Over the past 25 years there has been a dramatic upsurge in terrorist violence in many parts of the world. There is nothing new about terrorism of course; it has been around for a very long time. But in recent years it has acquired an unprecedented international profile. In the past, terrorist activity was largely local in its impact and intention; it was aimed at a defined audience and witnessed only by those physically present. But modern terrorism is performed on a global stage for a global audience. It is global in three senses: its targets are spread throughout the world; its instigators are increasingly linked together in elaborate international networks; and its audience includes the world-wide television viewing public, which at times, as in the case of the recent Beslan school massacre, watches events as they unfold.

It is not surprising, then, that terrorism today is often deemed to be the gravest of all threats to world peace and security. Its gravity far exceeds the small number of people involved in terror organisations or the limited strategic gains they make. Modern terrorism is considered such a serious risk because it scorns international borders and treaties, exposes the impotence of conventional military might to control it, and has the potential to unleash weapons of enormous destructive power on civilian populations anywhere on earth. It may only a matter of time before we experience nuclear or biological terrorism. As one expert has said: “The rule of thumb used to be that terrorists did not want millions of people dead, they wanted millions watching. That’s changed. They are now quite happy for both to take place”. ¹

As well as its epic proportions, another striking feature of much modern terrorism is its religious character. Only a generation ago, many Western academics were confidently predicting that secularisation would soon see an end of religion and the final death of God – or at least, God’s belated retirement from public life. With religion banished to the benign fringes of privatised devotion, no need would remain to slaughter opponents on God's behalf. How wrong such predictions have been!² The proportion of known terrorist organisations claiming a religious identity has increased sharply in the last two decades, and the use of religious language to describe their deeds is commonplace. After the destruction of the Twin Towers, Osama bin Laden declared: “Here is America, struck by God in one of its vital organs, so that its greatest buildings are destroyed”.³ Following the attack on the Australian embassy in
Jakarta in September 2004, Jemaah Islamiyah posted an internet statement saying, “We decided to call Australia to account, which we consider one of the worst enemies of God and of God's religion Islam”. Not to be out-theologised, George W. Bush once told a Christian gathering in the U.S: “God told me to strike at al-Qaeda and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did”. Religion has re-surfaced in the public square of international affairs with, literally, a bang!

This does not mean, of course, that all terrorism is religiously motivated, nor that all religious violence takes the form of terrorism. But so much terror today is inflicted in the name of God that it revives for our generation the centuries-old debate about the connection between religion and violence. Why do religious devotees engage in so much conflict and war? Does religion inescapably generate violence? Or is religion itself a casualty of violence, a violence that originates elsewhere and co-opts religious conviction for its own ends? Could religion even be a cure for human violence, and if so, how?

These are profound and complex questions which resist simple answers. But when passenger planes are flown into skyscrapers, ritual decapitations are displayed on the internet, and school children are blown to pieces by suicide bombers, all ostensibly at God's behest, the question about religion and violence is far from academic. It demands serious reflection by all people of good will, not least by those of us who are practising religious believers. It is also, as British theologian Duncan Forrester points out, the major issue that public theology must address today if it is to be relevant. “What we now need”, Forrester writes, “is not so much a forum for more academic and good-mannered discourse about conflicting truth claims, but an arena in which rage, frustration, hatred and fear, as well as reason, are in play, and are attended to, and, one hopes, are healed”.

In this lecture, I want to offer some initial reflections on what the epidemic of religious terror means for peace-loving religious believers, and in particular what it means for Christians who still wish to claim, notwithstanding Christianity’s own horribly violent history, that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, the one who brings the peace of God to earth. But first we need to be clear on what we mean by “religious terrorism” and on why it is such a difficult phenomenon to combat.

**Terrorism and Religious Terror**

The term “terrorism” comes from the Latin *terrere*, meaning “to cause to tremble”. At its most general level, terrorism designates “the intentional effort to generate fear through violence or the threat of violence and the further effort to harness these fears in pursuit of some goal”. This broad definition captures the three key components of terrorism: its reliance on violence, its strategy of fostering fear, and its teleological intent.
Yet there is real sense in which all violence generates fear and serves some ancillary purpose, not least the violence associated with conventional warfare. Recall the name given to the American invasion of Iraq – “Operation Shock and Awe” – a clear indication that premeditated violence was being employed to heighten fear and demoralise the opposition. So the question of what distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence is politically and ideologically highly loaded. Often it is only a matter of political expediency that deems some episodes of violence as terrorism and others as straightforward foreign policy.

Within this broad category, religious terrorism designates those “public acts of violence…for which religion has provided the motivation, the justification, the organisation, and the world view”. While it shares many common features with secular terrorism, faith-based terrorism is marked out by four things in particular: the absolutism of its categories, its tendency to spread contagiously, its heightened symbolism, and its relative unconcern for measurable success. Let me comment briefly on each.

**a) Absolutism:**

Religious militancy is characterised, firstly, by strong claims to moral justification and by a thoroughgoing dualism that divides the world into “us and them”, truth and falsehood, innocent and guilty, believer and unbeliever, with the fault line dividing the categories being absolute. After interviewing many violent activists, Professor Jessica Stern of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University writes: “I’ve noticed that one thing that distinguishes religious terrorists from other people is that they know with absolute certainty that they’re doing good. They seem more confident and less susceptible to self-doubt than most other people”.

Such people see themselves as caught up in a transcendent battle between good and evil, and consider it their religious duty to purify the world of corruption by force. This results in an unwillingness to make concessions, for how can one compromise with the devil or tolerate impiety? Accordingly religious zealots are willing to do virtually anything necessary to overcome the enemy, for evil cannot be transformed or accommodated, it must be utterly destroyed. “Religious terrorists groups”, Stern writes “are more violent than their secular counterparts, and probably are more likely to use weapons of mass destruction”. Historically holy wars have always been notable for their savagery, and religious terrorism is really a contemporary form of unauthorised holy war. And one of the most troubling features of holy war is its contagiousness.

**b) Contagiousness:**
There is an important sense in which any violence can be contagious. But arguably religious violence is more infectious than any other kind, and more addictive. Faith-inspired terrorism is contagious in two ways. First, its use of religious language expands the pool of potential sympathisers and recruits beyond the immediate battle zone to co-religionists all around the world. Once a holy war has been declared, religious hardliners from far and wide flock to join the contest. Secondly, once holy-war organisations are formed and achieve initial success, they seek additional missions elsewhere. This is something the U.S. did not reckon on sufficiently when it sponsored pan-Islamic terrorist organisations in Afghanistan to oppose the Soviet occupation. After the Soviet withdrawal, the mujahideen turned their sights on new targets, including on America itself.

Once unleashed, then, holy wars acquire a momentum of their own. They have no masters. Holy war excites more holy war. Fighting for God becomes addictive.

