

# Face to Face: Human Presence and Non-Violent Resistance

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## *Introduction*

My topic this morning is how theology contributes to violence or resists it. The focus of this Symposium is timely, and I hope our deliberations today will strengthen us to advance the possibilities of peace and non-violence.

To begin: a reading from *Time* magazine, Feb. 3, 2003.<sup>1</sup>

For the Bush administration's theologians, the rationale, timing and necessity for going to war against Iraq have been self-evident for so long that the only reason no shots have yet been fired is mainly mechanical: not enough forces in place. That's why the president sounded so exasperated last week when he called the rising volume of objections from abroad, even as he was jockeying his troops into ready position, the "rerun of a bad movie." Surely, he snapped, "our friends have learned lessons from the past." Yet for a growing chorus of other folks, not the least of all America's foremost allies, those lessons are no easy guide to the future. ...[the] French Foreign Minister... seemed to speak for much of the international community... when he declared, "We see no justification right now for any military action."

This news story suggests that the ideas operating at the heart of Bush's war-making machinery are best called theology. I was surprised to see *Time* calling the White House political and military advisors "theologians," but I don't disagree. I also agree with Bush. There is a lot in the news that is like the rerun of a bad movie and there are lessons to be learned from the past. (Which bad movie and which lessons may be a point of disagreement.)

I was heartened this past weekend – as perhaps you were as well – as the chorus of outcry against a U.S. preemptive strike against Iraq sounded around the globe, echoing the French Foreign minister who a week ago

yesterday, in a breach of protocol, received applause at the U.N. for his position. A million anti-war protesters marched in London, another million in New York, Washington D.C. and San Francisco combined. People gathered in Bangladesh, Mexico City, Johannesburg and Paris. In Tel Aviv, the Associated Press reported 2,000 Palestinians and Israelis marched together to witness for peace.

Many who marched have memories of war and violence, and do not believe that more violence will protect or save us. In contrast, the theology of the Bush administration and others makes an alternative truth claim: that violence, indeed, is our hope for redemption, our way to be liberators and peacemakers.

### *War as a System of Meaning*

War cannot be denied as a powerful force for meaning. It intensifies bonds of love (witness the touching scenes and very real experience, of military families saying good bye to loved ones who are boarding planes to be deployed to the Middle East); it generates a strong sense of community that makes differences petty or unimportant (witness the unified front of congress, putting aside differences to unite behind “our president” in the days following Sept. 11); it moderates the sting of lives lost with the satisfaction of knowing death came as a result of courage and generosity (how often we heard the emotional intensity of the words, “He died in the line of duty, seeking to protect others”). War sanctifies submission to a higher authority, relieving the anxiety and boredom created by liberal ideologies of autonomy and the ‘pursuit of happiness.’ It creates a sense of pride of accomplishment for individuals and nations: We did something that mattered: We stopped Hitler; we liberated the oppressed people of Afghanistan; we stood up to the bullies and made them back down. We did not live in vain.

Chris Hedges, a war correspondent for 15 years, gives personal witness to war’s appeal. In his recent book, “War Is Force That Gives Us Meaning,” he speaks of his own seduction to the intensity and supreme sense of purpose found on the battlefield, and admits that for some — and he would count himself among this number — violence has an addictive power. The adrenaline rush, the overwhelming of ordinary consciousness and sense experience combine to create a high, an altered state, that has qualities of ecstasy. But, Hedges cautions, the joy of battle, like other addictions, splits ecstasy off from the realities of what actually happens to bodies, communities, land and culture when war takes place. Underneath the valor, there is a vacuity of meaning encountered by those who have seen war up close. The force of war’s meaning crumbles in its real presence.

Long-term psychological and physical suffering is often experienced by those who served in active combat. This suffering extends into family systems – spouses and children – and into communities. Homelessness, poverty, and suicide among vets run high. In the Viet Nam war, for example, there were many U.S. casualties. But suicide in the aftermath by vets who returned home alive has claimed more lives than did combat.

