

WILLIAM CAREY  
International Development Journal



## Peacemaking in Africa

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WINTER 2012

## A Note from the Editor

I am delighted to welcome you to the launch issue of William Carey International Development Journal, a quarterly online journal from William Carey International University, devoted to interdisciplinary research on international development from historical, cultural, socio-political, and spiritual perspectives.

Peace is at the heart of God's mission in Jesus Christ, that he came as the prince of peace, reconciling God and man. In Matthew 5 Jesus taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." This issue is devoted to research, presentation, and reflections on Peacemaking in Africa, a conference co-hosted by Fuller Just Peacemaking Initiative, Peace and Justice Advocates, and William Carey International University in September-October 2011. Speakers include Kisongo Mbelelu of DRC, Faustin Ntamushobora of Rwanda, Bryant Myers of Fuller Theological Seminary, James Butare of WCIU, and Peter Sensenig of Just Peacemaking Initiative (JPI) who address the topic from different perspectives as scholars, practitioners, participants, and even victims. Socio-cultural, economical, political, and spiritual roots of the problem are explored, and biblical texts examined.

I invite you to read and reflect on the important theme. Join in discussion by sending in your comments on the articles and blogs.

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# William Carey International Development Journal

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**Journal Information:**

William Carey International Development  
Journal (ISSN # 2162-2817)

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*William Carey International Development  
Journal* was established in 2011 to pro-  
vide a place for scholarly communication  
and publishing for its students, faculty  
and constituents.

**Subscription Information**

Published quarterly by  
William Carey International University

All articles are available online free of  
charge at [www.wciujournal.org/journal](http://www.wciujournal.org/journal).

Print copies are available for \$10 from  
[www.wciujournal.org/journal](http://www.wciujournal.org/journal).

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## **Incarnation, Not Intervention: Mennonite Service and Just Peacemaking in Somalia By Peter Sensenig**

### **Introduction**

When a human crisis reaches the proportions of a situation like Somalia, questions of violence take on fresh urgency. Even within the peace church tradition, voices normally committed to staunch pacifism call for a second look for the sake of justice and neighbor love.

A debate along these lines took shape in early 1993 (a critical time for international response to war and famine in Somalia) in the Mennonite publication *The Gospel Herald*. J.R. Burkholder and Ted Koontz wrote: "Perhaps it is time to think again about some kind of dualism. By this we would acknowledge the importance of restoring order and accept the apparent need for governments sometimes to act with force or the threat of force." At the same time, Burkholder and Koontz reiterated the continued rejection of violence on the part of Mennonites, adding: "But we believe that as pacifist Christians, military action is not our calling. For Mennonites, this may be a time for silence. It may be a time to neither condemn nor advocate this particular use of military force."<sup>1</sup>

J. Denny Weaver responded with a clear "no" on two levels, calling first for a continued categorical rejection of just war thinking: "The most seductive of all American myths – guns and violence solve problems, provide security, and produce freedom – has tempted Mennonites as a

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peace church.” Second, Weaver pointed out on a particular level the slippery slope of a situation like Somalia:

With the absence of an overt military objective in Somalia, the supposedly humanitarian use of the army is more subtle and perhaps more dangerous to Mennonites. Some claim that the use of the U.S. Army to force the warlords into a cease fire creates more good than not using the army. If Mennonites are principled pacifists, they shouldn't fall into the use of justifiable war criteria to rationalize military action. Accepting an initial compromise to make limited use of a military presence is the beginning of a series of compromises, each one allowing yet more violence.<sup>2</sup>

Weaver's argument points to the deep pacifist contention with the dominant acceptance of justifiable violence. In the case of humanitarian intervention in a crisis, however, the thrust is even stronger than the notion of acceptability. For many, intervention falls into the category of responsibility, ostensibly placing the burden of proof on those who reject violence categorically. Pacifists rightly feel the pressure to respond to these important questions: Can nonviolent approaches appropriately address the need for public order in a place like Somalia? Are development, service, and other peacebuilding efforts adequate alternatives to military intervention?

The goal of this paper is not to propose specific solutions (against which some Somali writers have cautioned) but rather to suggest an alternative to the dominant bias toward violent intervention.<sup>3</sup> I will look at two nonviolent approaches in particular – Mennonite service in Somalia and just peacemaking theory – and identify the variables of ethical reasoning that these approaches have in common.<sup>4</sup>

Finding a nonviolent methodology to be superior on two counts – faithfulness to Jesus and (relative) effectiveness – I will then offer several proposals to refine it for a Somali context.

These proposals lead me toward a methodology that I call *incarnational* because of its theological grounding, emphasis on relationships and community, and normative vision of the cross.

