

Engaging the Powers of Nonviolence

A Critique of Walter Wink's "Third Way"

Julie Todd

Julie Todd is a student in the joint Ph.D. program in Religious and Theological Studies at the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology in the area of Religion and Social Change. She is an ordained elder in the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Walter Wink's notion of "Jesus' Third Way" has become central in discourse on Christian nonviolent theory and activism. This paper critiques this nonviolent ethic as it's put forth by Wink in *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in an World of Domination*. Given its broad, popular readership and application, it is important to analyze other perspectives that his argument marginalizes. This analysis challenges Wink's nonviolent ethic on the basis of its universalizing norms, lack of context, simplification of violence, and lack of revolutionary demands.

Walter Wink's notion of "Jesus' Third Way" has become central in the discourse of Christian nonviolent theory and activism. The intent of this paper is to critique Wink's nonviolent ethic in his popular work *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*.^[1] Ray Gingerich and Ted Grimsrud, editors of *Transforming the Powers: Peace, Justice, and the Domination system*,^[2] have already given tribute to the influence of Wink's exegetical scholarship on biblical principalities and powers that are the focus of the "Powers" trilogy,^[3] and though authors in the book critique various aspects of Wink's domination system analysis, none of them, with one small exception,^[4] critique his ethic of nonviolence. Given *Engaging the Powers'* broad, popular readership and application, it is important to analyze missing perspectives (without which his argument is incomplete) and show how they are marginalized. Wink sets his ethic in the framework of the myth of redemptive violence but fails to offer contextual analysis of the structural violence, power, and privilege under which any nonviolent ethic historically operates. This decontextualization leads to an inappropriate universalizing of Christian-biblical norms for

nonviolent action. In addition, given Wink's interpretation of the radical nature of Jesus' vision for God's domination-free order, my analysis challenges his ethic for its lack of revolutionary demands.

An Ethos of Violence

The pervasive violence of our age provides the backdrop for Wink's ethic of nonviolence. Chapter 1 of *Engaging the Powers* begins, "Violence is the ethos of our times. It is the spirituality of the modern world."^[5] The author is concerned to demonstrate that the spirituality at the very center of our political, economic, cultural, and national institutions is violent.^[6] He wants the reader, particularly the Christian reader, to take seriously "the reality of the demonic,"^[7] the violent spirit that takes concrete form in the physical and political world, and to learn how to oppose it "without creating new evils and being made evil ourselves."^[8]

Wink locates the roots of violence in the ancient Babylonian myth where creation itself is an act of violence, a victory of one god over another through the act of murder.^[9] By this act, order is imposed on the universe through the reign of the murderer-god. Rulers on earth are agents who reflect the order and will of the violent god:^[10] "the king's task is to subdue all those enemies who threaten the tranquility that he has established on behalf of the god."^[11] In order to refute the notion that human beings are genetically wired for warfare, Wink briefly proposes that there may have been a time before the domination system when some societies were basically egalitarian,^[12] but the basic rise of systemic domination was firmly entrenched by 3000 BCE.^[13]

Wink believes that the biblical myth of creation is diametrically opposed to the ancient Babylonian myth of redemptive violence. The Bible paints a picture of a good creation made by a good God, a creation that is fallen as a result of the actions of human beings.^[14] Violence is not an essential character of the creation or the godhead and therefore can be overcome. While the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures pointed to a "partnership society" and criticized the use of force, Wink believes that "it was Jesus who revealed to the world, for the first time since the rise of conquest-states, God's domination-free order of nonviolent love."^[15] Part two of the book describes Jesus' "radical assault" on the institutions and practices of the domination system, turning upside down notions of the family, the law,

purity and holiness, ethnocentrism, sacrifice, violence, and discrimination against women, children, and other powerless outsiders.^[16] Wink details the actions and teaching of Jesus in the gospels on these matters, which demonstrate the comprehensive nature of Jesus' vision—not reform, not revolution, but an “assault against the basic presuppositions and structures of oppression itself.”^[17] These proposals were so radical, Wink contends, that the domination system had to kill Jesus, and even the cross itself served to reveal and repudiate the violence at the heart of the Powers.^[18]