As a force that gives life meaning, war depends on the sacrifice of lives. War also sacrifices environments that sustain life by poisoning soil and water, burning forests, destroying habitats, disrupting agriculture.

Following the Persian Gulf War there has been a sharp rise in birth defects and cancer rates in southern Iraq. The lack of clean water, resulting from targeted destruction of water systems and the embargo on chlorine, and the use of depleted uranium weaponry, has led to widespread disease. The U.N. estimates that 500,000 Iraqi children have died since 1991 as a result. (The official position of the U.S. Department of Defense is that the use of depleted uranium in weaponry poses no danger.<sup>2</sup>)

As a force that gives life meaning, war extracts a very high price. In the end, war takes away the gift it gives. The meaning it bestows can only be sustained by a denial, by turning away from suffering children, devastated veterans and their families, decimated cultures, and damaged ecosystems. For the meaning of war to last, one must ignore what the senses tell and the eyes see. One must turn one's gaze towards fantasies, and avoid meeting the world face to face.

Heartsickness in response to war's devastations and dehumanizations is expressed in the anti-war literature that has emerged from combatants and victims of war over the past century. Such literature calls people to remember what the survivors of war know. Peace movements hold this knowledge, as well. Memory marched in the streets this past weekend.

Accurate and integrated memory matters as a mode of resistance, because violence so easily shatters it. J. Glenn Gray, a veteran of WWII, wrote, "The great god Mars tries to blind us when we enter his realm, and when we leave he gives us a generous cup of the waters of Lethe to drink."<sup>3</sup> A society can forget or hide what it knows.

Here is a story from the book "Proverbs of Ashes," that my co-author Rita Nakashima Brock and I published last year:<sup>4</sup>

"The social concerns committee wanted the church to raise public awareness of the growing stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world. Mary Brown suggested that we place posters on the city's fleet of metro buses. The posters would depict the increase in stockpiles of nuclear weapons since the end of World War II. Not everyone thought this was a good idea, especially the older members of the church.

"The topic came up for the third time at the women's Bible class that week. The women grumbled about how the church was spending too much of its energy working on political issues, and besides, why should we be raising questions about military strategy? It wasn't our place. Myrtle called a halt to the conversation. 'Just a minute,' she said, 'how can you say we have no place having an opinion about this?' She looked around at the women in the group. 'Every one of us here knows that our men came home for World War II broken,' she

said quietly. 'We've spent our lives holding together the pieces that war broke. We did our best to take care of them as well as our children. And never speaking of it, always saying it was a good war. We know there is no such thing as a good war.' There was quiet in the room as one by one the women silently nodded, remembering. After that, the women in the class supported Mary Brown's project. The church printed the posters and filled the city's buses with them."

Without memory society can succumb to war's false promise.<sup>5</sup> The drama and seduction of war can return. Today in the U.S. we are seeing a renaissance of desire for war. This is happening, in part, because we have allowed ourselves to forget – to not integrate – what we know, what we have seen, what we have experienced of war and its aftermath.

### ***Religion and War***

Our memory must be collective as well as personal. One of the things we most need to remember is that religion has often functioned to sanction war. Every major religion on the planet has, one time or another, provided religious justifications for war. It is neither fair nor historically accurate to identify religiously sanctioned violence with only one or two of the world's religious systems, while regarding others as peaceable. Mark Jurgensmeyer ably demonstrated this in his important recent book, "Terror in the Mind of God."

Jurgensmeyer studied religious terrorists around the world: from white supremacist Christians in the U.S. who have committed domestic terrorism such as the Oklahoma City bombing, to Buddhists in Japan who released poisonous gas in a Tokyo subway station, to Jewish and Palestinian terrorists in Israel, to Hindu and Islamic terrorists. Jurgensmeyer interviewed religious terrorists and concluded that religious ideas create systems of meaning within which the action of terrorists is, from their perspective, rational and virtuous. He notes themes surprisingly similar across the boundaries of diverse religious faiths. The holy warrior sees the world in black and white terms. Good and evil are arrayed in opposition. The warrior's people have been attacked, injured or humiliated in some way. Payback is in order. Salvation, peace, and blessing will be established by those who — in faithfulness to a higher calling, an illuminated mind, or the power of God working through them — are willing to risk everything in order to execute vengeance or destroy evil.

