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CAN THERE BE A JUST WAR? : A MORAL APPRAISAL OF THE CHURCH'S POSITION ON WAR

Dr. Xavier Ilango
St. Paul's Seminary
Tiruchirappalli - 1.

Introduction

War has become an inseparable reality of human life. Whatever may be the crimes and atrocities done to the human race through war, humans never think of saying no to war. Recent wars of the world¹ indicate the most destructive nature of the technologically advanced war forces of today. The Church in a particular situation had to insist on the just war theory.² The pivotal concerns of the Church in this regard were the basic right to defense by war (*jus ad bellum*) and the means morally admissible in war (*jus in bello*). In the past, political reasons predominantly led to the power-mongering spree. Today acquiescing economic

¹ The Afgan war showed 'us' how many noncombatants were indiscriminately destroyed in the name of bringing in law and order in the country. The international community unanimously condemned the recent war against Iraq that was headed by the United States of America. However, the war went ahead and a disarmed nation with its civilians underwent heavy loss.

² Oscar Cole Arnal, "War," in Judith A. Dwyer, ed. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, Collegeville, Minnesota: The liturgical Press, 1994, 977. The author concisely presents the Catholic position on war: "Roman Catholicism has a guardedly optimistic attitude towards war. Within the tradition one finds the conviction that war is not inevitable or a necessity of the human condition. Thus there is a hope that war can be abolished. This is tempered by the conviction conflict is inevitable in a sinful world."

resources in the hands of a few powerful nations have become the predominant cause of war. In such a context can the Church still defend its position of conducting wars for just reasons? Many spell out clearly the inadmissibility of war as the matter is more complicated and ethical assessment has become very difficult.³ At the same time, we cannot abruptly dismiss this tradition naming it irrelevant and impractical. We have a moral responsibility before us to take a comprehensive assessment of the present world and see why new wars threaten the humanity repeatedly. Of course the Church as a community of faithful always had a difficulty in confronting the evils of war. Most of the time it tolerated war as a necessary moral evil that is part of the fallen human race. However, it has approached the different dimensions of this moral problem correctly and justified or condemned certain aspects of war. Here, we aim at a critical assessment of the Church's position on war. We do not intend to make a detailed analysis of every teaching of the Church on war. However, essential aspects that gave moral sanctions to wars will be presented and their justifiability in the present context will also be critically evaluated.

Pioneers of Just War Theory

The original spirit of the Church towards war and violence had been negative. They relied more on the moral strength of non-violence as their master strongly adhered to this principle till the end.⁴ As Christianity turned to be a state religion, the moral problem of Christians participating in war was raised. As it involved direct killing of human lives, many thought that participation in war stands directly in opposition to the values of the Kingdom. However, the practical necessities of a civil administration created opportunities to wage war. Confronting such a situation, the first one to address this problem was St.

³ Dietmar Mieth, "Introduction: The Return of the Just War," *Concilium* 2001/2, 7.

⁴ To prove that Jesus had always been against war, pacifists quote so many scriptural passages: Lk 2:14; Mt 5:9; Mt 5:9; Jn 18:13; Mt 26:52. Others refute the pacifist's position by saying that Jesus never reproached the Centurion (Lk 3:14). "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt 10:34, Lk 12:51). John the Baptist did not demand the soldiers to abandon their profession (Lk 3:14). "Let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one" (Lk 22:35-38).

Augustine, whose influence strongly continues in the tradition of just war theory.

St. Augustine (354-430)

Augustine was a Bishop in North Africa, the then Province of the Roman Empire. His Christians becoming part of the reigning government had to take a different attitude to war. As the leader of the Christians he accepted the principle of just war. However, he admonished strongly not to use violence in self-defense. Let us try to understand the moral reasoning of Augustine in justifying war.⁵

Augustine understands that the fall of Adam has turned the human race into a mass of sin. Salvation in Jesus Christ could not radically transform the human tendency to follow selfish desires, and lower appetites dominate human life so much that it threatens the structure of human society. Egoism and pride tear apart the original fraternity of the human society. Though grace can liberate one from the clutches of sin, grace cannot give the basis for social organization, since it is given only to a few. What could be the possible base for the societal structures? Private property, the legal and political order are the means provided by God to put order in the society. These two institutions are both punishments and remedy of the human sinful condition. But this order maintained by the society is not natural to human kind and should be enforced by coercion and repression.⁶ These institutions have to be respected because without them the precarious order of the human society that is driven by human passion would be endangered.

