

## JESUS CHRIST'S PHILOSOPHY OF NON-VIOLENCE: A DISPOSITIONAL MECHANISM FOR RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS AND SOCIAL TENSIONS

*Barnabas Irmiya, Post Graduate Student, Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar,  
Cross River State, Nigeria.*

*Email: [jerrybarry2020@gmail.com](mailto:jerrybarry2020@gmail.com)*

*Micah, Pimaro, Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Cross River State,  
Nigeria.*

### ABSTRACT

Conflicts and social tensions have become perennial in global discourse. These conflicts and tensions were fostered through violence and non-violence. They also appear in different dimensions which include political, social, economic, and religious. They occur as a result of conflicts, values, needs, opinions, and other related instances. The aftermath of resolved conflict is peace and tranquility which yields a positive result of development and fosters unity. In this paper, we x-ray Jesus Christ's philosophy of non-violence from the perspective of the resolution of conflicts and social tensions. We also expose that most philosophers of peace and non-violence in conflict resolution rely on and make enormous, resolutions rely on and make references to Christ's philosophy of non-violence. Advocates of non-violence examined in this paper are Leo-Tolstoy Gandhi, King Jr, and others who had variously refer to Christ as the bastion of nonviolence philosophy. These philosophers had articulated and remedied oppression, racial discrimination, man's inhumanity to man, bigotry, tribalism, and related social tensions. From the strings of this paper, we hold firm to the submission that, Christ's philosophy of non-violence serves as the foundation of resolution of conflicts and social tensions across the globe.

**Keywords:** Nonviolence, resolution of conflict, social tensions.



© 2020. The author. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-By-NC-ND). Users may freely share and redistribute this work provided that the author and the Journal of Development and Communication Studies are fully acknowledged. Users may not tweak or remix and offer this work for sale. The full license may be accessed at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

---

## INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that conflict is as old as the creation of the world. Adam and Eve were placed as espoused in Judeo-Christian Bible in the garden of Eden with all the available needs provided by God, man because of basic need or interest on the “forbidden tree” lead to disagreement between man and his “creator” God (Genesis 3:5-6) also conflict between Abraham and his brother Lot (genesis 13:6-8). Based on that, one would not be surprised of the role conflict play in our lives. Accordingly Heraclitus of Ephesus asserts that

Strife or conflict maintains the world activities. We must recognize that war is common and strife is justice and all things happen according to strife and necessity. Conflict does not interfere with life, but rather is precondition of life. For there will not be harmony without high and low notes, nor living things without female and male which are opposites (DK 22A22&22B80)

In this sense, conflict is viewed as part of human existence. Conflict exist where man exist, this props up the saying that we disagree to agree, when there is disagreement, there is always need for agreement from disharmony to unity. Derived from this assertion, it is instructive to note that, conflict is indispensable in our life’s endeavours. In articulating how these conflicts and social tensions could be resolved, Jesus Christ’s nonviolence philosophy becomes a possible mechanism and remedy to be utilized for resolution of conflicts. In Jesus Christ’s social philosophy, we observed the pertinent of social inequalities which existed among the social and occupational groups in the Galilean society. (Eyo, 3, Baron 372-373).

In another perspective, the Jewish religion obligations, the Roman civil obligation and the ruthless method of Roman enforcement agents made social tensions possible in Christ’s society. (Baron 374; Eyo 5). From the positions and observations of these authors the conflicts and social tensions needed to be resolved, thus Jesus Christ had severally

rebuked the pharisees and condemned Jewish elites for their violent manipulations of the common man and the peasants of the Jewish society.

In the alternative, Christ preferred a diplomatic resolutions and non-violence to be the mechanism in the resolution of these tensions and conflicts situations.

## **THE DISCOURSES ON JESUS CHRIST'S NONVIOLENCE PHILOSOPHY TOWARDS THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS AND SOCIAL TENSIONS**

Basically the Bible preaches against violence that characterized inhuman act. To seek peace, deep rooted in justice not a mere absence of war, but the fullness of life for all that is the Christian vocation and way of life. As followers of the one who is peace, we are called to help more on our broken and violated world towards the full new creation repeating Jesus way of active nonviolent persistent creative peace-making.

A nonviolent life challenges us to live a life which man can struggle to live without violence. Jesus Christ's teaching on nonviolence in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5:38-42) read's "You have heard, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say offer no violent resistance to one who does evil".

Although the Old Testament tried to regulate fair punishment so that punishment would exceed the injury, but here Jesus prohibits any form of punishment or violent retaliation. He advocates a brand new way of life; nonviolent "resistance" to oppression. That is to say do not use violence to resist evil. Jesus wants us to break the cycle of violence by refusing to co-operate with violence, refusing to retaliate, to Jesus violence in response to violence can only lead to further violence. "Do not mirror evil" which was translated as "do not repay evil for evil" Gandhi explained this as "An eye for an eye only makes the whole world blind". He said the world considered violence or run away and do nothing. (Gandhi, *Philosophy of non-violence*, Eyo: *Leadership Philosophies*, 2020, Eyo, Udofia and Edor *Introducing philosophy of peace and conflict resolution* 2020).