Jurgensmeyer comments that as a system of meaning, there is little that can match the power of "holy war." Holy war provides a complete and comprehensive picture of the world, it explains the meaning of history and projects an ultimate triumph of goodness. It gives the holy warrior a transcendent purpose, in which even the loss of one's life pales in comparison. The transcendent purpose requires using violence to destroy or debilitate evil, but such destruction is performed in service to or in intimate relationship with a transcendent source of power. In using violence, the violent actor is united with divinity. A more intense system of meaning can hardly be found.

My own work as a theologian has been focused on analyzing the dominant religious tradition in the U.S.: Christianity. I should say, I study Christianity as a Christian. It is my heritage. I have chosen to wrestle with its blessings and its curses, and I seek to be guided by its best wisdom while contributing to its repentance and ongoing reformation. I should also say, I approach my religious commitment as a humanist. That is, I place higher value on reasoned observation of the world and reflection on experience than I place on received tradition, creed or sacred scriptures.

Whether you identify as a Christian or not, I believe that for our society to embrace peace-making more fully we need to understand more deeply the religious heritage that a majority of Americans align themselves. We need a keen awareness of how Christian theologies have promoted holy war and sanctioned violence, especially through theologies of the cross.

During its first millennium, Christianity focused its sights on paradise, on resurrection, on the living presence of Christ. The cross was a ubiquitous image in Christian art during these thousand years but it was always depicted as a resurrection cross – a sign of the promise of life. The cross appears blossoming into a spiraling green tree, issuing forth cascades of water flowing from the garden of Eden, bursting into a sun at dawn, or glittering in a midnight blue sky filled with gold and silver stars.

But virtually nowhere, during the first thousand years of Christian art, can you find the cross depicted with a man nailed to it, dying an anguished death. The first time a monumental image of Jesus *dying* on the cross appears is at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, in Northern Europe.

After nearly a millennium of absence, the emergence of the dead Christ as an icon for Christian meditation, marks a major shift in Christianity – a shift towards violence. Earliest Christian practice forbade Christians from taking up arms of any kind or serving in the military. Justin Martyr, in the 2nd century, wrote: “We ourselves are well conversant with war, murder, and everything evil, but all of us throughout the whole wide earth have traded in our weapons of war.”<sup>6</sup>

This did not last. Early Christianity’s disavowal of the use of violence was gradually eroded, especially by the changes that began when Constantine professed that it was a dream of the cross which had given him the power to defeat Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 311, giving him control of the Roman West. Bishop Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo provided theological justifications for use of violence by Christians.<sup>7</sup> By 438, the Theodosian Code reversed the church’s early practice. It mandated that none could serve in the Roman army *except* Christians.<sup>8</sup> Despite this change in attitude toward the military, violence was still regarded as a necessary evil, not a good. Soldiers who killed were required to do penance.

But in the 10th century, Europe was experiencing a breakdown in the power of kings to enforce law and maintain peace. The Carolingian Empire was in decline, and local castellans used violence to plunder the

countryside, robbing monasteries and attacking travelers. In the absence of secular powers that kept the peace, Bishops began to call Peace Councils, demanding that the castellans take vows not to destroy church property. The Bishop of Le Puy, for example, called a peace council around 975:

Held in an open field outside the city walls, the council was convened to address the pillaging of ecclesiastical property in the diocese. The bishop threatened the pillagers with excommunication and forced the assembled warriors and peasants to take an oath to keep the peace.<sup>9</sup>

The power of saints' relics was employed as well. Bits of sacred bone, tatters of holy cloth, and ornate reliquaries encasing objects of spiritual power would be hauled out for the occasion of a peace council and placed in the center of the gathering. The populace would gather around the relics to make their oath. But, in case neither the relics nor the threat of excommunication carried enough power, physical force was not ruled out.

