

Item 12-06

Full-Text Rationale for Resolution on Violence, Religion, and Terrorism

*Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens
your faithfulness to the clouds.*

*Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.*

*How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.*

*They feast on the abundance of your house;
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.*

*For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light. (Ps. 36:5–9, NRSV)*

I. Introduction

This resolution and background paper have been developed in response to the following referrals:

- *Alternate Response to Overture 95-36, #5(1). On Directing ACSWP and ACREC to Study and Develop Recommendations on National Terrorism—From the Presbytery of Denver (Minutes, 1995, Part I, pp. 73, 684).*
- *2002 Referral: Item 14.07. Direct ACSWP to Authorize a Task Force to Study, Report on Terrorism, Role of Violence in Religion, and U.S. Political/Economic Involvement in the Middle East; Report to the 216th General Assembly (2004) (Minutes, 2002, Part I, pp. 55, 711).*

The 214th General Assembly (2002) directed the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy “to authorize a task force to study and report on terrorism, the relationship of religion to violence, U.S. military response, and U.S. political and economic involvement that may contribute to global problems, and report to the 216th General Assembly (2004).” The assembly further described the work in this way: “A vital part of the work will be the defining of terrorism, war, and political violence and reviewing the applicability of the concepts of just peacemaking, just war, and nonviolent intervention in the context post September 11, 2001.” Therefore, this resolution is intended to provide a framework for Presbyterians to understand more fully and accurately the phenomenon of terrorism and its probable causes, as well as to make responsible judgments about the nature, size, and potential result of possible responses.

This report will focus on the role that religion plays in relationship to violence, most specifically the form of violence used to attack important centers and symbols of American power on September 11, 2001. It will also examine actions that have been, or can be, mounted to counter such violence and the role religion plays in supporting or challenging those counter terrorist actions.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (as well as the hijacked plane crash in Pennsylvania) have momentous implications for thinking about American policy regarding issues of war and peace, global economic development and international relations as well as domestic public safety. These were surprise attacks (though the extent to which they might have been anticipated is a matter of current investigation); they employed methods that violated important canons of international morality; they were done by people who did not identify themselves, they attacked symbolic as well as functional centers of both civilian and military operations; and, they were theatrical actions of unprecedented scope. All of these factors differentiate them from traditional warfare as carried on between sovereign nation states. It is generally assumed that religion was a factor in the motivation of

those who carried them out. Although terrorist attacks have been occurring across the world for decades, having the attacks hit home in America jarred us out of our complacency. They should lead to, not merely responsive actions, but careful rethinking of many questions about the stance that religious faith should have toward the uses of violence for political purposes, including the use of violence for purposes of combating terrorism as a form of violence.

We realize that religion, historically, has been used both to resist and transform violence and to instigate and justify it. Further, we can see that faithful followers of all religions must confront the violence around them and in their own lives, including that violence that is woven into the very fabric of religion itself. The scriptures of many religions include descriptions of violence undertaken by the faithful, as well as depictions of divine violence (e.g., the ten plagues God visited on the Egyptians in the Exodus narrative, and Jesus' acceptance of death on the cross in the Gospels). Human sinfulness involves all of us in violence and in the struggle to find ways to deal with violence rooted in our own religious traditions. For Christians, God's resurrection of Jesus represents the ultimate triumph over the forces of violence and death. In Christ, the path of reconciliation is opened to use as the disciple's calling.

Throughout the centuries since the time of Jesus, however, the behavior of Christians has often not always contributed to peace. Christians have often blandly tolerated the world of violence and even made use of it in extraordinary ways. Even today there are Christians who employ, or would employ, violence to achieve what they consider to be important moral and political objectives—such as bombing abortion clinics to prevent actions that they consider to be murder, bashing gas guzzling vehicles to thwart environmental damage, or using military action to settle international disputes.

There is a deep and persistent division within the Christian tradition over the use of violence. Some groups eschew violence as a political tool; others have generally supported carefully circumscribed uses of violence as a means to combat social evils that yield to no other means of control; still others have regarded violence as a legitimate means for advancing the fortunes of religion or destroying evildoers. All of this means that the response to terrorism as a special form of violence must be made without the clarity and credibility that might be forthcoming from a more adequate consensus within the Christian community regarding the moral implications of God's work in Christ.

Terrorism is a vivid indication of the degree to which human interactions can be affected by sin. But terrorism is not the only form which sin takes; it is not the only form of evil. The Christian doctrine of original sin holds that all persons and all institutions fall short of God's intentions for them. While there is considerable difference between terrorist wrongdoing and many other political wrongs, that difference is a matter of degree and not an absolute contrast. In thinking about sin in relation to social and political struggle, Christians are called to ask how their behavior as well as that of others falls short of God's intention for human community. This means that we must examine our own policies to see to what extent they have been a factor in creating the resentments and the sense of despair that drive terrorists to their behavior. To use the idea of sin mainly to draw a complete contrast between those who are "good" and those who are "evil" is, ironically, a manifestation of sin in the most insidious form.

II. Concepts and Definitions

The study deals with several important concepts whose use in what follows deserves to be carefully spelled out:

A. *Religion*

Religion is the way of life of a community of people whose existence is shaped by beliefs and convictions about ultimate reality, particular understandings of the world and of human nature, and a set of practices both devotional and practical. Adherents of all religious traditions express their commitments in word and deed. Religious people orient their living toward a source of ultimate meaning, often understood to be sacred. Most religious communities have a collection of writings or stories that serve as a source of authority for interpreting how to live in their particular way. There are marked similarities and profound difference among the goals and

points of orientation of different religions. One important dimension of religious living shared by all religious believers is the need for those living by a particular tradition to interpret and apply the insights and practices that they have inherited from the traditions to their own time and place.

B. *Violence*

Violence is found throughout human societies and is expressed most visibly in warfare, in several kinds of crime, and in terrorism. Although there are instances of violence that can be understood as the venting of anger or deep hostilities, it is purposive violence that is of greatest concern for this study. Purposive violence is the intent to inflict injury on others in the effort to obtain a resulting change in behavior that is not freely forthcoming. Some of the deepest moral disagreements within the Christian tradition revolve around the legitimacy of such efforts, especially when the desired consequences have moral warrant (as, for instance, in the case of self-defense or the protection of another). Some Christians condemn violence on the ground that any effort to be coercive is morally wrong; others hold that violent forms of coercion are illegitimate but that nonviolent action (sometimes called “soul force”) can be used to deal with threats and obtain social goals; still others believe that violence is sometimes necessary in order to exert the force necessary for the protection or enhancement of human well-being. Each of these attitudes toward purposive violence will significantly affect the way in which the problem posed by terrorism will be addressed and the differences between them account for differences in thinking about how to counter terrorism.

C. *War*

War is a term that is used in several ways. When used metaphorically, it describes an action undertaken with an unusual amount of effort or high resolve, as in the “war on drugs” or the “war on crime.” The conventional use of the term describes violence carried out at the deliberate decision of a nation-state usually against another nation-state by personnel deliberately selected, trained, and equipped for combat. Such individuals are usually identified by uniforms, take orders from a hierarchical command structure, observe certain conventions developed over the years, and can be ordered to cease the use of violence when the political situation comes to the point it desires such action to take place.

Another situation in which armed conflict is often described as “war” is revolution, in which organized groups of oppressed or marginalized people train, arm themselves and fight to obtain their freedom from some form of tyranny. They may not wear uniforms, though may adopt an identifying item of clothing. They may also resort to unconventional forms of violence in the face of the superior force of their oppressors. Furthermore, they do not have any officially sanctioned legitimacy of the kind described in the traditional rules of military engagement. On the other hand, they usually have a command structure, training camps, and other features of traditional armies. While those in power often characterize such initiatives as “terrorism,” they are “wars of liberation” to those who initiate them.

Still another use of the term “war” arises out of the traditions of certain religious groups, especially those in the Abrahamic tradition. Whether the term used is “crusade,” “herem,” or “jihad” they are commonly referred to as “holy war,” carrying the sanction, not merely of nation-states, but of a divine power itself.

