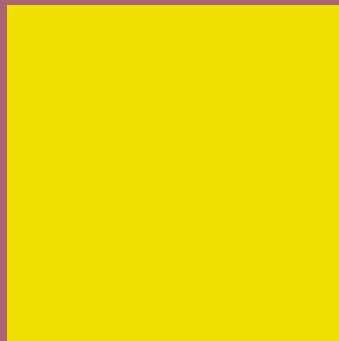


4



WHEN ENCOUNTER
BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST
WAR AND JUST PEACE

MODULE FOUR

JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

4.1 TEACHING AIMS & THEOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1.1. TEACHING AIMS

Man seeks and rejoices in meeting; meeting with himself, with his fellow man, with nature, with God himself. Meeting in peace. Meeting safely, in order to develop his talents creatively, to progress both personally and collectively, to enjoy beauty, nature, coexistence with others. To discover and develop collaboration and solidarity through his own efforts, in anticipation of a better, more creative and peaceful future. And yet, experience shows that this meeting is not an easy task. It often becomes poisoned and turns, instead, into conflict. Human history is full of violence, hostilities, aggressive behavior and bloody conflicts between individuals and peoples. Not only in the context of national, political and social confrontations, but also in the context of religion. All religions, including, unfortunately, even the Christian religion, have failed to escape the temptation of conflict, often contradicting the fundamental values they teach.

The issue that will concern us in this lesson is outlined in the following text, and its main axes indicated.



Photo: © Bits and Splits / Adobe Stock

Every day we witness crimes committed in the name of God or in the name of religion, and the publicising of these crimes, online and on television, increases the horror and disgust, the feeling of insecurity, as well as hostility towards others, which are spreading in Western societies, including our own. [...] All over the world there are either religious wars or crimes and massacres committed in the name of religion; at best violence and coercion in the name of religion [...] No doubt, we are in urgent need of models of peaceful coexistence, dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation between religious communities. [...] We are really Christians only in so far as we stay faithful to the gospel commandment of love towards all people, regardless of race, gender, religion, social class or origin; a love that includes even our enemies. We are genuinely Orthodox when we do not succumb to the temptation to impose the kingdom of God through secular means and to enforce the eradication of the weeds that prevent or delay its arrival [...].

(Ignatios, Metropolitan of Demetrias and Almyros. "The spread of the phenomenon of religious fanaticism and the witness and martyrdom of Christians in the modern world". Presentation at the International Interdisciplinary Conference on "Religion and Violence" (ATh., April 27-29, 2015), (excerpt))

4.1.1 GOAL OF TEACHING

Goals of Teaching

The lesson aims to help the students to analyse and evaluate the Christian positions on war, violence and peace as well as those regarding the limits to human interaction. They will be encouraged to incorporate Christian values in their personal life to promote peace in the world, through dialogue.

Goals for the students

- To understand the various positions of the Orthodox Church on all forms of violence and war, even if it is a just or holy war.
- To study the teaching of the Gospel regarding the peaceful coexistence of people.
- To evaluate the teaching of Christianity regarding the establishment of peace and reconciliation.
- To consider the importance of ecumenical and inter-Christian dialogue for the peaceful coexistence of religious communities.
- To define the personal responsibility of the believer, as well as their own responsibility, towards cultivating reconciliation between all forms of otherness.

Expected learning outcomes for students

- To know the meaning of the terms “just war”, “holy war” and “peace in Christ”.
- To examine and evaluate the various interpretive approaches of the above terms.
- To distinguish the Gospel principles defining the limits to peaceful expression.
- To discover the importance of interfaith dialogue and incorporate it in their daily lives.
- To recognize the believer’s responsibility for the maintenance of sober dialogue, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence of diversity at local and global levels.
- To raise awareness and make peace a key value in their lives.

4.1.2 THEOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

Theological background to the teaching of the subject

To provide a deeper foundation for the theological approach to our subject, "When encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace", we quote excerpts from the relevant literature, which support the teacher theologically, as well as supplementing the texts used in the student's book to elaborate the topic.

Holy Lands and Sacred Nations

The call that Christ addresses to us is personal and is not addressed to some collective of nation, race, people, and so on. The call of the twelve, Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, the Canaanite woman, the Roman centurion, or even the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (to ground this argument in a few specific biblical examples), are not only absolutely personal events and choices that are not mediated by religious, national, linguistic, cultural or class collectives, but very often personal choices that are turned against the particular collectives or that push against the framework and limits that they have laid out. The collective of the nation does not take shape in the New Testament, not because some supposedly private religiosity or individual version of faith and salvation arose then, but because the only collective that is recognized is the Church the new people of God - which is, however, a spiritual 'race'. This new people is formed, therefore, not on the basis of race, nation, language or culture, but on the basis of admission into the Body of Christ, offering universality and catholicity.

The Orthodox as well as Christians from other traditions will urgently have to decide which of these two we support and profess: the unity of all and the universal brotherhood of humans, or national particularity? In the time and in the context of a multinational pluralistic post-modern society, Christianity loses the theological and spiritual resources of the biblical, patristic and Eucharistic tradition in the rhetoric of 'identities' and in an outdated religious tribalism».

(Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "Holy Lands and Sacred Nations", Concilium: International Review of Theology, 2015.1, pp. 122-123)

A theology of otherness and identity

On the part of religion, it is necessary to formulate a modern theology of otherness and identity, in order to establish that, at the individual level, otherness is not a threat to unity. Difference does not lead to division, but causes our feelings about the other to become an ontological part of our identity. After all, for religion, Truth (God) is not the light of one culture over others; on the contrary, the relation of Truth to the world is inextricably linked to freedom, which means that the identity of the social person embodies otherness. From the viewpoint of modern theology, obsession and self-identification with particular cultural models means the transformation of culture into a "prison of Truth" [...] The human being emerges as a creator of culture in a multicultural environment and not as a product or a consumer in the productive process, as defined by the ideology of the world as a product. According to this logic, religion (as an existential answer), respects diversity and looks forward to world peace, promoting tolerance between the various denominations and versions of revelation, but also between itself and secular movements and views..

