

just war” that can be “applicable to all kinds of ethical issues” as well as to uses of force other than war.<sup>46</sup> Capizzi similarly refers to the “just war ethic” rather than “theory” as “an ethic of the use of force.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, for his part, Steffen extends this mode of moral reasoning to include nonviolent resistance, which is a kind of use of force. He writes, “The ethic that underwrites just war thinking may appear to be focused on the coercive force of violence, but the normative guide against using force applies not only to uses of force that are destructive and violent but to any use of force.”<sup>48</sup> He shows how Gandhi and King both recognized this, and how they used just-war reasoning, even if not explicitly, when arguing that nonviolent resistance, which is a form of coercion, must be morally justified like any other form of coercive force. That is, as a response to an injustice (just cause), nonviolent resistance may justifiably be resorted to after noncoercive (persuasion) or less coercive means have failed. This attention to the deeper ethic behind just war by just war theorists may help Catholics and others to imagine a way forward. My worry, though, is that the *Appeal* needlessly and hastily jettisons JWT and what it can imaginatively contribute toward the ongoing development of just peacemaking and just peacebuilding, such as an integral peacemaking approach, akin to Pope Francis’s call for an “integral ecology.”<sup>49</sup> Let’s begin imagining that.

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### III.

#### *Talking about War*

Pope Francis titled his recent World Day of Peace message “Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace.” The use of the word “style” is unusual but important. It reveals the significance of the way we talk about

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>47</sup> Capizzi, *Politics, Justice, and War*, 1, 3, 14, 28, 36.

<sup>48</sup> Steffen, *Ethics and Experience*, 52.

<sup>49</sup> I suggest an “integral peacebuilding” or “integral peacemaking” in my chapter “Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth: *Laudato Si’* and Integral Peacemaking,” in *All Creation Is Connected: Voices in Response to Pope Francis’s Encyclical on Ecology*, ed. Daniel R. DiLeo (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2017), 195–211. Pope Pius XII first used the phrase “integral peace” in his Christmas message of 1942, “The Internal Order of States and People,” <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12ch42.htm>. I am grateful to Gerard F. Powers for bringing his use of this term to my attention.

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the questions of violence and peace—our rhetoric, in other words. It has been suggested that talking about “just war theory” can, in fact, obstruct the development and use of nonviolent techniques for the resolution of conflict. My contribution to this roundtable will examine the extent to which that is the case.

### *The Danger of Seeing War as an Easy Default*

It is clear that for Christians, violent techniques should never be regarded as a normal, default option for the resolution of conflict. Karl Barth used striking language to describe what he saw as the necessary attitude:

[W]ar should not on any account be recognised as a normal, fixed and in some sense necessary part of what on the Christian view constitutes the just state, or the political order demanded by God. Certainly the state as such possesses power and must be able to exercise it. But it does this in any case, and it is no primary concern of Christian ethics to say that it should do so, or to maintain that the exercise of power constitutes the essence of the state, i.e., its *opus proprium*, or even a part of it. What Christian ethics must insist is that it is an *opus alienum* for the state to have to exercise power. It cannot assure the state that in the exercise of power either the state or its organs may do gaily and confidently whatever they think is right. In such cases it must always confront them with the question whether there is really any necessity for this exercise.<sup>50</sup>

The idea of war as *opus alienum*—an alien undertaking—is very important. The logic of war is a direct affront to our call as Christians to extend love and forgiveness to our enemies. As the *Appeal* points out, talk of war is often a way to nurture, rather than reduce, enmity, polarization, and dehumanization of the other. Furthermore, our culture often regards war as a normal, default option to turn to when other efforts seem to be unsuccessful. And if war is an easy default or an automatic fallback position there is indeed far less motivation to develop creative alternatives. It is like a couple that gets married with the thought, “If it doesn’t work out, we can always get a divorce.” Such an attitude indeed makes divorce more likely, because it diminishes their commitment to finding a solution other than divorce when they encounter marital difficulties. One can think of other examples—if dropping out of high school is seen as an option, a student is less likely to persevere when encountering a challenging course. Thus, talking about dropping out, or talking about

<sup>50</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 456.

divorce, can actually hamper our ability to remain creative, persevering, and committed.

Barth acknowledged the danger of this dynamic when it comes to war, writing: “May the Church show her inventiveness in the search for other solutions before she joins in the call for violence!”<sup>51</sup> Indeed inventiveness and creativity are what are needed in finding alternatives to war—and are too often short-circuited by a quick move toward talking about war.