Wink's exegesis of Matthew 5:38-42 in *Engaging the Powers* serves as one example of what Jesus offers as concrete nonviolent alternatives to the domination system: turn the other cheek, give the undergarment, and go the second mile. The ones to whom Jesus is speaking are those who have suffered indignities under the ancient Roman Empire. Each event Jesus describes is an encounter of power—slapping someone, suing someone, and conscripting someone to carry a pack—in which the non-retaliatory action of the offended party robs the oppressor of power. “The person who turns the other cheek is saying, in effect, ‘Try again. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect. I deny you the power to humiliate me. I am a human being just like you. Your status does not alter that fact. You cannot demean me.’”^[19] Giving away one's last garment shames and turns the tables on the creditor “in prophetic protest against a system that has deliberately rendered him destitute. ... The entire system by which debtors are oppressed has been unmasked.”^[20] Wink writes that using nonviolence exposes the internal violence by which the system of domination operates. When we respond to domination with violence, however, we speak and act on the system's terms. “We become what we hate. ... We turn into the very thing we oppose.”^[21] Wink speaks here of the need for means to be commensurate with ends. If we want a world based on the laws of justice and love, we must use commensurate means demonstrated by Jesus, such as loving one's enemies, respecting the rule of law, and modeling the way of the cross.^[22] Based on his exegesis, Wink extrapolates a broad ethic of nonviolence he believes was advocated by Jesus and that is to be imitated by his followers. Wink names this nonviolent ethic “Jesus' Third Way.”

Jesus here reveals a way to fight evil with all our power without being transformed into the very evil we fight. It is a way—the only way possible—of not becoming what we hate. “Do not counter evil in kind”—this insight is the distilled essence, stated with sublime simplicity, of the experience of those

Jews who had, in Jesus' very lifetime, so courageously and effectively practiced nonviolent direct action against Rome.^[23]

Context and Universality

Though Wink's analysis of this text is provocative, it is spurious to suggest that these verses definitively establish a broad biblical ethic of nonviolence; nor can we state that Jesus definitively held, practiced, or commanded his disciples to follow such an ethic. New Testament scholar Robert A. Horsley refutes the majority of Wink's exegetical analysis in an essay dealing more broadly with Matthew 5:38-48 and its Lukan parallel (6:27-36). Horsley refutes the connection of any of these verses with enemies beyond the immediate local community or the disciples, or with nonviolence and nonresistance in general.

The issue of political violence for liberation from oppression, or even in interpersonal relations, is wholly absent from these sayings. Non-violence is not the issue or the message in these texts ... Although (in the English speaking world) "turn the other cheek" may well have become an admonition of non-resistance, it is difficult to see how stretching the original phrase metaphorically to mean non-resistance to evil in general can possibly meet the criteria of acceptable biblical exegesis.^[24]

Horsley grants that in a local context, non-retaliation might be a more appropriate label than nonviolence.

It is possible to say that Jesus gave particular advice about not retaliating against one's adversary under certain local circumstances, but this is not the same thing as saying that Jesus held and practiced a totally unqualified ethic of nonviolence that stands as a model for nonresistance to be applied universally for all time. Horsley also questions the basis on which biblical scholars in the first world argue exclusively for nonviolent revolution. He questions the extent to which we can directly apply Jesus' practice to the broader modern context. "There are surely some significant differences from situation to situation today. ... Direct application of Jesus' words today may be an unwarranted shortcut in the process by which our own broader situation is analyzed and the will of God for our situation is discerned."^[25]

For Wink, the creativity that allows for new human and just possibilities is nonviolent. In *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, liberation theologian José Míguez Bonino proposes that this creativity may just as well be violent; that is, neither violence nor nonviolence should maintain exclusive sway. More importantly, he believes neither position strictly speaking is fully supported by the biblical text.

The Bible does not conceive man and society as a function of reason or freedom but in concrete historical relations of man-things-God. Even if we try to understand the basic biblical notions of justice, mercy, faithfulness, truth, peace, we are always thrown back to concrete stories, laws, invitations, commandments; they are defined as an announced action of commandment of God in a given historical situation. ... [this] mean[s] that ethical criteria are not defined a-temporally but in relation to the concrete conditions of existence of men historically located. ... This direction cannot be translated into a universal principle—reason, order, liberty, conflict. ... Violence appears in the Bible, not as a general form of human conduct which has to be accepted or rejected as such, but as an element of God's announcement-commandment, as concrete acts which must be carried out or avoided in view of a result ... indicated by the announcement-commandment. Thus, the law forbids certain forms of violence to persons and things and authorizes and even commands others.^[26]

Míguez Bonino insists on the necessity of context in doing theology and ethics.