(D. Magriplis, "The world as a product and religious fanaticism",
Synaxis 104, pp. 43-44)

The Fathers of the Church on non-violence

According to John of Damascus, “virtue is called by this name, because it is based on choice. It is elective and voluntary, because we do good deeds deliberately, by choice, and not unintentionally and out of necessity”. He repeatedly states that “that which is done by force, does not constitute a virtue.” “God,” Basil the Great observes, “does not love what is done out of necessity, but what is accomplished by virtue. And virtue is achieved by free will, not by coercion. Free will is one of those things that depend on us.”

The temptation, for the human being to accept God as a tyrant, is, of course, not new. Saint Isidore of Pelusium, replying to someone who wondered why Christ failed to persuade Judas to embrace virtue, says that he should not forget the notion of free will, “because the salvation of human beings is not built by force and coercion, but by persuasion and acceptance” [...]

This is obviously the theological basis which, paired with the primacy of love, caused John Chrysostom (during a time of fierce conflict) to declare that it is an insult to God to ask him to act against our enemies. According to him, Christians must defend their positions to the death and fight against pagan arguments without, however, provoking, or attacking persons or insulting anyone. Similarly, Augustine in a speech that has been described as a “masterpiece of mass manipulation” prevents the Christians of Carthage from invading the property of the pagans in order to destroy their idols. It is better, he said, to uproot idols from their hearts and pray for them, than to spill out hatred against them. And Chrysostom, having in mind the recent plethora of witnesses of martyrs for the Church, considers the use of violence in matters of religious conscience to be a feature of the pagan kings. In his opinion, no Christian king forced an unbeliever to convert. In fact, he considers it an accomplishment that Christians saved many books of the Gentiles from destruction. “It is not right for Christians,” he says somewhere, “to destroy fallacies by coercion and violence; they should work out the salvation of men by persuasion, reason, and gentleness.

(Th. N. Papathanassiou, *The Church comes into being when it opens up*, Athens: En Plo, 2008, pp. 244-246))

A Comment on the parable of the weeds

A brief comment on the parable of the weeds (Mt: 13: 24-30) [...] The temptation of which Christ speaks in this parable is great: to rid the world of evil forever, to uproot the weeds of the wicked, and for Good to prevail absolutely in History. But as evil has no existence, and the only thing that exists is the people who commit it (the weeds are not the wicked but the progeny of the wicked), the cleansing of the world from it simply means death and bloodshed; of the innocent and the guilty alike, the righteous and the unjust, indiscriminately. That is why Christ rejects this temptation, as do the sons of the kingdom, i.e. the saints, and His commandment is unequivocal and absolute (No [...] let them both grow).

This refusal and commandment constitute the most radical condemnation of violence, because violence is condemned in its most attractive version, that is, when it is exercised for the redemption of the world from evil. For the true believer the only holy war that exists is the internal war against the passions and in no sense is it against the sinners, the wicked and the unbelievers. This seemingly purgative and redemptive violence that uproots the weeds of evil from society simply means genocide, ethnic cleansing, as we used to say after the intra-Yugoslavian war; it means totalitarianism, which is precisely the violent imposition of good, the society of bliss, the obligatory virtue, the new type of man. Let us add, finally, that the temptation of the sons of the Kingdom is, from a religious point of view, the supreme monotheistic sin, which is none other than the substitution of man in the judgment of God.

Jesus' command "let them both grow" defines the attitude that Christians must follow (the same applies, I believe, to followers of other religions too) in post-Christian European society: to live and bear witness to their faith and teaching, without anxiety about numbers and statistics, without pressure to proselytize people, but also without succumbing to the temptation of despair in this world that seems to follow a radically different path to their own, and leaving the rest in the hands of God".

(St. Zoumboulakis, God returns to Europe, Introduction to the book by Jean Daniel, Is God a fanatic? Athens: Polis, 1998, pp. 46-49)

Religious fanaticism or political pathology?

I think that, even if in the personal and subjective worlds, at the level of individuals, the border between moderation and extremism or between sober faith and passionate zeal is vague and porous, certain institutions are called upon to make it visible and respected [...] However, the preservation and deepening of moderation also falls within the jurisdiction of the institutions and the interpretive mediators, even if it cannot be ensured at moments of personally experienced intensity, An institution, whether ecclesiastical or secular, religious or political, can and must propose, argue for and persuade in favor of the moderate interpretation, the non-fanatical and the non-totalitarian interpretation of the faith. This means that even if a passionate fanaticism is an inextricable element of identity and commitment, the institution and its mediators and officials are called upon to organize the resistance, in other words the pedagogical mediation and the clear separation of faith from violence, oppression and hatred”.

(Nikolas Sevastakis, “Religious fanaticism or political pathology?” Frear, Winter 2021)

<https://mag.frear.gr/thriskeytikos-fanatismos-i-politiki-pathologia/>

Peace and divine Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy begins with the “Litany of peace”. These are the three opening prayers: “Let us pray in the peace of the Lord”, “For the peace from above”, “For the peace of the universe...”. In the three most important moments of the Divine Liturgy, before the reading of the Gospel, before the kiss of peace and before the Holy Communion, the Church has placed the liturgical greeting: “Peace be upon all of you”. In the Holy Anaphora (“Offering”), which is the culmination of the Divine Liturgy, the minister urges: “Let us stand aright! Let us stand in awe! Let us be attentive, that we may present the Holy Offering in peace.” The chanters respond: “A mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise”, defining its content. After the Offering and before the Holy Communion, prayers for the various needs of people are read. Among them, peace again holds an important place. According to the above, the Divine Liturgy contains a condition and an effect in relation to (the good of) peace. Peace presupposes reconciliation. Most of the prayers aim at leading the believers to a state of reconciliation before the Eucharist, according to Jesus’ recommendation in the Sermon on the Mount: “When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother [or sister] has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” True participation in the Divine Liturgy implies connection with social life. Anyone who has the experience of peace in the Divine Liturgy cannot remain indifferent to its absence from society. Whoever truly participates in the Divine Liturgy, can no longer think and act differently in the church, and differently after the Liturgy.