Jesus philosophy of nonviolence is at variance with who relied on violence in resolution of conflict instead Christ teaches and practices active, steadfast resistance to evil is long been interpreted as passivity, but instead it calls for creative nonviolent action. Jesus wants us to resist with active nonviolence, stand our ground, speak the truth wants us to resist with active nonviolence, stand our ground, speak the truth, insist on our common humanity, disarm our opponent, risk suffering-love, so that the one who does evil will show remorse and change lifestyle. Jesus wants us to use nonviolence to resist the oppressor injustice. He wants the oppressed to risk nonviolent action for their liberation. Jesus was never passive and he never used violence. Even before Pilate, he engaged in nonviolent action. The peak of Jesus nonviolent resistance was demonstrated on crucifixion and resurrection in the ultimate example of nonviolent resistance to the empire of violence and death. From a Gandhian perspective, Jesus is the epitome of nonviolence. He forms his community of disciplines to practice his way of nonviolence and sends them out as "sheep into the midst of wolves" (Matt 10:16) Jesus nonviolence was practically seen as he engages in nonviolent civil disobedience in the Temple, as arrested, tortured and executed, and yet remains perfectly nonviolent into his last breath. Even in his resurrection, Jesus practices nonviolence. He does not utter a word of revenge, anger or retaliation. Gonsalves (96). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God". (Matt. Gospel 5:9). This means that Christ followers should be characterized by living a way that leads to peace totally the opposite of life characterized by violence and strife. Paul buttressed this point in the book of (Romans 12:18). "Live peacefully with all men". Even the enemies "Pursue peace with all people" (Hebrew 12:14) <https://www.mcronline.org/blog>.

However men ought to operate within the principle found in (Roms. 13:10) which reads "love does no harm to a neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilment of the law" One

major way to demonstrate 'love' is through a life of peace and nonviolence. The worst in the persecution received from oppressors (Matt. 5:10-12).

"Blessed by inner peace and God's love are those who are persecuted for doing which is normally right". At the core of persecution, nonviolence resistance should be the only phenomenon to disarm opponents because at the end follows blessing. Jesus' teachings on nonviolence in conflict resolution is practical and worth emulation among his followers. One of the worst evil on earth is involuntary suffering which is being imposed and forced on people, by other human beings. This involuntary suffering can be physical, psychological or economic. At the same time, one of the most powerful things on earth is a voluntary willingness to face suffering for the establishment of peace for justice and well beings of all. (Eyo, 2016 servant leadership). <https://www.lifehopeandtruth.com/God>

It is the practice of compassion, entering into the suffering of another that leads us to come together to voluntarily face the consequences of opposing unjust and imposed suffering. We have hope in suffering we believe that peace and justice will eventually win. (baron quoted in Baldet, Jesus the Rabbi prophet, 2005)

Jesus opposed the domination system of his day through active nonviolent resistance illustrated by several teachings recorded in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Jesus encourages his followers to resist the imperial domination system. The "Sermon on the Mount" is the core ethic of nonviolence and its insistence on the blessing of the powerless, it can be misinterpreted as a dissuasion from actions, plea to settle down and a deep rooted version of Christ philosophy of nonviolence advocated is espoused in the gospel of Mathew thus; if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take him with you, to one or two or more, that by the mouth of two or three witness, everyone may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, but if he refuses

to hear the church, let him be like a heathen (Matt. 18:15-17), Eyo *Jesus the philosopher: An expose* 2019).

These portions as captured by Eyo and articulated in the Bible expressed the indepth picture of Jesus Christ reliance and disposition towards non-violence. The next sub-discussion on this paper anchors the need to adopt Christ's philosophy of non-violence n conflict resolution and remedying social tensions.

Most exponent and advocates of Jesus Christ's non-violence philosophy in resolution of conflicts and social tensions had profound admiration for the extensive populace who had found solace in non-violence.

According to Brown, the new restatement spoke deeply to Gandhi, especially Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount set him afire. Gandhi was deeply moved by the message of forgiveness and redemptive love which Christ urged his followers to obey in the sermon of the mount (Brown, 26, Eyo, *Jesus Christ the Philosopher*, 2019).

From another perspective, Leo Tolstoy's in his book *My Religion* expressed these words, Christ says do not resist evil, make no distinction between good and evil, he says forgive all men; forgive not once, not seven times but without end; love your enemies, (*My Religion*, 25, Eyo, Udofia and Edor 2020, Eyo, *Jesus Christ the Philosopher* 2019).

Also, Martin Authur King jr. added these words "There is power in love that our world has not discovered yet, Christ discovered it centuries ago, Gandhi discovered it few years ago, but most men and most women never discovered it, for they believe in hitting for hitting" (Anagwonye, 55; Eyo,).

It is instructive to reiterate that nonviolence can never be a weak method, it is method upon which the evil men and the oppressors are always afraid of; for its not easy to be quiet in the face of adversities and hostility. Living a nonviolence life challenges us to chose love over hate Jesus nonviolence resistance embarks diversity and disallows discrimination

violence distance us nonviolence brings us closer together. The goal of nonviolent life is unity.