Wink first published this Matthean exegesis in *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa: Jesus' Third Way*.^[27] In that volume, he offered a more nuanced presentation of the use of violence and nonviolence. By writing within the violent historical context of the colonization of South Africa, blacks justifiably rejected nonviolence as a "white" gospel of submission.^[28] He counseled that whites "must not raise a single finger in judgment of those who have despaired of nonviolent change and have turned to violence as a last resort."^[29] In the South African context, Wink refrained from equating all forms of violence as evil, writing that "violence is not an evil to be avoided at all costs,"^[30] and that the counter violence of the oppressed "may be something that God is able to employ."^[31] Because of his understanding of these complexities, he did not (and does not) consider himself a pacifist. In a number of his writings he has noted that Mahatma Gandhi

“continually reiterated that if a person could not act nonviolently in a situation, violence was preferable to submission.”^[32]

In the preface to *Engaging the Powers*, Wink tells the reader that *Violence and Nonviolence* is really the first volume in the “Powers” trilogy, and “the book on South Africa provides what this one lacks: a practical case study of the relevance of nonviolent direct action applied to a concrete situation.”^[33] However, the reality is that *Engaging the Powers* is far more widely read and referenced to support both biblical interpretation and Christian nonviolence. Therefore, its lack of contemporary context is problematic and of great concern. It is surprising that Wink, a highly regarded activist as well as a scholar who is well acquainted with the realities and complexities of context neglects it in this influential volume.

Perhaps more important than his nonviolent ethic is Wink’s “we become what we hate” analysis of the use of violence by the oppressed. Here Wink equates the violence of the oppressed with the violence of the oppressive systems of domination. Essentially he makes no detailed comparison of different kinds or levels of violence, so it is difficult for the reader to question or judge these assumptions. Robert McAfee Brown offers a more complex examination of violence that emanates from different sources by noting the moral distinction between what Régis Debray calls the “violence that represses and the violence that liberates.” Reubem Alves describes the same phenomena using the vocabulary of “violence and counter-violence.” Alves says, “Violence is the power that oppresses and makes men unfree. Counter-violence is the power that breaks the rod which enslaves, in order to make men [sic] free. Violence is power aimed at paralysis. Counter-violence is power aimed at making man free for experimentation.”^[34] Contrary to Wink’s argument, note here that “freedom” is a characteristic of violence. Wink’s imperative for a broad ethic of nonviolence obscures these important distinctions.

The analysis by the conference of the Latin American bishops in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968 offers the kind of contextualization necessary to begin speaking of ethical action, be it violent or nonviolent.

The violence we are talking about is the violence that a minority of privileged people has waged against the vast majority of deprived people. It is the violence of hunger, helplessness, and underdevelopment. It is the violence of

persecution, oppression, and neglect. It is the violence of organized prostitution, of illegal but flourishing slavery, and of social, economic, and intellectual discrimination. ... We call this “violence” because it is not the inevitable consequence of technically unsolvable problems, but the unjust result of a situation that is maintained deliberately, ... rooted mainly in the political, economic, and social systems that prevail, ... based on the profit motive as the sole standard for measuring economic progress.^[35]

The priests stated that masses of the poor were awakening to the dynamics of these injustices and beginning to consider the possible solutions.

Liberation is impossible without a fundamental change in the socio-economic structures. ... More than a few feel that the time has already passed for accomplishing this by purely non-violent means. ... Because the privileged few use their power of repression to block this process of liberation, many see the use of force the only solution open to the people. This same conclusion is being reached by many militant Christians whose own lives faithfully reflect the gospel. ... One cannot condemn oppressed peoples when they feel obliged to use force for their own liberation; to do so would be to commit a new injustice.^[36]

Robert McAfee Brown makes a concise argument for the use of violence in light of such circumstances of oppression, calling for consideration of a “just revolution.”