With the advent of the Peace Councils it became necessary for church officials to recruit armed soldiers into the service of the church, and the church accrued to itself the authority to regulate the use of violence.

Thomaz Mastnak summarizes:

By setting rules specifying whom arms-bearers were not allowed to attack, the kinds of property they were not allowed to touch, and days of the week and seasons of the year when they were not allowed to use arms, the peace council regulations also gave the church the authority to determine who could employ arms, for what purpose, on whose command, against whom, and when. The circumscription of violence opened the way for the Church not only to assert its control over the use of arms but also to direct violent action.<sup>10</sup>

In November 1095, Pope Urban II called a Peace Council in Clermont, France. Preaching to the massed gathering of armed nobles, bishops, monks and laity he called them to turn aside from fighting one another and turn instead to fighting against the enemies of Christ in the East. Cole comments, that Pope Urban: argued strongly for the unprecedented and extraordinary character of the war which he was proposing: one instigated by God, in which the combatants were not plunderers but soldiers of Christ fighting not improperly but rightly, and whose reward was not to be a few coins but eternal glory and friendship with God. As preparation, they were to receive, by Christ's command, the remission of their sins.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars of the Crusades point out that the instigating factors of this first crusade were not to be found at Europe's borders. There was minimal real threat from Muslims. The issues were within the sphere of Europe's social, political and religious concerns.<sup>12</sup> In service to those concerns, Pope Urban characterized Muslims in the east as godless, violent filth – as enemies of God.

Thousands responded to Urban's sermon by "taking the cross." In public rallies, they vowed to give their lives in the service of God's honor. At first, however, they did not travel east. They traveled north to the Rhineland and began to hunt down and kill Jews. A medieval Hebrew chronicler tells what it meant when a

preacher of the Crusades arrived in Trier during Passover in the spring of 1096. “When he came here, our spirit departed and our hearts were broken and trembling seized us and our holiday was transformed into mourning.”

The crusaders pursued, tormented and killed approximately 10,000 Jews in the Rhineland in the spring of 1096 – nearly a third of the Jewish population in Europe, the first large-scale massacre of Jews by Christians.

By 1099 the crusading Christian armies had reached Jerusalem. The account of their conquest of the city by eyewitness Raymond of Aguilers bears witness to the extent to which violence in the name of God led to atrocities:

Piles of heads, hands, and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city . . . men rode in blood up to their knees and the bridle reins... Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgement of God, that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies.<sup>13</sup>

A Muslim chronicle from this period tells of refugees from the atrocities in Jerusalem arriving in Bagdad during Ramadan. It describes the weeping in the mosques as the refugees’ stories were told. The chronicle reports that the distress of the refugees was so great, they were relieved from observing the fast.

War became a force that gave life meaning and strengthened “the peace” among Christians at the expense of those who would be required to fulfill the role of enemy: Jews and Muslims and heretics. Interpretations of the meaning of Christ’s death were central to the preaching of the crusades. Crusaders “took the cross” and in taking it they vowed to avenge the death of Christ, to defend Christ’s kin in his name, to offer themselves as he did in obedience and faith to God, as a sacrificial offer that merited a reward.

Anselm of Canterbury, Pope Urban’s friend, provided the formal theology that captured the spirit of the age. Writing in 1096, in the midst of the first crusade, he produced “Cur Deus Homo?” — “Why Did God Become Human” – the first full-blown explication of the doctrine that Jesus’ death on the cross saved humanity. Anselm’s substitutionary theory of the atonement interprets Christ’s death on the cross as payback to God for humanity’s debt of sin. Jesus’ violent death is a gift that liberates humanity. Anselm wrote, “Man absolutely cannot give himself more fully to God than when he commits himself to death for God’s honor.” He exhorted Christians to imitate Christ’s self-offering when the cause of God’s justice demanded it.