D. *Terrorism*

Too often the word “terrorism” is applied in a pejorative fashion, attached as a label to those groups or individuals whose political objective someone finds objectionable. In order to develop a policy to respond to this phenomenon, we must first establish a workable and useful idea of what terrorism is—useful in that it has sufficient precision to allow us to identify the phenomenon when it occurs, and workable in that it is acceptable to us as a Christian community. Terrorism is best defined by focusing on the act rather than the cause.

While it has not yet been possible to create a universally acceptable definition of “terrorism,” it is both possible and necessary to specify certain features common to the phenomenon. Acts possessing all of these features could then be identified as acts of “terrorism” with some consistency. Without falling into the political quagmire of attempting to label individuals, groups, or governments as “terrorists,” certain types of actions could

be identified consistently as “terrorism,” regardless of who commits them, and no matter the nature of the cause for which they are committed.

A working concept of terrorism must, of necessity, be focused but flexible. The operational definition fairly widely accepted today defines terrorism as a synthesis of crime and theater, a dramatization of the most proscribed kind of violence—that which is perpetrated on innocent victims—played before an audience in the hope of creating a mood of fear, for political or social purposes. There are, in this definition, a number of crucial components. Terrorism, by this definition, involves an act of violence, an audience, the creation of a mood of fear, victims who are not parties to the dispute, and political or social motives or goals. Each of these elements deserves some clarification.

First, it is important to note that terrorism involves some form of violence or credible threat of violence. Sit-ins, protest marches, picket lines, and other similar forms of protest, no matter how disruptive, are not terrorist acts. Violence, or threats that demonstrate a capacity and willingness to commit violence, are essential to terrorism. The violence need not be fully perpetrated—that is, the bomb need not be detonated or all of the citizens of a village killed—in order for the act to be considered “terrorism.” But the capacity and the willingness to commit a violent act must be present.

This means that the perception of an audience that there is a potential for violence is crucial to classifying an act as “terrorism.” Terrorism is, essentially, a crime of theater, an act played before an audience, designed to call attention to a situation through shock, producing reactions of outrage and horror by doing the unthinkable without apology or remorse. Unlike similar acts of violence in war that aim to destroy the sources of danger, terrorists acts are often only tangentially related to the ends sought. They are simply crafted to create a mood of fear and to demand attention to an issue or cause. This theatric horror is also to be witnessed by the constituency that terrorists claim they represent. Terrorists hope that the injuries, fears and life disruption caused by their attacks will promote their message and give them political legitimacy. They hope such reactions will consolidate even more support for their cause, and more importantly encourage more individuals to join their ranks.

This mood may not be created merely as a result of the numbers of casualties caused by the act of violence. While the number of people killed in the attacks on September 11, 2001 was appalling, it was the nature of the victims of those acts that earned the opprobrium of “terrorism” for those events. Automobile accidents cause greater numbers of injuries and deaths each year in the United States, without generating the mood of terror that swept the country in the wake of 9/11. Instead, the individuals who died in the Trade Towers were assumed not to be guilty of any particular crimes nor engaged in any military operations. They were only in the wrong place at the wrong time—civilian noncombatants who lost their lives in a totally unpredictable act of violence. Therefore, their deaths terrified a nation because they were unexpected and uncalled for.

Terrorism is thus distinguished from guerilla warfare since it consists of deliberate attacks upon persons who are not parties to the conflict (that is, who are bystanders), and because of the separation of the victims from the ultimate goal of the perpetrators. Unlike the soldier, the guerilla fighter, or the revolutionary, an individual committing a terrorist act is often in the paradoxical position of undertaking actions the immediate physical consequences of which are not of particular interest to him or to her. While someone committing an ordinary murder will kill someone because he or she wants the person to be dead, an individual engaged in an act of terrorism will shoot someone even though it is a matter of complete indifference to him whether that person lives or dies. It was not the individuals in the Trade Towers who were the specific object of the perpetrators rage. They were only in the wrong place when the attacks occurred, and their deaths were necessary to create the mood of fear and send a warning message.

Put more simply, the difference between terrorist acts and many crimes and the activities of warfare is that terrorist acts are perpetrated deliberately upon third parties in an effort to coerce a second party or persons into some desired political or social course of action. Victims are chosen, not primarily because of their personal stance (in terms of membership in opposing military or governmental groups), but because their deaths or injuries will so shock the public that concessions can be obtained in order to avoid a recurrence of the incident. The laws of war permit waging war between armies, within certain humanitarian limits. Even for enemies in a violent protracted conflict, some types of behavior (such as genocide and torture) are expressly forbidden, and certain

basic amenities are required to be preserved (regarding such matters as the protection of civilians and humanitarian treatment of prisoners-of-war). Terrorist acts violate these rules in that those targeted for destruction are not armed military opponents, but helpless civilians. Rules of international behavior for warfare, particularly those that pertain to political responsibility and military obligation, supposedly offer significant protection to civilian noncombatants. Terrorism, in contrast, involves the persistent, deliberate attempt to harm precisely that type of person.

There is one further element in this working definition of terrorism: the political or social motive for the act. While this element is crucial to delineating acts of terrorism, it is important to remember that a political or social motive may be necessary but is not sufficient to earn special legal protection to such acts of violence. Most of those who engage in acts of terror today have genuine social or political goals, some of which may even be just—perhaps even laudable. But no goal, however just, can make legitimate the use of force that deliberately targets the lives of those who have no connection with the matter being contested.

III. Why Terrorism Arises

Along with the impulse to achieve certain political objectives, acts of terrorism often give vent to broader feelings and aspirations. We cannot ignore the conditions that motivate men and women to carry out acts of terrorism. These must be understood if we are to respond with a tough, even love-directed, concern for justice rather than with cries for vengeance. Studies of terrorism suggest that those who commit acts of terrorism are often alienated and de-socialized. They seldom get this way in a day or due to a single event (although if one's whole family or home is destroyed the response can be sudden). Instead, they have developed such attitudes over a period of years. This suggests that the roots of terrorism are very deep.

Terrorism is almost always an attempt to communicate a message. Acts of terrorism give expression to the feelings and perhaps even the aspirations of those who resort to this form of violence as a way to express themselves when they are not otherwise recognized. Therefore, whenever a terrorist act occurs it is important to ask, "What is being said?" Terrorism will be understood adequately only if that message can be discerned despite the shock created by the horror produced by the violence with which the message is foisted upon the world.

A. *Political and Social Causes of Terrorism*

A major theme in the message being sent by terrorist behavior is unhappiness, discontent, and frustration with many of the trends at work in every part of the contemporary world. But in the case of terrorism these feelings have reached a point of desperation and anger far exceeding normal responses. Through the financial and technological transformation commonly referred to as "development," the contrasts that once sharply distinguished the so-called "under developed" from the so-called "developed" countries are breaking down, but not always in beneficial ways. The transitions to "development" from "underdevelopment" often involve disruptions that disturb as much as they help. Moreover, not all economic development furthers the cause of economic justice. Affluent countries and transnational corporations frequently act in thoughtless and heedless ways.

Abject poverty continues to be the plight of many people. About half the people on earth today survive on less than \$2 per day. The number of "have nots" is growing faster than the number of "haves," and the gap between them is widening rapidly, often enhanced by the process of globalization that has made the world a "neighborhood" in the technical sense but not a "community" in the moral sense. The development of more extensive international communication often increases people's awareness of the disparities that do exist. Disease, overcrowding, and hunger breed despair, anger, and hate. More than a generation of such conditions, offering little hope for a better future, can lead to alienation and ultimately to a willingness to commit acts of terror. Terrorism, therefore, while never justified, should be examined for the possibility that it can be a protest against the economic and social changes that are ongoing in the emergence of a new world. But alienation can occur, not merely among those who are economically deprived, but from any group that feels outcast for any reason.

