

# VAIHARAI

(The Dawn)

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## Book Reviews

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U.K. : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.

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**Lay Catechists - Their Formation in India.**

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– Dr. Andrew De Rose 98

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– Dr. G. Valentine Joseph 100

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## **JUST WAR POSSIBLE?**

**Editorial**

"It is war! It is war! O God's angels, protect, prevent and interrupt. Alas, it is war yet again, I long not to be guilty of it" (Mathias Claudius 1740-1815).

Odd episodes from the war - hit Iraq put every one of us into mixed feelings of sadness, anger and helplessness. As Elsa Tamez has expressed, "As inhabitants of the planet we are spectators of one of the most revealing episodes in the history of human kind and one of the saddest." America proclaimed to the world that it was moving its forces into Iraq only with the motive of reinstating democracy in a country where despotism had the final say! Salvaging the human rights of so many thousands of Iraqi men/women was presented to the world as the sole motive of the war. When Bush Jr. declared that the war in Iraq was over on May 1, many thought that all that had been achieved. Continuous murders, burning of oil fields, killing of American soldiers, bombing of the Jordanian Embassy, looting of private as well as public property including antique art treasures of inestimable value have become every day stories. Lofty promises by the warlords have vanished into thin air and hardly anything effective is done to reorder the affected country. Total disregard for the long suffering victims of the economic sanction had already led many to famished condition and death. Is it the real meaning of humanitarian intervention? Whose interests are safeguarded by such ruthless and indiscriminate destruction of hospitals, schools, habitats and above all non-combatants? Are there any criteria to justify this war or for that matter any war?

Two traditions consistently run through the history of the Catholic Church: the peace loving, non-violent, Pacifist tradition and the Just War tradition. The former obligates non-violent position as the way to bring in peace that is promised by Jesus. Many disfavor this moral position as this disarms persons, states and groups when they are unjustly aggressed upon or their rights are violated wantonly. Hence a right to self-defense is stipulated and that becomes the pivotal argument in justifying a war. The just cause of a just war would be self-defense. Just means are to be deployed in a war of self-defense. Recent wars of the world do not in any way fit into the traditional norms of a just war. Discrimination meted out to ethnic minorities in different countries of the world engenders ethnic wars. Discriminated minorities resort to unconventional methods of fighting that destroy human lives and live stocks indiscriminately. Here one finds competing moral duties. Can we morally justify the violent means deployed by the victims in view of reclaiming the lost rights from a powerful military state? Or do we accept the aggressive oppression of the ethnic minorities by the armed state? Whose rights do we prioritize?

A biblical understanding of war presented by Dr. Hieronymus M. Cruz analyses elaborately, how wars had been misunderstood as commands of God to destroy enemies indiscriminately. Some wars negate even the basic principles of war by killing children and women who deserve utmost protection. However, if these wars are deemed as instruments of empowering the masses oppressed for thousands of years, then their moral admissibility achieves a different dimension. From the perspective of the victims, moral values and assessment of particular acts differ totally from the normal understanding of moral deliberation.

Dr. Vimal Trimanna CSSR, explores the role of modern media in presenting the realities of a war. His objective and incisive analysis of the role of the media exposes the ugly face of the media in the Iraq war, when they acted explicitly as stooges of the super powers. The moral responsibility of the press to awaken the sensitive conscience of the human community was sidelined and it was busy in displaying the fireworks of bombing in Iraq. In this way, the media has certainly

become an instrument and voice of the aggressors who pretend to be the saviors of lost human rights.

Pacifism determinately denounces war. Dr. Bala Udumala explores the reasoning behind the pacifist position and demands a faithful following of the same, as it is understood to be the stance of Jesus. Non-violent approach to any conflict would certainly enable us to arrive at solutions that cannot be so easily achieved through force. However, every state will avail the immediate source of self-defense in its hand and that renders the pacifist position impractical and utopian. It would be ideal if everybody takes the words of Jesus seriously in solving problems so that peace prevails over armed conflicts.

Dr. Arockiasamy makes a comprehensive study on the morality of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Of course, the study revolves around the prime principles of just war. However, his critical appraisal on the use of WMD evokes so many moral questions in the mind of the reader. When it is a matter of indiscriminate destruction of everything, then no weapon can be approved as means of defending a just cause. No religious or moral tradition had ever approved WMD as the right means in defending the lost rights. The saddest story we encounter now is that those who went to ensure the abolition of WMD have applied the same means to achieve what they wanted.

The Just War tradition of the Church is also scrutinized briefly in order to arrive at a critical understanding of the Church's position on war. It is so obvious that the preoccupation of the Church had always been with the lives and rights of ordinary people who should never be rendered helpless victims in the hands of the unjust aggressors. The right to self-defense had been the moral principle that it has consistently proposed to permit the conduct of any war. However, the concepts of self-defense and the right conduct in war have undergone innumerable changes and their applications have also attained new dimensions. In such a context, the Church expresses its genuine concern to stop any war that results in indiscriminate destruction of human lives and other things. Healthy and constructive alternatives should be sought by the international community to resolve conflicts between nations. Promoting peace should be the mission of every country.

Reflecting on the various dimensions of war, we have a moral responsibility to discern and tell the world where we are? And what should we do? Arundhati Roy exposes the true nature of our world paraphrasing the words of Noam Chomsky: "He shows us that, among the myriad freedoms claimed by the U.S. government are the freedom to murder, annihilate, and dominate other people. The freedom to finance and sponsor despots and dictators across the world. The freedom to train, arm, and shelter terrorists. The freedom to topple democratically elected governments. The freedom to amass and use weapons of mass destruction - chemical, biological, and nuclear. The freedom to go to war against any country whose government it disagrees with" (Arundhati Roy, "The Loneliness of Noam Chomsky," *The Hindu*, 24.08.2003). That means we have created a world order in which the powerful alone have the final say. In an unjust world order the mighty nations dictate terms to the tiny as to what their roles and duties are. In this context, it is minimal to discuss about the moral rightness or wrongness of any war. Every war waged is a ruthless assertion of the rights of the powerful against the powerless. It is high time that the world listens to the powerless nations that cry for justice. It is dismally insufficient to appeal to the superpowers to stop proliferation of arms and every war. The right demand would be to create a just world order where nobody is at the mercy of others. A new world order should be of equal distribution of natural and other resources so that every one enjoys equal rights and privileges. It should be the order of love and peace rather than the order of might is right. The reign of love and peace should be founded on the reign of justice towards which we should take the world in solidarity.

**Dr. J. Xavier Ilango**