### **Mennonite Service and Just Peacemaking: Three Variables of Reasoning**

Mennonite work in Somalia has strongly emphasized service and presence flowing out of the mandates of Christian discipleship. The theory of just peacemaking consists of ten practices that are grounded in three theological convictions: initiatives, justice, and love-centered community.<sup>5</sup> Thus both Mennonite service and just peacemaking see practices as a way of reasoning; practices are not simply actions, but modes of living that fit into a broader view of the world and communal life. Additionally, both share the variables of *Christlikeness and justice* (including discipleship that takes initiative), *community loyalty* and a particular way of viewing *social change*.

Any discussion of just peacemaking and pacifist approaches must address questions of multiple ethical languages. Duane Friesen argues strongly that Christian witness is multilingual. Our first language is our Christian narrative, but four other languages may be employed appropriately: prophetic witness, Christian vocation, common good in democratic discourse, and middle axioms that call people or institutions to live up to their own moral principles or ideals.

The language of middle axioms provides a framework for addressing and supporting practices like just policing and crisis intervention based on human rights (including attention to conditions at the root of a conflict, early warning and early action capability before violence erupts, and disarmament and limiting arms sales). Friesen therefore asserts that nonviolence is

compatible with all of the practices of just peacemaking, but that some of them “involve the participation of government actors who have not given up the threat of violent force, even as they seek to resolve conflicts peacefully.”<sup>6</sup> Glen Stassen affirms that if pacifists truly care about peace, they are obligated to support just peacemaking practices that create peace.<sup>7</sup>

All of the practices are potentially applicable to Somalia on some level, but the five practices of cooperative conflict resolution, acknowledgement of responsibility, just and sustainable economic development, offensive weapons reduction, and grassroots peacemaking groups are particularly relevant to the context.

Several of the other practices may become more clearly applicable as the country stabilizes. For example, the purported attempts of the U.S. and U.N. at imposing democracy from the outside have had disastrous consequences.<sup>8</sup> Such an imposition is rejected by both Mennonite thought and just peacemaking. Friesen notes that Christian support of democracy should not be a Constantinian view that power shapes the world, but rather one of mutual servanthood. He rephrases Reinhold Niebuhr’s dictum in more ecclesiological terms: “The human capacity for dialogue makes democracy possible, but the human inclination to partial knowledge and self-serving ideas makes democracy necessary.”<sup>9</sup> Likewise, advancing human rights and religious liberty are critical but presuppose in some ways the presence of a functioning government with real power.<sup>10</sup>

*1. Christlikeness and justice* – A basic conviction for the nonviolent methodology in Mennonite and just peacemaking thought is that Christ calls his followers to be peacemakers. Discipleship therefore entails taking deliberate action in response to injustice. Just peacemaking

calls this action “initiatives.” Mennonites have historically used the term “service.”<sup>11</sup> Emphasis on the variable of Christlikeness and justice insists on two claims: there are alternatives to violent intervention, and these alternatives carry moral weight because they are both faithful to Christ and effective for bringing about justice that is lasting.

Mennonite theology emphasizes ongoing community discernment for the task of discipleship. The mode of discipleship in the realm of political engagement, however, has found expression in a spectrum of Mennonite separatism and activism, ranging from Guy F. Hershberger’s “nonresistance” to Yoder’s “witness to the state” to J. Lawrence Burkholder’s “social responsibility” to Gordon Kaufman’s “radical love.”<sup>12</sup> The genius of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC, a relief and development agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches) is that it represents Anabaptists (including Amish) on all points of this spectrum, drawing them together under the motto “In the name of Christ.” The point of connection is a radical Christian discipleship through a life of service. The perception of pacifists as socially irresponsible in letting evil win out – a widely accepted accusation of Reinhold Niebuhr’s – assumes that responsibility can only take a public political form. When the question of civic duty is given more adequate definition, however, the reality is that peace churches have responded to the needy in many significant ways without relying on a particular nation for legitimacy.<sup>13</sup>

A life of Christian service has taken many forms for Mennonites. PAX was an alternate service program beginning with the Korean War and ending after Vietnam.<sup>14</sup> PAX workers served in Somalia in “appropriate technology” – oxen plowing, irrigation and food storage.<sup>15</sup>

The program demonstrates how Mennonites can potentially be involved in post-war reconstruction in Somalia, as they were in other parts of the world.

Another way that Mennonites (as well as Brethren, Friends, Baptists, Presbyterians and others) have served for the stated goal of “violence reduction” is Christian Peacemaker Teams. CPT talks to soldiers and paramilitaries, advocates human rights, supports local initiatives of nonviolence, accompanies those in danger, and reports on conflict situations in Iraq, Palestine, Haiti, Canada, Colombia and Mexico.<sup>16</sup> The Mennonite connection would serve CPT well in branching into Somalia as well.