(St. Ch. Tsopanidis, “The Churches in Search of a ‘Just Peace’ in an era of globalization”, in Kasselouri-Chatzivasileiadi, Eleni (ed.): “Peace on Earth...”: a Vision and a Demand for Societies and Churches Today. An Orthodox Contribution, Athens: Indiktos, 2010, p.121)

4.2 VIDEO PROJECTION AS A STARTING POINT FOR TEACHING

The video we watched prepares our lesson on the topic “When encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace”, bringing to the fore the key questions:

- How can we deal with violence in our everyday lives?
- What stance does Christ suggest we should adopt in our life?
- Can this proposal work even if we feel we have suffered unjust violence?



Figure 4.1
Video Clip

After an incident on the way to school with a guard dog which is followed by a quarrel between two classmates about their football teams, Yiorgos comes to think that we frequently try to defend our beliefs in a way that is very similar to that of animals. What does Jesus suggest about our disputes and quarrels? We get the answer through the Gospel and an interactive game organized in the classroom by the religious education teacher of Yiorgos' class.

4.2.2 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: *Having watched the video, students are asked to answer the following multiple-choice questions individually. These questions aim to help the teacher assess the extent of the students' understanding of the content of the video and to evaluate their views on the relationship between violence and religion.*

The correct answers are 1 – B, 2 – C, 3 – D.

Based on the video you watched, try to answer the following questions.

1. *What prompted the discussion in Yiorgos' class?*

- a. A dispute between students and teacher
- b. A quarrel between two students regarding their favorite football teams
- c. A dispute between one group of students and another
- d. The racist attack of one student on another
- e. I do not know / I did not understand

2. *In the video, the teacher read to the class a passage from the Gospel, in which Jesus said:*

- a. You should be patient when you are slapped
- b. If you are slapped on the cheek, you should slap back, to be fair.
- c. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- d. When you are slapped you must report it to the authorities.
- e. I do not know / I did not understand.

3. *What method did the teacher use to convey his message to the students?*

- a. They all read a text on terrorism and discussed it.
- b. They split into two groups and did a simulation of a quarrel.
- c. They played the educational game "debate"
- d. They played the interactive game "return the blow"
- e. I do not know / I did not understand

4.2.3 HAVE YOU GOT THE MESSAGE?

Instruction: *With the question that follows we ask the students to express their personal opinion, to determine the extent to which they have understood the message of the video and, consequently, the meaning of the words of Christ.*

In the video we see that the teacher used the game to help the students understand the words of Christ: "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (Mt. 5:39). In the following box, write a sentence explaining what you think the students learned from this?

Indicative answer:

When we do not respond with violence to the violence we receive, then we can hope that the vicious circle of violence will be broken.

4.3 THE REJECTION OF VIOLENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Instruction: *We will base our further investigation of the subject with the students on two passages from the Gospel of Luke, which illustrate Jesus' teaching and attitude toward violence. The biblical texts should be read by the teacher.*

The following questions aim to help the students identify in the texts the behavior of the Disciples and Jesus' answers, and then justify the way in which the vicious circle of violence can break.

Every day we witness behavior characterized by conflict and violence. Man is constantly trying to dominate and impose his ideas, or change situations using force, disregarding any concept of freedom.

In the teachings of Christ in the New Testament we find the rejection of any form of violence. Two incidents from Jesus' life reveal in practice his attitude toward violence; an attitude that contrasts with violent behavior suggested even by his own Disciples.

So, we read in the Gospel according to Luke:

A. Shortly before the passion of Christ

⁵¹When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; ⁵³but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶Then they went on to another village. (Lk. 9:51-56, NRSV)

B. During the arrest of Jesus

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" ⁴⁹When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" ⁵⁰Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. (Lk. 22:47-51, NRSV)



Figure 4.2
The Betrayal of Judas,
18th century fresco
(under restoration) from
the Church of St Apostles,
Agia, Greece. Photo by
Olya Gluschenko, 2017.

Exercises

1. In the above biblical texts, find the words and actions of the Disciples which show violent behavior, and then find the response of Jesus.

Indicative answer:

Students:

“Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

“Lord, should we strike with the sword?” Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

Jesus:

He turned and rebuked them

“No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him

2. Jesus advises us to avoid responding to violence with violence. Is this suggestion helpful for breaking the vicious circle of violence? Justify your answer.

Indicative answer:

The circle of violence traps us in behaviors that lead to a dead end. The violence is constantly multiplying and escalating, resulting in constant destruction. The only way to get out of this trap is to be the first to stop being violent.

Exercise:

The exercise is based on the text that follows, which gives us answers to the objection which was raised on the video, that the rejection of violence carries the risk of passivity and therefore of submission to the evil.

Alternatively, this exercise can be done in groups, as the intention is for the answer to emerge from the discussion on the topic between the students, with the support of the text given.

Let us remember again the words of Jesus that we heard in the video: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also” These words urge us to stop the vicious circle of enforcement and retaliation. But this attitude raises the question which is often expressed: Does the rejection of violence lead us to passivity and submission to the evil that happens around us?

The following text gives us the answer to the above question:

We need to be aware that this attitude (the rejection of violence) does not mean passivity* and fatalism*. On the contrary, it is an active attitude; it is a choice and an action. The witness [the Christian] does not legitimize evil. He clashes with it and refuses to obey those who serve it. Christ himself, during his trial by the high priest, asked the guard who had hit him to explain the reason: “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” (John 18:23). In fact, at some point before his arrest, when he saw that the temple precinct had been turned into a trading post, he made a rough whip out of ropes, pulled people and animals out, threw down the money and turned over the benches. “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” (John 2:16). It is noteworthy that even at this particular moment, Christ did not hit people.

(Ath. N. Papathanasiou – M. Koukounaras-Liagkis
Topics of Christian Ethics, Athens: Educational Policy Institute, 2020 p.83)

Based on the text, formulate your conclusions in your own words.