In the simplest terms, the case would be made that structural violence can become so deep-seated, so powerfully entrenched, and so destructive and despotic that there remains no way to overthrow it short of physical violence. The need to overthrow it by such means is not only permissible, but is demanded in the name of justice, equality, and love.^[37]

The voices of victims or circumstances of violence that Wink occasionally provides do not adequately describe the depth of oppression and domination within which Wink proposes to set his nonviolent practice.

Responses to Structural Violence

There is another level at which this violence needs to be clearly defined. Robert McAfee Brown writes, “our immediate response to the word violence is to think of it as describing an overt, physical act of destruction.”^[38] Victims of marginalization and oppression experience not only this level of instrumental, observable violence, but institutional and structural violence as well. Helder Cámara, a bishop and central figure at Medellín and in the development of Latin American liberation theology, said that this structural violence is “everywhere the basic violence,” and referred to it as “Violence No. 1.”^[39] “Violence No. 2” is a revolt against “Violence No. 1” and gets the most attention, though it is the one most likely to be condemned, as it is visible, instrumental, and forceful. “Violence No. 3” is the repression that comes in response to No. 2 and is also visible, instrumental, and forceful, but is justified as the only way to maintain order. Cámara notes that both No. 2 and 3 must be understood as responses to the first level, structural violence. Number 1 is the kind of violence that we must identify and condemn first so it may be legitimately and adequately addressed.

Wink purports that Jesus’ third way intends precisely to expose and disrupt the cycle of violence and unmask the underlying spirit of violence concealed within domination systems. Yet his methodology of examining the three practical amplifications of the exhortation to not resist an evildoer (turning the other cheek, giving the undergarment, and going the second mile) discourages a clear analysis of these different types of violence. On the one hand Wink’s argument that the very spirit of institutions is violence speaks without providing actual historical context to the structures of domination and the structural violence experienced on the individual level. On the other hand he proceeds to “focus attention on the person or agent of that force”—the one who slaps, the one who sues, the soldier who conscribes—and the victim. The occasions are described as discrete interpersonal events of overt physical force.

Because of this failure to address concrete, context-based structures, Wink’s description of nonviolent action falls back on individualism and interpersonal encounter. For example, what causes Wink to believe that the victim will assert his or her dignity by offering the other cheek and that this action will register with the offender and so “create enormous difficulties for the striker?” Is it not just as likely, if not more so, that the one who turns the cheek (and is already considered less than human) will be struck again? In the case of nudity resulting from giving one’s last garment as payment, will the shame of the creditor really

“unmask the entire system” by which debtors are oppressed? Is not Wink being overly optimistic when he states that the debtor’s nudity “offers the creditor a chance to see, perhaps for the first time in his life, what his practice causes, and to repent?” Willard M. Swartley makes a similar criticism: “That the ‘victim’ takes the initiative to turn humiliation into dignity, fundamental to his position, is good, but I am not persuaded that the offender would thereby be shocked into a new respectful relationship.”^[40] Wink has admitted that a “nonviolent orientation is premised on a power seldom recognized by oppressor and oppressed alike.”^[41] It is a form of power that “those inured to violence cannot comprehend.”^[42] The majority of scholars who borrow Wink’s exegesis, however, rarely describe such nuances when using his scholarship from *Engaging the Powers* to make a nonviolent reading of this particular Matthew text normative.^[43]

Wink hopes that a violent offender who is backed by and benefits from a system of privilege will be awakened to the oppressive nature of the structure and realize that the very structure is invested in preventing him or her from seeing its true nature. This view comes from his earlier thesis in the trilogy and in *Engaging the Powers* where he describes that the “Powers that Be,” in their original state, were good. They are now fallen and must be awakened to their original goodness by liberating them from their delusional state. Once again, his analysis lacks any discussion of the historical complexity of the nature of violence, nor does he acknowledge that in order for these structures to continue they must privilege power. His failure to discriminate between the concealed, invisible spiritual state of domination systems and the clear structural violence they cause prevents the reader from grasping the implications of his nonviolent ethic.