In Anselm’s theology, God was honored by Jesus’ execution and the boundless merit of his suffering blesses all Christians. With this theology, Western Christianity embraced violence as pleasing to God. Violence was no longer a sin the required penance. Violence was holy. Christian holy war became a penitential act. The fastest route to paradise was to kill or be killed. Self-sacrifice became the highest love. Death by torture became salvation. And God took pleasure in the murder of human beings.

Tomaz Mastnak sees in this first crusade a blurring of boundaries, a failure to distinguish realities.<sup>14</sup> The *pax Dei* movement had confused temporal and eternal peace. In calling the Crusade, Urban confused heavenly and earthly Jerusalem. Likewise, the acts of violence committed by the crusaders confused the historical actors who killed Jesus with present Jews and Muslim who had lived peacefully with Christians, and confused the mystical body of Christ with the literal body of the dead Jesus. The iconography of the crucified Christ provided a visual point of reference in which these confusions merged into one multivalent image.

Psychological studies of violence point to the ways in which a blurring of boundaries comes into play in acts of extreme violence. Present realities become substitutes for other realities, the target of violence becomes a stand in for someone or something else. Time merges, place merges, people merge. Mass violence, in particular, fails to distinguish realities and excels at false identifications. It creates meaning by force of false associations that have come to seem completely rational.

The substitutionary theory of the atonement generates a series of substitutions. Crusaders slaughtered Jews who substituted for Muslims who substituted for earlier “Jews” accused of killing Christ who substituted for the Romans, who actually killed Christ. Jesus substitutes for sinful humanity to pay the debt owed God. God substitutes for Satan as the cause of Jesus’ death. Personal suffering and self-sacrifice substitute for the moral virtues of self-restraint and serenity. And committing violence substitutes for spiritual rebirth as the route to paradise.

This theology, like violence, obliterates distinctions and replicates itself indiscriminately. And now: Afghanistan can substitute for al Qaeda. Saddam Hussein can substitute for Osama Bin Laden, or Saddam Hussein can substitute for Hitler. Iraq can substitute for Afghanistan. Palestinians can substitute for Nazis. All Muslim men can substitute for any terrorist.

The publication of Anselm’s treatise, “Cur Deus Homo,” and the emergence of the crucifix as an image for devotion, mark the beginning of a thousand year period in Western history dominated by the confusion of violence, self-sacrifice and love. The inability to distinguish among them becomes explicit in the piety of crusading. To engage in a military campaign in defense of Christ’s people against the unbelievers came to be regarded as an act of great love. Cardinal Odo of Chateauroux preached a crusade organized in 1245 saying:

It is a clear sign that a man burns with love of God and zeal for God when he leaves country, possessions, house, children and wife, going overseas in the service of Jesus Christ... Whoever wishes to take and have Christ ought to follow him: to follow him to death.<sup>15</sup>

This is the theology that haunts us still in legacies of war as a force that gives life meaning. In the U.S. today, forms of Christian piety abound in which faithfulness to Jesus is equated with being willing to die defending one’s country, or being willing to sacrifice our young women and men in order to liberate others from evil.

When Osama Bin Laden speaks of the U.S. war agenda as a crusade, he is tragically accurate. The impulse to destroy the infidels and to regard doing so as an act of love for God is a present reality in U.S. culture. It may not be the motivating factor for Bush and his advisors. More pernicious agendas such as gaining greater control of the world's oil fields must be taken into account. And it doesn't mean the problems of terrorism and global security aren't real. They are. But the Bush administration sounds the notes of holy war in subtle and pervasive ways. It relies on the presence in U.S. society of a large number of people for whom war is a religious act, an act of faith, hope, courage and love.