Indicative answer:

Rejection of violence does not show weakness against those who attack us and try to harm us. We seem to be passive, but in fact we are strong. It takes strength to choose to avoid violence when we are challenged. We can claim our rights and react without using violence. This is shown by the example of Christ, who asked the guard who hit him during his trial for an explanation. But there are also cases when we need to express ourselves dynamically, as Christ did with the merchants in the Temple. He protested strongly against the evil that was being done but, again, without using violence against people.

4.4 WAR: ONE OF THE HARSHTEST FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Instruction: *Our next educational step concerns the harshest form of violence: war, its causes as well as its forms, that raise moral issues for the Christian, as well as others.. After the students search the texts and locate the main causes of war, they critically examine the concept of a just and holy war. Through the texts quoted, the students are invited to discover the positions of the Orthodox Church regarding these forms of war.*

War is one of the harshest forms of violence a human being can face. The thirst for power and strength, but also the desire for wealth, lead to the annihilation of peoples and cultures, destroying every sign of freedom and humanity. History is full of wounds that war has inflicted on the body of humanity. They confirm how unjust and tragic the violence of war is.

Find, in the following texts, what are the causes of the war.

¹Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. (James 4:1-2)

Money is the gallows of souls, the hook of death, the bait of sin. How long will it be omnipotent? How long will wealth, the cause of wars, for which weapons are made and swords are sharpened, rule? (Basil the Great, Sermon to the reach, PG 31, 297B)



Figure 4.3
Mounted Normans
attacking the Anglo-
Saxon infantry, 12th
century, Author
unknown, 12th century.
Source Lucien Musset
The Bayeux Tapestry
2005 Boydell Press via
Wikimedia Commons:
[https://commons.
wikimedia.org/w/index.
php?curid=27217789](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27217789)

4.4.1 BUT IS THERE A JUST WAR?

But there are also wars that we treat as necessary, because they help to bring greater evils to an end. We are accustomed to calling this war “just”, when it takes the form of defense because it protects freedom and life, which are precious to us. In other words, when you are trying to protect the freedom of your homeland and the lives of your loved ones by sacrificing your own life. In the history of the Orthodox Church there are cases where the Church was asked by the Byzantine emperors or by the state power to sanction the just wars they waged, by invoking the help of God. But even in this “just” war, people use violence and kill their fellow human beings in order to defend themselves.

Question:

What is the position of the Orthodox Church concerning the “just” war?

To answer, consult the following text and, based on its positions, write a short paragraph with your answer:

Whenever it becomes necessary for a Christian to take part in a war, it should be done in a spirit of self-sacrifice. But this self-sacrifice does not concern [...] his life. It is about something infinitely more important for a Christian: the committing of sin and salvation! That is, participating in a war, with the tragic awareness that for the sake of certain relative values (e.g. the freedom of the community or the security of ones family) one accepts committing a sin and risking ones own salvation. It is a contradictory circumstance, as it is a historic duty to use violence in order to stop a torrent of violence, while being at the same time a torture, in that it is an act that not only does not please God, but will require forgiveness on His part..

(Th. N. Papathanassiou, “Anthropology, Culture, Praxis”
in *Terrorism and Culture*, Athens, Armos, 2013, p.89)

Indicative answer:

For the Orthodox Church every war is a sin, even when it is considered “just”; it is man’s failure to meet his fellow man in love. Therefore a Christian, even when participating in a war to defend the freedom of his homeland and his loved ones, knows that he will sacrifice not only his life, but also his salvation. That is why he asks God for forgiveness. So participating in the “just” war is an act of self-sacrifice.

4.4.2 CAN A WAR BE HOLY?

A war is called holy when it is declared by the Church or by a religion or, in general, in the name of God, in order to defend the faith and ideas that characterize that particular religion. For a Christian, every war is a civil war since man turns against his brother, that is, his fellow man. It is a tragic and undesirable reality. Therefore, the Orthodox Church does not accept that a war can be holy for any reason; it is impossible to declare war in the name of God and for it to have a salvific character, leading those who participate in it to their salvation.

Exercise

The following text mentions an incident from the time of the Byzantine Empire that reveals the position of the Church that no war can have a salvific character.

In 960 A.D. the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas demanded that the Church proclaim as saints all those who died in battles against Islam, defending the Christian faith and the homeland. The Church refused, citing a sacred canon [...] It was the thirteenth canon of Basil the Great, who expressed disagreement with the “impunity” of those killing in war (even defensively!) and argued that a penance of a three year abstention from Holy Communion should be imposed [...]

(Th. N. Papathanassiou, “Anthropology, Culture, Praxis” in *Terrorism and Culture*, Athens, Armos, 2013, p.91)

State in one sentence the conclusion you reached after reading the text.

Indicative answer:

Christians who take part in a war for the sake of faith and religion are under no circumstances saved. On the contrary, the rules of the Church impose penances on them.



Figure 4.4
Peter Stronsky. The Kind
Angel of Peace Donetsk,
Ukraine, 2008, photo
by Andrew Butko via
Wikimedia Commons.
Licensed under the
the Creative Commons
[Attribution-Share Alike
3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license. The
photo has not
been changed and
can be found at [https://
commons.wikimedia.
org/wiki/File:2008._
Донецк_122.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2008._Донецк_122.jpg).

4.4.3 AND SO TO CONCLUDE ...

... with what Archbishop Anastasios proclaims about what should be the role of any religion when faced with an armed conflict:

Instruction: *It is proposed that the teacher reads the following text to the class, as a final conclusion on the role of religion when addressing violence and war.*

Violence brings violence and in this vicious circle it is the innocent and the weak that become the victims. The Church insists that no one has the right to use the holy oil of religion to feed the flames of armed conflict. Religion is a divine gift, to soothe hearts, to heal wounds and to bring individuals and peoples closer together, in peace."