Pope John Paul II addressing young people in Lesotho on September 19, 1988 said “to choose the means of nonviolence is to make a courageous choice in love, a choice which embarks active defence of human right and a strong commitment to justice and harmonious development” (21). Therefore, living a nonviolence life is acting out of truth that frees and engages forces that are greater than any other forces and principalities. Tolstoy’s book “The Kingdom of God is within you, depicts Christ’s non-violence theory as instructing and directing doing good to those who hate, walking extra mile and loving ones adversary”. (Gonsalves 2014, [www.liveencounter.net](http://www.liveencounter.net))

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus nonviolence methodologies in the amiable resolution of conflict has great lesson to be learn by all people. Jesus quest and need for peaceful co-existence that gives better life is draw on love, justice and truth. The scrutiny of Jesus moral life was highly demonstrated in suffering love. Jesus theory of nonviolence emphasizes the need to have harmonious living on the principles of total submission, willingness and voluntary suffering and opposed the retaliatory principles of anger, revenge and self interest. If we cultivate only positive ways and reject negatives ones in our interpersonal relationship then, violence will definitely give way and allows a new creative peaceful society.

Jesus nonviolence is a genuine one that gears towards true love and humility, than that sacrificial love by individual or groups. Jesus nonviolence is far back remove from looking at one’s wrong doing but aim at forgiveness that provides communal living. Jesus nonviolence relies on the truth, that we are all created in the image and likeness of God, loved by God and called by God to reveal the truth. Anytime we are in conflict situation we are to speak our understanding from the truth and love.

This paper however reveals that in our disposition, availability of time and space, in conflict and social tensions, non-violence pays more than violence. It is trite that from Jesus Christ philosophy of nonviolence, a role model has been carved upon a which, Tolstoy, Gandhi, Martin JIng Jr. and other advocates have growth, watered and sustained non-violence. Jesus nonviolence is needed in all dimensions and context in our lives and our world as a dispositional mechanism for resolution of our personal, social and political upheavals.

### WORKS CITED

- Balbdet, Jacques, *Jesus the Rabbi Prophet*, Trans. Joseph Rowe Vermont Inner Traditions, 2005.
- Charles Daryl & Timothy Denny, what did Jesus teach about violence and turning the other cheek. <https://nonviolence> and the sermon on the mount. Retrieved 2 june 2001.
- Dear John, offer no violent resistant. <http://ncronline.org>. Retrieved 13 November, 2016.
- Edet, F. F. "Jesus in Africa." *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy* 10.1 (2007): 156-163.
- Edet, F. F. "The contribution of religion to national development: A case study of living Faith church aka Winner Chapel". *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy* 10.2 (2011):91-97
- Eric Jones, Jesus Christ taught peace and nonviolence. <https://www.lifehipeandtruth>
- Eyo, E. B., and C. A. Udofia. "Taxonomy of Methods of Conflict Resolution." *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy* 13.2 (2011): 51-56.
- Eyo, Emmanuel B. "Servant Leadership and Its Ethical Challenges." *Journal of Integrative Humanism Vol 7 1* (2016).
- Eyo, Emmanuel B., and Felix OE Ojong. "Peace and conflict resolution as a foundation for national development." *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy* 11.1 (2008).

- Eyo, Emmanuel Bassey, and Emmanuel E. Etta. "Ubuntu's philosophy and the challenge of Xenophobia: towards peace in Africa." *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation (IJHI)* 3.1 (2020): 39-43.
- Eyo, U. E. (2019). Between Religion and Agriculture: A Roadmap to Revamping Nigeria's Economy. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 2(1).
- Gandhi M. K., *An autobiography, or the story of my experiments with truth*. <https://www.biography.com>. Retrieved 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2017.
- Gandhi, M. K. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence <http://www.gandhisevagramabram>. Retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2009.
- Gonslaves Peter: Gandhi and the popes <https://cac.org>. retrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019.
- Mark, Joshua J: Ancient History of encyclopaedia Heraclitus: <https://lifeisflux>. Retrieved 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.
- Nojeim Michael, *Life and works of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. the power of non violent resistance*, Benin City, Benlahland publications, 2013.
- Subrahiman P. I., *Mahatma and the sermon on the mount*. <http://www.mkganghi.org>. retrieved 22 June 2013.
- Tolstoy, Leo, *My religion complte works of Tolstoy*, Leo Wiener Trans. Boston, 1904, online: <https://philosophy> no/issues. 54/ Tolstoys, theory of nonviolence retrieved 4<sup>th</sup> august, 2018
- Tosltoy, Leo; *The kingdom of God is within you. In the kingdom of God and Peace*.
- Uduigwomen, ANDREW F., and MESEMBE I. Edet. "The primacy of the family in the philosophies of Confucius and Aristotle, and in African philosophy: A comparative analysis." *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy* 7.1 (2004): 83-89.
- Vermes, *the Religion of Jesus the Jew*, Minneapolist, Fortress Press 1999.
- Webert, T. and Burrowes, R. J: *Nonviolence, an introduction*. <http://www.Gandhisevagramabrham>. Retrieved 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2018.