The moral reasoning of Augustine differs very much from the contemporary approach to morality. Every thing in this world happens according to the divine providence. The significance of any event is determined by its ability to fit into God's plan. We humans do not know what is beneficent to us. Our mortal life is a trial and we do not know for certain to reign or serve, to conquer or

⁵ There is no systematic treatise on war by Augustine. We have to rely on the interpretations of the various texts written by him on different circumstances. It would be equally difficult to understand the context in which particular ethical teaching was given.

⁶ According to Augustine, war could serve the purpose of maintaining the social order by its punitive function.

to be killed. Human values and actions in the ethical framework of Augustine were understood differently. We cannot determine the consequences of action and their values. They become meaningful in so far as they have divine sanction and fit in to God's plan of action. Augustine strongly felt that what happens in this world lack ultimate significance. What matters are the inner world of the agent and the will of God? The moral reasoning emphasizes the inner disposition of the heart in human actions. In which case how to understand the objective of a just war? Correcting those who do evil seems to be the objective of war. It is not the victory or fame that comes out of a war that has to be sought after, but punishing those who have done injuries and forcing them to do restitution for the harm done.⁷ Augustine approves a war as just when it restores the rights that are violated and it assures the restoration of the moral order.

As to the criteria of a just war, he clearly accepts the justifiability of a defensive war, where the objective is to prevent the unjust actions of the aggressor. He accepts an offensive war against a state that refuses to make restitution for harms committed by its own citizens. Offensive war can also be allowed when the state refuses to make restitution for properties that are unjustly taken. Whether the war is defensive or offensive, it involves violence. Is it not a contradiction of Jesus' command to "turn the other cheek?" This amounts to repay violence with violence. "Augustine answers that such sayings should not be taken literally. The command to reject violence is a 'precept with regard to the preparation of the heart, and not with regard to the visible performance of the deed.' It symbolizes a non-resistant and self-offering disposition, according to Augustine, but does not mean that no violence is ever allowed."⁸

Can Christians kill another human being even in the context of a war? What about those innocent civilians who are killed in a war? According to Augustine Christians are not expected to totally

⁷ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994, 73.

⁸ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Christian Just War Tradition: Tensions and Development," *Concilium* 2001/2, 76.

refrain from killing in so far as they act as agents of legitimate authority. Christians can be soldiers in the army and kill enemies in the battle. Soldiers kill the enemies of the state as the authorities order them to do so. The purpose of political institutions is to keep the social order and the security of the people. In executing its role as the guardian of the people, the state wages war. The individual soldier is acting in submission to the representatives of the state. He does not act on his own. However, the problem of innocents being killed in a war is not solved. Augustine saw war as a work of justice. However, it is a violent method of rendering justice and therefore killing of innocents is inevitable. Some other possible rationales are derived from Augustine. It is the hierarchy of values. It is better to accept death than to be guilty of moral evil.⁹ Another rationale would be that there is an extremely intimate relationship between individual and social morality means that an unjust nation will not be characterized by the presence of a just citizenry.

Augustine's thinking on war has to be understood only within the framework of his teachings on the heavenly city and the earthly city. Participation in war is a practical responsibility of a Christian in fulfilling the orders of the political community. Force is advocated in order to keep the City of Jerusalem on earth in unity. Unlimited violence on enemies is never encouraged and he never advocated violence for self-defense. However, it is still inexplicable that a Christian theologian such as Augustine could move from the Gospel imperative of love to a justification of force. His teaching on war cannot be taken as a coherent theory but could only be explained "as clusters of ideas grouped around the central theme of sin and punishment."¹⁰

Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274)

The development of just war theory was not much in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Later thinkers who developed his

⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Love Your Enemies*, 69-71.