(Anastasios (Yannoulatos, Archbishop of Tirana), *Vigilance, Debt of the Orthodox*, Athens: En Plo, 2017, p. 122)

4.5 THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

Instruction: *Our investigation of the subject will be completed by considering the concept of peace. Through observation of the drawing, we aim at a deeper understanding of Isaiah's prophecy.*

The prophet Isaiah, in the years of the Old Testament, envisioning the coming of a new world where peace will prevail, says: "4 [...] they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isa. 2: 4)

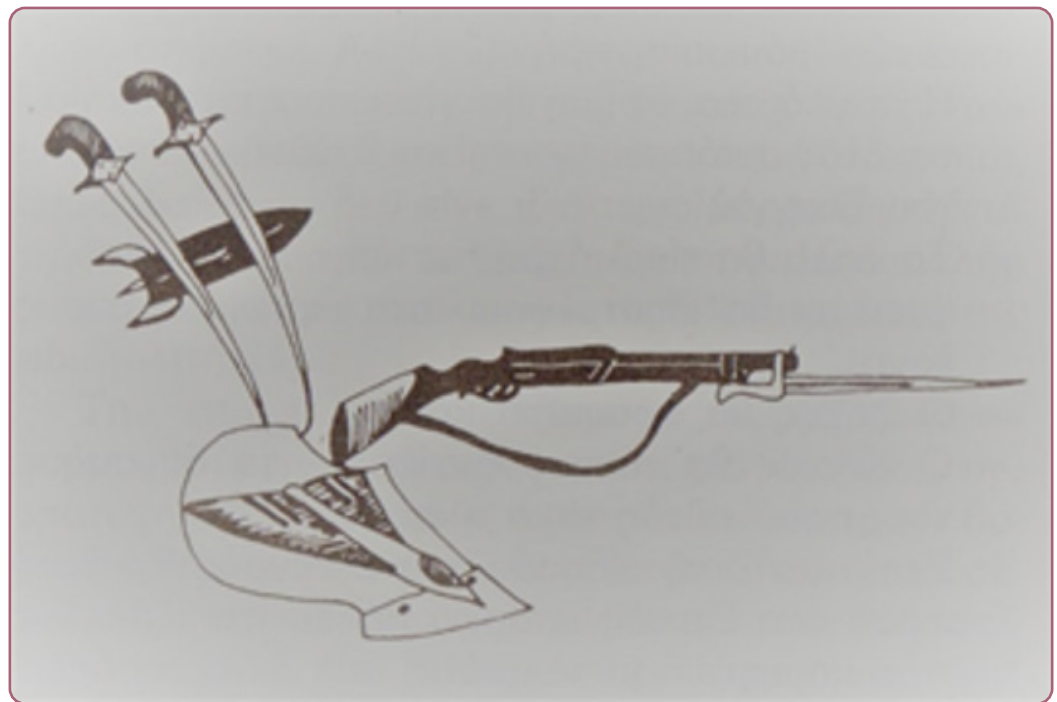


Figure 4.5
Plow made of weapons
Drawing by Vaso Gogou

Exercise

Observe the drawing "plow* made of weapons" and find the matches with the words of the prophet Isaiah.

4.5.1 THE ROLE OF RELIGIONS IN ACHIEVING PEACE



Figure 4.6
Peace dove statue in
Lomé, Togo, Africa,
photo by Jeff Attaway:
Licensed under the
the Creative Commons
[Attribution 2.0 Generic](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peace_dove_(3329620077).jpg)
license. The photo has
not been changed and
can be found at [https://
commons.wikimedia.org/
wiki/File:Peace_dove_
\(3329620077\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peace_dove_(3329620077).jpg).

Instruction: *The last issue which we will focus on in the first teaching hour is the fact that all religions need to contribute to the struggle for peace and, ultimately, to the creation of a society of reconciliation. We will use a text, through which the students will draw inspiration for the task that follows, where they are called upon to react and express themselves creatively to promote a vision of peace.*

The Declaration of Assisi

On January 24th 2002, patriarchs, imams, monks and rabbis from all over the world gathered in Assisi and proclaimed, together with Pope John Paul II, that believers around the world must renounce violence, and prayed together for peace.

Excerpts from the Declaration of Assisi

We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic Spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism. [...] We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

(Anastasios, (Yannoulatos, Archbishop of Tirana):
Coexistence: Peace, nature, poverty, terrorism, values, Athens: Armos, 2016,
p.35))

Exercise

Having read the above excerpts from the Assisi declaration, imagine that you are a reporter in a newspaper and write a short tweet informing your public on the conclusions of this very important meeting

4.6 ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: MATERIAL FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

In order to enrich the discussion that will follow in the second class hour, we use texts and works of art, to deepen understanding and encourage the development of the creative and critical thinking of the students.

It is open to the teacher to choose, depending on the ability and interests of the class, one or more texts or works of art with the corresponding activities.

4.6.1 A PAINTING AGAINST WAR

In order to further experience the tragedy and drama of the violence of war, we will use Picasso's iconic anti-war work, Guernica, created in 1937, as a direct response to the news of the destruction of the city of Guernica in the Basque Country by the Nazis on the 28th of April 1937. This immense canvas (3.49 x 7.77m) describes the inhumanity, violence and despair of war. The symbolic-allegorical content of the painting, as well as its monumental importance, make it relevant even today. The work is housed in the Queen Sophia National Art Museum in Madrid, and is widely available in the web, e.g. here: https://i.natgeofe.com/n/0adb5779-42cb-4a12-ab9c-fdb6498bee50/Main_Guernica_BAT-10313_16x9.jpg?w=1200.

The elaboration of the work that will open the discussion in the classroom will be done with the routine "I See - I Think - I Wonder" by Artful Thinking, which is a method of teaching through art proposed and applied by David Perkins, developed by Harvard Project Zero in partnership with Traverse City for Michigan Public Schools. The application utilizes visual arts (painting, sculpture, architecture), musical and literary works. The tools of artful thinking are called routines. The main aim of the method is the development of critical and creative thinking of students through the dynamics of art.

Based on the routine "I see - I think - I wonder" the students answer the questions: What do you see? - What are you thinking? - What makes you wonder?

With these questions we ask the students to observe the work carefully and to give and justify an interpretation of the work, and then to formulate their own questions in relation to what they observed in the work and the interpretations they suggested. The questions set the stage for the debate over the painful consequences of war..

Activity

Observe carefully the work of Pablo Picasso, Guernica

- What do you see?
- What do you think?
- What makes you wonder?