Mennonites have a long history of service in Somalia, first under what is now Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) and later with MCC. John Lapp describes the emphasis of Mennonite work in Somalia as bearing witness, defined as presence that takes the form of “traditional Mennonite incarnational servanthood.”<sup>17</sup> Mennonite mission work in Somalia began in 1953. For the next several decades Mennonites engaged in various types of service to the Somali people and nation. They ran elementary and secondary schools and taught English and agriculture. They built clinics and a nurse station and training school, and sent doctors and nurses in response to community needs for vaccinations and health care. They worked in agriculture, irrigation and food storage, and sanitation. One Somali witness noted that Mennonites earned trust by learning the language, demonstrating that they valued the community and the relationships they were building, and transporting the sick to hospitals.<sup>18</sup>

In 1972 the schools were nationalized and all buildings were taken over by the government. The government pushed out all foreign workers in 1976, but the Mennonites were

invited to return in 1980. The 1980s saw 1.7 million refugees from droughts, floods, and wars; in response MCC brought food, water, sanitation, medicine, and craft programs. In 1982 MCC chartered an entire cargo ship for a delivery of corn during a food shortage.<sup>19</sup> EMM sent many teachers, agricultural workers, and health workers to Somalia in the 1980s, including my parents.

Although EMM and MCC were forced to pull their personnel from Somalia by 1991 they remained present with the Somali people, opening an office in Kenya in 1991 to stay connected to refugees and believers, as well as to issues of education, development, and peace.<sup>20</sup>

Representing EMM and MCC, Bonnie Bergey made frequent trips to Somalia, arranging for nurses to come during ceasefires, and along with John Paul Lederach attending meetings of clan elders, women, and others who were reaching across clan lines to discuss peace.<sup>21</sup> The relief and development work continued with great care to provide equal aid to various groups, so as not to aggravate inter-clan tension or conflict.<sup>22</sup> Mennonite service to Somalis extended even to the diaspora, helping with immigration, settlement, and advocacy in North America.<sup>23</sup>

One important aspect of Christlikeness and justice is special concern for the vulnerable and poor, in many cases women and children. Judith Gardiner states that Anabaptists have a long historical experience at the margins, and maintain an orientation to the margins that emphasizes God's "preferential option for the poor."<sup>24</sup> During the Somalia conflict MCC and EMM persisted in focusing on the most vulnerable, holding an AIDS workshop in Mogadishu in 2002. Emphasis on working with women was strategic as well as theological; in 1997-1998 MCC gave \$50,000 for work in Somalia, most of which went to women's peace conferences.

MCC recognized that women are uniquely positioned to work for peace because they are not tied to clan politics and often support entire families. Women play a key role in education, small business, and health, even in a war-torn area.<sup>25</sup>

Just peacemaking emphasizes *Christlikeness and justice* through deliberate actions for peace that function as viable alternatives to violence. In this way just peacemaking places the moral content that Mennonites have invested in the term “service” within the framework of “initiatives.” These initiatives are modeled after and grounded in the Sermon on the Mount. As disciples we do more than obey Christ; we embody Christ through our practices. Just peacemakers view working for justice as central to the church’s mission, and the church sustains the spirituality that drives this mission. It also combines hope with realism, identifying what God is doing in the world and participating in that work as a community.<sup>26</sup>

One practice of just peacemaking closely related to the variable of *Christlikeness and justice* is fostering just and sustainable economic development. David Bronkema, David Lumsdaine, and Rodger A. Payne define development as the “processes of change in peoples’ relationships to their environment which increase their wellbeing, standards of living, or quality of life.”<sup>27</sup> They point out that justice and peace and sustainable development depend on one another. Much care must be taken, however, to determine what type of development is appropriate for a context and how the environment can actually be a source of the conflict (as access to water rights has been in Somalia historically). Development is a matter of the community working together rather than a project done by outsiders.<sup>28</sup>

Like the Mennonites, Bronkema, Lumsdaine, and Payne advocate an approach that focuses on the poor and their needs. They propose that this can be done by supporting the following: agencies that work directly with the poor and have long-term relationships and agencies that protect the legal rights of the poor, stronger ties between poor and wealthy communities, and ecologically sensitive practices. A transfer of material and natural resources is also critical; the poor are generally effective entrepreneurs for whom access to resources goes a long way.<sup>29</sup>

Sufficient normalcy has been attained in the northwest part of Somalia (Somaliland) and in the northeast for some development to occur.<sup>30</sup> Development projects in these areas can address post-conflict reconstruction as well as the needs created by shrinking resources such as water, one factor causing and aggravating conflict in the region.<sup>31</sup> One project implemented by MCC supplied fishing equipment to people living along the Juba River in Somalia.<sup>32</sup>

Mennonite practice and thought and just peacemaking share a common vision for *Christlikeness and justice* that attends to serving and meeting the needs of the poor. An “embodied Christology” demands taking initiatives that work toward a community of justice and peace.