Any consistent recourse to violence can become physiologically addictive for some individuals. But religious violence is addictive in a psychic and spiritual sense as well. Participation in holy war ranks among the most intense of all religious experiences. Jessica Stern found that only a few of the terrorists she interviewed claimed to be in personal communication with God, but they all described themselves as responding to a spiritual calling and many reported themselves as being addicted to its fulfilment. They were, she says, “spiritually intoxicated” by their cause, and experienced “a kind of bliss”. “…the bottom line, I now understood, is that purifying the world through holy war is addictive. Holy war intensifies the boundaries between Us and Them, satisfying the inherently human longing for a clear identity and a definite purpose in life, creating a seductive state of bliss”. Such bliss is its own reward – which leads to the third distinctive feature of religious combat.

c) Heightened Symbolism:

All terrorist acts are symbolic events to some degree, but religious violence is almost exclusively symbolic. That is to say, its creations of terror are done not primarily to achieve a strategic goal but to make a symbolic statement. It is a statement about the real condition of the world and about who possesses true power in the universe. The presupposition of religious terrorism is that the world is already at war, an apocalyptic war between good and evil. This war is being played out on the worldly stage of power politics, though few are aware of it. Terrorist acts dramatise or materialise the spiritual struggle that is invisibly underway behind the scenes. Victims are chosen not because they are a threat to the perpetrators but because they serve as symbols of this larger spiritual confrontation.
The symbolic character of current Islamist terrorism is highlighted well in a recent article by Jason Burke on Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, believed to have been personally responsible for the beheading of three Western hostages in Iraq in September-October 2004. These videotaped executions, Burke explains, were carefully scripted dramas intended for the world’s 1.3 billion Muslims. They were laden with symbolic meanings missed almost entirely by Westerners. Zarqawi justifies his actions by appealing to “one of the single most emotive issues in the Islamic world: the supposed imprisonment, and abuse, of Muslim women by non-Muslim men”, even though, in reality, very few such prisoners existed. After evoking other sources of Muslim resentment, the videotape climaxes with an act of ritualised slaughter, re-enacting myths about how the first warriors of Islam killed the enemies of God. “Islamic militant terrorism”, writes Burke, “is primarily propaganda and not usually tied to a specific political objective. Though frightening vital Western contractors out of Iraq…is useful, Zarqawi’s primary goal is to communicate”.  

This brings us to the fourth distinguishing feature of holy combat – its attitude to success

d) Assessment of Success:

Secular terrorists assess the utility of their acts to ensure that their violence will advance their political or nationalist goals. Sacred terrorists, by contrast, do not measure success in such worldly or human terms. Their aim is to not to gain strategic advantage in a tactical campaign but to champion God's will, oppose God's enemies, and galvanise God's people. In fact, Mark Juergensmeyer finds that its purveyors have often turned to holy war precisely because there was no hope of human success. Their violent acts, he suggests, are “devices for symbolic empowerment in wars that cannot be won and for goals that cannot be achieved”. For their campaign is not ultimately about politics or economics or even territory, though such concerns may also be involved. It is about the vindication of their theological vision of the world and the fulfilment of their eschatological hopes. Their sense of achievement comes simply from being involved in the struggle, confident that God is on their side and buoyed by contemplation of spiritual or heavenly rewards.

Such, then, is the distinctive Gestalt or shape of sacred terrorism. Why such a style of terrorism has exploded in recent decades is still debated by the experts. Is it the result of economic need, or of personal greed, or of clashing creeds, or of the speed of global change? My own proposal is that religious terrorism emerges where four elements come together: (i) an external situation of real or perceived human suffering; (ii) a set of psychological and emotional responses to this situation on the part of certain individuals within larger cultures of resentment; (iii) the availability of religious resources to explain present experience and justify violent remedies; and (iv) the influence of charismatic religious leaders who exploit feelings of alienation to
issue a call to holy war. No single ingredient is sufficient to spawn holy terror; it is the combination that is critical.

Within this deadly cocktail of contributing factors, the most contentious is the role of religion itself. All world religions have a track record of shedding innocent blood in the cause of faith.\textsuperscript{24} Could it be, then, that there is some direct causal connection between religious faith and violence?\textsuperscript{25} Is there something inherent in the religious mind itself set itself that inevitably results in violence? Is religion the poisonous root from which springs the fruit of human conflict? Is there, in short, some lethal equation between religion and death?

**A Lethal Equation?**

Certainly there are many critics today who think this is the case.\textsuperscript{26} In support, they mount two types of argument, one that targets the deep structures of religious thought, the other that addresses its historical and cultural expressions.\textsuperscript{27}

On the one hand, critics point to the presence of divinely-authorised violence in the sacred texts, traditions, teachings, and rites of all major religions. Violence pervades the religious imagination. As this violence-of-god deposit is passed down from generation to generation, they argue, it moulds cultural and spiritual identity, shapes individual and collective consciousness, and predisposes people to accept certain kinds of violent behaviour as divinely approved.\textsuperscript{28} “Those who can make us believe absurdities”, Voltaire is reputed to have said, “can make us commit atrocities”.\textsuperscript{29}

On the other hand, critics cite the evidence of history – the wars and related depravities perpetrated in the name of God. Major examples of religious violence include the wars of Islamic expansion in the 7\textsuperscript{th}-8\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the Christian Crusades of the 11\textsuperscript{th}-13\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the horrors of Roman Catholic Inquisition in the Middle Ages, the bloody wars of religion that followed the Protestant Reformation in the 16\textsuperscript{th}-17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, and the brutality of forced conversions and enslavement during the European conquest of the Americas in 17\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{30} More recent examples include the sectarian violence in Kashmir, Bosnia, and Northern Ireland, and the enduring conflict between Palestinians and Jews. The current plague of Islamic jihadism is but the latest instance of the same deadly phenomenon.\textsuperscript{31}

Sometimes greater blame for violence is attached to the three great Abrahamic or monotheistic faiths than to other religious streams. When asked what he thought constituted the real “axis of evil”, British journalist Christopher Hitchens replied: “Christianity, Judaism and Islam”.\textsuperscript{32} The problem with monotheism, some critics argue, is that it inevitably divides people into two groups: the “us” who know the one
true God and the “them” who do not, and who are therefore, by definition, infidels or heretics. Such monotheistic exclusivity is bound to have a violent legacy, for it discourages peaceful co-habitation with non-believers who are viewed either as candidates for conversion or for destruction.  

Added to this is the fact that in the Scriptures of each of the monotheist traditions, God is portrayed as a deity of exquisite brutality, a God whose power is displayed precisely in his exercise of superior violence. A further component in the violent mix is the promise in each tradition of life after death for the righteous. This leads to a devaluation of life within this world and a preparedness to suffer and inflict death in service of the next world. After lamenting how suicide bombers can be persuaded to die by the promise of immediate entry to Paradise and associated carnal pleasures, Richard Dawkins warns that “to fill the world with religion, or religions of the Abrahamic kind, is like littering the streets with loaded guns. Do not be surprised if they are used”. For Dawkins, such extremist actions are symptomatic of the pathological virus that is religion itself. Nothing can redeem religion, he says, but its demise.