A reading from the New York Times, Sunday, Feb. 16, 2003:

President Bush may believe that a war against Iraq can be waged without disrupting home-front business as usual. But the gods of war have always demanded sacrifice. From time out of mind, warriors have been asked to lay-down their bodies on the martial altar. Modern wars have also visited agonies of deprivation on civilian populations, immolating countless noncombatants as well. But sacrifice is about more than death and mayhem. The word itself literally means "to make holy," a reminder that sacrifice has a spiritual and symbolic rationale more venerable than its military one... War leaders have long understood the utility of nurturing the feeling that "we're all in this together"... The sentiment of shared sacrifice binds soldier to civilian. For better or worse, that sentiment is what has made modern warfare – industrialized and full throttle – possible."<sup>16</sup>

The theology of redemptive sacrifice does more than make warfare possible. It also contributes to the sanctioning of domestic violence and the sexual abuse of children. This is the intimate side of the story – the true home-front implication of a system of meaning grounded in the idea that Jesus' death on the cross was a redeeming sacrifice.

My concern with Christian-sanctioned violence began with seeing the links between theologies of the cross and domestic violence. This is a link I did not understand when I first began as a young minister. In "Proverbs of Ashes," I tell how my consciousness changed. A story:

A quiet knock on the church office door interrupted my reading. A short, brown-faced woman stood on the threshold...

"Hello, pastor. I'm Lucia. I live down the block and walk by the church on my way to the bus." She gestured to indicate the direction. "I saw your name on the church sign. You are a woman priest. Maybe because you are a woman, you can understand my problem and help me."

"Of course, come in," I said. She sat down on the old sofa next to my bookcase with its load of theology texts bending the shelves. She smiled, an expression both warm and sad.

"I haven't talked to anyone about this for a while," she began... sadness deepening in her eyes. "But I'm

worried for my kids now. The problem is my husband. He beats me sometimes. Mostly he is a good man. But sometimes he becomes very angry and he hits me. He knocks me down. One time he broke my arm and I had to go to the hospital. But I didn't tell them how my arm got broken."

I nodded. She took a deep breath and went on. "I went to my priest twenty years ago. I've been trying to follow his advice. The priest said I should rejoice in my sufferings because they bring me closer to Jesus. He said, 'Jesus suffered because he loved us.' He said, 'If you love Jesus, accept the beating and bear them gladly, as Jesus bore the cross.' I've tried, but I'm not sure any more. My husband is turning on the kids now. Tell me, is what the priest told me true?"

Lucia's deep black eyes searched by hazel ones. I wanted to look away, but couldn't. I wanted to speak, but my mouth wouldn't work. It felt stuffed with cotton. I couldn't get the words to form.

I was a liberal Christian. I didn't believe God demanded obedience or that Jesus' death on the cross brought about our salvation... But just that past Sunday I had preached a sermon on the willingness of love to suffer. I preached that Jesus' life revealed the nature of love... I'd said that love bears all things. Never breaks relationship. Keeps ties of connection to others even when they hurt you. Places the needs of the other before concern for the self.

In the stillness of that moment, I could see in Lucia's eyes that she knew the answer to her question, just as I did. If I answered Lucia's question truthfully, I would have to rethink by theology. More than that, I would have to face choices I was making in my own life. After a long pause, I found my voice.

"It isn't true," I said to her. "God does not want you to accept being beaten by your husband. God wants you to have your life, not to give it up. God wants you to protect your life and your children's lives."

Lucia's eyes danced. "I knew I was right!" she said. "But it helps to hear you say it. Now I know that I should do what I have been thinking about doing." She planned to take courses at the community college until she had a marketable skill. Then she would get a job and move herself and her children to a new home.

We stayed in touch as she took each step. Eventually, her husband sought help for himself. Lucia agreed to let him spend weekends with their children. "They got their father back," she said, "and I got my life back."

I wish Lucia's story was unique, but since Sept. 11, incidents of domestic violence are on the rise. And over the years, countless women have been advised by ministers and priests to be obedient to their husbands and to accept abuse. Fortunately, theological education now prepares ministers with a much more responsible understanding of domestic violence, and such counsel is becoming rarer. However, the recent revelations of the church's cover-up of priests who sexually abuse children is rooted in the same theological problem.