¹⁰ Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 25.

ideas perfected it with a view to promote peace.¹¹ However, his understanding of charity will give us a clear picture of his moral reasoning of war, because under Christian charity he brings in the moral discussion on war.

Thomas points out clearly that war is always sinful. He takes the statement of Jesus "All who live by the sword will die by the sword" (Mt 26:52) seriously. The words of St. Paul are also referred to: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God" (Rom 12:19). He makes a contrast between war and peace. If peace is a moral virtue, then, war that is just opposite to that virtue must always be sinful.

Three requirements are spelled out for a just war: authority, just cause and just intention. A prince who is entrusted with the common good of the kingdom has the authority to wage war and this reason merits first place to Thomas. It is the duty of the prince to protect the commonwealth from the external enemies. The just cause referred to by Thomas implies the guilt of the enemy who deserves the attack. The third requirement is the righteous intention of the soldiers to promote good and avoid evil. War could be rendered illicit if the intention of the soldiers happen to be wicked. Thomas insisted that war should not only be justifiable but it should be justly waged.¹²

Peace is the main objective of war. "All wars are waged that men may find a more perfect peace than that which they had heretofore."¹³ Genuine peace cannot be achieved by external force, but only through love. Perfect peace is possible only when there is perfect union of love between God and humans, and their union with God determines all actions of humans. Naturally this union directs an individual to love his/her neighbor as oneself, and fulfill his/her will as if it is God's will. Thus peace can be achieved by charity alone and justice would certainly remove the hurdles to peace. According to Thomas justice could be done either

¹¹ Peace seemed to be the predominant concern of the angelic theologian. Even just war was encouraged in order to attain peace in the society.

¹² Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages*, 268.

¹³ Lisa S. Cahill, *Love Your Enemies*, 85.

through love or by external force but the complete fulfillment of the law depends on love.¹⁴

Love of neighbor and enemies in the ethics of Thomas has special significance to the discussion on just war. All persons are to be loved equally because God is understood to be the origin and end of all. Love of enemies does not need a special attitude of love. However, if that is possible and expressed it can be called the perfection of charity. He thinks that neither it is obligatory nor it is possible. Therefore active love to ones enemies is not a prerequisite for salvation. However, one should be ready in his mind to help the enemies in case of urgency. The obligation to do self-sacrifice for the sake of others does not take priority in Thomas' thinking. He admonishes love of enemy as a means to preserve self-dignity as a child of God and to gain a victory over the enemy who is on the wrong side. The strong side of his argument in this regard would be his emphasis on charity and it demands a strong pressure against war. At the same time he does not allow the radical non-violent examples and teachings of Jesus to challenge his moral perspective.¹⁵

What do we conclude from the teachings of Thomas? He did not deem war as positive moral good. At the same time he held that war is not outside the limits of moral life. He never endorsed the view that war is inherently immoral and therefore should be got over as early as possible. Another important moral perspective we have to look into in Thomas is the use of force. When a moral agent is confronted with excessive use of force that is extremely destructive and damaging, that agent has no other choice except oppose that force with force. The opposing force must be proportionate and the motive should be to safeguard the common good of the society. Some are embarrassed to see Thomas bringing the discussion on war under the theological virtue of charity. It would have been ideal, if he had discussed war in connection with natural law or with justice. However, Pangle argues differently that Thomas Aquinas had developed the just war theory as a political theory based on a much more developed notion of natural law.

¹⁴ Lisa S. Cahill, *Love Your Enemies*, 85-86.

¹⁵ Lisa S. Cahill, *Love Your Enemies*, 90-91.

Another important aspect that has to be noted here is the audience to whom he addressed these issues. He was discussing with some high profiled people who were involved in the major political decisions of his day. He was not advising feudal men or peasants who were directly involved in the fighting but to the decision makers of the power structures.¹⁶ Thus we have to understand the teaching of Thomas Aquinas on war from his context and need of his time.

Twentieth Century and the Concerns of the Church

Prominent developments did not occur after Thomas Aquinas regarding just war. Of course the emphasis shifted from the just cause to just means applied in war. Seventeenth century saw the development of international law on war. Only in the twentieth century, papal teachings directly addressed to the different issues involved in war and the teaching of Pius XII affirmed the just war ethic.