These are trenchant criticisms. In attempting to rebut them, defenders of religion usually try to distinguish between the essence and the practice of religion. The true essence of religion, they insist, is peaceable and benevolent, although the practice of religion sometimes falls victim to violent impulses which arise from elsewhere and co-opt and distort religious conviction. It is not only moderate religious leaders who thus seek to exonerate religion of the blame for violence. Many secular academics are also happy to do so, for they find it impossible to believe that something as intellectually vacuous as religion could inspire such intense passions. The real cause for communal violence, they assume, must lie elsewhere, with religion serving merely as a surrogate for political ambition and protest (this assumption is so widespread today that international peace initiatives rarely address the religious dimension of conflict).

Eschewing Reductionism

Both these positions however – one that damns all religion as organically violent, the other that sees violence as some alien addition to an essentially benign (or vacuous) religious essence – fail to do justice to the complexity of human behaviour and to the socially integrated nature of religious conviction and practice. Both views are reductionist in two key respects.

First, both wrongly assume that establishing historical causation is a relatively straight forward matter, reducible to simple unilinear relations. But this is far from the case. Discerning causative patterns in history is not an objective science. It is a
necessarily hermeneutical exercise on the part of individual interpreters, as they construct interpretative narratives about particular historical phenomena. Many things can lead to outbreaks of violence, and assessing the particular contribution of religion among a large number of other variables – such as economic, political, psychological, and ideological factors – is always a matter of individual judgment.\textsuperscript{39} To decide in advance that, within this dense network of relations, religion is always most culpable for violence merely betrays an impatience with complexity. To refuse to factor in the peacemaking influence of religion in human affairs is similarly to underrate the complexity of historical reality.\textsuperscript{40}

It is also reductionist, in the second place, to assume that religious sentiment stands in splendid isolation from all other human motivations and activities. But, as a source of ultimate meaning and order in society, religion is inextricably bound up with the political, economic, psychological, sexual, and other dimensions of social life that can serve as engines of conflict. Indeed the universality of religion may be seen as evidence that religiosity is fundamental to human nature, that religiousness (by which I mean the drive to give significance, and depth, and beauty, and purpose to human existence through reference to some transcendent, supra-mundane reality) is intrinsic to being human. If it is so, then religious belief cannot be treated as a discrete and dispensable cause of violence, for religiousness is the stuff from which a great deal of human cultural activity unfolds.

Given these two considerations, a 2004 Bradford University study on war and religion is surely right to conclude that “armed conflict is rarely, if ever, solely about religion or religious differences. Although armed conflicts may take on religious overtones, their genesis is found in a complex matrix of crisscrossing and mutually exacerbating factors, such as economics, politics, resources, ethnicity and identity, power struggles, inequality, oppression, and other historical grievances”.\textsuperscript{41} Religion always \textit{contributes} to conflicts because it conditions and informs all other significant cultural activities. But religious belief or practice is never \textit{solely} to blame (nor is it wholly \textit{free} of blame) simply because religion is, by definition, interconnected with all the rest of social reality.

Of course, if religion \textit{were} a singular cause of violence in the world, the best way to fix the problem would be to eliminate the cause.\textsuperscript{42} Coercive suppression might even be justified, for the less religion there is, the more peace there will eventually be. But there is little evidence for an inverse relationship between religion and peace. The 20\textsuperscript{th} century was both the most secularised and the bloodiest period in all of human history, with more wars and more victims than ever before.\textsuperscript{43} But the overwhelming majority of these conflicts did not have an overtly religious basis, such as doctrinal disagreement or competition for converts. Indeed, as the Bradford University study points out, atheistic authoritarian regimes (such as Stalin’s Russia and Mao’s China)
have perpetrated more mass murder than any state dominated by a religious faith. The single greatest act of genocide in history was carried out by Nazi Germany, where Christian faith was effectively silenced or corrupted by a totalitarian political ideology. If history teaches us anything, then, it is that humanity’s irreligious religiosity is exceeded only by its incessant and unbearable cruelty.

**Sacred Ambivalence**

What all this means is that the question about whether religion causes violence cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”. It depends on what one means by religion, what constitutes proof of causation, and on how broadly or narrowly one defines violence. One thing is clear however: *formal religion exhibits a deeply ambivalent attitude towards violence*. At the centre of all religious world views is a yearning for peace, and in all of them non-violence is considered to be normative spirituality. At the same time however, violence in service of some transcendent cause is, to varying degrees, condoned, encouraged and often glorified in all religions.

Perhaps one reason for this is because both religion and violence necessarily deal with issues of ultimate value. Religion concerns itself with the ultimate meaning and order of existence, with the purpose and worth of human life, and with what happens after death. It infuses human activity with a sense of structure, significance and sacredness. But violence also trades in ultimacy. To resort to violence, especially lethal violence, is to claim ultimate disposition over another person’s body, identity and destiny. To take human life intentionally is to exercise absolute, god-like power over another’s being, to subordinate their will, and even the purpose of their existence, to some higher agenda.

It is not surprising, then, that religion should be used to furnish ultimate justification for such ultimate actions. Religion is employed to imbue certain kinds of violence with divine necessity and to invest such “holy” violence with saving and order-restoring significance. Thus emerges what Walter Wink calls the “Myth of Redemptive Violence”, which “enshrines the belief that violence saves, that war brings peace, that might makes right. It is one of the oldest continuously repeated stories in the world”. It is present in all religions, thus making religious commitment an ideal instrument for violent conquest.

Yet that is only one side of the story. Religion also serves to control and critique violence, and religious obligation can be the most powerful incentive towards reconciliation and peacemaking. It is perhaps more helpful, then, to reformulate the question about religion and violence to ask: What *aspects* of the religious worldview, and individual religiosity, lend themselves to violence? What elements lead certain people, in certain circumstances, to resort to violence under religious auspices? And,
most importantly, what can be done, from within each religious tradition, to prevent this from happening? This brings us back to the pressing issue of religious terrorism today and how best to respond to it.

**Responding to Holy Terror**

Enough has been said, I hope, to show why the religious dimension makes modern terrorism such a complex and dangerous reality to deal with. But it must be dealt it. It is vital that internationally co-ordinated efforts are made to counteract it. A coherent strategy is required that balances short-term and long-term remedies. The short-term need is to shut down or contain terror groups and networks and bring known perpetrators of murder to justice. The long-term need is to ensure that terrorist ideology loses its appeal among populations made vulnerable to it by perceived humiliation, human rights abuses, economic deprivation and other forms of collective distress. The challenge is to achieve the goal of containment without making the goal of prevention more difficult. There is also need for a third kind of response, a theological response that seeks the transformation of the religious mindset that feeds holy war. Let me tease out each of these three responses in a little more detail.