When Christianity portrays Jesus' death on the cross as a saving event, pleasing to God, in which Jesus, out of love for humanity and devoted obedience to his father, willingly bore pain, humiliation, torture and death in order to liberate humanity – it conceives Jesus as a model victim and God as a Divine Child Abuser. Is it no wonder that the church would protect child abusers?

When my theological consciousness began to shift, I began to speak, preach and write about the limits and dangers of saying Jesus died for us. It was difficult for people in my congregation to hear about sexual abuse, incest, battering of children and spouses. Breaking silence, though stressful, was also healing. But the silences kept around men's experience in war were the deepest silences I encountered in the church. A final story from "Proverbs of Ashes":

"Only after the congregation had become a site of open conversation around topics once forbidden did I begin to hear from women, and then from men, about war. Myrtle's comment in the Bible class, "We all know our men came home for the war broken," haunted me.

I began to listen more carefully to the men in the congregation, to hear where the silences were. The devastating consequences of war for those who serve in active combat were becoming clearer to me. So too, were the resources that people found to put life back together in the aftermath of violence, even when it took a long time.

Bill asked me to come see him. He'd been diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. "I want you to hear my testimony before I die," he'd said on the phone. Bill was Marge's husband. They lived out of town in a small house shaded by trees, close to the edge of the lake. There was a quietness there, and I felt the warmth of their home when I settled in by the fire. Marge disappeared into some other part of the house. We all knew that the brain tumor was far advanced, but Bill could still talk cogently.

"I'm not afraid to die," Bill began. "I want you to know that. And I want you to hear why. I was in the Korean War. They made me a sergeant and gave me a group of men to command. They were good guys. I loved them. Every one. Especially Sam, my best buddy. He was sweet and honest. He never said a hurtful word. He was always there when you needed him. We made it through some tough spots in that jungle. But the men were getting tired. Run down with sickness, the heat.

"One day, a message came through from my commanding officer, ordering us to make an ambush the next day. I knew where we were in the jungle. I knew where the enemy was. I knew if we made the ambush, there was no chance that we could succeed at the objective or get out alive. It was a suicide mission."

"I argued with the commanding officer. I told him the mission would fail, and that it was a stupid idea to send

us in there. I went so far as to tell him that even if he gave the order, I would refuse to lead my men into there. He told me I was betraying my duty as a soldier, that I was letting personal feelings get in the way of my responsibility, that if I wasn't going to carry out the command I wasn't an American, I wasn't a soldier, I wasn't a man. I felt ashamed of myself for questioning. The next day, I gave the order. We went it. It was bad." Bill stopped speaking for a moment, composing himself. "Most of my men were killed."

Bill hunched over and wrapped his arms around himself. "I was holding Sam in my arms when he died." It was quiet for a moment. "I broke down then. I wasn't good for anything anymore. They sent me home. In my eyes, I had failed in every way. I had questioned my superior officer. I had faltered in doing my duty. And when my men were killed. I couldn't take the pain. I began to drink. I wanted the same to go away. I wanted to bury the pain. I drank for the next twenty years. My family fell apart. My wife and children were disappointed in me. Angry. Hurt. She took them and left. I drank more. Slowly but surely I was killing myself."

"Then I met Marge." Bill sat up, caught my eye, and smiled... "Marge was tough. She told me I was worth something but I was treating myself like shit. She knew – she'd been there. Thanks to Marge's love I got into AA. I stopped drinking. I began to feel all the things I'd buried and think all the things I couldn't bear to think. It was rough, but the other guys in AA listened to all the crap I had to say about myself, about the world. They just listened. Didn't tell me I was right. Didn't tell me I was wrong. Didn't blink. Then I really began to come to my senses, like the Bible says."

"I saw the truth. Back there is Korea, I was *right* to have questioned my commanding officer. I was *right* to feel the order should be disobeyed. And when I broke down because my buddies died. I was *right* to cry."

As Bill spoke he placed both his hands on his own chest. "This is my manhood," he said, tapping a rhythm with his hands upon his body. "That I can feel. That I can care. That I can grieve. That I can love. That I hate war. That I had the courage to question. That I was willing not to obey."