2. *Community loyalty* – Mennonites and just peacemakers share a strong loyalty to all people, a sense of responsibility for the well-being of neighbors near and far. The sense of community loyalty to all peoples and ultimate loyalty to Christ that first called Mennonites to work with Somalis in 1953 has transformed into *practiced loyalties* that reinforce the former commitments. Mennonites and Somalis have built a relationship of mutual respect that

buttresses all cooperative peacebuilding efforts. This critical component of peacemaking has even caused other traditions to take note; Anglican Bishop John Gladwin observes: “The Mennonite record of compassionate work in the world for the victims of power and oppression will stand comparison with any other and leaves the work of more established churches far behind in radical *commitment*.”<sup>33</sup>

Just peacemaking places *community loyalty* to all humanity central in many of its practices, including advancing human rights, democracy, and religious liberty; working with emerging cooperative forces in the international system; and fostering just and sustainable economic development. But the just peacemaking perspective on human rights is particularly important. The theory draws a distinction between human rights grounded in Lockean individualism (which it rejects) and the human rights concept that springs out of the Hebraic community, which emphasizes responsibility and needs.<sup>34</sup> This second kind of concern for human rights is firmly rooted in a biblical loyalty to the entire human community.

Another practice of just peacemaking that is derived from *community loyalty* is acknowledging responsibility for conflict and injustice. Alan Geyer writes that peacemaking requires self-transcendence in the form of empathy, repentance, and forgiveness. Public repentance on a national or communal level can be a powerful instrument for peace because it acknowledges the rift in community and hopes for healing. Conversely, a lack of repentance out of ignorance or fear of weakness communicates disinterest in creating an international community. Somalia has been a tragic example; the U.S. has never issued an apology for its involvement during the Cold War or for the massacre of October 1993.<sup>35</sup> As a result, local

warlords and extremist groups alike have leverage with the Somali people against the U.S. and the U.N. (and any national government they support). Mennonites and just peacemakers share a strong loyalty to all people that makes repentance a possibility and a practice, guided by a sense of responsibility for the well-being of neighbors near and far and the desire for a community of peace.

3. *Social change* – Both Mennonite pacifism and just peacemaking seek to eliminate the use of and need for violence. But both are also concerned for justice that leads to wholeness rather than simply a lack of violent conflict. They share, therefore, a way of seeing *social change* that confronts and rectifies injustice without resorting to violence. The basic claim of this view is that God has equipped each community with power to move toward wholeness. Another way to say this is that injustice is not remedied from the top down, but from the ground up.

Mennonites have sought to build peace from the ground up in two ways: using tools of conflict resolution through meetings and consultations, and drawing from Muslim Somali resources for peacemaking. John Paul Lederach has argued that the only way to peace in Somalia is regional reconciliation that builds toward a national forum. The tools for restoring peace are not top-down but bottom-up and must focus on Somali society and its peace constituencies rather than on armed groups.<sup>36</sup> Lederach identifies six tracks of MCC work in Somalia: relief and development (with equal attention to various groups), diaspora Somali peace initiatives (forming the peace group Ergada), U.N./Life and Peace Institute resource group (keeping MCC in touch with Somali and U.N. leaders), in-country conciliation focused on bottom-up peacebuilding, education and awareness,<sup>37</sup> and nonviolent peacekeeping and

disarmament (in discussions with top officials at U.N. and the U.S. Institute of Peace). The underlying principles of this strategy include attention to long-term and short-term concerns, context and indigenous peace efforts, showing commitment to all across lines of conflict, and remaining faithful to an ethic of nonviolence.<sup>38</sup>

To that end, MCC and EMM have sponsored various consultations focusing on the traditional clan elders, women, poets, and others who were trying to reach across clan lines and make peace.<sup>39</sup> They held Somali peace conferences in Nairobi and sought to address all aspects of the problem, including patterns of abuse in aid and development and the role of the narcotic *qat* in the disintegration of Somali society.<sup>40</sup>

The Mennonite approach has emphasized that working with traditional systems, including elders, gives peace a stronger foundation among Somalis.<sup>41</sup> Part of the effect of this approach is that it opens up a wealth of resources for peacemaking within Muslim Somali culture. Bruce Bradshaw, who served in Somalia in the early 1990s as a regional liaison officer for the U.S. Agency for International Development, observed that “existing clan structures continued to function to help people meet their basic daily needs, even when states failed.”<sup>42</sup>