**1. The Task of Containment**

Since 9/11, the international response to terrorism has focused primarily on the job of containment. Huge efforts have been made to hunt down known terrorist leaders, to destroy the material and financial bases of their operations, and to enhance domestic security. The predominant means of containment has been by the use of raw military power. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent and tens of thousands of lives sacrificed in the so-called “war on global terrorism”.

Now war is always a blunt and bloody instrument for resolving conflict. But the strategy of warring against holy war is a particularly unsophisticated and fruitless way to respond to religious violence. The problem is not only that large scale military assaults compound the suffering and the humiliation felt by the constituency from which terrorists emerge in the first place, making future recruitment much easier. The main pitfall of waging war on religious terrorism is that the religious zealots’ underlying ideology of holy war is actually strengthened every time military power is directed against them.

Military reprisals prove that their diagnosis of the world is correct: a great battle for religious truth truly is underway, the enemy really is a satanic monster, and believers must now rally to defend true religion. Displays of massive counter-violence may even be welcomed by terrorist leaders, for they help to spread the seeds of burning rage and religious zeal that guarantee “the enlistment of a whole new
generation of faith-based terrorists, ready and willing to wage a life and death struggle for the global soul”. 47

Making war on terrorism also validates something even more fundamental – the terrorist conviction that violence is ultimately a redemptive medium. Religious warriors believe in the saving efficacy of righteous violence. But so too, apparently, does their opponent. 48 When President Bush initially referred to the attack on Afghanistan as a “crusade”, he was saying more than he realised. 49 The term was quickly abandoned because of its sensitivity to Muslims. But changing the label does not change the product.

The war on terrorism retains many of the hallmarks of a crusade – which is the Christian term for “jihad” or holy war. The campaign is strongly dualistic, with an overt demonising of the opponent; 50 it sees total annihilation of the enemy as the only way to lasting peace; 51 it refuses any thought of compromise or negotiation with the enemy; 52 it expresses suspicion towards those who inquire into the causes of terrorism 53 or who call for moderation; it claims to be fulfilling a sacred duty; 54 it is bolstered by claims of moral purity and certainty, 55 and, most revealing of all, it favours pre-emption over prevention or deterrence. In the judgment of ethicist Edward Leroy Long, the Bush Administration’s adoption of the doctrine of pre-emptive strike “clearly illustrates how deeply the model of crusade has taken over as the controlling paradigm since the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon”. 56 Holy war, it appears, has elicited holy war, a holy war fought arguably in the name of American civil religion. 57

Yet imitation is the greatest compliment that can be paid to terrorism. Not only do both parties compete to instil the greater fear and exact the higher price, but both insist that purity of motive justifies immense cruelty of action. Both conceive of the problem as a battle to be won rather than an injustice to be resolved. But if terror is to be reduced, rather than ratcheted up ever higher, the issue must be conceptualised in different terms. How we speak of a problem is surprisingly important, for it determines how we conceive of solutions. Lee Griffith bemoans

… the growing American incapacity to address any problem without resorting to war. This is more than a matter of semantics. Behind the linguistic style that speaks of a war on crime, a war on poverty, a war on drugs, and a war on terrorism lies a style of being and acting. The enemies must be identified, not merely as abstract social problems to be solved, but as real flesh-and-blood enemies to be vilified (which is why the “war on poverty” so quickly turned into a war on the poor). The enemies must be defeated rather than being transformed, much less loved (which is why there is profligate spending for prisons and executions but scant resources for drug treatment). When there is a problem, America goes to war because the world is viewed as ripe for conquest rather than ripe for redemption. 58
Instead of conceptualising the issue in terms of fighting a war, it is more helpful to think of it within a law enforcement framework. Global terrorism, notwithstanding its ideological agenda, may be classified as a type of organised criminal activity in which the whole global community has a stake. Attempts to track down its perpetrators should therefore take the form of international police action, with intelligence gathering serving as the equivalent of sound detective work.

This is not merely tinkering with words. Police action differs from military action in terms of its normative character. Police work is subject to judicial restraint; it is guided by the requirements of procedural fairness; it has strictly limited aims (viz., to control wrongdoing, not to kill all wrongdoers); it does not exercise judgment or administer punishment; its coercive power is applied to the offending party alone; and it is expected to employ minimal force in performing its duties. It is also usually successful in achieving its purpose, and is compatible with longer term restorative objectives. In all these ways, policing differs from soldiering. Police action against terror cells could still employ military personnel. But their methods and goals need to conform to the normative character of police work, rather than the normal practices of war-making.

Even so, as the analogy of domestic justice shows, police action by itself is never sufficient to significantly reduce offending. Efforts at prosecution must be matched by efforts at prevention. The same is true of terrorism. The long term task of prevention is ultimately more important than the immediate goal of containment.

2. The Task of Prevention

Religious terrorism is often likened to a deadly virus that spreads contagiously in deprived, oppressed, and traumatised communities where traditional forms of religious adherence are high. This being the case, the most promising remedy is one that boosts the collective immune system so that it does not succumb to the infection.

This requires treating the environmental risk factors that predispose communities to violence, such as poverty, joblessness, human rights abuses, indebtedness, ready access to weapons, state failure, political or military repression, and other perceived injustices and humiliations, many of which stem from US foreign and economic policy. In this connection, advocates of the new ethical paradigm of “just peacemaking” have several specific proposals to make for helping to prevent or reduce terrorism, such as working to advance human rights, democracy and religious liberty; developing the institutions of civil society; promoting co-operative methods of conflict resolution; strengthening the rule of law; identifying common
security interests between adversaries; and, perhaps most crucially of all, making concerted efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. 

Prevention and prosecution, therefore, belong inseparably together in the campaign to reduce terrorist violence. But a third kind of response is also needed, one that seeks to sever the religious as well as the sociological roots of holy terror.

3. The Theological Task: Funding Religious Resources for Peace

Religious terrorism is more than a simple response to poverty, oppression, or humiliation. It is also an acting out of a particular theological world view, which rests upon a selective appropriation of key texts and themes from sacred tradition, and is energised by a determination to defend true religion against forces of apostasy and dilution. Counter-terrorism strategies that ignore this spiritual dimension are doomed to frustration. Along with other means of containment and prevention, efforts must be made to displace the belief system that sanctifies killing in God's name, in favour of theologies and practices that promote peaceful protest and reconciliation.

This is not a task for secular academics and politicians, who seem incapable of understanding, never mind reshaping, people's deepest religious sensitivities. It is a job for the leaders of believing communities themselves, and for all sincere members within those communities. After all, it is religious believers who commit religious violence, so it is religious believers who belong to the same faith tradition as the killers, and who share the same spiritual concerns, who are best equipped to penetrate to the spiritual source of their terroristic zeal.