Historical legacies have a dramatic impact upon contemporary economic developments—legacies that have included imperialism where the strong have been enriched at the expense and suffering of the weak. The historical

process through which the world has been moving has taken place in three major waves: (1) the age of discovery during the 15th and 16th centuries; (2) the age of mercantilism during the 17th and 18th centuries; and (3) the age of imperialism/colonialism during the 19th century and the early 20th century—coinciding with the industrial revolution. Through this long history Western countries accumulated enough economic and political power to organize their own internal social, cultural, and political structures, and to determine and/or dictate how the newly “discovered” and conquered nations would organize themselves. Imperialism and colonialism have been ways of securing both natural resources and labor-power at the lowest possible cost (the corrosive attitudes of racial superiority and “Social Darwinism” were furthered as a consequence). The acquisition of colonies was important and beneficial not only for economic gain but also because it foreclosed action by rival nations. Thus, European nations did not hesitate to exercise violence against their colonial dominions but also against each other to secure their advantage.

Along with colonialism and economic imperialism went a profound cultural imperialism; i.e., the imposition of a world view in which Euro-American nations defined themselves as modern, history-making, scientific societies, and in turn defined the newly conquered nations as prehistoric, traditional, and superstitious societies. Western superiority was assumed and used as the basis for the natural right to civilize other nations and exploit the world’s resources to create a world in its own image.

The same ideologies that undergirded the self-image of the powerful proved themselves effective in disabling the self-image of colonized nations and peoples. The colonized came to believe that they were subservient to the superior Europeans and saw themselves as having at best instrumental value, while the Euro-Americans were to be honored and respected as beings with dignity. The colonized in turn came to feel that they were not equal and ought not to aspire to build a world in which they were equals. While it is not clear how much this has been universally true, such attitudes are being sharply challenged by the rise of liberation thinking.

The Europeanization of the “new world” was the product of the massive diaspora of ordinary travelers, merchants, explorers, adventurers and fortune hunters, missionaries and soldiers that settled in the “new lands.” They were the ones who exploited and developed the available material and human resources (which resulted in uneven growth and social inequality between the colonial powers and the satellite nations) and the ones who undertook the creation or the alteration of political social and cultural institutions which led to uneven power relationships among members of the ruling colonial power and native inhabitants.

Practices of imperialism have survived even where colonial relations have been eliminated. While most vestiges of colonialism formally ended during the period between 1945 and 1990, a form of neo-imperialism continues as Western nations (particularly the United States) secure wealth and power through continuing economic enterprises within, and political domination of, other parts of the world.

These developments, based on unequal economic and military power relationships, have increasingly encountered resistance. In some cases this has resulted in struggles for national liberation, which, while preferable to oppressive colonial rule, have not always delivered on their professed intentions. The hope that political independence would lead to greater social justice for most of their populations has not always been realized. In Central and South America, colonial dominance was replaced by control through a dominant class mostly composed of the direct inheritors of former European colonial rulers whose power stemmed from access to that inheritance. In parts of Africa, colonial dominance was often replaced by military juntas that came to power following the overthrow of the weak leadership that emerged at the time of independence. In parts of the Arab world, colonial dominance was replaced by royal families that gained power through the support of the departing colonial power. Many of the regimes that emerged have proven to be more repressive and violent against their own citizens than were the former colonial rulers.

Globalization is a natural extension of the imperial economic and cultural project pursuing the same goals of enhancing wealth, securing natural resources and cheap labor, enhancing markets and consolidating regional influence. The term globalization, however, points to significant changes in the technological, economic, political, and financial spheres and to developments within the communication and information industries that for the first time in history have created the possibility of establishing a world that functions as an organic community or as a truly integrated economic, political and cultural global village.

Those who control the worlds of finance and technology have reached such a degree of dominance that they are often able to override the power and limits of the nation-state. The nation-state continues to be a major political player at the world scene; however, its capacity to control and regulate the flux of international capital and to establish autonomous policies has been significantly diminished. This role is increasingly being assumed by transnational corporations.

The process of globalization, like all complex historical processes, is quite ambiguous, hard to define, and difficult to evaluate. It can be seen as a constructive and positive process that forwards unity and integration among all nations and peoples, and also as a process that has the capacity to generate greater wealth and additional opportunities for more people to enjoy a meaningful life. Furthermore, the immediate access to information that the new communication technologies put in the hands of individuals and social groups are creating more occasions for consciousness raising and for solidarity between groups committed to issues such as the preservation of the environment, arms reduction and upholding the rights of those who have been traditionally marginalized and oppressed.

At the same time it can be seen as the culmination of the inhumane and cruel process of imperialism. Transnational globalization raises the following problems:

- It gives transnational corporations the power to undermine local political practices and to disregard matters of social justice. Such actions can lead to social unrest that generates repressive responses, even the militarization of society.
- Its expectation of never ending growth may disregard environmental limits and assumes a triumphal and overly optimistic sense of its capacity to provide a technological fix to whatever social or natural problem might emerge, thus contributing to greater ecological degradation and depletion of scarce resources.
- It challenges and even distorts existing cultural and moral values. Matters of love, justice, and service to others take a back seat to matters relating to materialistic consumption and the immediate gratification and satisfaction of base desires and pleasures.
- And, finally, the quest, otherwise positive, of an integrated world community is impoverished and distorted by the imposition of a homogeneous global culture centered mostly on the mass-consumption lifestyle and values of Western nations. Transnational globalization is perceived as a serious devaluation of the plurality of values and meanings that define the sense of truth, of the forms of beauty and goodness that have traditionally given meaning to the lives of the many and diverse cultures and peoples.

The foregoing analysis of “what is going on” helps to explain in part the possible motivations which are behind the rise of terrorism in the world today. Much of the violence is protest against economic and social developments that seem threatening to large numbers of people.

B. *Cycles of Violence*

Terrorist violence is often but one development within a cycle of violence. Terrorists frequently claim that those against whom they use violence already engage in violence to gain their way or support their power. Most revolutionary groups assert that it is terrorism by the state that provokes, and by its presence justifies, acts of terrorism by non-state groups seeking to change the government or its policies. Casualty figures give some indication of the magnitude of the harm states can inflict on their people. In the decade between 1968 and 1978, approximately 10,000 people were killed by terrorist incidents by non-state actors. By comparison, almost the same number of civilian deaths occurred under the new military dictatorship in Argentina in just one of those years (1976–77). When violence is carried out by official agencies on such a scale, it becomes more difficult to consider its use by unofficial groups as uniquely evil.

C. *Religion and Terrorism*

There is often a powerful linkage between religion and terrorism. Today mention of one often prompts attention to the other. Religion is something that gives life meaning and purpose, even when the possibility of

finding meaning and purpose in ordinary achievements has been cut off by misfortune and oppression. Religiously motivated terrorism connects the will to kill or the will to die for a cause to a transcendent purpose that is seen as connected with a divine will. Even though this connection is often repudiated by the majority of adherents of a religion involved, the drive that religion can provide to terrorism is formidable.

The modern trend toward secularization—which many foresaw as inevitable (even as potentially healthy) just a few decades ago—is no longer characteristic of a “world come of age.” Cool, rational, detachment has not proven to be a characteristic that necessarily promises to bring harmony and agreement to the political process or prevents emotive excess and convictional bias of a sort that works havoc in public life. A truculence and rigidity rooted in faith stances that claim absolute authority has increasingly become an aspect of public life in almost every part of the world. This development is often referred to as “fundamentalism,” a term that should be used with caution because it refers to many dimensions of religious behavior besides truculent rigidity and because it has a very specific meaning in American religious history.

The religious orientation that is of most concern with respect to terrorism is characterized by intense devotion that helps to justify, in the minds of its adherents, the use of violence in order to advance faith or to repress heresy. Religion is used as a driving force to maintain cultural cohesion and social unity in face of perceived threats from outside sources, often pluralistic and diverse in nature. When so exercised religion may involve strict adherence to dominant beliefs and morals. In doing so it draws sharp lines between believers and infidels, and may become an instrument of oppression. These trends have become characteristic of groups in every religion and have caused divisions that are often far greater within those religions than the differences between the various religions. Terrorism often develops when those who embrace such a passionately held and narrowly conceived religious stance feel it is their duty to attack (usually verbally but sometimes physically) those who embrace secularizing trends or beliefs and practices that differ.