Identifying the clan system as the root of the problem is simplistic and misleading.<sup>43</sup> In traditional Somali culture genealogies give one a place in the social system and a kind of political contract serves as an inter-clan police system. Certain religious leaders have a distinct non-warrior identity. When the colonial powers enforced a more individualized judicial system in the 1950s, the traditional system was weakened.<sup>44</sup> The Iise clan had a system for settling

disputes that was ignored by the Western framers of the Somali constitution.<sup>45</sup> Scott Peterson writes:

Surprising as it sounds, in light of what has afflicted Somalia for the past decade, Somalis for centuries had developed peacemaking as an art form almost on par with war making. Some argue that these traditional restrictions could be considered a Somali version of the Geneva Conventions.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the disintegration of many facets of Somali society, occasionally this initiative for peace breaks through. Helen Metz writes that during the famine “some Somali women with a gift for reconciliation were playing key roles in operating many of the food distribution centers established by nongovernmental organizations.”<sup>47</sup>

One instance even points to Somali peacemaking in the form of nonviolent direct action. The 1989 assassination of the Roman Catholic Bishop, attributed to Barre, led to the protest massacre and subsequent manifesto against the President. When Barre sentenced many of the signers to death, he was forced to back down by demonstrators surrounding the court.<sup>48</sup>

Threads of peace can be found in Somali traditional law called *xeer*. The law’s goal is to establish peace among the clans by assuring that no one is above the law. Compensation for violence comes from the entire community, holding retaliation in check. The system has proven effective in maintaining peace in Somaliland and Djibouti. Somali traditional culture also includes separation of religion and politics, placing clerics apart from clan politics, and leans toward a peaceful interpretation of Islam.<sup>49</sup>

A way of seeing *social change* that starts from the ground up and draws from Somali peacemaking does not mean working exclusively with marginalized people. This approach also

values higher education. Eastern Mennonite University and the University of Hargeisa in Somaliland have agreed to an exchange of faculty in order to boost efforts for peace.<sup>50</sup>

Just peacemaking also sees *social change* from a ground up perspective. Although the practices are theologically based, they are accessible and useful for all people.<sup>51</sup> The three practices of cooperative conflict resolution, encouraging grassroots peacemaking groups, and reducing weapons are particularly relevant to the Somali context.

The practice of cooperative conflict resolution (CCR) takes the process as a shared pursuit of beneficial outcomes. This shapes the principles of CCR: seeking to understand the adversary, listening, judging only behavior, acknowledging faults, transparency and honesty, partnership (power with not power over), using force only to create necessary space, risk-taking, long-term prevention solutions, and peace and justice as core components. An important aspect of CCR for the Somali context is that it seeks to take the place of court cases, a void that must be filled in a country with no stable government. Conflicting parties or clans, given an opportunity and framework, may find common ground in the needs and fears that are behind their positions.<sup>52</sup>

Another practice for *social change* is encouraging grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations. Unfortunately, this approach has been ignored by the U.S.:

When U.S. Special Envoy to Somalia Robert Oakley shook hands with Mohammed Farah Aided and Ali Mahdi in front of the international press, he accorded them recognition as the legitimate representatives of the Somali people. In doing so, Oakley undid months of thoughtful negotiation by the former representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mohamed Sahnoun, who was promoting traditional elders and grassroots associations as alternative sources of authority.<sup>53</sup>

These groups foster and create peacemakers and the stories around which we build our peacemaking practices. Grassroots groups have played critical roles in social change all over the world. They have the advantage of transcending narrow self-interest in conflicts, maintaining concern and interest, representing the voiceless, and initiating action for justice.<sup>54</sup>

A third just peacemaking practice within the way of seeing *social change* is reducing offensive weapons and weapons trade. The disastrous results of flooding Somalia with weapons in the Cold War and following have already been addressed. Ongoing military aid from the U.S. demonstrates that it is still operating under the assumption that social change occurs through violent revolution or violent suppression, both of which have failed miserably in Somalia. Just peacemaking, on the other hand, recognizes that war is not worth the price for any society, no matter what the intended outcome. It calls instead for reducing the weapons trade, banning land mines, and moving toward defensive force structures. A Code of Conduct Bill would restrict U.S. arms deals to countries with bad human rights records like Somalia, as well as restrict wealthy nations' donation of surplus arms to developing states.<sup>55</sup> Weapons reduction is part of the related issue of disarmament, a critical need for Somalia. John Paul Lederach suggests that disarmament in Somalia could take the form of development and employment in exchange for weapons.<sup>56</sup>

The methodology of nonviolent practices can find resources from both Mennonite service in Somalia and just peacemaking theory. These two approaches' shared emphases on *Christlikeness and justice* (discipleship that serves and takes initiative for justice), *community*

*loyalty* and a way of viewing *social change* from the ground up combine to form a faithful, effective alternative to military intervention.