How is this to be done? What is required of religious communities today in face of the rising tide of sacred violence? How can those who share a belief in God and in the rewards of the spiritual journey, but who are appalled at the commandeering of religious conviction by purveyors of mass violence, reply in ways that will de-legitimate holy terror and cure its contagion? I want to suggest that five interrelated kinds of response are necessary.

• Affirming the Validity of Protest:

First, faith communities and their leaders must affirm the complete legitimacy of believers engaging in vociferous protest against all forms of oppression and injustice. Since faith-based terrorism flows from a particular spiritual perception of a deep-seated social malaise, common ground with militants can be established by acknowledging their perception of the malaise, and the validity of them raising strong objection to it. Strident denunciations of terrorist brutality will fall on deaf ears without some acknowledgement that, as sincere believers, they do well to bridle at
injustice and spiritual indifference. In other words, the concerns which motivate terrorists can often be affirmed, even if their methods and ideological framework require vigorous critique.

- **Interfaith Engagement:**

  Second, religious communities must increase their commitment to engage in conversation and co-operation across confessional and religious boundaries. Such inter-faith contact should not, in the first instance, be aimed at exploring or debating doctrinal differences, but simply at building humane and trusting relationships.

  Interfaith dialogue is not a new idea, of course; it has been happening at a formal institutional level for over a century now. But arguably its impact has been limited because it is mainly carried out by theological and academic elites rather than by grass root believers, and tends to focus on religious ideas more than on fundamental human aspirations and needs. More urgent than theological dialogue today is the need to bring local faith communities into face-to-face contact, both to express their acceptance of one another as equally valued human beings and to explore how each other’s religious insights can help promote human rights and peacemaking. One powerful example of such intercommunal contact was the decision of several American Mennonite churches in the weeks following September 11 to observe the fast of Ramadan with local mosques, as a sign of solidarity with them at the time Muslims were under suspicion and attack in wider society.

- **Improving Lay Education**

  Third, to equip people for hospitable encounter with other traditions, and to challenge extremist voices within their own tradition, faith communities need to invest heavily in the education of their grassroots membership. There are always wide variations in the extent to which religious adherents understand their own traditions. Some have only a tacit knowledge. Others know basic beliefs but are illiterate in their texts and traditions. Others have a narrow or polemical understanding of one strand of the faith. Some are well-versed, or even have the ability to think critically and reflectively about their beliefs. Usually it is those with a very limited or highly sectarian understandings who are most vulnerable to being swept up into violent crusades. A committed and theologically informed laity is therefore an important resource for resisting violent voices. Knowledgeable believers can challenge the militants from within their shared theological tradition, as well as encouraging others to reject their call to arms.

  This is why Miroslav Volf, the prominent Yale theologian, argues that “the cure against religiously induced or legitimized violence is not less religion, but, in a
carefully qualified sense, *more religion*. Religious believers contribute most to peace not by moderating their convictions or reducing their faith to a privatised spirituality, but by remaining specifically religious actors in the public sphere, with a deep and informed commitment to the content of their faith. “Strip religious commitments of all cognitive and moral content, and reduce faith to a cultural resource endowed with a diffuse aura of the sacred”, Volf writes, “and you are likely to get religiously inspired or legitimized violence. Nurture people in the tradition and educate them about it, and if you get militants, they will be militants for peace”.

Of course, it is important to be realistic about what can be achieved by education. Militant fundamentalism is as much a psychological complaint as it is a want of education. But even the most traditional of believers can still be taught, from within their own foundational texts, that any religious claim to truth depends ultimately on two prerequisites – the existence of human life as a mysterious gift from beyond, and the freedom to engage in the spiritual quest, which in turn requires the right *not* to engage. Without life and liberty, there is no way of knowing truth or pleasing God, which means that every believer must respect the right of all others to life and liberty if they are to be true to the very traditions they claim to venerate.

*Faith-based Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:*

Fourth, religious communities need to support the development of faith-connected mechanisms (such as restorative justice) for promoting healing and reconciliation in situations of communal strife. Politically-initiated peace negotiations sometimes fail because those involved are unable to harness the power of religious conviction. The inclusion of respected religious leaders in the negotiations can help make both the process and outcomes acceptable to religiously devout antagonists.

One important role for such leaders is to identify and articulate those parts of sacred tradition that summon peacemaking and forgiveness ahead of self-interest, those parts that affirm the sanctity of human life above all else, *including even the pursuit of justice*. It is true that there can be no peace without justice, as we are often reminded these days. But it is equally true that peace will never come if all traces of injustice must first be eliminated. This is what religious terrorists believe as they prime their bombs and load their guns. Attempts at reconciliation cannot be conditional on the prior achievement of perfect justice, else it will never happen.

To use Volf’s well-known metaphor, the *will* to embrace precedes the *act* of embrace, and while the act of embrace, if it is genuine, requires a commitment to equal justice, the *choice* to embrace is ultimately an expression of grace. Religious traditions have a unique capacity to unlock the wellsprings of grace – those repositories of generosity and hospitality present in every culture – so that
peacemaking becomes an active partner in justice-building, not just its eventual outcome.

- *Undertaking a Terror-Audit:*

Finally, and most importantly, every religious tradition should be encouraged to undertake a terror-audit on itself – by which I mean, a fresh and honest assessment of its own historical, moral, and theological complicity in violence. It would be naïve to think this could happen on any grand scale across all religious traditions, or even thoroughly within any one tradition. But even if a small percentage of active believers were to accept the obligation to undertake a self-critical assessment of the violence that emanates from their own religious community, it could have a dramatic affect. Intra-religious dialogue on such matters is just as important that inter-religious dialogue

One religious tradition cannot do this for another; Christians cannot tell Muslims where their religion opens the door to sanctified violence, and vice versa – or at least not until each has begun working on its own house first. And the Christian house certainly needs urgent attention.

**The Need for a Christian Terror-Audit**

Such is the emphasis today on Islamic terrorism that many Christians conveniently forget Christianity’s own long and shameful history of violence and terror. And it is our recent history, not just our distant history, we are talking about. As Griffith points out, “It was not ‘Muslim extremists’ who brought horror to Rwanda; it was Christians killing other Christians. It was not some ‘demonic’ cult groups that planted bombs in Northern Ireland; it was Christians trading brutality with other Christians. It was not ‘atheistic communists’ who instituted a reign of terror to enforce apartheid in South Africa; it was Christians kidnapping and torturing and murdering other Christians…even in the Balkans, violence between Serb Orthodox Christians and Croat Catholic Christians has been as vicious as between Christians and Muslims”.