Though Wink may occasionally offer an apologetic for the use of violence based on context, these statements ring hollow when the preponderance of his writing treats nonviolence as normative and violence as “evil” and “what we hate.” In the case of South Africa, he wrote that Jesus’ nonviolent third way is not a “thou must” but a “thou mayest”; it is nonetheless apparent that he believes nonviolence is the better way. The crux of *Engaging the Powers* is this:

Christians are called to non-violence, unequivocally. They are to engage evil nonviolently, in every circumstance, without exception. They must lean all their weight on divine grace, trusting that the Holy Spirit will reveal the third way not evident in the situation. But when the crisis breaks, we may discover that

we are not creative enough, or open enough, or imaginative enough, to find that third way. If we choose violence, however, we abandon the realm of freedom for the kingdom of necessity. Having committed our lives to the ways of God, to our remorse we find that we have become acolytes of the Domination system.^[44]

While he leaves the door to violence slightly ajar, moral and spiritual authority are ultimately granted to nonviolence over violence because nonviolence is equated with creativity and imagination, freedom and trust in God, and finally with Jesus and his “Third Way.” In reference to the ideas of John Swomley, Wink agrees we should always “side with the oppressed, even when they follow the bad example of their oppressors when resorting to violence.”^[45] However, he does not deal in any serious, critical way with the justification for the use of violence to confront systems of domination, either theoretically or historically. Furthermore, though he makes reference to the injustice and oppression of blacks in *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, he does not provide a concrete human voice, nor reasons for the tensions between the advocates of violence and nonviolence, nor an adequate historical analysis of the overall structural conditions.

Simplifications of History

A critique of Wink’s lack of historical analysis could be readily applied to his treatment of Christianity itself as part and parcel of the domination system. Wink believes that the root of the Babylonian myth of redemptive violence still holds sway as the “dominant myth in contemporary America (more influential by far than Judaism or Christianity).”^[46] He describes how the myth has been inculcated in young people, particularly by the comics and cartoon shows in which the mythic pattern of redemptive violence is played out over and over again. The theme of such narratives presents an agent of chaos who appears to triumph until a champion fights back and ultimately triumphs by destroying the evil power so that order may prevail.^[47] Wink notes that religious education cannot “even remotely match the myth of redemptive violence,” particularly considering the influential, effective, and entertaining power of the myth played out on television. Further, the myth of redemptive violence has used “the traditions, rites, customs, and symbols of Christianity” as a vehicle to both validate and enhance the power of violence at the spiritual heart of institutional

principalities and powers. Christian civilization has become little more than a “hollow shell ... filled with the creed of redemptive violence.”^[49] Wink’s notion that somehow Christianity has fallen victim to a myth of violence and that it serves as little more than a vehicle or shell for a more powerful worldview invites serious historical critique. He laments that the “domination system proved too strong” for the church, and that “from within and without, enormous pressures forced the church ineluctably toward precisely the kind of hierarchical and violence-based system that Jesus had rejected.”^[50] He also wrote that with the collapse of both communism and secular optimism, “perhaps we can now see the gospel for what it has always been: the most powerful antidote for domination the world has ever known.”^[51] The task of the church “over against the Powers” is to “remind the Powers to whom they belong.”^[52] Such a declaration might be more appropriately applied to “the church” itself. If there ever was a time when Christianity, or “the church,” could divorce itself from the myth of violence that is at the heart of the domination system, such a time no longer exists. Wink portrays the church as a victim of an ancient mythic spirituality whose task is to disclose the spirituality of the powers,^[53] “deligitimate an unjust system and to create a spiritual counterclimate.”^[54] Wink offers no concrete proposals for such programs, nor does he offer any analysis of institutional churches as generators and perpetrators of the myth of redemptive violence themselves. Who is this “church” about which Wink writes? Such questions must be considered concurrently with constructive proposals in order for churches to earn any legitimacy at all promoting nonviolence and acting upon such principles.

Wink offers lists of nonviolent movements throughout the world as persuasive evidence for the efficacy of nonviolence.^[55] These lists of nonviolent activities, however, also lack context. Many of the nonviolent movements Wink includes do not have roots in Christianity, such as the women’s movement, the ecology movement, and the gay rights movement. In fact these groups often see Christian institutions, texts, and ideologies as the sources of domination and liberation. In addition to this disconnect from the Christian tradition, Wink’s belief in the success of nonviolence generally must also be questioned historically. In other words, the success of nonviolent tactics must be understood within a particular historical context, especially the violence contemporary to each movement. Certainly Mahatma Gandhi and the movement for Indian independence from British rule and Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern freedom movement are powerful examples of

how nonviolent strategies have in fact worked to transform domination systems in their day.