4.6.2 TWO INCIDENTS FROM THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TRADITION

The following two incidents can be used in the classroom as examples of the application of criteria faithful to the Gospel, rejecting violence and practicing love to the enemy.

An incident with Bishop Acacius*

In skirmishes with Persian troops in 421, in the territories of Persian Armenia, the Byzantine army captured seven thousand Persian soldiers. These prisoners suffered a famine resulting in numerous deaths. Acacius summoned the clergy of his diocese and said to them: "Our God needs no discs or chalices*. He neither eats nor drinks, since he has no physical needs. Thanks to the gratitude of the pilgrims, the Church has many such treasures of gold and silver, so I find it appropriate to use them to save the captured soldiers from hunger". Thus, the valuable ecclesiastic vessels were given for melting. The income from these precious metals provided food for the prisoners (despite the fact that they were of a different nation and religion), and they were provided with the supplies they needed to return to their homeland. It is said that the Persian king asked to meet bishop Acacius personally, and expressed his admiration for the wisdom of the Byzantines, who managed to triumph both in war and by benevolence..

(Papathanassiou, Th. (2008), My God, a foreigner. Texts for a truth "down in the street", Athens: En plo, p. 57-58. The incident is cited from Socrates, Ecclesiastical History, 7, 21, PG 67, 781B-784A)

Activities

The dilemma faced by bishop Acacius on how to save the prisoners is summed up in the question: In the final analysis, what is the holiest, the sacred vessels of the Church or the human being, even if he is an enemy? Explain the answer he gave through his actions.

Try to take the place of the Persian prisoners learning that a bishop is saving them from starvation and captivity. Describe your feelings.

Indicative answers:

For Bishop Acacius, the criteria of the Gospel leading to his choice are clear. Love and care for every human being, even the enemy, is a priority as we see in every human person the image of God. After all, according to the examples of the Gospel, Christ stops the circle of violence. With his decision, bishop Acacius stops the violence of the war with his love.

From the point of view of the Persian prisoners who are released I feel joy, gratitude, but also I wonder about the kindness shown to me.

An incident with St Carpus*

Saint Carpus, in the 1st century, narrates the following incident: Once a pagan made him very sad because he deceived a Christian and converted him to paganism. The pagans rejoiced over this conversion and sacrificed to their gods and Carpus was filled with bitterness and hatred. At night, as usual, he got up to pray to God, protesting that it is unfair for atheists and pagans to live and distort the truth of Christ. He prayed to God to send a thunderbolt and mercilessly end their lives. As soon as he had said these words, he suddenly saw a vision of Jesus with his angels high in heaven. Looking down, into a dark chasm, he saw the people he had cursed, terrified and about to fall into the void. Below them, at the bottom of the chasm, there were snakes, ready to bite them. And then he saw Jesus looking mercifully at the two men in danger and, rising from his throne, approaching them and reaching out to help them. Surprised, Carpus heard Jesus saying to him: "So hit me too, I am ready to suffer greatly again to save people."

(From the Synaxarist of St Nikodemos of Mount Athos)

Activity

Read the Gospel passage (Luke 9:51-56) with the incident of Jesus rebuking his disciples and find the correspondence between that incident and Saint Carpus.

Indicative answer

The correspondence is clear in the content of the disciples' words to Jesus "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" and in the prayer of St Carpus to God "to send a thunderbolt and mercilessly end their lives". In both cases it seems that we humans succumb to anger and want to annihilate those who oppose our faith and to cleanse the world of evil using violence. In both cases we also see how

similar the answers of Christ are and the corresponding reaction to both incidents is clear in his answers: “The Son of Man did not come to destroy people but to save them” - “So hit me too, I am ready to suffer greatly again to save people”. Therefore, when I attack a person who insists on having a different faith from me, it is like attacking Christ himself, who came to save even the enemy with his love.

4.6.3 PEACE AND THE DIVINE LITURGY

Based on the following text, the teacher can comment briefly that the main request of the Divine Liturgy is for the acquisition of peace.

The Divine Liturgy ends with the exhortation “let us go forth in peace”. This exhortation invites the faithful to go out to the world with the gift of peace, to live with it and to fight for it. In essence, each individual believer, but also the community as a whole, is bidden to go out and to prove that the Mystery they experienced was truly accepted. The realization and acquisition of the good of peace is the overriding request of the Divine Liturgy. It is the amazing wealth that the Liturgy contains for this good”.

(St. Ch. Tsopanidis, “The Churches in Search of a ‘Just Peace’ in an Age of Globalization”, in Kasselouri-Chatzivasileiadi, Eleni (ed.): “Peace on Earth...”: a Vision and a Demand for Societies and Churches Today. An Orthodox Contribution, Athens: Indiktos, 2010, p. 120)

4.6.4 CAN THE CROSS BE A SYMBOL OF WAR OR OF DIVISION?

Observe the following drawings and photos, where the cross is used as a symbol of war or of division.

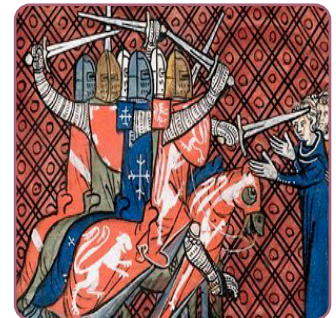


Figure 4.7
From left to right, and up to down photos:
1. German WWII tank / Envato Elements
2. Wehrmacht reconnaissance zeppelin in France during WWII / Envato Elements
3. German Air Force Panavia Tornado via [Wikimedia Commons](#)
4. Ku Klux Klan Cross Burning, 1958, via [Wikimedia Commons](#)
5. Hospitaller Knight Circa 1250 AD via [Flickr](#)
6. Albigensian Crusade via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Exercise:

Write a text explaining the reasons for a Christian to ask the prohibition of the use of Cross by groups or states as a symbol for warfare or similar reasons.

4.6.5 SONG

The students can work with the song “Where is the love” by The Black Eyed Peas in the classroom, or alternatively they may do a project. The aim of these activities will be for the students to meet the evangelical truth regarding the prevention of violence, through their musical choices. The project is an alternative task, to be carried out outside of the school timetable.