### *Critique and Room for Development*

Any response to Somalia that takes seriously the real needs of its people must deal with the need for aid. Mary Anderson warns: "It is a moral and logical fallacy to conclude that because aid can do harm, a decision *not* to give aid would do no harm."<sup>57</sup> Aid has an even greater impact on the conflict in Somalia because there are few accessible natural resources. As a result diversion of food aid in Somalia was unprecedented; estimates range from 20-80% and many saying roughly half of the food was stolen.<sup>58</sup> But although it is often diverted and profits warlords, suspending aid would punish the most vulnerable and create more population movements and greater poverty.<sup>59</sup> Simeon Ilesanmi, citing Rwanda and Liberia as examples, argues that this kind of corruption and instability will not change without good leadership.<sup>60</sup>

Advocates of nonviolent approaches certainly cannot be accused of neglecting aid. They must deal seriously, however, with critiques presented by those who prefer a just war approach. Martin Cook insists that in a situation of humanitarian intervention, just peacemaking should not be given moral preference over just war but rather seen as another "toolbox" available to leaders.<sup>61</sup> Ronald Stone argues that just peacemaking needs more serious engagement with realism, especially the kind formed by Scripture.<sup>62</sup>

Both of these charges would also be leveled against a Mennonite approach that rejects violence as an option for administering aid. A nonviolent methodology must therefore deal with this critique: Critical aid to Somalia has been administered under armed protection. This

critique can be extended by pointing out that even MCC and EMM workers moved under the protection of armed guards in some cases. Bonnie Bergey notes, however, that most rented vehicles came with “gunmen included,” which she realized was more for the protection of the vehicle. She writes that she always felt safer when there were no guns with her.<sup>63</sup> But the question remains: the notion that some people should be armed but pacifists do not need to be responsible for that task falls into the dualism warned by Burkholder and Koontz.

An adequate response to this critique must argue one of two things: that armed protection does not make aid workers safer, or that there are alternatives to armed security. I think a nonviolent approach could make claims for both, especially in a Somali context.

The increasing vision among Mennonites to “seek the shalom of the city” entails thinking critically about how order and security is maintained.<sup>64</sup> Duane Friesen and Gerald Schlabach’s edited volume *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security, and the Wisdom of the Cross* is an important work in a field that must be further developed. Gerald Schlabach argues that the work of putting love into practice shows that security is an important issue. He proposes the concept of “Just policing” as a response to the security question. As disciples, we should not be afraid to ask what works, what is actually effective in creating security. But the various meanings of the term “security” demonstrate that assumptions are shaped by theology, ideas, and worldview, and ultimately the way that we respond to insecurity.<sup>65</sup>

Duane Friesen proposes that Christians should have a particular set of assumptions: our security is ultimately dependent on God, the Christian narrative is formative, we need a “thick” picture of Jesus Christ, and security is integral to biblical *shalom*. He challenges the widely held

assumption that public order is dependent on violent force, a reading of Romans 13 that he calls an “ontology of violence.” It is vital to distinguish between violence and coercion in public order. Yet he also acknowledges that the wisdom of the cross is an ethic of risk: “Nonviolence requires the same kind of courage as warriors who are willing to die in battle.”<sup>66</sup>

“Just policing” is a point of connection with just peacemaking; a grassroots peacemaking group might take the form of a “just police” force. According to Lederach, just policing must work within a framework of local conflicts rather than on an international level, keeping in focus the well-being of the local people.<sup>67</sup> That U.N. peacekeeping forces and police in general are trained not to open fire indicates that there are security options and protocol that rely on alternatives to violence. Jeff Gingerich explores possibilities for a nonviolent police force.<sup>68</sup> Advocates of a nonviolent approach must continue to develop this area if they are to present a credible alternative to armed security.

### **A Methodology of Incarnation, Not Intervention**

Whatever positive connotation it may carry as a compassionate response to humanitarian crisis, intervention has lost its clout in Somalia. *Intervention* carries a sense of intrusion, in theory and in practice. I suggest rather that our goal is *incarnation* that is faithful to Christ and does not compromise on effectiveness.

An incarnational approach is particularly important in Somalia for two reasons. First, it seeks to communicate the gospel in a context that is explicitly unreceptive to any religion besides Islam. In this context, service *is* preaching. In whatever form God chooses to build the church in Somalia, the foundation will be relationships, service, and the presence of Christ

through his followers. Second, an incarnational approach takes seriously the reality of sin and leaves space for risk, suffering, and tragedy. The cross to which Christ calls each of his followers is the flip side of incarnation. But it is also the wonder that God confronted sin by stepping into it, exposing it, and defeating it in the resurrection.