The teaching of Pius XII on war is spelled out in the context of creating an adequate political and legal structure in the international community. Force could be used in order to establish peace that too only with a view to create proper order in the society. Pope recognizes correctly and sufficiently aware of the destructive nature of war and he reduces the just causes of war from three to one. A nation that is unjustly attacked has every right to defend itself by war. Pius XII says that the only form of war now legally permissible for a state is a war of individual or collective self-defense. This teaching has minimum justifiability compared to the destructive nature of modern weaponry. However, the Pope was very certain about not accepting pacifism as a moral option in the place of just war. The pontificates of John XXIII and Paul VI had developed a different strand of thinking on just war. There we could find a revival of the pacifist tradition of the Catholic Church.

Pacem in Terris and Gaudium et Spes

Pacem in Terris (PT) can be applauded for its definitive stand against three aspects of war. The first one is the immediate need to

¹⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London: Duckworth, 1988, 203.

control the arms race and to restructure the international political and legal system. According to Pope John, the control of arms race indicates the structural defect of international relations today. The second one is that PT alone does not explicitly endorse the right to individual and collective self-defense. The third aspect is that the moral teachings of the papal document on war questions the very rationale of just war theory. It is rendered this way: "Therefore, in this age of ours, which prides itself on its atomic power, it is irrational to think that war is a proper way to obtain justice for violated rights."¹⁷ Some understood this statement as no form of warfare can be justified. Therefore this can be a clear assertion of pacifism. Others differ in understanding this passage telling that this is only a reassertion of Pius XII teaching on war that is defensive war is the only form of force that is permissible in the nuclear age. There are such contending views on the statement of PT that represent the position of the Church on war before and after PT. It is regrettable that all the succeeding papal documents reaffirmed the legitimacy of the states to defend themselves by war. Though we cannot interpret the text of PT as proscribing the defensive use of force, it certainly opens a new outlook in the Catholic Church's position on modern war.¹⁸

Gaudium et Spes is unique in its approach by endorsing nonviolent philosophy and encouraging the position of conscientious objection. At the same time the right to wage war is not denied by the council. "The conditions for a just war, as traditionally understood by theologians, are clear enough. The first requirement is that the war should be declared by a legitimate authority, the second that the cause might be the right one, and finally, the belligerent should have a right intention, seeking to secure peace, punish evil doers and help those who do right."¹⁹ Lawful self-defense was permitted when all peaceful efforts had failed. It is the duty of the authorities of the states to defend the

¹⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*, Footnote No. 80.

¹⁸ J. Bryan Hehir, "The Just War Ethic and Catholic Theology: Dynamics of Change and Continuity," in Thomas A. Shannon, ed. *War or Peace?: The Search for New Answers*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1980, 20.

¹⁹ Rodger Charles, *The Social Teaching of Vatican II: Its Origin and Development*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982, 216.

interests of their people. It is one thing to defend the rights of the people and another thing to impose domination on another nation. The possession of military power should not be abused for political objectives and fair means should be applied in war. Those who are part of the military service should mind their responsibility as custodians of the freedom of their fellow countrymen and when they dispense their duties properly they contribute to the maintenance of peace. We can understand that war is inevitable only when no other international authority is there to solve the disputes between two nations. However, the present methods of waging war render the old understanding of self-defense meaningless. Present warfare ends up in total destruction and killing thousands of non-combatants. "With these considerations in mind, the Council, endorsing the condemnations of total warfare issued by recent Popes declares: every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation."²⁰ This outright condemnation of indiscriminate killing in war should be appreciated much. However, if every powerful nation takes this teaching seriously it would have better appreciation.

The desire of the council is to have a peaceful world order where war would be the last thing to be dreamt of. "It is our clear duty to spare no effort in order to work for the moment when all war will be completely outlawed by international agreement. This goal, of course, requires the establishment of a universally acknowledged public authority for all, regard for justice and respect for the law."²¹ The effort to end war can be achieved only when there are equal efforts to put an end to the arms race. This includes the biological and chemical weapons that could kill and incapacitate people. Seeing the massive destructive power of modern wars, the council should have declared clearly that any future wars, or preparation for them, intrinsically immoral. This was not possible because there were nations that were not prepared with the modern weapons could be at the mercy of their

²⁰ Rodger Charles, *The Social Teaching of Vatican II*, 217.

²¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 82.

enemies who were well equipped with all possible weapons. Therefore it was not possible for the Council to name any war as intrinsically immoral.²²

The provision of conscientious objection denotes the Council's sensitivity and respect for individual conscience. "It seems that just laws should make humane provisions for the case of conscientious objectors who refuse to carry arms, provided they accept some forms of community service."²³ This is a basic human right to dissent from the common decision of the state, where the individual or groups feels that the war itself or the particular acts of war is objectionable. By defending this right of conscientious objectors, some feel that the Council directs the citizens to resist rulers and orders that violate the natural law. Others feel that by supporting conscientious objection the Council brings the Church on the side of perfect pacifism. Council's stand on non-violent means and conscientious objection lead us to query whether Church has taken a pacifist position. Whatever may be the new perspectives of the Church on war, one cannot conclude that it has made a clear shift from the position of just war to pacifism. There are clear indications that certain means and ways of war are categorically condemned as intrinsically evil and immoral. At the same time the tradition of just war ethic is consistently present in all the teachings of the Church.²⁴

Contemporary Developments

Recent teachings of the Church on war approach this issue from a global perspective. Some powerful nations of the world armed to the teeth, are looking for occasions to set right issues through armed forces. Arms race is at its peak today. In such a context the Church feels strongly that common good of the international community must be kept in mind when a country think of getting into war. Pacifist option of the Church has taken precedence over the right to wage war. The danger of nuclear weapons, the socio-economic injustices perpetrated by mere

²² Rodger Charles, *Social Teaching of Vatican II*, 218.

²³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 79.

²⁴ J. Bryan Hehir, "The Just War Ethic," 21-22.

preparations of war, and the obliteration of social peace by war make the Church to rethink of its strong position on just war.

Pope John Paul II invites people to show solidarity with others. He has strongly expressed his reservations about the justifiability of war. Even though he does not renounce the just war theory, he rejects violent means to end strife between nations.²⁵ It is worth noting some of the repeated themes appear in his encyclicals *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1981) and *Centesimus annus* (1991). The encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* comes out strongly against the arms race that deprives development of so many. "How can one justify the fact that huge sums of money, which could and should be spent on the development of the destitute, are used for the enrichment of some or to stockpile weapons?"²⁶ It is a strong condemnation against the abuse of public resources by a few that deprives and denies just rights to many. Another passage condemns the arms race strongly names the practice as a moral distortion. "The arms race, the production of arms, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, and the arms trade are moral distortions in a world crying for justice. They lead us more quickly to death than to life and development."²⁷ The issue of arms race is discussed only in relation to justice that is denied to millions that lead them slowly to death. To turn away from a world of injustice and to reach a world of justice the virtue of solidarity is proposed. "Solidarity is the path to peace and at the same time to development. Interdependence demands abandonment of blocs, the sacrifice of all forms of economic, military, or political imperialism and the conversion of distrust into collaboration. The fruit of solidarity is peace."²⁸ Instead of proposing war as a means to solve the conflicts created by injustice, solidarity in the form of commitment to justice is demanded from the world community to attain peace. The whole encyclical with its special concern for the victims of the unjust social orders is quite aware of the arms race and the wars that are bound to occur in this globe. Its strong admonition is to abandon

²⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Christian Just War Tradition," 80-81.

²⁶ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 10.

²⁷ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 24.

²⁸ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39.

military imperialism. The non-violent option to solve political conflicts between states is quite evident in this encyclical.