On a similar note, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown questions whether Christians have any right to feel superior to their Muslim counterparts when it comes to violence. As a Muslim, he laments what he calls the “authoritarianism, philistinism and barbarism [that] are now the hallmarks of most Muslim states and too many Muslim immigrant communities,” and he concedes the need for a Muslim reformation. But the Christian record is far from exemplary. He points to how the foundational teachings of Jesus are daily betrayed by the militarism of Bush and Blair, by the excessively punitive character of British and American criminal justice systems, by the West’s hostility
towards asylum seekers, by its obsession with materialism and its neglect of the poor. He also observes that most of the world’s weapons of mass destruction are not owned by Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Bahais or pagans. They are owned by Christians. “Christianity seems to me the most redemptive and merciful of all the major religions”, he writes. “But where, oh where, is that essence of forgiveness among the merchants of power today?”77

A terror-audit on Christianity must address, not only its past and contemporary history of violence, but also reconsider the moral validity of its two dominant ethical viewpoints on war – the Just War Theory and Pacifism. The phenomenon of global terrorism raises new challenges for both positions. Pacifism has to consider whether non-violent responses are adequate or defensible in dealing with international networks of small groups of extremists who seek union with God through unrestrained violence against defenceless civilian targets. Just War Theory, on the other hand, has to confront its susceptibility to capture by terrorist ideology.78 When Michael Bray, the imprisoned leader of a violent anti-abortion group in the US, said: “Christians tend to be opposed to violence…But there is nothing in Scripture to support this view. Violence is amoral – its moral content is determined on the purpose of the violent act”79 ….he was actually articulating the fundamental premise of just war thinking. Any serious terror-audit of Christianity must surely confront the inherent dubiousness of the process by which just another war is almost invariably converted, by court prophets, into a just war whose fighting God approves.

As well as examining its history and ethics, a terror-audit on Christianity also needs to consider the role biblical and dogmatic theology have played, and still do, in underwriting righteous violence. This involves identifying and naming those themes, images, and texts that are so easily and frequently marshaled in support of divinely sanctioned bloodletting, as well as identifying and naming those strands of tradition that provide a basis for explicitly countering visions of redemptive violence.

Both these critical and constructive tasks are inescapably hermeneutical in nature. It comes down to what we do with contradictory evidence. The biblical text and subsequent theological reflection on it provide ample resources for holy war ideology, as history attests, and ample resources too for the definitive rejection of holy war, indeed of all war, as a travesty of the character and will of God, as Quaker and Anabaptist history prove. It is a hermeneutical decision as to what we do with both kinds of biblical material, and, as my own Anabaptist tradition rightly insists, hermeneutics must always be anchored in ethics.

It is time to finish. This has been a wide-ranging ramble over complex territory. Rather than attempting to draw the threads together, as a good teacher ought to do, I would like to finishing (as a good theologian ought to!) by quoting part of a
prayer I heard two or three weeks ago. It is a prayer that captures the kind of religious outlook that believers who seek the way of peace must increasingly cultivate in this age of holy terror.

O God, our creator and friend, we live in a world of rich beauty
Overflowing with possibility, a world of your making
Yet our hearts are heavy with the suffering of the ages:
The blood of the innocent stains the earth, cries of anguish fill the night
We have squandered the gift of life, abused the freedom entrusted to us
The good life of some is built on the pain of many,
The pleasure of a few on the poverty of the millions
We serve death in our quest to possess ever more things;
We serve death in our hankering after our own security,
our own survival, our own peace
As if life were divisible, as if love were divisible.
Forgive our life-denying pursuit of life,
And teach us anew what it means to be your children
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.


4 Cited in New Zealand Herald September 11-12, 2004, B12.

5 Cited in Greg Austin, Todd Krannock & Thom Oomann, God and War: An Audit & Exploration (Bradford: Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, 2004): 9. According to BuzzFlash, “In a recent book about George W. Bush, written by sympathetic authors from the Hoover Institute, one unnamed Bush relative is quoted as saying that Bush sees the war on terrorism ‘as a religious war’. ‘He doesn’t have a P.C. view of this war. His view of this is that they are trying to kill the Christians. And we the Christians will strike back with more force and more ferocity than they will ever know.’ http://www.buzzflash.com/interviews/04/05/int04024.html. Accessed 12 May, 2004. Similarly, Bruce Bartlett, a past Republican presidential policy advisor says of George Bush: “…this instinct he’s always talking about is this sort of weird, messianic idea of what he thinks God has told him to do….This is why George W. Bush is so clear-eyed about Al Qaeda and the Islamic fundamentalist enemy. He believes you have to ill them all. They can’t be persuaded, that they’re extremists driven by a dark vision. He understands them, because he’s just like them. He truly believes he’s on a mission from God. Absolute faith like that overpowers a need for analysis”, cited in Ron Suskind’s article, which tracks the evolution of Bush’s “faith-based presidency”, “Without a Doubt.” The New York Times, 17 October 2004. Online http://www.truthout.org/docs_04/printer_101704A.shtml. Accessed 19/11/04.


8 Juergensmeyer, Mind of God, 7; also Lee Griffiths, War on Terrorism, 179.


12 Stern, Name of God, 83-84, 117, 233 (the label “Jihadi International Inc.” was coined by Eqbal Ahmad).


14 Griffith, War on Terrorism, 107, 110.

15 Selengut, Sacred Fury, 21.

16 One terrorist operative told Stern, “I am spiritually addicted to jihad”, Name of God, 200, cf. 217, 221

17 Stern, Name of God, 281-82.

18 Stern, Name of God, xxvii.

19 Stern, Name of God, 137

20 Juergensmeyer, Mind of God, 125


23 Juergensmeyer, Mind of God, 218

24 For a brief overview, see McTernan, Violence in God’s Name, 45-76; Juergensmeyer, Mind of God, 19-118; Austin et al. God and War, 24-36


29 Cited by Alan Jacobs, “Afterword”, in Must Christianity Be Violent, 228

30 Luis N. Rivera-Pagan shows how Spanish conquest of the Americas was viewed as a reward for Spain’s keeping of the faith uncontaminated. “The notion of an elected nation, to which God has conceded a providential and transcendent mission, becomes the hermeneutical key to understand the conquest of America” (43). Indeed it was impossible for the Spanish crown to view the legitimacy of its conquest and colonisation of America in terms other than missionary evangelisation; it could not see them in purely political or economic term. “The conquest of the Americas was guided by a strong Spanish mentality of providential messianism that perceived historical events in the context of a cosmic and universal confrontation between true faith and infidelity”, “Violence of the Conquistadores and Prophetic Indignation”, in Must Christianity Be Violent,37-49 (at 44).


To portray either Nazism or the Holocaust as the logical outcome of Christian history is false, both historically and theologically, Victoria Barnett, “Beyond Complicity: The Challenges for Christianity”, in Must Christianity Be Violent? (Chicago University Press, 1997). At least four initial things can be said in response to this charge.