### *Nurturing Creative Energies for Peace*

How do we nurture creativity and inventiveness in thinking about peace? One important way is simply by *telling stories*. The pope mentions several specific people who have been involved in nonviolent movements—from Abdul Ghaffar Khan to Leymah Gbowee. These types of role models should be household names. I have found that telling the stories of successful nonviolent campaigns—often by showing documentaries from the series *A Force More Powerful*<sup>52</sup>—is a dramatically effective teaching tool. Students are far less likely to assume that war is necessary or legitimate when they realize that there is an alternative. But all too often they have not heard the kinds of stories that convey this alternative. Nonviolence has a publicity problem. This is rather surprising, because so many nonviolent campaigns are dramatic, riveting, even humorous—and therefore ripe for storytelling. For example, when Manuel Noriega took refuge in the Panamanian Nunciature, US soldiers responded by playing Guns N’ Roses music at top volume. This musical tactic was effective, helping to lead to Noriega’s peaceful arrest.<sup>53</sup> And, not coincidentally, it was an option that was chosen because violence was off the table. More recently, there have been many humorous social media efforts to embarrass and undermine ISIS. At one point someone had the idea to take ISIS publicity photos, with their very serious fighting poses, and Photoshop rubber duckies onto the faces of the fighters.<sup>54</sup> At another point, when ISIS militants were tweeting threats to come to Rome, Romans responded with travel tips and warnings about the traffic they might

<sup>51</sup> Karl Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946–52* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), 41.

<sup>52</sup> *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*, directed by Steve York ([United States:] York Zimmerman, 2000). DVD.

<sup>53</sup> Greg Myre, “How the U.S. Military Used Guns N’ Roses to Make A Dictator Give Up,” NPR, May 30, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Joel Gunter, “Isis Mocked with Rubber Ducks as Internet Fights Terror with Humour.” *The Guardian*, November 28, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/28/isis-fighters-rubber-ducks-reddit-4chan>.

encounter.<sup>55</sup> These creative responses can undermine ISIS's perceived legitimacy in an effective, but nonviolent way.

Andrea Bartoli, a member of the Community of Sant'Egidio, has talked about Sant'Egidio's experience negotiating with some of the most violent guerrilla movements in the world.<sup>56</sup> He says that in general they are fighting because they see no other option. If they are presented with another, less violent way to achieve their goals, they are usually quite likely to take it.

### *The Enduring Importance of JWT as a Way to Limit War*

Now a return to the original question: do we need to dispense with JWT in order to fully embrace nonviolence as a strategy? Does talking about the possibility of a just war inhibit our creativity when it comes to peacemaking? Perhaps. It is hard to find a style of talking about war or divorce or dropping out of high school that doesn't normalize and legitimize these things in a problematic way. And yet we can't just not talk about them, because they are part of the reality of human life. Divorce will continue to be part of the reality of human life, and thus it remains important to examine how Christian communities can help prevent divorce, but also mitigate the consequences when it does happen—particularly in its effects on children. Ceasing to talk about divorce out of fear that we might appear to condone it is not a realistic or merciful pastoral strategy.

The task of moral theology is not just to uphold moral virtues and ideals but also to help us navigate the times in which we fail to live up to our moral principles. As much as war may be alien to Christian life and vocation, we cannot abandon the conversation, because that would be ceding the field to the warmongers. The virtue of JWT is that it refuses to regard warfare as a situation in which moral categories no longer apply. JWT is precisely the way that we can remain in the conversation about war without normalizing or glorifying it. JWT is essentially a set of reasons why war is usually wrong, a set of reasons why war should be taken off the table as an option in most cases. And like nonviolent resistance, it could benefit from some efforts at storytelling. After all, there are plenty of stories from history to illustrate how disproportionate uses of violence frequently backfire, how a failure to wage war under legitimate authority can completely undermine whatever was the goal, and how the failure to embark on a serious consideration of whether

<sup>55</sup> Adam Taylor, "The Islamic State Threatens to Come to Rome; Italians Respond with Travel Advice," *Washington Post*, February 20, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/20/the-islamic-state-threatens-to-come-to-rome-italians-respond-with-travel-advice/?utm\\_term=.05a1ce872256](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/20/the-islamic-state-threatens-to-come-to-rome-italians-respond-with-travel-advice/?utm_term=.05a1ce872256).

<sup>56</sup> Andrea Bartoli, interview by author via Skype, May 20, 2008.

a cause is “just” can lead to the kinds of military overreach that can doom a government completely. A serious conversation about the many failures of justice in war can help drive the quest for alternatives—and JWT is precisely a way for us to articulate those past failures and potential future failures.

Cardinal Cupich modeled a helpful approach recently when he wrote about Trump’s budget proposal: “The question is not whether there should be military spending, but what is the needed proportion so that other ways of making us safe, secure, and whole are not neglected.”<sup>57</sup> We need to talk about how disproportionate military spending is, and how disproportionate most military endeavors are. And we need to talk about other, better ways of promoting safety and peace. By showing clearly the limits of what war can accomplish and the possibilities of what nonviolence can achieve—through storytelling and even humor—there is room for Christian ethics to speak about limiting war in a way that does not detract from our duty to be peacemakers.

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#### IV.

##### *Practical Implications of Abandoning Just War*

This final section focuses less on theory, theology, and ethics and more on the practical implications if the church were to abandon JWT. After such sustained critique, it is crucial to reiterate the points made earlier regarding how many just-war thinkers, like ourselves, affirm what is in the *Appeal*. We agree with and support most of what it says. Where we part company with the *Appeal* is over the two sentences and one bullet point (forty-five words) outlined above.

<sup>57</sup> Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, “Witnessing to a Consistent Ethic of Solidarity,” *Commonweal*, June 2, 2017, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/cardinal-blase-cupich-signs-times>.

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