"I'm not afraid to die now, because I know what love is. I know where God is." Hand again, pressing against his own flesh. "This is what I wanted you to hear from me before I die." He took my young hands in his old ones and looked at me. "It is important for you to know this. You are a preacher. Tell my story. People need to know what I'm telling you. You need to know what I'm telling you."

Bill had hated himself. But his life had been saved by a listening community, the tough encouragement of his wife, and by something in himself that rebelled against the suppression of his capacity to think feel, and act.

## *Conclusion*

Effective resistance to violence begins with our personal journeys to integrate our experiences and knowledge of violence and its effects on our lives. Like Bill and Lucia, we may need to find a new path, a new heart, discover a new identity. Effective resistance to violence expands through the work of communities, their capacities to enable recovery, to find some means of restitution, and to negotiate responses to violence within a vision of restorative justice and steady, active love, embraced in a common life, with all its difficulties and rewards. Such communities of remembrance, resistance and hope enable human thriving amidst all the powers in their own times and places arrayed against them.

This weekend millions of people, from every age, race, religion, occupation and social background, in 400 cities around the world, under conditions of icy winds, balmy skies, pouring rains and scorching heat, demonstrated to prevent a preemptive U.S. war against Iraq. The isolation of the U.S. among the people of the world, in this winter of our discontent, is, perhaps, a small glimmer of hope that the last nuclear century helped us see that we must pull back from the abyss, that violence is never a solution, and that we are all in this together.

None of us can save the world alone.

But together,

face to face,

present in truth to life's beauty and its terror,

to our power to harm and our power to heal,

and revering that power within us

that rebels against the suppression

of our capacity to think, feel and act

Together,

we can create peace.

<sup>1</sup> Johanna McGeary, "Six Reasons Why So Many Allies Want Bush to Slow Down," *Time*, February 3, 2003.

<sup>2</sup>This position is contradicted by several studies. Dr. Hari Sharma, University of Waterloo in Canada, has studied the effects of DU weapons in Iraq for the Military Toxics Project. "His findings, approved by the World Health Organization as 'substantially correct,' were that cancer in southern Iraq is up to three times more common than it was before the Gulf War began. In and around Basra, which was hit especially hard by Allied attacks, some cancers are seven times as common." It has also been reported that "premature births are numerous. Congenital malformations of the new-born show a high post-war percentage of 26.8%." Reported by Alan Parry, "Going Home – to a toxic death trap", Labornet UK.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Chris Hedges, *War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 165.

<sup>4</sup>Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup>Even before September 11, 2001 George W. Bush had declared “the purpose of a strong military is to fight and win wars.” This rhetoric preceded the formulation of a Bush administration foreign policy centered on the concept of pre-emptive war as a form of national defense.

<sup>6</sup>Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, quoted in Lee Griffith, *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 25.

<sup>7</sup>Ambrose’s support for violence was selective. He excommunicated the Emperor Theodosius for massacring Thessalonian rioters, but supported the Emperor in using violence against Jews. Augustine’s theory of just war provided principles for judging when Christians could countenance war as a necessary evil that have served to this day as a basis for Christian objections to military action that does not meet just war criteria.

<sup>8</sup>Lee Griffith, 26-27.

<sup>9</sup>Mastnak, 4.

<sup>10</sup>Mastnak, 10.

<sup>11</sup>Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades*, 11-12.

<sup>12</sup>For a discussion of Erdmann’s thesis see H .E .J. Cowdrey, “Pope Urban II’s Preaching of the First Crusade,” *The Crusades: The Essential Readings*, ed. Thomas F. Madden (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 17-20.

<sup>13</sup>Raymond of Aguilers, quoted in Mastnak, 60-61.

<sup>14</sup>Mastnak, 46-47

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in Riley-Smith, 36.

<sup>16</sup>David M. Kennedy, “What Is Patriotism Without Sacrifice?” *The New York Times*, Sunday, February 16, 2003, WK 3.