1. First, monotheistic religions often designate certain gods to be in charge of terror, such as Ares in Greek mythology and Mars in Roman mythology. In this sense violence is a permanent part of the divine, and therefore human, world. As Griffith observes, “Some might count it as a benefit of polytheism that the dilemma of theodicy is mitigated. Human beings serve as a reminder that the gods who populate the heavens and the earth may not be altogether beneficent” (Lee Griffith, War on Terrorism, 31). In monotheism this is not the case.

2. Secondly, in the biblical creation narrative, peace is ontologically prior to violence (it is also eschatologically posterior). Violence has no role in the creation process itself, but enters as a result of human sin. This is quite different to other ancient Near Eastern creation myths, such as the Babylonian Enuma Elish, where creation is the result of a violent act of deicide and humans are created from the blood of the murdered god. Evil precedes good; chaos is conquered by violence; the king serves as Marduk’s representative on earth, ruling by means of holy war. In contrast, as Walter Wink observes, “The Bible portrays a good God who creates a good creation. Chaos does not resist order. Good is prior to evil. Neither evil nor violence is a part of the creation, but enters later, as a result of the first couple’s sin and the connivance of the serpent (Gen. 3).”

A basically good reality is thus corrupted by free decisions reached by creatures. In this far more complex and subtle explanation of the origins of things, violence emerges for the first time as a problem requiring a solution, The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 44-48, at 46. Also Patricia M. McDonald, God and Violence: Biblical Resources for Living in a Small World (Scottdale, Penn.& Waterloo, Ont.: Herald Press, 2004), 35-49.

3. Third, while divine oneness can serve to divide people into us and them, it can also serve as the basis for universalism and radical inclusivism, as Paul argues at the end of Romans 3. More significantly, as Volf points out, the Christian conception of God's oneness as consisting of three persons existing in a perfect communion of love, where the identity of each is defined by the identity of the other, grounds peace in the transcendent peacefulness of the divine being. (Miroslav Volf, “Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Justice: A Christian Contribution to a More Peaceful Social Environment”, 7-9. Available from http://livedtheology.org/pdfs/Volf.pdf. Accessed 6 January, 2004).

4. Fourth, if monotheism were a singular cause of violence, one might expect a non-theistic faith like Buddhism to be free of violence. On the one hand, Buddhism lacks those features that are thought to encourage violence – belief in a creator God to whom one is accountable, belief in a devil, a human soul or self, and divine revelation, commandments, prayers and dogma. On the other hand, “Among all the world religions Buddhism stands out for its unambiguous commitment, at least as an ideal, to the promotion of peace and pacifism as a way of life” (McTernan, God's Name, 49). One might expect its doctrine of ahimsa would make Buddhist organisations immune from violence or justifications for acts of terrorism. Yet, for all this, the history and teachings of Buddhism are not free of religiously endorsed violence (see McTernan, God's Name, 50-52, 147-48, 92-106).


5. The Catholic Church has shown a greater readiness to critique its own historical failings than has any other world wide organisation, whether governmental, religious, business or cultural (89).

6. The Catholic Church has shown a greater readiness to critique its own historical failings than has any other world wide organisation, whether governmental, religious, business or cultural (89).

7. The Church has shown a greater readiness to critique its own historical failings than has any other world wide organisation, whether governmental, religious, business or cultural (90).

8. It is possible to discriminate between those expressions of so-called Christian behaviour on the basis of how closely they resemble the religion of Jesus (Matt 5). “If groups or persons known as Christian appear not to follow such guidance from Christ himself, maybe they are not truly Christian at all” (91) Mark A. Noll, “Have Christians Done More Harm Than Good?”, in Must Christianity Be Violent, 79-93.


10. So too Jacobs, who writes “the whole notion of religion as the cause or source of violence is, I believe, a function of the desire to believe that religion is eliminable”, “Afterword”, 231.

11. Wink alleges that more people were killed in war in the 20th century than in the previous 10,000 years combined, Powers, 137.

12. “To portray either Nazism or the Holocaust as the logical outcome of Christian history is false, both historically and theologically”, Victoria Barnett, “Beyond Complicity: The Challenges for Christianity”, in Must Christianity Be Violent? 97-106 (at 98).
In a speech given on September 16, 2001, Bush said: “this is a new kind of thing – a new kind of evil – and we understand. Gerald Schlabach rightly observes that “The just war theory has gained much of its credibility by imagining war to be like writing only a week after September 11, Maria Stalzer Wyant Cuzzo offers an excellent commentary on what should be.

The contagiousness of the war on terrorism is also worth noting. Stassen points out that “as the United States declared its. See Christopher D. Marshall, "'But Deliver Us from Evil': George Bush and the Rhetoric of Evil.”

An analogy can be drawn between the way terrorists co-opt religion to justify violence and the way that state does. Wink 45. See John Basil Utley, "Thirty-Six Ways the U.S. is Losing the War on Terror". Available from http://www.antiterror.com accessed 3 August, 2004. 46. McTernan, God's Name. 155. “Military action to destroy terror…will be like hitting a fully mature dandelion with a golf club. We will participate in making sure the myth of why we are evil is sustained and we will assure yet another generation of recruits”, John Paul Lederach, Lederach, John Paul, “The Challenge of Terror: A Traveling Essay”, Available from www.mediate.com/articles/terror911.cfm. Accessed 2 October 2004. 47. On the universal appeal of the myth of redemptive violence, see Wink, Powers That Be, esp. 42-62. Wink calls the myth “the simplest, laziest, most exciting, uncomplicated, irrational, and primitive depiction of evil the world has ever known (55), and deems it to be “the dominant religion in our society today” (42). See also Robert Jewett & John Shelton Lawrence, Captain America and the Crusade against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2003), 245-72 & passim.


In an insightful discussion, Jewett & Lawrence suggest that the crusading ideal of redemptive violence, which has imparted a unique mystique to American wars, leads to a tendency to use unrestrained violence to obliterate the evil foe. If violence is universally redemptive, then why not use it universally against the enemy, including women and children, Captain America, 250-61.


Richard Perle, a Bush advisor, has argued that we must “decontextualize terror”, which means refusing to ask about the context in which it emerges. “Any attempt to discuss the roots of terrorism is an attempt to justify it”, Perle says. “It simply needs to be fought and destroyed”. Johann Hari rightly dismisses this as absurd, something that “invites us all to participate in a strange, willful ignorance of cause and effect. How can this be a serious response to our problems?”. Hari argues that “Islamo-fascism” or “jihadism” is a better term for the current problem that “terrorism”. Johann Hari, ‘Jihadism The Real Terror of Our Age’, Independent – reprinted NZ Herald, 27 September, 2004, A17.