Centesimus annus takes the same direction of the previous encyclical at the same time its position against war is emphatic and forthright. "What is condemned is total war, which has no respect for the dignity of others (and consequently of oneself). It excludes reasonable compromise, does not pursue the common good but the good of a group, and sets out to destroy whatever stands in its way."²⁹ The condemnation of total war continues throughout the encyclical. However, the justification of arms race in the name of self-defense seems to appear in one place. The apparent acceptance of the then existing condition is nothing but an objective observation of the continuing arms race that impoverish millions. "Third world countries were armed, terrorism spread, and the whole world was oppressed by the threat of a nuclear war. Such a war would be without winners calling in question the issues of total war and class struggle."³⁰ The world community dividing itself into blocs of rivals will bring a situation where there is no winner or loser. The loss is to the human community. To circumvent such losses stopping the arms race and war seem to be the only solution. "Priorities have to be redefined. Enormous resources could become available by disarming the huge military machines built by East and West for conflict. These resources could become even more abundant if we found a way of resolving conflicts without war."³¹ A positive and constructive approach to solve the problems of the world emerges here. "War never again! Just as personal revenge has given way to the rule of law within states, so the time has come for a similar step to be taken at the international level, not forgetting that at the root of war and conflict there are usually real grievances."³² The roots of conflicts lie in the grievances between nations that have to be tackled properly without resorting to war.

Both the encyclicals forthrightly condemn war and do not even suggest war as a last resort to solve conflicts. CA goes a step

²⁹ *Centesimus Annus*, 14.

³⁰ *Centesimus Annus*, 18.

³¹ *Centesimus Annus*, 28.

³² *Centesimus Annus*, 52.

further demanding no further war and thus almost close to the pacifist position. Putting an end to the arms race becomes the impending obligation of the world community in order to show solidarity with the struggling masses of the world. Real peace can be established only when the resources are shared with deprived millions of the world. Thus the right relationship between justice and peace is discerned and proclaimed by the Pope in clear terms. All such teachings against war hardly lead to a permanent negation of the just war theory and that requires a moral appraisal of the Church's position on war.

A Moral Appraisal of the Church's Position

Some question the coherence of just war theory developed by the Catholic Church. "Clearly, some dispute the claim that Christian disciples can countenance resorting to violence to achieve values such as justice and peace or that violence may be used as means of expressing love of neighbour."³³ Though many respect and attribute sufficient importance to the tradition of just war, those who reject war do not believe the conclusions arrived at by the proponents of just war. As Kenneth understands, the tradition of just war is a matter of practical moral reasoning and in a world where one treats the other unjustly, undermines the common good and aggressively take what belongs to others, each behavior has to be morally assessed according to the particular circumstances.

Some feel that just war theory has to be revised or should undergo new development as the new situation of the world demands new moral obligations and evaluation of the existing ones. The changed international scenario after the end of the cold war indicates a different atmosphere of the international community. There is no impending threat of a nuclear warfare. New conflicts emerge between ethnic groups and groups of religious fundamentalism that propose physical force as the way to arrive at peaceful solution. The heightened sensitivity of the world towards human rights and against their violation marks the unique developments of this century. There is a felt need of strong

³³ Kenneth R. Himes, "Religious Rhetoric of Just War," *Concilium* 2001/2, 47.

interdependence that demands new ties between nations. The changes of territorial borders question the original and traditional understanding of state sovereignty. The above-mentioned issues create new situations where the traditional moral reasoning on just war does not seem to answer all the moral issues that emerge.³⁴ Some of them can be critically viewed here.

The Right to Self-Defense

When there is a just cause, a nation has the right to wage war. Seeing the disasters of the two world wars Pius XII proscribed all war except that of self-defense. As we see the tradition of the just war many causes legitimate and permit a war. From the time of Pius XII self-defense alone is accepted as just cause and no other legitimate moral reason can permit a war. The present context of nuclear war threatens the very existence of the humanity and one does not dare to expand the notion of just cause anything other than self-defense.

Some recent wars were fought for liberation from the oppression of one group over other and the hostility is provoked on religious or ethnic grounds.³⁵ They used only conventional weapons and the motives were other than self-defense. The prime motive had been to settle grievances or to assert their right of self-determination. The moral admissibility of such wars is upheld on the ground that the public power has so abused the requirements of justice and truthfulness that it has destroyed the foundations of its own authority. In such cases even armed insurrection is justified and understood as self-defense of the nation.