But even these movements of nonviolent direct action require contextualization. Ward Churchill argues that “Gandhian success must be viewed in the context of a general decline in British power brought about by two world wars within a thirty year period” and the other violent nationalist movements within India at the time.^[56] Similarly, he notes that Martin Luther King, Jr. was accepted as a leader of the nonviolence movement at the same time other civil rights leaders who accepted violence as a tactic in the struggle began to gain influence in the African-American community.^[57] James Cone presents the “twoness” of the civil rights movements represented by Martin Luther King and Malcolm X—integrationist and nationalist respectively—and argues that the outcomes of the struggles of their era, including the tensions between the use of violence, particularly in self-defense, and nonviolence, cannot be understood one apart from the other.^[58] Leilah Danielson points to the framework of “twoness” as manifested in the person of James Farmer and the work of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) during the civil rights movement. She describes the need for analysis of this movement that does not to dichotomize violence and nonviolence, but that evaluates the positive and negative dimensions of the various elements of the movement as well as the fruitful tensions such differences created.^[59] Certainly these authors elucidate a more context-based analysis of the racism and white supremacy under which violence-nonviolence debates must occur than does Wink. Churchill in particular provides a provocative critique of white, middle-class, progressive activists for whom he contends nonviolence provides a privileged comfort zone.^[60] It has become apparent that white, middle-class, progressive, Christian activists such as Wink and I should not promote the nonviolent direct action we advocate without seriously confronting such challenges. As Wink’s exegesis and his notion of Jesus’ third way have become central in the discourse of Christian nonviolent activists and his activism demonstrates his commitment to liberation for all people, his work should more adequately address the voices of oppressed communities.

It is not my intention to imply that violence is either a more effective or appropriate method than nonviolence for successful revolutionary transformation. I am a Christian activist for whom Wink’s work deepened my own commitment to nonviolence. However, I have endeavored to present an argument here against a scripturally-based Christian theory that universalizes nonviolence as a normative framework that effectively marginalizes all other

approaches to revolutionary transformation. Whether or not this was Wink's intention, his work is consistently applied in this way.

Wink calls on the oppressed to assert their humanity and dignity and to refuse to accept humiliation in the face of overt oppression, yet he admits that these nonviolent actions are not intended to change the structures of domination. In the Matthew passage these actions demonstrate "how the oppressed can recover the initiative and assert their human dignity in a situation that cannot for the time be changed," and, "to behave with dignity and recovered humanity now, even under the unchanged conditions of the old order. ... Jesus does not propose armed revolution. But he lays the foundation for social revolution."^[61] Wink's emphasis on affirming the dignity and agency of the oppressed and humanizing action is laudable when and where "structural change is not immediately possible."^[62] But he offers no constructive proposals for building "the foundation for the social revolution" of which he writes. What will this social revolution look like? He assures us that the future will be based on the "contours and character of existence in God's domination free order" as seen in the person of Jesus.^[63] What might coerce the "Powers that Be" to give up power and change the structures of oppression themselves? How does Wink square his un-revolutionary proposals with his earlier contention that the gospel is Jesus' "radical assault" on the presuppositions of oppression, that it is "a message of a world transfigured, right down to its basic structures,"^[64] and it is meant for "the salvation of the socio-spiritual orders themselves?"^[65]

Jose Míguez Bonino rejects traditional approaches to creating peace and calls for something radically different that is based on historical circumstances, and demands the complete transformation of structures. Whether achieved nonviolently or violently, Bonino makes no call for conciliation of any kind, only "a means for attaining a new and more just situation."^[66] "The 'new age' does not coexist pacifically with the 'old age' but engages in a death struggle. Reconciliation is not achieved by some sort of compromise between the new and the old but through the defeat of the old and the victory of the new age."^[67]

Míguez Bonino states that nonviolent action is coherent only when it serves a revolutionary purpose: it respects the human person; makes room for an internalization of the project of liberation in the masses; and fosters a sense of solidarity in the construction of a new society.^[68] If violence can be more efficacious, it should also be considered, given rigorous analysis and application of explicit restrictions. He reiterates that no one position should be

endorsed over another without adequate analysis that includes specific context.