One consequence that may flow from this development is a trend toward a religious domination of the political sphere. The separation of church and state is challenged on the ground that religion as guidance for moral behavior should be used to enforce certain norms and practices through available channels of authority—thus preserving traditional practices.

In Islam, for instance, the writer/philosopher/activist Sayyid Qutb has perceived the expansion of Western dominated market and political models to be major threats to the integrity of Islam. He and other radical Muslims see this threat taking place on at least three levels: political, economic, and moral. Their outlook differs in this respect from mere fear or discomfort with secular changes in that it makes resistance to those changes a matter of religious duty.

Among the developments feared by Islamic sectarians are political and social changes that seem to them to pose a threat to the doctrine of “Tawhid” (the belief that in the unity of God and the solidarity of the human family God is to be worshiped in surrender without reservation or rationalizations). In their view, Islam frames the roles played by politics and economics. To those who embrace this view, the continuing Westernization of Islamic societies is especially unacceptable. At the heart of this corruption, from the sectarian Islamic perspective, is the Western style of law and the importation of Western style democracy that undermines Shari’a (Islamic law) and justifies values that are offensive to God—such as portrayal of behavior considered immoral on public channels of communication and the opening of Islamic societies to market practices that promote usury and greed. Qutb and his followers call this separation of religion from social values a “hideous schizophrenia” promoted by the Christian West and lament its penetration of Islam.¹

Among the moral issues raised by such Muslims is objection to the exposure of certain aspects of human life to the public. Some sectarian Muslims would also zealously enforce quite distinct roles for men and women in the affairs of society. These are convictions that place these Muslims and their movements in tension with other Muslims and Islamic society in general, and sharply at odds with dominant trends in Western outlooks, in which freedom of expression allows (perhaps even encourages) more openness in matters of dress and where the movement for equality between men and women in all functional roles has the support of huge segments of the population.

Religious zealotry is not found only in Islam. The same developments are present in most faith traditions in the world today. In the United States the “Christian Identity” movement, the Aryan Nations, and the Ku Klux Klan fear cultural change and strongly oppose religious diversity. And some adherents of these groups have resorted to theatrical violence to combat the “evil” they deplore. These radical “Christians” employ the same harsh rhetoric as those in other faiths who support terrorist means to oppose trends and practice they despise.

Few matters create more intense feelings than loyalties to land and place. Conflict over the Holy Land (and those regarding Ireland) may be among the most powerful forces behind the development of modern terrorism. The efforts, often violent, to establish a Jewish homeland on land occupied for millennia by Palestinians have long been a source of the resentments that lead to terrorism. Inability to resolve this conflict in its many dimensions by numerous diplomatic efforts has done much to create the kind of feelings that give rise to terrorism. Religious elements are very much involved in this thorny and complex issue, especially when political Zionism asserts scriptural support for its possession and control over the land. This belief in the divine intention to offer such possession is taken to be an unchallengeable promise in the biblical record that cannot be eroded by compromise or tampered with for the sake of peace. When demands of dogma foreclose the possibility of genuine interaction, the groundwork is laid for the use of terrorism. Violence may quite understandably arise from within a group that presently feels it has been deprived of the use and control of the land over which it has had a long period of recent control.

D. *Resort to Violence: A Religious Dilemma*

Terrorism is never justified. Nevertheless, as Christians we are compelled to understand it. The various factors that have been examined above certainly must be taken into account in understanding the causes of terrorism, but the analysis needs to be pushed even deeper, especially if we are to understand how religion—which normally teaches its adherents to eschew violence, and especially terrorism—on occasion becomes a very potent instigator of violence, especially when those adherents feel their place, their identity, or their community is threatened.

Religions have not been able to escape the moral perplexity generated by such crises. When what is regarded as most precious is seriously threatened, it may seem that the only available defense may require their adherents to violate a fundamental moral tenet such as the prohibition of violence. Sometimes this results in terrorist actions—an extreme response to an extreme threat.

In the case of the Palestinian people seeking protection in a land and state of their own, and fearing the overwhelming threat to life and livelihood represented by the Israeli Defense Force, many have responded with terrorist attacks. While religious sanction is often cited for them as “martyrs,” these actions are in fact undertaken in spite of the normative teachings of their faith, which condemn such violence.

Over against the Palestinians stand the Israelis, with an equally strong fear of their neighbors, yet with overwhelming military power. That fear becomes the occasion for justifying their campaigns of terror against the Palestinian population, obliterating villages and assassinating Palestinian leaders, in spite of the normative teachings of their faith that condemn such violence.

In a more extreme example, this rationale has been invoked by Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda, representing their terrorist acts as the only reasonable way to protect the essential values of Islam—holy lands, sacred sites, and the practice of the true faith—against the destructive influences of the West.

The frequent resort to terrorism by people of faith for reasons of dire necessity demands that morally sensitive people think through the appeal of such exigencies as a basis for terrorist acts and examine mitigating circumstances in which terrorism may be understood. Is there anything that distinguishes the firebombing of Germany and the atom bombing of Japan toward the end of World War II from the officially sanctioned terror of the Israeli Defense Force or the Palestinian responses to Israeli actions or from the terrorist acts perpetrated by Al Qaeda? To answer these questions is a fundamental religious and moral challenge that is increasingly difficult to escape in light of the rise of international terrorism.

IV. Responses to Terrorism

Not only must the messages imbedded in terrorism be understood, but the possible responses to terrorist threats must be examined. The possible responses to terrorism are complex. For the sake of analytical clarity, four types of response are presented in the following discussion: military, legal, nonviolent, and just peacemaking. A response may consist of more than one type. Therefore, respondents to terrorism using a mixed strategy may find their actions in more than one of the four. They may also find themselves promoting strategies that in the abstract seem to combine suppressive and transformative approaches.

A. *Attempts at Suppression*1. *United States Policies*

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States government has developed a complex series of interlocking strategies to guide the nation's "war against terrorism." The National Security Strategy, the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, the National Strategy for Homeland Security, Vision 2020, and other documents outline how the instruments of power—diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence, and the military—will be harnessed for the purpose of countering terrorism.

In February 2003, the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism precisely defined the objective of the U.S. response:

The intent of our national strategy is to stop terrorist attacks against the United States, its citizens, its interests, and our friends and allies around the world and ultimately, to create an international environment inhospitable to terrorists and all those who support them.²

Four objectives determine the direct and indirect use of U.S. national power. These are:

- defeat terrorists and their organizations;
- deny sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists;
- diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit; and
- defend U.S. citizens and interests at home and abroad.³

United States military responses have focused on depriving terrorists of protected territory from which they can plan, train, and launch attacks. Additionally, the responses have been intended to eliminate state sponsorship of terror on a case-by-case basis. Much less has been attempted to implement the third objective, to overcome the conditions that terrorists seek to exploit.

In October 2001, the United States and its allies launched a military campaign as a response to the events of 9/11 to overthrow the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and to disrupt or destroy the infrastructure of the Al Qaeda network of Osama bin Laden. By destroying training camps, weapons caches, safe houses, and cave complexes, the combined military action significantly disrupted Al Qaeda's ability to plan and launch attacks from within the sanctuary of Afghanistan. Current U.S. policy denies individuals detained as suspected terrorists any administrative or judicial review or counsel, leaving hundreds detained indefinitely without hope of case review. While bin Laden has so far apparently escaped, many of his top lieutenants have been killed or have subsequently been captured in follow-on operations in Pakistan or elsewhere. Despite this, and less known military operations in other parts of the world conducted for the same objective, terrorism has continued with high visibility and costs.

During 2003, President Bush offered many reasons for the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Principle among these reasons was the need to prevent weapons of mass destruction (WMD) from being made available to terrorists. Much uncertainty has subsequently developed regarding the actual

presence of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons that could have been transferred to terrorists. However, intensive air attacks did destroy the terrorist camp used as a safe haven by members of Ansar al-Islam and the Al Qaeda network.

