which begins with Philippi, in The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Vol 2, Graeco-Roman Setting, 411-417. The colony of Philippi was founded for Roman veterans by Antony after he defeated Brutus and Cassius in 42 B.C.

³¹ This was the most common Greek title for the Latin *duoviri*, who were two Roman officials of Philippi. Keener thinks that they probably called themselves "praetor," a more dignified title, Background Commentary, 369. Each magistrate had two *lictors*

serving him: Ac 16:35, 38, *cf.* 22 who carried *virgae*, that is, bundles of rods that symbolized their right to exercise physical coercion or corporal punishment. Corrective beating had been applied in the Roman Empire from early times, and to slaves and free men. It excluded Roman citizens under provisions under the Julian, Valerian and Porcian laws. Brian Rapske, Paul in Roman Custody, 124.

³² Rapske Paul in Roman Custody, 22 notes that the state prison (*carcer*) was the severest form of imprisonment because it held the ‘most unsavoury malefactors,’ and because conditions there were more severe than in other places of confinement. Athens’ state prison was constructed around the middle of the fifth century. Each city had its prison. Placement in the Roman quarry prison was the next most severe form of custody, 24.

³³ But Rapske, Paul in Roman Custody, 302-303 thinks there was more to Paul’s late disclosure of Roman citizenship. The missiological concerns put forth by Keener and others are acknowledged, but in Paul’s words is the suggestion of “a much more immediate and status-based Pauline concern,” (303). What then is this concern? They “are a ‘challenge-riposte’ response to a profoundly devastating status degradation. Realizing that Paul emphasized the public maltreatment they received especially, as Roman citizens who had been treated like lesser class persons, they were put to public disgrace and shame. That degradation became complete when they were thrown into prison and locked in stocks. Rapske’s suggestion that we understand Paul’s question, ‘And now do they want to get rid of us quietly?’ in terms of honor and shame.

³⁴ See Bruce W. Winter, “The Imperial Cult and Gallio’s Judgment,” in David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Vol 2, Graeco-Roman Setting, 98-103 for a fuller discussion of this and related issues. Chapter 4, *Acts and Roman Religion*, 79-102 is especially helpful on just what the Jews had in mind here, and how the imperial cult related to Christians in the Roman empire.

³⁵ See Paul Trebilco’s discussion on Ephesus, its history and the events which Luke reported as happening there in The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Vol 2, Graeco-Roman Setting, pp. 302-357. Ephesus was an affluent city (*cf.* 306).

³⁶ Much later in the history of the Roman Empire, simply bearing the name ‘Christian’ was what constituted a crime. W. Ward Gasque, “The Challenge to Faith” in The History of Christianity, explains that Christians’ rejection of Roman gods was thought to threaten the peace and prosperity those gods were believed to provide. Another treasonable crime was refusing to worship the Emperor, 84.

³⁷ See S. J. Hafemann, Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit: Paul’s Defense of His Ministry In II Corinthians 2:14-3:3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

³⁸ Wansink, “Roman Law and Legal System,” *Trials and Courtrooms in the New Testament*, in Dictionary of New Testament Background, 988. Wansink notes further that Jesus’ trial before Pilate was a typical *cognitio* process. The Jewish officials were the accusers. They held an initial process among themselves called a trial and determined what charges the governor would most likely be disposed to hear. Pilate heard the case. He could have stopped the trial, but chose not to. They were more

influential than Jesus in this case, and because they linked political and religious interests in their charges, Pilate chose to listen to them. Jesus was not a citizen, and the threat in John 19:12, together made the decision easier for Pilate. All that he did in determining the trial and its punishment were within his imperium. His sending Jesus to Antipas was a case of *extra ordinem*, in which he could seek advice from other equals or superiors, 987-988.

Notes on Chapter 7

¹ Cf. John's "Simon Peter...Malchus" (18:10) with Luke's "one of them" (22:50); Mark's "one of those standing near" (14:47) and Matthew's "one of Jesus companions (26:51). Only John identified that Peter cut off Malchus' *right* ear.

² Cf. *Sir* 19: 6-17; 20: 1-8, 18-26; 23:7-15; 27:11-15; 28:13-26; 37:17-18 for similar and various descriptions of the tongue especially, when unchecked, loose and foul, such that its speech instead of gracing, is violent. This thought in ancient wisdom parallels what James here presents.

³ Leon Morris, 1 Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 30. Pandang Yamsat, An Exposition of First Corinthians for Today. Koinonia Bible Commentary Series (KBCS) (Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2004), 26, dates it between 54 and 56 A. D. NIV Study Bible "Introduction to 1 Corinthians" puts it at about 55 A. D. "toward the close of Paul's three-year residency in Ephesus and Leon Morris, 31 puts it "somewhere about the mid-fifties." Danny McCain Notes on the New Testament, 202, put it at "probably" A. D. 55. But Henry Clarence Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament, 205, settles on "spring of A. D. 54 or 55."