Wink's ethic of nonviolence is inspirational in its call for creativity that refuses to participate in the spiral of violence; however, its universalizing tendencies invite serious critique. The daily reality of the vast majority of exploited peoples in the world is violence, not nonviolence. In this, his major work, Wink has missed the reality and voice of the marginalized, thereby potentially creating an ethic that is neither complete nor just. Biblical, historical, and social-scientific investigations of the use of violence are necessary alongside a nonviolent analysis and strategy. A truly liberating perspective demands contextual analysis that definitively names forms of violence, resists universalizing a normative position for nonviolence, and makes constructive, revolutionary proposals.

1. 1. Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).
2. 2. Ray Gingerich and Ted Grimsrud, eds., *Transforming the Powers: Peace, Justice, and the Domination System* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).
3. 3. The first two books in the trilogy are *Naming the Powers: The Language and Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) and *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Human Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).
4. 4. Ray Gingerich, "The Economics and Politics of Violence: Toward a Theology for Transforming the Powers," in *Transforming the Powers: Peace, Justice, and the Domination System*, edited by Ray Gingerich and Ted Grimsrud (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 117-18.
5. 5. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 13.
6. 6. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 6.
7. 7. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 10.
8. 8. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 3.
9. 9. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 14.
10. 10. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 15.
11. 11. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 16.
12. 12. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 37.
13. 13. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 39.

14. 14. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 14.
15. 15. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 45.
16. 16. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 110.
17. 17. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 136.
18. 18. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 149.
19. 19. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 176.
20. 20. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 179.
21. 21. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 195.
22. 22. These are three of Wink's six theological arguments supporting a case for nonviolence in *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa* (New Society Publishers, 1987), repeated in many of his more recent works.
23. 23. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 189.
24. 24. Richard A. Horsley, "Ethics and Exegesis: 'Love Your Enemies' and the Doctrine of Non-Violence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 13-14.
25. 25. Richard A. Horsley, "Response to Walter Wink: 'Neither Passivity nor Violence: Jesus' Third Way,'" in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, edited by Willard M. Swartley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 31-132.
26. 26. Jose Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 117.
27. 27. Walter Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa: Jesus' Third Way* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987).
28. 28. Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, 5.
29. 29. Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, 28.
30. 30. Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, 66.
31. 31. Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, 68.
32. 32. Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 51.
33. 33. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, xiii.
34. 34. Robert McAfee Brown, *Religion and Violence* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 44.
35. 35. Brown, *Religion and Violence*, 44.
36. 36. Brown, *Religion and Violence*, 58.

37. 37. Brown, *Religion and Violence*, 56-57.
38. 38. Brown, *Religion and Violence*, 6.
39. 39. Helder Cámara, *Spiral of Violence* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971), 30.
40. 40. Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 64.
41. 41. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 127.
42. 42. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 55.
43. 43. Two examples of such use of Wink's exegesis even further removed from analysis of context or power are Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 151-154, and J. Milburn Thompson, *Justice and Peace: A Christian Primer* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 183-186.
44. 44. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 237-8.
45. 45. Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, 66.
46. 46. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 17.
47. 47. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 20.
48. 48. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 28.
49. 49. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 30.
50. 50. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 45.
51. 51. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 48.
52. 52. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 167.
53. 53. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 164.
54. 54. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 165.
55. 55. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 49, 244-251.
56. 56. Ward Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role Of Armed Struggle in North America* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007), 55.
57. 57. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 56-57.
58. 58. James H. Cone, *Martin and Malcolm in America: A Dream or a Nightmare?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).
59. 59. Leilah Danielson, "The 'Two-ness' of the Movement: James Farmer, Nonviolence, and Black Nationalism," *Peace and Change* 29, no. 3-4 (July 2004):431-452.
60. 60. Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology*, 61.
61. 61. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 183.

62. 62. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 179.
63. 63. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 257.
64. 64. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 83.
65. 65. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 63.
66. 66. Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, 119.
67. 67. Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, 121.
68. 68. Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, 127.