As U.S. military forces have engaged abroad in the war against terrorism, so U.S. forces have taken part in protecting citizens at home at a scale unprecedented in the nation's history. Since September 11, 2001, thousands of fighter and helicopter patrols have flown over America's cities to prevent the use of a commercial or private aircraft as a weapon. National Guard members have provided medical, airlift, and security support at state facilities. Reservists have provided medical, engineering, and civil support. And, in what has been described as "the most significant command change since 1946," the Department of Defense established the U.S. Northern Command with headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Northern Command's mission is homeland defense against military threats emanating from outside the United States and support to local, state, and federal authorities in their responses to terrorism.

In the wake of September 11, the employment of U.S. military forces has reached a tempo not seen since the Cold War. War in Afghanistan, war and occupation in Iraq, counterterrorism training around the globe, forward deployment of rapid reaction forces such as those in the Horn of Africa have significantly elevated the role of the military instrument of national power compared to other elements. Along with the new demands have come increased military budgets, both regular and supplemental. The fiscal year 2004 military budget request was \$399.1 billion. By comparison, the military budget of the United States was more than six times that of the second ranking military (Russia); almost double that of the next six nations (Russia, China, Japan, United Kingdom, France, and Germany); or equal to the next twenty nations combined budgets.

2. *Actions by the United Nations*

The modern wave of terrorism has brought forth responses, not only from the United States government, but from the United Nations as well. The UN has and will continue to take a role in combating international terrorism. The United Nations primarily combats international terrorism through two of its main bodies, the General Assembly and the Security Council. With these two bodies the United Nations has created a framework of international law that defines acts of terrorism as crimes and obliges states to cooperate both in preventing them and in bringing perpetrators to justice. In addition to individual responses from each of its bodies to particular incidents of terrorism, the United Nations has brought together twelve major multilateral conventions identifying the crimes and establishing the responsibilities of individual states to combat acts of terrorism.

Since the 1963 drafting of the Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft, the United Nations has defined the specific responsibilities incumbent upon states in regard to terrorism. The conventions range in topic from terrorism occurring specifically on airplanes, to kidnapping and/or assassinating heads of state, to the marking of explosive devices to enable detection and identification. One of the last of these conventions deals with the issue of bombing, and the most recent of these conventions, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, came into effect in 1999 and explicitly says that those who finance terrorism are to be held criminally, civilly, or administratively liable for all such acts.

International terrorism has become even more an area of focus for the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council since the events of September 11, 2001. On September 12, 2001 the UN Security Council passed resolution 1368 condemning the attacks. While highly symbolic, the resolution was nonetheless an important step in consolidating the international will to fight terrorism. On September 28 the Security Council passed resolution 1373 calling on states to control "the financing and preparation of any acts of terrorism," and to ratify and implement all relevant UN protocols and conventions. The General Assembly also held a weeklong session on terrorism October 1-5, 2001. During that time, delegates from all nations had a chance to share their concerns related to the spread of international terrorism and their ideas of how best to combat the growing threat.

The UN conventions and protocols, along with the various General Assembly and Security Council resolutions signed and passed in regard to terrorism, have influenced the creation of an ad hoc committee to deal specifically with topics surrounding the suppression and elimination of terrorism. The Counter Terrorism

Committee (CTC) was convened immediately after the passage of Security Council Resolution 1373. Taking its mandate from that resolution, the CTC is composed of the fifteen members of the UN Security Council.

In addition to the work of the CTC there are two international treaties on terrorism currently under discussion at the United Nations. The first is a draft Convention Against Nuclear Terrorism. This treaty, like the twelve extant treaties on terrorism, would continue and enhance what is viewed by many as the current piecemeal approach to combating terrorism. The second convention in the works is the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. This convention would seek to replace the current topical treaties with one unified document. The American news media often emphasizes what our country has been doing to combat terrorism and fails to provide adequate attention to the work done by the United Nations.

3. *An Analysis and Critique of Suppressive Responses to Terrorism*

How are we as Christians within the Reformed Tradition, members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and citizens of the United States called to understand, to critique, to support, and, if necessary, to challenge aspects of these U.S. and UN responses to terrorism?

The U.S. responses since September 11 have flowed directly from the Constitution of the United States. In the Preamble to the Constitution, our founders stated that “We the people” share the responsibility of shaping our nation’s role in the world. “We” take on the responsibility to “provide for the common defense” and to “secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.” And, from that same document the president of the United States swears that he “will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

The National Security Strategy issued in September 2002 outlined the administration’s approach to international engagement in the post-911 environment. The topic that has prompted the greatest debate deals with “preemptive” attacks against adversaries. The document states:

... We will disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations by . . . identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders. While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right to self defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent their doing harm against our people and our country.⁴

Is the seriousness of the threat of terrorist attack in an age of weapons of mass destruction sufficient to move the United States to a posture of preemptive attack? In adopting such a posture, does the United States set an example that gives other states the sanction to attack preemptively to defend their national interests as they perceive them? Are there to be limits to preemption and, if so, how are those limits to be defined?

In developing its blueprint of how the U.S. military will fight and win the wars of the next two decades, the Joint Chiefs of Staff released Vision 2020 in June 2000. At its core is the concept of Full Spectrum Dominance, which is a reformulation—indeed, a sharp contrast—with previous policy.

The overall goal of the transformation (of America’s Armed Forces) . . . is the creation of a force that is dominant across the full spectrum of military operations—persuasive in peace, decisive in war, preeminent in any form of conflict . . .⁵

For the joint force of the future, this goal will be achieved though full spectrum dominance—the ability of U.S. forces, operating unilaterally or in combination with multinational and interagency partners, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the full range of military operations.⁶

We have responded with the massive capability of our armed forces to the threat of terrorism. As the United States seeks allies in the global fight against terror, special attention must be paid to the sale or transfer of high technology weapons to states that, before September 11, demonstrated little regard for human rights or for controlling nuclear weapons proliferation. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan may provide assistance in the Afghan campaign, but what of their own treatment of minorities? Pakistan and India are embraced for cooperating in the war on terror, but have their nuclear weapons programs been scaled back or have they taken sufficient steps toward resolving the crisis in Kashmir? Adapting the ancient adage “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” the United States, throughout the Cold War period and beyond, has supported governments where repression and

oppression have bred terrorism. It runs risks when it does not carefully examine the record of those states that become members of a “coalition of the willing.”

Few people debate the requirement for a comprehensive response on the part of the United States to the rise in global terrorism represented by Al Qaeda and the September 11 attacks. Ours is to bring a Christian perspective shaped by the Reformed Tradition to bear on the nature of the response. The Reformed versions of the Christian faith emphasizes the power and sovereignty of God, the reality of sin in all human actions, and the personal appropriation of faith in its implications for the totality of our personal and social lives. For this set of convictions certain questions arise. Is the employment of military force balanced by similarly focused political and economic actions? Is the cost paid by U.S. citizens to defeat and defend against terrorism commensurate with the price paid in delayed progress in domestic education, social service, and health-care programs? Does making the response to terrorism a “war” open the way to emphasize military action and to forget the broader and more significant (and equally expensive) tasks that have to be undertaken to overcome the conditions from which terrorism arises?

The use of military force is insufficient to bring about a satisfactory end to terrorism, especially if it is employed without the involvement of the world community. Our faith points us to participate in a world community, where well-being and survival require a “world vision” and a willingness to work with the peoples of all nations to face common threats. It is imperative that the U.S.-driven effort to combat terrorism be truly internationalized by integrating U.S. initiatives and resources with those of the rest of the United Nations community.

The problem posed by seeking to counter terrorism with the model exemplified by the United States is that of creating credibility for the unilateral use of preemptive force on such a worldwide scale. The problem with efforts of the United Nations is an inability to muster sufficient impact to carry out its effort, particularly when support for such efforts is either lacking, half-hearted or deliberately undermined. Using force without sufficient international credibility creates one kind of problem; attempting to establish credibility without sufficient resources creates another. Acting alone the United States can create the force, but cannot legitimate its use. The United Nations may create the legitimacy, but in the absence of full cooperation may not be able to mount the logistics needed to make its role effective.