I find the second methodology of nonviolent peacemaking to be superior on two counts – faithfulness to this resurrecting God and effectiveness. Affirming its variables of *Christlikeness*, *community loyalty*, and *social change*, I want to emphasize the *incarnational* nature of these variables. Then I propose that a nonviolent way of reasoning depends on a *practice* (presence) and a *virtue* (patience) that can continue to guide incarnational peacemaking work in Somalia.

Ray Gingerich states, “An Anabaptist vision that engages the world claims the church as the resurrected body of Christ.” *Christlikeness* therefore means willingness to risk for the sake of others, living in such a way that demonstrates Christ’s inclusive love and the hope of the resurrection. It also means engaging the world at the margins, as he engaged it, and embracing a new paradigm of power that frees us from the idolatry of wealth, privilege, and violence.<sup>69</sup> Bertha Beachy, with many years experience working among Somalis, writes: “Somali peoples call Christians to serious incarnational living in the presence of great faith.”<sup>70</sup>

This ultimate loyalty to Christ informs the community loyalty to the Somali people, manifest in the commitment to building relationships. Fatima Jibrell, the Somali Managing Director of the Horn Relief Organization, said of Mennonite work in Somalia: they educated many, advocated for Somali issues during the crises, risked their lives to be present, listened, and showed cultural humility, eating and sleeping in the same places. She advocates the same

for all organizations who want to be effective.<sup>71</sup> Alemu Checole and Samuel Asefa recount this story:

Abdul-Cadir Wursame, one of the first Somali believers, recalls how he stumbled across Mennonite missionaries serving in Mogadishu in the early 1960s. To him the Mennonites seemed to be a unique community of believers blessed with the virtues of humility, love, compassion, gentleness and meekness. In their humility and meekness, he saw Christ.<sup>72</sup>

### *The Practice of Presence*

A nonviolent way of reasoning must see long-term relationships and community as vital to peacemaking and witness. The practice of presence is important for three reasons: it allows for listening to Somalis, it builds trust and mutuality, and effectiveness in building peace depends on it.

The importance of listening to Somalis is obvious to people working in all capacities in the country. Michel Anglade states that despite conditions of aid diversion and corruption,

Humanitarian actors still present in Somalia succeed in creating a minimal space for intervention. By including Somalis in the decision-making process and by relying on the elders and local authorities, humanitarian organizations can achieve consensus within the community and prevent their staff from finding themselves 'in the front line' against militia leaders. Precise and properly targeted humanitarian intervention also enables the Somali people to be more closely involved and thus minimizes the risks.<sup>73</sup>

Others have argued that security responsibility belongs to the Somali leaders and people. Full democratic participation is required, strengthening cultural and Islamic values conducive to the common welfare and properly placing primary responsibility for ending conflict on the Somali people.<sup>74</sup> This also allows for drawing on the resources of Somali cultural and religious peacemaking outlined above.

The practice of presence also builds trust and mutuality. Mennonites have demonstrated through decades of work that they have no agenda but to serve. Two events in the 1960s displayed this commitment. In July 1962 Mennonite worker Merlin Grove was martyred by an Islamic radical. Both the mission and his widow expressed forgiveness, and Mennonites continued to serve in Somalia. In 1963 the government began to require Islamic education in all schools. EMM listened to Somali believers and agreed to allow this rather than to leave, seeing this not as a compromise of witness but as a way to break down barriers.<sup>75</sup> Chantal Logan writes, “Although these two events happened more than thirty years ago, Somalis still remember and retell them today. They are part of the reason Mennonites and Somalis have the kind of relationship they do, one that allows Mennonites to work freely among the Somalis.”<sup>76</sup>

Nobody expected the war to last so long; the longevity and nature of the conflict give an advantage to those who know the culture and have relationships with the people. Rather than creating artificial NGOs to talk about peace, Mennonites worked with existing Somali structures and community leaders, and MCC workers stayed when others left. Their openness about faith combined with their peacemaking efforts was an asset for working with Somalis, something secular NGOs could not understand. Building bridges takes time, trust, and long-term commitment to a people group; in short, the practice of presence.<sup>77</sup>

Effectiveness in building peace and success in administering aid depends on the practice of presence. NGOs can fail or succeed at this, but ultimately rely on long-term relationships for effectiveness. Mary Anderson sees this as part of the overall goal of moving toward justice, not simply giving aid: “NGOs must be clearly on the side of those who are poor and marginalized,

those against whom societies discriminate, and their aid must support systemic change toward justice rather than simply keep people alive to continue to live in situations of injustice.”<sup>78</sup> The U.N. Research Institute for Social Development also recognizes that its War-torn Societies Projects play a critical role not in directing policy but in influencing key decision makers to research alternative options in conflict.<sup>79</sup>

Military intervention is predisposed against this model, tending to view security as establishing a “safe area” rather than making a country generally safer as nonviolent approaches seek to do. The practice of presence that sees long-term relationships and community as vital to peacemaking, listens to Somalis, and builds trust and mutuality will be more effective in the long run for building peace.

