

Rewriting History Written In Blood

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War is a defeat of humanity. Only in peace and through peace can respect for human dignity and its inalienable rights be guaranteed.

-Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace, January 1, 2000

The history of human civilization is a history written in blood; a history defined by the callousness, insanity and bestiality of the human species. In our attempt to dominate one another, we have committed the most horrible atrocities against ourselves, our earth and its resources, and left behind footprints of death, pain and waste; a symphony of destruction. Our much-vaunted evolution from a primitive to civilized state has turned out to be a mere hoax after all; a sheer material transition, for we remain as crude and savage as our cave-dwelling ancestors who had to fight and kill to survive in the harsh environment they found themselves; less than the early-men whose actions could be excused taking into cognizance the scarcity of resources in the state of nature they had to subsist in.

Modern man, who has supposedly advanced through the ages, developing all the trappings of a higher civilization, cannot be said to be better than his cave-dwelling ancestors. In fact, we are as guilty as our primitive (?) cousins of all the reprehensible manifestations of the darkness that saturates the human heart; guilty of the cruelest, rankest, darkest and most atavistic displays of apocalyptic forms of inanity contrived by man since the genesis of recorded history. For the records, it is estimated that since (despite) the formation of the United Nations Organization (UNO) in 1945, over 100 major conflict have occurred globally, leaving in their wake over 20,000,000 million people dead, unaccounted numbers wounded, and produced over 17,000,000 million refugees and approximately 20,000,000 million displaced persons. Another estimate puts the average number of wars around the world per year since 1989 at an average of 30 to 34. (This is excluding all the various wars of conquest and domination that had been fought before and after the establishment of the modern state system).

We have spent a significant part of our civilization hunting and killing one another; wasted thousands of years warring against one another; depleted precious time devising and perfecting crueler, more sadistic means of hurting ourselves; exhausted centuries hating and maiming our brothers and sisters; expended stupendous sums of money, time, energy and other scarce resources, not in solving what we might call the “problems of peace”, but in prosecuting senseless conflicts, leaving behind a gruesome trail of devastation, such as increased social and political animosities, economic collapse, displacement of persons and disease migration, trauma, pains, neglect, enmity, underdevelopment etc; a litany of woes. The obvious lesson from both ancient and contemporary warfare is that” the costliest peace is cheaper than the cheapest war”. We have spent more time making war instead of working for peace. No wonder our civilization has not advanced beyond merely creating technological tools for our subsistence (and destruction). According to President Bill Clinton, one time president of the United states of America, “ The central reality of our time is

that the advent of globalization and the revolution in information technology have magnified both our creative and destructive potential of every individual, tribe, and nation on our planet". No wonder there is so much hopelessness as defined by fear in the world today.

The dawn of the 21st century does not offer man much hope as he is faced with more problems than he seems capable of handling: an increasingly polluted and otherwise threatened planet composed of finite resources whose limits may soon be reached; gross imbalance in the distribution of wealth, which inhibits vast majority of the human species from becoming the best that they can be, and ensures that many more die prematurely; and regrettable patterns of social and political injustices, in which racism, sexism, and other forms of unfairness abound, and in which representative government is relatively rare and torture and other forms of oppression, distressingly common. These challenges have inadvertently widened the circle of violent conflicts in different parts of the world. These conflicts have stemmed from attempts by individuals, groups and nations to make meaning out of their lives by seeking to redress the pitiable conditions they are forced to subsist in, in a world that has gone berserk; attempts that have unfortunately resulted in the worsening of their sorry conditions as a result of the violence that emanates from their actions.

What emerges from the foregoing discourse is a very sad scenario; the hazy picture of a confused world perpetually at war with itself; a world controlled by man who is the real denominator in the whole potpourri of confusion that currently envelopes the world. He has dominated (and continues to dominate) his fellow man to his injury; has continued to be inhuman to his fellow man; a social animal who dislikes his kind. From the politician who declares war on another country under the guise of doing his duty, countries that ally with others to fight against common enemies, citizens (supposed patriots) who support the war efforts of their mother countries morally and financially, to the soldiers who do the actual fighting on the battle field, one gospel truth stands out: that humans worship violence and see it as the only option... the only solution to misunderstandings; that regardless of the excuses given by the worshippers of the god of war, violence springs from the animal within us and expresses itself through our savage conduct. That is why the formation of several world bodies such as the United Nations Organization (UNO), League of Nations etc, have failed monumentally in their quests to bring positive peace to reign on earth.

Thus, regardless of the various postulations put forward by statesmen, intellectuals, religious leaders and other leaders of thought, as concerns the reasons for wars and their solutions, man's role is the most crucial. Wars are said to emanate from the individual, group, state, decision-making, ideological, social and economic levels, but the human factor is the most crucial. Whether acting alone or in concert with others; whether operating from within societal institutions or other agencies within which human societies are animated, man's actions remain very crucial in understanding the causes of conflicts and their solutions. This is not a caustic blanket pronouncement of "guilty as charged" on man, but an obvious truth that stares us boldly in the face everywhere we look.

For unfettered peace and tranquility to reign supreme on this earth, we must change from our old ways; must be transformed in our thoughts, words, and actions, casting away the negatively pernicious imaginations that has defined our bloody existence on this finite plain, and stunted our much-trumpeted evolution. We must begin to acknowledge the deprivations of our fellow men and seek for means to alleviate their miserable conditions on this earthly plain; for according to a

popular saying, “we can find ourselves only when we lose ourselves in the service of others” (emphasis added). We must look in the mirror and change our ways and attitudes towards others.

In all, man must make deliberate efforts towards checking his animalistic instincts; that is, his violent dispositions and inclinations towards hurting others. He must seek other non-adversarial methods to resolve his disagreements with others. Violence profits no one in the long run. It is a cancer that must be avoided by all and sundry. Positive peace, not the current negative peace of the graveyard, will begin to reign on earth only when we begin to change our ways. God save the world!