For all the counterterrorist work being done through the UN and around the world it is unfortunate that the international community appears more disposed to absorbing the enormous costs of conflict than to pooling resources for prevention. Reports from the committee of the UN General Assembly responsible for social, humanitarian, and cultural issues, point out that the terrorism branch of the Center for International Crime Prevention, the UN body most qualified to deal with terrorism, remains underfunded and understaffed. There is simply not enough money in the system and the effects can be seen in daily catalogues of underfunded UN appeals and in more serious warnings from UN agencies like the Center for International Crime Prevention.

Although there are many facets to what has been done by the American administration to counter the threat of terrorism, most of the nation’s actions are built on a model of war, albeit extended and intensified. These actions have been largely taken on a unilateral basis. In contrast, the efforts made by the United Nations have been built on what might be called an international criminal justice model. Such a model presupposes that the issues at stake are defined and adjudicated by the world community and that the force used is subject to the restraint exercised by the world community. It also, ideally, seeks to apprehend and punish the particular individuals or groups that are responsible for the terrorism rather than to mount campaign against whole countries or the regimes of particular nations. Because our goal as Christians is not just to suppress terrorism or to punish terrorists, we must go further and seek strategies that are genuinely transformative.

B. *Proposals for Transformation*

The foregoing responses to terrorism seek to curtail or eliminate terrorism by taking measures that deter its use by creating the fear of retaliation, punishment, and possible destruction. We come now to responses to terrorism that are based on a hope that by listening to the messages terrorists are sending ways can be found to deal with their distress and get them to desist from their behavior. Suppressive approaches do not need to listen to the messages of terrorists; it is enough to recognize their behavior as an evil to be stopped. Transformative

approaches must discern the message, take account of the feelings that drive terrorists to violence, and work to overcome the root causes of the behavior rather than simply to repress it by counterviolence or the threat of counterviolence.

There are two major approaches to transformative action: nonviolent direct action and peacemaking (which provides for but is not limited to nonviolent direct action). Both seek alternatives to war. A difference between them lies in how they deal with extremely destructive conflicts. Just-peace advocates do not rule out that these crises may justify the use of military force in certain circumstances, whereas those who promote nonviolence, believing that military intervention will create further harm, rule it out.

1. *Nonviolent Direct Action*

Over the years there has been increasing awareness that nonviolent direct action can be used to achieve significant results in dealing with oppression, even aggressive threats. It played a major role in the process by which India overcame British colonial rule. It also played an equally impressive role in the civil rights struggle in the United States. Many of the things that the advocates of nonviolent direct action propose—attention to the root causes of terrorism, flexible negotiation, willingness to compromise—are best done before hostilities break out, before the cycle of destroy-and-revenge takes hold. In conflict, since the power of nonviolent direct action may depend upon close interactions between individuals in conflict, it may not prove to be a major answer for dealing with attacks in which there is no such personal interaction.

The working premise of nonviolence theory is that violence breeds violence and that conflicts can only be overcome by breaking that cycle. It reflects a recognition that warfare too often leads to more warfare rather than to the resolution of conflict. This is more than a pragmatic observation. The theory comes also from Scripture, from teaching about breaking the cycle of violence. We are admonished “not to render evil for evil,” but to follow what is “good” (1 Thess. 5:15). We have Jesus’ teaching that the “Son of Man came not to destroy lives but to save them” (Luke 9:55) and what is more important his challenge not only to “love our neighbors” but even to “love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). This is a radical departure from the “take revenge and destroy” model for responding to being attacked. It opens up space for new negotiation and perhaps even for reconciliation. According to its advocates, nonviolent responses might induce terrorists to abandon their reliance on violence, when they find they cannot break the morale of societies by their actions.

Nonviolent direct action has proven effective. The Gandhian movement in India and the civil rights struggle in the United States are only the most famous cases where it has been successful. There have been many other uses of direct action. Among them are elections that peacefully removed military dictatorship, as for examples, in Guatemala (1944), Brazil (1985), the Philippines (1988), Chili (1989), and Serbia (2001). Long-standing armed conflicts have been resolved by negotiations, as in El Salvador (1992) and South Africa (1994), and the peace settlement of 1998 in Northern Ireland shows promise of finally ending that long struggle. “People power,” that is, massive nonviolent protests and general strikes, played a part in preparing for those settlements, and peoples’ protests played the major role in forcing the Society Union out of East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary in 1989–90. And in many of these cases, notably in the Philippines and East Germany, the churches played a major role.

Nonviolent direct action requires close encounters between the parties to a dispute. Unlike acts of war, which can use technological weaponry against others with whom no communicative interaction takes place, nonviolent direct action must be open and straightforward and carried on through actual interactions. Whereas in violent combat, stealth and deceit can be used to possible advantage—for instance, to destroy an enemy by surprise—they would be entirely inappropriate in nonviolent direct action. Much imaginative thinking is needed to develop ways to carry out nonviolent direct action against terrorists, whose actions differ from those of the oppressors against whom it has been successfully used.

Moreover, advocates of direct nonviolent methods of responding to violence urge training in conflict resolution, a step that may be useful in guiding initial responses to terrorist attacks—responses that keep retribution from being thoughtlessly hostile or even preemptive. It is important that peacekeeping forces, whether unilateral or multilateral, be especially trained for this dangerous work. We must have peacekeepers who speak

the language and know the culture of the contested area, and who have experience in conflict resolution. An unarmed civilian force, trained in conflict resolution, may play a significant role. On a small scale, this is called “accompaniment.” Trained civilians interpose themselves between warring groups. Some pioneers in this approach to nonviolent direct action are Witness for Peace, Peace Brigades International, and Christian Peacemaker Teams employing groups of two to five persons. A new nongovernmental group, Nonviolent Peaceforce, is emerging to apply the same principle in larger numbers. All of these groups differ from UN Peacekeepers in that they are unarmed, taking the risk of injury onto themselves, to open up a space for peace. Who can tell what transformations might occur if there were as much attention and resources given to training in nonviolence as is presently devoted to preparing persons to use violence to settle disputes?

It may be that nonviolent direct action can be carried out more successfully by small groups than by nation-states. The efforts of such groups can take many forms, not necessarily only those of direct nonviolent action. For instance, third parties are needed to monitor elections, support fragile judicial systems, and possibly police public areas.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can work in local communities to bring about changes in policies and attitudes. They must work without recourse to violence. They can influence positively the behavior of many groups, those associated with governments and those associated with private commerce. Transnational corporations, which operate in many countries and communities, often have a negative impact on people’s lives through abusive labor practices, low wages, and environmental contamination. Their policies and behavior must be evaluated, not only by what they produce and their impact of the environment, but also by how they contribute to sustainable community and whether or not they undermine the dignity of the human person. When their policies are destructive or exploitative nonviolent protest can pressure them to change.

International and local NGOs play an important role in holding transnational corporations accountable to promoting human rights, labor rights, and environmental responsibility, which contributes to sustainable communities and a just peace. Religious and labor groups have been effective in Central America as monitors of factories in export processing zones to ensure compliance with core labor rights and the creation of safe and healthy workplaces. Individual investors, particularly in the religious community, have put pressure on corporations through filing shareholder resolutions and dialogues to adopt policies that are socially and environmentally responsible. The NGOs have launched effective boycotts of offending corporations and play an integral role in making sure responsible corporate social policies are implemented throughout the company’s operations and supply chain. This can help to change the conditions that lead to the resentments that breed terrorism.

2. *Just Peacemaking*

A response to terrorism informed by the idea of just peacemaking could be even more proactive than a response informed by belief in the possibilities of nonviolent direct action. It would ask what initiatives could be taken to address the message that terrorists are conveying by their actions. Just peacemaking seeks to understand the world from the perspective of “the other” instead of from the perspective of the powerful. It seeks to root out causes of distrust, sources of anger, and reasons why people come to feel they cannot get grievances ameliorated by dialogue and negotiation.