The Black Eyed Peas - “Where Is The Love?”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpYeekQkAdc&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=BlackEyedPeasVEVO

People killin', people dyin'
Children hurt and you hear them cryin'
Can you practice what you preach?
Or would you turn the other cheek?

Father, Father, Father help us
Send some guidance from above
Cause people got me, got me questioning

Where is the love (Love)
Where is the love (The love)
Where is the love (The love)
Where is the love, the love, the love

Activities

Question:

Can you find lyrics in the song which refer to the Gospel, as well as concepts and views that we encountered in today's lesson? (Group discussion)

Project:

In the song, identify references to the points of our discussion on the example of Jesus in preventing violence. Why do violence and war still prevail? What do you consider to be the responsibility of Christians in establishing justice and cultivating harmonious coexistence? Search the internet for examples of Christians who defended peace and create a virtual museum with their history.

4.7 GLOSSARY

Abstention (from Holy Communion): The Church, for pedagogical reasons, sometimes imposes abstinence from Holy Communion as a penance for certain serious transgressions or failures. Penance is an act proposed by the priest during confession, in order for the believer to comprehend the magnitude of his transgression and to move towards goodness. In the Orthodox Church, common penances include intensive prayer, study, fasting, and acts of charity. For more serious sins, the penance can be abstinence (ie exclusion) from Holy Communion.

Acacius, saint: Became bishop of Amida, an Armenian city, at the beginning of the 5th century. In 419 the emperor Theodosius II sent him as ambassador to the king of Persia and his presence there helped to strengthen the faith of the Orthodox believers of the region. Acacius visited Persia for the second time at the invitation of the Persian king himself, who asked to meet him after his miraculous act of freeing 7000 Persian captives captured by the Byzantines. The Orthodox Church commemorates him on April 9.

Canon: The provisions that have been formulated from time to time by the Church for regulating and dealing with the various daily problems that arise in ecclesiastical and social life. The purpose of the rules is to guard and protect spiritual life.

Carpus, Saint: Lived in the times of Nero (52 AD), and is one of the seventy disciples of the Lord. He was a collaborator of St Paul and, according to his 2nd Epistle to Timothy, worked for the dissemination of the Gospel in the region of Troy. Later he became a bishop in Varna, Thrace, where he was the spiritual father and a shining example for all the people of his diocese. The Orthodox Church celebrates his memory on May 26.

Fatalism: A view or opinion according to which all events are irrevocably predetermined by a higher power, such as fate.

Passivity: Behavior that implies acceptance of a situation and does not act or seek to change it.

Plow: An agricultural tool drawn by a tractor or animals to plow the land

Samaritans: They were the inhabitants of Samaria. Samaria was attacked by other tribes who had a pagan faith and its population was completely changed due to cross-marriages. Although they maintained their faith in the one God of the Jews, they introduced into their faith several pagan customs and ceremonies. They worshipped God on Mount Gerizim and not in Solomon's Temple. In the New Testament, the word Samaritan signifies the unclean (sinful) and hated person (John 8:48).

4.8 TRANSCRIPTION OF THE VIDEO

Characters:

YIORGOS

APOSTOLOS: Yiorgos' father

TEACHER: A teacher of Religious Education

STUDENTS

DOG

SCENE 1

Yiorgos and his father Apostolos are heading to school early in the morning. Apostolos will then continue to his work. Yiorgos feels drowsy and his father teases him.

FATHER: (smiling) Hey Yiorgos, get a move on! If we go on like this it'll be time to come home before you get there!

YIORGOS: Leave off, Dad, I feel so sleepy... (yawns)

FATHER: Then you should get to bed earlier, so that you wake up easier in the morning.

YIORGOS: (He doesn't answer and yawns again)

Suddenly as they are walking on the sidewalk and passing through a yard, a dog appears, barking furiously. Yiorgos and his dad are frightened by the ferocity of the barking.

YIORGOS: That scared me!

FATHER: (angrily) Stupid dog! It terrified us.

YIORGOS: What is it about dogs that makes them bark like that sometimes? Why do they make so much noise?

FATHER: He is a guard. He thinks that by acting like that he is protecting the house from intruders.

YIORGOS: Well, we didn't try to get into his home.

FATHER: It doesn't matter. He has no way of knowing if we are going to try to enter, or not. He protects it anyway.

YIORGOS: Probably he takes his job too seriously.

FATHER: (in a playful mood) I don't know if he is a good guard, but he is certainly good at waking people up. He definitely woke the neighbors, but he also managed to wake you up too, ha ha!

YIORGOS: Pff...very funny.

We see their backs as they continue on their way

SCENE 2

Yiorgos arrives at school with his father. They wave goodbye to each other and Yiorgos enters the schoolyard. He suddenly hears noises from one side of the schoolyard and, along with many kids, he heads over there out of curiosity. Two students are quarreling over their football teams. Some other students are trying to restrain them. Yiorgos observes without interfering.

STUDENT 1: You are a fool and you deserve a good beating.

STUDENT 2: Just you dare to come closer and you'll see what happens.

STUDENT 1: Do you think I'm afraid of you? We all know what a coward you are. You always hit from behind just like your team does on the field. You bribe the referees and then you win the matches.

STUDENT 2: Not at all, I will hit you straight in the face. As for my team, better get used to seeing our backs in the stands, because you'll never get ahead of us.

A teacher sees the fight and intervenes. She stops them and has a short dialogue with the kids. Yiorgos is still watching the scene.

TEACHER: Hey boys what's all the fuss about? I can't believe it! You are high school students and you fight like small children.

STUDENT 1: He started it, Miss.

STUDENT 2: Why don't you tell the truth? He insulted me first, Miss.

They yell at each other and their voices mingle with the voices of the other students who are present at the incident.

TEACHER: (loudly) Everyone please stop! (She speaks calmly to the first student) So tell me now, how did he insult you?

STUDENT 1: Eh, well...he did not exactly offend me, but he spoke against the football team I support.