⁴ Scholars still debate the Petrine authorship of the second epistle. McCain, Notes on the New Testament, 283, notes that, "there has been more debate about the authorship of 2 Peter than any other book in the New Testament." Michael Green, 2 Peter and Jude: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968, 1987), 13-16 considers the broad outlines of the debate. Eusebius places this epistle among the seven *Antilegomena*, and although many have doubted or denied in whole or part, Petrine authorship of this epistle, competent critics have also defended it. Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church 1: 339 notes the chief objections as: "the want of early attestation, the reference to a collection of the Pauline Epistles, the polemic against Gnostic errors, some peculiarities of style, and especially the apparent dependence of the second chapter on the Epistle of Jude."

⁵ See N. T. Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God vol. 2 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, SPCK, 1996), 540-611, "The Reasons For Jesus' Crucifixion," for Wright's reasons for the death of Christ.

⁶ See Leon Morris, Studies in the Fourth Gospel: *kai. qeo.j h=n o` lo,gojÅ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 15-63; Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 49-52; Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church vol.

1, 325-326; and B.F. Westcott, Introduction, The Gospel According to St. John, lxxvii-lxxiv for how the Johanine and Synoptic problems relate.

⁷ Cf. the Synoptic accounts of the same event in Mt 21:12f.; Mk 11:15-17; Lk 19:45f. Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, 188ff. points out differences in the accounts: Mark's is the fullest but shorter than John's references to oxen and sheep, the scourge or cords, the ford for "challengers of money" (*kermistēs* in John and *kollubistēs* in the Synoptics; but John uses *kollubistēs* in 2:15); the "scattering of the coins" of the money, and the command, "Get these out of here!" are not the same. So also John's word for "overturned." The Synoptics make Jesus to quote Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11, while John does not even say anything about Jesus quoting a verse, although His disciples remembered Ps 69:9. In John, Jesus does not prohibit anyone carrying anything through the temple as Mark did. While Jesus overturned the seats of those who sold doves, Jesus in John ordered them to get "these" out of here. Most importantly, John records the temple cleansing event twice, once at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and at the end, just before His death whereas the Synoptics record only one cleansing at the end of Jesus' ministry. Resolving these issues is however beyond the scope of this work.

⁸ John's order of events and the events themselves are different from those of the other Evangelists. For example, John does not mention where the Lord and His disciples ate the Passover that he refers to as "the evening meal" (13:2). At that meal, Jesus showed the full extent of His love to His disciples by washing their feet. He showed them what serving is like. The Eucharistic formula of Jesus taking bread and wine, praying over them, breaking and giving them to the disciples is conspicuously lacking in John's account, although He did eat the meal and even referred to Judas. Nor is the exhortation to often eat His body and drink His blood as a memorial mentioned in John. From there, they did not seem to leave the place immediately as the other Evangelists reported. Instead, Jesus gives the disciples a lengthy lecture (Jn 14-16) and begins the longest prayer session any of the Evangelists ever recorded (Jn 17), the real "Lord's Prayer." Only after the prayers did Jesus and His disciples leave the place, crossed the Kidron Valley, into an olive grove on the other side of the valley (18:1). There is no mention of Gethsemane, which may well have been the name of the location of the grove. Jesus did not pray here and one wonders why He and the team were there at that time. But Judas knew that location and led the arresting party upon them. The "crowd" of the Evangelists is a "detachment of soldiers and some officials" from the chief priest and Pharisees who were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons (Jn 18:2-3). Jesus first approached the party and asked them whom they wanted. A brief dialogue passed between them. When He first answered them, "I am he," the party "drew back and fell to the ground," for no apparent reason. Were they shocked to see such display of boldness and courage or were they simply surprised to see the man they thought would be hiding come right up to them and give Himself up? Or, was Jesus about to show them a miracle convince them that they really cannot arrest Him without His consent? John does not explain. Jesus asked the arresting party to let His disciples go free because it was Him they wanted, not them. That was to fulfill what He had earlier been spoken in John 6:39 about not losing any of all that His Father had given Him. John mentions nothing about other prophecies being fulfilled. There are other events that only John recorded, in keeping with his expressed purpose for writing—"that you may believe that Jesus

is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31). John adds that he “is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down” (21:24), again, the only Evangelist of the four to do so.

Notes on Chapter 8

¹ He died that others may experience freedom and live as the chorus of Nuwoe-James Kiamu, unpublished The Man on the Cross (1993), points out.

² See Adrian A. Helleman and Caleb Ahima, Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters (Jos: Stream Christian Publishers, 2004) written particularly against the backdrop of corruption and injustice in Nigeria, to help Nigerian (African) Christians face up to these social problems that hinder development.

³ Richard B. Hayes, The Moral Vision of the New Testament. A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics (San Francisco: HaperSanFrancisco, 1996) is a penetrating work in New Testament ethics from which 21st century Christians and Christianity have much to gain.

⁴ L. Gregory Jones, Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) is an excellent book on forgiveness. Jones’ approach to the study of forgiveness is liberating. It does not make forgiveness an act, though or word and neglect the feelings, hurts, joys—experiences of the one to do the forgiving. It recognizes the difficulty in forgiving, but gives the ground for exercising forgiveness that liberates both the one in need of forgiveness and the one doing the forgiveness as the later embodies and becomes an embodiment of the virtue of forgiveness. Jones brings freshness and depth of perspective to the study of forgiveness.