In its resolution approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998), which considers the matter of humanitarian intervention, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) renewed its commitment to just peacemaking. It stated a number of principles that are equally pertinent for addressing terrorism. These include

- (1) the promotion and preferential use of nonviolent means for conflict resolution and change;
- (2) the importance of human rights, religious liberty, and democratic principles as foundational [to peace];
- (3) the necessity for sustainable economic development in the achievement of just societies and the protection of the environment;
- (4) the abolition of nuclear weapons, limitations on the development of new weapons, restrictions on the sale and transfer of instruments of destruction;

- (5) the strengthening of international cooperation through the United Nations, including its peacemaking and peacekeeping roles;
- (7) the use of unilateral initiatives to reduce risks of conflict; and
- (8) the importance of self-examination and repentance in international relations as steps in the healing of conflict and the promotion of reconciliation. (*Minutes* 1998, Part I, pp.75, 457)

The initiatives characterizing just peacemaking are most important for taking action before a conflict actually breaks out, but they are never useless. All initiatives designed to advance human well-being are significant for peacemaking. Over the years the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has called attention to the need for such initiatives, ranging from nonviolent interventions to military actions. For example, the 208th General Assembly (1996) approved a policy statement “Hope for a Global Future” which called attention to the steps that would be needed to create a world in which the needs and concerns of all people would be cared for in ways that lead to peace. The 211th General Assembly (1999) approved a policy statement “Building Community Among Strangers,” which emphasized the moral obligation to combat racism, religious intolerance, and conflict. This document points to the need for people of diverse identities and interests to learn to live with one another. It is an example of a peacemaking initiative, even if it was not explicitly designated as such.

Just peacemaking cannot guarantee the success of efforts to change political, economic, and social processes in ways that foster peace and justice. But no efforts to better the human condition are ever assured of success. What just peacemaking can do is to listen thoughtfully for clues as to what prompts people to threaten peace; imagine creatively how their concerns can be alleviated; and work, perhaps even sacrificially, for changes that will alter conditions for the better.

V. Theological Perspectives on the Responses to Terrorism

The various models and proposals for dealing with terrorism are each grounded in a set of theological claims, moral values, civic-cultural loyalties, and socioeconomic commitments. Any proposal for responding to terrorism should be taken seriously only to the extent to which it makes clear the fundamental premises in which the proposal is grounded. Doing this means going beyond defending any particular proposal for its utility in combating terrorism. Such fundamental premises—including faith stances—must be acknowledged for their potential implications and possible impacts.

A. *Theological Issues Raised Suppressive Approaches*

Both suppressive responses accept the possibility that force may sometimes be needed to preserve social order from destructive attack. In this they are part of a long tradition that accepts the possibility that military force can be used to defeat a threat. But that does not altogether resolve the issues, since that same tradition has elaborated criteria for arriving at a judgment as to conditions that must present for the use of force to be legitimate.

Among other conditions that just-war teaching has elaborated as a warrant for using force is the idea of last resort. According to this doctrine, all other means for dealing with aggression or malfeasance must have been tried and failed before the use of force is legitimate. Many religious groups have given attention to what constitutes last resort, especially as issues have arisen about certain features of American strategy in recent years. But the consideration always involves pragmatic judgments about a particular crisis. Historically, just-war thinking has generally been used to approve, not criticize, military action but recent thinking has now developed to the point that raises the possibility that in some instances the use of force will be considered as illegitimate. For instance, just-war thinking was either explicitly or implicitly involved in the opposition of many religious people or groups to extending the war against terrorism into action against Iraq.

Although the idea of last resort does not settle the issue in any specific case as to whether all efforts at avoiding military conflict have been exhausted, it does stress the importance of making such efforts and undertaking military action only for dire emergencies. The doctrine of preemptive strike that was central in guiding the administration, especially in its decision to take the action in Iraq, is a radical reversal and repudiation

of moral teaching about just war as it has been developed through thoughtful reflection about such matters, especially in recent years. Over the long haul, the preemptive use of military action is bound to be destabilizing because it opens the door for any nation that sees fit to do so to make quick and sudden use of military action.

Another moral consideration that is advanced in just-war thinking about the use of force is the requirement that war be undertaken on by appropriate or legitimate authority. The trend across the years has been to consider the use of force to be legitimate to the extent that it is sanctioned and monitored by responsible political officials. All civil societies have judged the use of force by individuals acting alone to be illegitimate except for self-defense against a very evident attack. The restriction against the unilateral use of force by private citizens is the foundation of law and order. Societies marked by law and order restrict the use of force to specifically commissioned officials and even limit the use of police power to the apprehension of wrongdoers using minimal necessary force. In such societies only courts can mete out punishment.

Ever since World War II much effort has been expended to enlarge and extend the scope of authority in world affairs to the United Nations. Just as sovereign states promote civil order by curtailing the rights of individuals to employ violence, it has been the aim of this movement toward international order to curtail the unilateral use of force by individual nations in order to enhance world order. The progress in this direction has been slow, yet significant.

If the impulse to deal with terrorism quickly and decisively undercuts the efforts to extend international order, the consequences will be tragic and long-lasting. The struggle against terrorism must not become the excuse for treating the concerns of the international community as having no significance for shaping policy. No world order will be significantly achieved until the use of force can only be sanctioned an authority that is international in character.

One of the most radical aspects of biblical faith is found in the prophetic denunciations of God's own chosen people who are condemned for their own unfaithfulness and for their own failure to do justice and love mercy. The prophetic stance stands forever as a critique against any and every pattern in which any group claims the right to be master of other groups because its own faithfulness gives it the moral standing to do so with confidence in its own righteousness. This may not preclude taking actions necessary for the protection of the group's own life or even to protect the well-being of others, but it does rule out doing so in ways that overlook the moral shortcomings of the very group that takes such responsibilities upon itself. The normal tendency of people is to exaggerate the evils in others and to overlook evil within the self. Prophetic religion reverses this tendency by insisting that those who stand in covenantal submission to God's will are judged by even higher standards than others. Covenant creates the obligations of fidelity; it is misunderstood and corrupted when it is claimed to bestow righteousness on a people or to mandate them to be the instrument of vengeance on others. Any use of force for the alleviation of wrong that is carried out with self-righteous fury rather than a humble reluctance is a form of sin.

B. *Theological Assumptions Raised by Transformative Approaches*

The theological and moral premises that inform transformative responses to terrorism start with the conviction that no person or group is incapable of repenting wrong and moving toward amendment of life. Although there are differences between the use of nonviolent direct action and negotiations designed to achieve such transformation, both responses believe in the possibility that those who do evil can be led to change. No one can prove this assertion; it is a statement of faith—it is a form of that which must be hoped for, the evidence of something not seen.

This assumption is more significant for these approaches than is their repudiation of violence. It is the positive premise that gives these approaches warrant. History contains many cases in which a group once considered an "evil empire" has come to be seen as a legitimate partner. Therapeutic, rather than retributive, approaches to dealing with wrongdoing can work, though not without costs or uncertainty. The advocates of nonviolent action and just peacemaking believe that it is at least as legitimate to take risks and face uncertainties in the effort to allow others to change as it is to take risks and uncertainties in the effort to destroy them. Nor are efforts at peacemaking morally ruled out even if they are more costly than repressive strategies.

One possible cost associated with transformative approaches to terrorism might be having to live with the possibility of attacks. There is no evidence, however, that efforts at suppression eliminates those risks. The need to live with the possibility of harm may be recognized more readily by those who advocate transformative responses than by those who place their trust in suppressive responses. The nature of terrorism is such that efforts to reduce threats by the use of counterforce are less and less likely to be reliable. Terrorism may be sending the message—even if it does not intend to do so—that the use of counterforce is no longer able to guarantee safety.

VI. Counterterrorism and Domestic Liberties

Efforts to counter terrorism and its threat have consequences for the life of the countries that take such responsibilities upon themselves. The legitimacy of such efforts cannot be judged merely by the extent to which they are effective in stemming terrorism but must be examined for the consequences such actions have on people who undertake them. It is possible to endanger freedom at home in the process of seeking to prevent being destroyed from abroad. The current U.S. policy to detain indefinitely individuals suspected as terrorists without administrative or judicial review or counsel goes against the basic right to judicial review and counsel continually affirmed by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in its policies on restorative justice.