There are still other forms of recent wars that took the form of genocide. The international community observing the outrageous

³⁴ Kenneth R. Himes, "Religious Rhetoric of Just War," 48.

³⁵ The problem of the moral legitimacy of insurgency and counter-insurgency warfare become a serious issue for many Christians. Often these kinds of war are inextricably linked with some form of terrorism. *Populorum Progressio* gives a right direction: "We know, however, that a revolutionary uprising, save where there is manifest, longstanding tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country, produces new injustices, throws more elements out of balance and bring new disasters. A real evil should not be fought against at the cost of greater misery."

violence done to people resent such human right violations. Humanitarian intervention appears as the only alternative to defend human rights.³⁶ Thus humanitarian intervention has become one of the just causes. However, this cannot be strictly called self-defense but going to rescue the victims who are unjustly punished. In the name of humanitarian intervention there are ample opportunities to infringe in the rights of other nations and cause further damages that are unwarranted. Unless and until powerful nations are controlled and guided by right motives and moral principles, one cannot morally admit humanitarian intervention as a just cause.

From the Viewpoint of the Victims

Viewing moral values and principles from the point of the victims gives a new dimension to understand moral issues.³⁷ Listening to their voices gives the right direction and orientation to do a right and just moral praxis. Integrating the voices of the victim amounts to discerning God's will at a particular historical context, because their voices has the power to initiate moral transformation of an immoral situation. Similarly we must listen to the victims of war. If we still continue to hold the just war theory as a moral framework to evaluate today's wars, then the voices of the victims should be taken seriously in the discussion on just war.

The irreparable losses of the victims of war speak volumes of tragic stories. "In World War I the percentage of casualties who were civilians was 5%. In World War II that percentage rose to 50%. In the Vietnam conflict the figure rose even higher to 80%. In the more recent conflicts of the past decade 85% to 95% of war's victims were civilians. No discussion of just war principles can ignore such dismal realities in its moral casuistry."³⁸ Besides these

³⁶ J. Milburn Thompson, "Humanitarian Intervention, Just Peacemaking and the United Nations," *Concilium* 2001/2, 83-91. He argues for a greater openness to humanitarian intervention. "This should be so, first of all, because of a new global situation, characterized by a kind of mediaeval barbarism and unspeakable human suffering and by a reduced risk of imperialism and interstate warfare."

³⁷ Xavier Ilango, "Morality from a Dalit Perspective," *Jeevadhara* 1998/28, 433-434.

³⁸ Kenneth R. Himes, "The Religious Rhetoric of Just War," 49.

explicit damages done to the civilians the psychologically traumatic experiences undergone by the youth will have serious consequences in the future. In some ethnic wars children are forced to carry arms and they participate in a moral action without knowing the gravity of the matter. Innumerable women who were raped and abused, and other women who were widowed or lost their sons become helpless in a male dominant society. The loss of cultural heritages, displacement from the place of origin alienates the victims from the normal living conditions that handicap them to continue a meaningful human life. In this way the suffering and death of so many victims carry a special message to the discussion on just war. That should be taken seriously in order to arrive at a right moral decision on war.

Conclusion

War in any form cannot be accepted today. India's wars against Pakistan and the ethnic war in Sri Lanka do not indicate hopeful signs of arriving at peaceful solutions. Armed insurgency and guerilla warfare bring in more disasters to non-combatants. The post war realities of many countries reveal how inhuman and brutal can be one man against the other. When so many millions are starved to death, poor countries such as India maintain the fourth biggest army of the world. When India tested its nuclear bombs, some nations that assist India in health care projects refused to fund India anymore. On whose interest do they build up powerful armies? Such line of thinking provokes us to recast the Church's position on war into a new mold. The recent Popes had already initiated a healthy discussion insisting on the moral inadmissibility of war and the need to invest more resources on human development. I would prefer to insist on the liberation of the poor nations from the clutches of economic and military imperialism of a few powerful nations that would bring an egalitarian international community. In such a context war would not be the immediate alternative to resolve conflicts between nations where as political dialogue with an attitude of interdependence will solve the problems. If our humanity aims at such an ideal for the world, then the world will become the Garden of Eden.