An analogy can be drawn between the way terrorists co-opt religion to justify violence and the way that state does. Wink observes that in the myth of redemptive violence, the welfare of the nation becomes the supreme good. People are expendable; the state is not. “Not only does this myth establish a patriotic religion at the heart of the state, it gives divine sanction to that nation’s imperialism. The myth of redemptive violence thus serves as the spiritualism of militarism. By divine right the state has the power to demand that its citizens sacrifice their lives to maintain the privileges enjoyed by the few. By divine decree it utilizes violence to cleanse the world of enemies of the state. Wealth and prosperity are the right of those who rule in such a state. And the name of God – any god, the Christian God included – can be invoked as having specially blessed and favoured the supremacy of the chosen nation and its ruling caste”, Powers That Be, 56-57.

In his perceptive account of George Bush’s evangelical faith, Jo Klein suggests that the real problem with it is not dogmatism but its easy certitude. His faith “does not discomfort him enough; it does not impel him to have second thoughts, to explore other intellectual possibilities or question the consequences of his actions”. Accordingly his faith “offers no speed bumps on the road to Baghdad; it does not give him pause or force him to reflect. It is a source of comfort and strength but not of wisdom”. Joe Klein, “The Blinding glare of His Certainty.” Time, February 24, 2003, 14. A similar conclusion is reached by Suskind, “Without a Doubt.” He describes Bush as “one of history’s great confidence men...in the sense that he’s a believer in the power of confidence”. On the influence of the Christian right on US unilateralism, see Dume Oldfield, “The Evangelical Roots of American Unilateralism: The Christian Right's Influence and How to Counter It.” Foreign Policy in Focus, March, 2004 (2004): 1-6. For an evangelical critique of Bush's theology of war, see “Evangelicals Slam Bush for his 'Theology of War',” online: http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_041012bsh.shtml. Accessed 20 October, 2004.

Edward LeRoy Long, Facing Terrorism: Responding as Christians. (Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 90, see further 44-50, 85-86. In point of fact, the American tendency to turn wars into holy crusades has been present since the beginning of the nation, while crusading idealism has been dominant in American civil religion over the past 60 years, as Jewett & Lawrence document, Captain America. In a recent interview, Tony Blair defended the pre-emptive strike on Iraq, saying: “What changed for me is, post September 11, you no longer wait for the thing to happen. You go out actively and try to stop it. That's the thing that has changed now”. Andrew Rawnsley and Gaby Hinsliff, “Blair Battling with Shadow of War”, Observer – reprinted in New Zealand Herald 28 September, 2004, B3.

The contagiousness of the war on terrorism is also worth noting. Stassen points out that “as the United States declared its military war against terrorism, Indonesia canceled peace talks with the rebels in Aceh and instead made war against them; Israel increased its military attacks against Palestinian leaders; and Russia pursued its destructive war against Chechnya free of U.S. government criticism”, Glen H.Stassen, “Just Peacemaking as Hermeneutical Key for International Co-Operation in Preventing Terrorism”. Available from http://www.fullerseminary.net/sot/faculty/stassen/Just_Peacemaking/july272004uploadfiles/04%20SCE%20JPTaddress.htm. Accessed 23 September 2004.

Griffith, War on Terrorism, 76. Stern, Name of God, 238.


Gerald Schlabach rightly observes that “The just war theory has gained much of its credibility by imagining war to be like police action without facing up to how different the dynamics of warfare can be from policing. But if war is justified
through an appeal to the virtually irrefutable need for policing, it consistently becomes something quite different from policing, and just war reasoning itself all too often devolves into propaganda. It becomes permissive rather than stringent – and it sometimes becomes permissive precisely through the reassuring guise of having been stringent”, “Just Policing and the Christian Call to Nonviolence”. 6. Available from http://www.mcc.org/peaceethology/papers.htm. Accessed 21 October 2004.

61 I am indebted to Lederach, “Challenge of Terror”, for this analogy.

62 See, for example, Gilbert Achcar, “The Clash of Barbarisms”, Available from http://www.monthlyreview.org/0902achcar.htm. Achcar notes, for example, that the “sanctions of mass destruction” used against Iraq caused more deaths than have all the casualties from use of weapons of mass destruction combined (est. at 400,000). The US has bombed over two dozen countries since the end of World War II (William Blum, Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II.), and has been involved in direct or indirect support for revolts, coups and invasions in over 70 different nations (so Griffith, Terror of God, 90-91).

63 Just peacemaking is a new third paradigm for considering the ethics of war and peace, alongside pacifism and just war theory. It addresses not the “permission” question (Is it morally permissible to make war in this situation?) but the “prevention” question (What strategies should be used to prevent war?) It identifies 10 principles that are normative for Christians of both just war and pacifist streams. It is not a narrowly Christian paradigm, although one of its architects, Glen Stassen, shows how it coheres with the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, in “Jesus and Just Peacemaking Theory.” In Must Christianity Be Violent? Reflections on History, Practice and Theology, ed. Kenneth R. Chase & Alan Jacobs (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2003), 135-55. For a large scale treatment of Jesus’ teaching from this perspective, see Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee, Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context (Downsview Grove Ill: IVP, 2003).


66 Redekop, Violence to Blessing, 156.

67 Selengut, Sacred Fury, 232. One powerful example of this process working is the case of Hamoud al-Hitar and four other Islamic scholars in Yemen who challenged five Al Qaeda members in prison to a theological contest over whether terrorist violence could be justified by the Koran. The agreement was that if the prisoners could convince the scholars of their case, they would to join their campaign. Conversely if the scholars won the debate, the prisoners would agree to renounce violence. The results of this unconventional counter-terrorism methodology have been spectacular, with a dramatic decline in terror attacks in the country over recent years. See further James Brandon, “Koranic Duels Ease threat”, Christian Science monitor February 4, 2005. Available online as http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.html

68 Volf, “Forgiveness”, 3 (emphasis mine).


70 Moltmann insists that the three conditions of the modern world that overcame the religious wars of the 17th C remain fundamental to the achievement of peace between religions: the separation of church and state, or religious and civil communities: individual religious freedom; and dignity and human rights for women. In this sense, the real need of our day is not dialogue between religions but the promotion of human rights. Jürgen Moltmann, "Hope in a Time of Arrogance and Terror." International Congregational Journal 3/2 (2003): 157-67.

71 Selengut, Sacred Fury, 235-36.

72 Kenny Noble, a leader of violent apocalyptic cult in USA in 1980s, told Jessica Stern: “We wanted peace, but if purging had to precede peace, then let the purge begin”, Name of God xx.


74 For brief summary, McTernan, God's Name, 55-137.

75 Griffith, War on Terrorism, 46.


77 Just War theory has similar features in all three Abrahamic traditions; see Selengut, Sacred Fury, 19-45, Juergensmeyer, Mind of God, 19-84, McTernan, God's Name, 53, 64-75

78 Cited in Stern, Name of God, 162.