TEACHER: (Speaking to the other Student). And how did he insult you?

STUDENT 2: Well, he spoke against my team too.

TEACHER: So, if I understood you correctly, you were fighting with each other because of your teams and not for yourselves.

STUDENT 2: (He shouts loudly with bared teeth and clenched fist) Yes, and if he does it again, he will pay for it...

Everyone speaks loudly. The noise is reduced as Yiorgos looks at Student 2 and makes a logical association. As he sees him growling, threatening and showing his teeth to the other student, he brings to mind the dog that scared him with his barking a few minutes ago (he remembers that the dog was also showing his teeth). For a few seconds Yiorgos imagines that the student has been transformed into a dog. Yiorgos laughs out loud at this thought and returns to reality. The "dog-student" turns into a human being again and the surrounding voices come back.

SCENE 3

The scene takes place inside the classroom. The teacher is the same one who stopped the quarrel at the schoolyard.

TEACHER: I believe that many of you were present at the quarrel. It is certainly not uncommon for people to fight, especially if they consider that something of their own is threatened.

STUDENT (GIRL): Yes Miss, but what happens when both of them feel that this "something" is really valuable?

TEACHER: Since this is an RE lesson, shall we see what Jesus says about quarrels? Please open the Bible at Matthew, chapter 5, verse 38.

The children look for the verse and the teacher reads.

You have heard that it was said: "An eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, "Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also."

STUDENT 3: (Obviously perplexed) Sorry Miss, but if I understand correctly, what Christ is saying is to let the others take advantage of us. Is that right?

STUDENT (GIRL): Yes, that's how I see it, too. But if I act like that the whole school will make fun of me!

The children start a rowdy but creative discussion, and the teacher walks among the desks and listens to them. As she passes Yiorgos, who is sitting at the last desk, she leaves a note on his desk and winks. Yiorgos looks puzzled and surprised. He unfolds the note and reads the following:

"We are going to play a game in the classroom. Whatever happens, please do not hit anyone back, even if others urge you to do so. There is reason for this."

The teacher walks back to the front and announces to the class:

TEACHER: OK, so we all have different opinions . Shall we play a game?

Everyone is excited.

CLASS: Yeees

TEACHER: Great. Here's what we are going to do. Each of you will give a tap on the arm, shoulder or back of the person sitting next to you. Let's do it in turns, one after the other, like a domino effect. But be careful, not too hard, alright? I'll go first.

The teacher taps the student sitting at the first desk. Then this student laughs and taps the student next to him. The other student gives a tap to the student behind him and so on. Sounds of laughter fill the room. Another student gets up and approaches Yiorgos, hitting him a little harder. Yiorgos winces with pain but does not react, as the teacher had told him not to retaliate.

STUDENT 4: (laughingly) Come on Yiorgos. Hit him!

Yiorgos doesn't react.

STUDENT (GIRL): (laughingly) Hey, what are you waiting for? Stand up and hit him.

YIORGOS: No, I don't want to.

STUDENT 3: (Obviously irritated). What do you mean? That's the game..

YIORGOS: I'm telling you no. I'm not going to hit anyone.

STUDENT (GIRL): (angrily) Miss, tell him! . Yiorgos is spoiling the game.

TEACHER: Yiorgos, don't you want to continue the game?

YIORGOS: No Miss, I don't like it.

TEACHER: Then I'm afraid we have to stop. You see, this is how the game is played: we all have to hit the one sitting next to us. If someone stops, the game stops too.

CLASSROOM: (Exclamation of disappointment. They stare at Yiorgos in a hostile way).

STUDENT 4: See what you've done?

TEACHER: But on the other hand, what Yiorgos has done by choosing not to hit anyone else is to save many of you from being hit by the others.. Yiorgos broke the chain of violence when it reached him. Is he really a spoilsport, or does the half the class owe him a favor because actually he saved them from being hit? Maybe violence and evilness is something like a pandemic. It is transmitted from one person to another.

YIORGOS: Are you saying that what Jesus suggests is the solution to our quarrels?

STUDENT (GIRL): (hesitantly) And ... What about the pandemic?

TEACHER: Quarantine has always been a solution to prevent the spread of a disease. Aren't violence and evil diseases too?

The students look at each other silently.

SCENE 4

Yiorgos walks with a classmate as he returns from school.

STUDENT (GIRL): Hey, Yiorgos. Do you really believe that you could do what Jesus suggested?

YIORGOS: What exactly?

STUDENT (GIRL): To not react when others harm you.

YIORGOS: I don't know. It's really difficult. It seems to me that most of the time we react with "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", as they say.

STUDENT (GIRL): Yes, that's right.

YIORGOS: But if you think about it, what Christ suggests is probably the smartest thing to do. Who would want to live in a world of blind and toothless people?

STUDENT (GIRL): You're tho right in what you're thaying. I would not like thuch a world at all. It would be a meth...

Yiorgos and his classmate laugh out loud. We watch their backs as they walk away laughing.

4.9 REFERENCES

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4.9.2. Works of Art

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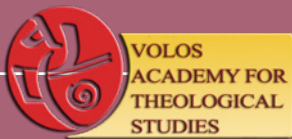
German Air Force Panavia Tornado via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:46%2B22_German_Air_Force_Panavia_Tornado_ILA_Berlin_2016_06.jpg.

Ku Klux Klan Crosss Burning, 1958, via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Klansmen_in_robcs_with_burning_cross_\(State%27s_Exhibit_No.4\)._The_photographer_for_this_shot_is_not_listed_or_known,_and_it_is_likely_that_this_photo_was_taken_at_a_Klan_cross_burning_in_earlyJanuary_\(8223346951\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Klansmen_in_robcs_with_burning_cross_(State%27s_Exhibit_No.4)._The_photographer_for_this_shot_is_not_listed_or_known,_and_it_is_likely_that_this_photo_was_taken_at_a_Klan_cross_burning_in_earlyJanuary_(8223346951).jpg).

Hospitaller Knight Circa 1250 AD via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/8765199@N07/4554617703>.

Albigensian Crusade via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Albigensian_Crusade_01.jpg.

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