Among the responses of the Bush administration to the attacks of September 11, 2001, four aspects of domestic law enforcement and government policy bear particularly on the protection of the civil liberties of Americans and resident aliens: support for and active administration of new “emergency” legislation; proliferation of executive orders and governmental regulations and policies that expand the government’s ability to surveil and detain suspected terrorists or subject them to secret proceedings; use of the U.S. court system for prosecuting suspected terrorists; and the development by the Defense Department of a special antiterrorism surveillance system.

The USA Patriot Act,⁷ the centerpiece of the government’s post-September 11 “emergency legislation,” was passed on October 26, 2001, with the full support of the Bush administration. The act variously relaxes a variety of civil liberties protections for American citizens and for resident aliens, and as such is a very controversial law. Among other things, three aspects of the legislation are particularly troubling.

1. *Arbitrary Detention.* Non U.S. citizens may be held secretly, and virtually indefinitely, not for what they have done, nor on the basis of evidence supporting a probable cause that they are a risk to public order and safety, but typically for trivial offenses, and because they are regarded for some undisclosed reason as “a danger to national security.”

[O]ur country now jails large numbers of people not for what they have done, nor even with case-by-case evidence that it would be dangerous to leave them at liberty, but only because they fall within a vaguely defined class, of which some members might pose danger.⁸

2. *Guilt by Association.* According to the Patriot Act, organizations can be designated as “terrorist” based on “classified evidence,” which need never be made public because such disclosures might jeopardize national security. Consequently, noncitizens, and possibly American citizens, associated with such groups are liable under the act, if they have contributed money or solicited membership, unless they can prove that they did not know or could not reasonably have known that the group is terrorist. That could be impossible to do, since the reason the group is called terrorist can remain undisclosed!

[O]ne potential consequence of the Act could be to create a broad new definition of ‘domestic terrorism’ that could sweep in people who engage in acts of political protest and subject them to wiretapping and enhanced penalties.’ This broad sweep of [the Act] conjures some scenarios by which entire religious groups might be identified as terrorist organizations and by which members of those religious groups might be identified without warrant as engaging in terrorist activity. For example, if two or more members of a church, unbeknownst to the wider congregation, conspire to bomb an abortion clinic, and in carrying out this act, a federal agent is killed, the Patriot Act implies that the entire church may be labeled a terrorist organization.⁹

3. *Expanded Government Authority for Search and Surveillance.* The Patriot Act enlarges the permissible range of government surveillance, while minimizing traditional forms of judicial oversight.¹⁰

Such secret searches were formerly permitted, pursuant to a special warrant for that purpose, only if the primary purpose of the search was to collect information about a foreign nation's activities in this country. Now they are permitted if the primary purpose is to collect evidence of a crime that can be used in prosecution, so long as the intelligence gathering is a subsidiary purpose, as it can always said to be when a suspected terrorist's property is searched.¹¹

In ways supplementary to the expanded emergency powers granted by the USA Patriot Act, and that raise related problems, the U.S. government has claimed the right to relax conventional civil protections in relation to three specific areas: subjecting non U.S. citizens arrested for immigration violations to secret deportation hearings; indefinitely detaining individuals considered potential material witnesses in terrorism cases, and indefinitely detaining American citizens regarded as "enemy combatants" on the side of terrorists, and denying them access to legal counsel.¹²

There are a few encouraging signs in regard to "monitoring the monitors." A report sharply critical of the Justice Department and the FBI, as well as of certain corrections facilities, in administering the laws and policies adopted and applied after September 11 was issued on April 29, 2003, by the Office of the Inspector General of the Justice Department. The report found "significant problems" in the arrests and detentions of around seven hundred suspects, including insufficient evidence, "a pattern of physical and verbal abuse," and the denial of access to lawyers. Despite a rather belligerent and unbending public response by the attorney general, the administration has nevertheless agreed to implement nearly all of the recommendations put forward in the report.

Furthermore, as of February 2003, the Congress has determined that a Pentagon project designed to uncover terrorists by monitoring Internet e-mail and commercial databases for health, financial, and travel information may not be employed against Americans.

All the same, there is countervailing evidence that the administration continues to run the risk of substantially overreacting to the terrorist threat. This is made clear by the large number of lawsuits brought against the government by civil rights groups. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union is currently involved in more than thirty legal initiatives challenging the government's practices regarding closed hearings, surveillance, material witness detention, discrimination against Arab Americans, treatment of citizen detainees, search and seizure violations, and infringement of the First Amendment rights to assemble and protest. These cases will of course have to work their way through the system, but the sheer volume attests to the degree of apprehension in the land concerning the practices of the government.

In addition, the administration has a new proposed piece of "emergency legislation," called, Patriot II, which would further expand the law enforcement and surveillance powers of the government. Among other things, it would authorize secret arrests carried out in connection with "international terrorism." It would give the attorney general unlimited discretionary power to deport foreign nationals, including lawful permanent alien residents based on a judgment by him that such persons represent a threat to "national security." The bill would entitle the government to withdraw citizenship from people who belong to or support organizations designated as "terrorist" by the attorney general, and would authorize him to bypass the courts altogether in regard to searches and wiretaps conducted under Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. It would allow more intrusive wiretapping and Internet surveillance activities, and it would further relax the restrictions on domestic criminal investigations allegedly connected to terrorist activities.

VII. Faith for the Times in Which We Live

There is every probability that the future will be characterized by experiences of escalating vulnerability. That probability is consistent with a biblical worldview that assumes both good and evil increase in their intensity with the passage of time. The premise that underlies the modern belief in progress—that goodness increases and propensity for evil decreases over time—has been called into question by terrorism. This is not to say we are in the millennial moment when the final conflict between good and evil is taking place. To believe that is to open the door to actions that could have enormously destructive consequences. What it does say is that we should not expect to overcome evil by actions aimed directly at doing so suppressively—actions we might be tempted to make as surrogates of God in history. As the stakes get higher, the obligations of fidelity get greater and the possibilities of effecting transformation are both more momentous and demanding.

This means that in dealing with terrorism there is need for a heroism of patience that is just as demanding as a heroism of action, for a prudence of steadfastness that is just as important as the pursuit of expedient strategies, for a willingness to approach others in trust that is at least as important as the need to defend one's self. We are called to a discipleship that trusts God even more than to exercise a shrewdness that is founded only on what seems humanly prudent.

Endnotes

1. Berman, op cit.
2. www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/counter_terrorism/counter_terrorism_strategy, 11.
3. Ibid., 11–12.
4. www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf, 6
5. www.dtic.mil/jointvision/jvpub2.htm, 1
6. Ibid., 8.
7. Its full (less than felicitous) title includes the following: “The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001.”
8. Ronald Dworkin, “The Threat to Patriotism,” *New York Review of Books* (Feb. 29, 2002), pp. 44–49), p. 44. Dworkin elaborates: “If the Attorney General declares that he has ‘reasonable grounds’ for suspecting any alien of terrorism or of aiding terrorism in the broad sense that is defined, then he may detain that alien for seven days with no charge. If the alien is then charged with any, even a wholly unrelated crime, and the attorney general finds that ‘the release of the alien will threaten the national security of the United States or the safety of the community or any person, he may be detained for six months and then for additional six-month periods so long as the attorney general continues to declare that his release would threaten national security or anyone’s safety.’”
9. Derek H. Davis, “The Dark Side to a Just War: The USA Patriot Act and Counterterrorism’s Potential Threat to Religious Freedom,” *Journal of Church and State* 8, 37 (Feb. 8, 2002), pp. 9–10.
10. Dworkin, “The Threat to Patriotism,” p. 44.
11. Ibid.
12. “After Sept. 11, a Legal Battle on the Limits of Civil Liberty,” *New York Times* (August 4, 2002), pp. A1, A20.