### *The Virtue of Patience*

An incarnational approach takes seriously the reality of sin and leaves space for risk, suffering, and tragedy. At the heart of this is the virtue of patience that continues in faith without seeing immediate results. Mark Logan observes that Mennonite aid has saved people’s lives and allowed them to remain in their homelands.

But even more importantly, we need to help more people to be trained as peacemakers. Only seeds planted in love and watered by the grace of God will bring forth a harvest. This knowledge keeps Mennonites working in a country that has demoralized many. It is faith that keeps us going when the world around us seems to have gone suddenly mad.”<sup>80</sup>

The virtue of patience leaves space for risk and suffering. An element of risk always remains for those involved in humanitarian intervention and giving aid. Soldiers, aid workers, and Somalis who risk their lives must be appropriately honored. But Christians have an even

deeper framework for risk because their discipleship is rooted in the cross of Christ. Christians in Somalia have faced that risk on many occasions. In 1959 a Mennonite worker was attacked and injured in her home at night. EMM faced opposition throughout the 1960s because of some Somali converts. The martyrdom of Merlin Grove in 1962 was only a precursor to the many Somali believers martyred in the 1990s. In January 1992 Somali believer Ahmed Haile was wounded by Aidid's troops in a peace meeting with other Hawiye.<sup>81</sup>

The reality of risk and suffering points to an important aspect of patience: enemy love. John Rempel writes, "The distinctive charism of Mennonitism is its combination of two convictions: that the church...is already the bearer of the kingdom and that one of the most astonishing evidences of this new reality is the possibility of loving one's enemy."<sup>82</sup>

Patience also allows space for tragedy, recognizing that no solution will stop bad things from occurring. Somalia has had more than its share of tragedy. As I was writing this paper a suicide bomber disguised as a woman killed at least nineteen people in Mogadishu, including four government ministers. The attack occurred at a hotel during a graduation ceremony for medical students from a local university.<sup>83</sup> Within the horror of this incident is a glimmer of hope; Somalis are building systems of peace – a medical school – even in the war-torn capital. But the slaughter of Somalia's brightest, the very people who will improve health care and quality of life in the country, has no worthy explanation.

Any method that seeks to explain every occurrence is deceptive. A solution that sees violent intervention as the only way leaves no space for tragedy, fitting all events into its own narrative. Ironically, this ends up letting tragedy shape the response, as it so often does in

military intervention. Nonviolent responses can also be tempted to leave no space for tragedy, by trying to determine the root causes to explain all actions. Lisa Sowle Cahill argues that sin must feature prominently as a key doctrine in just peacemaking theory.<sup>84</sup> Christian compassion compels action in the face of injustice and suffering. But allowing tragedy to set the agenda can obscure what God is doing and squelch hope.

After all, hope is the essential ingredient in patience. Only Christian hope grounded in the resurrection cannot be dismayed by risk, suffering, and tragedy, believing that God is in the act of making things right even in a place like Somalia. In the meantime, we incarnate Christ through presence and patience as we work for peace.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> *Gospel Herald*, January 12, 1993, cited in Omar Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories: The Mennonite Mission in Somalia, 1953-2003* (Telford, Pennsylvania: Cascadia, 2003), 89-90.

<sup>2</sup> *Gospel Herald*, April 27, 1993, cited in Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 90.

<sup>3</sup> Glen H. Stassen demonstrates that presenting alternatives to war is empirically critical to a convincing argument in "Just Peacemaking as Hermeneutical Key: The Need for International Cooperation in Preventing Terrorism," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 24, no. 2 (fall/winter 2004): 174-175.

<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of the variables of ethical reasoning, see the chapter "Holistic Character Ethics" in Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2003), 55-78.

<sup>5</sup> Duane K. Friesen, John Langan, S.J., and Glen Stassen, "Just Peacemaking as the New Ethic for Peace and War" in Glen Stassen, ed. *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 15. The ten practices identified by a team of thirty scholars (including Christian ethicists, economists, experts in international relations, and conflict resolution practitioners) are the following: support nonviolent direct action; take independent initiatives to reduce threat; use cooperative conflict resolution; acknowledge responsibility, seek repentance and forgiveness; advance human rights, democracy, and religious liberty; foster just and sustainable economic development; work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system; strengthen the United Nations and international efforts; reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade; and encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations.

<sup>6</sup> "In Search of Security: A Theology and Ethic of Peace and Public Order" in Duane K. Friesen and Gerald W. Schlabach, eds. *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security, and the Wisdom of the Cross* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2005), 55-72, quotation on 70.

<sup>7</sup> "The Unity, Realism, and Obligatoriness of Just Peacemaking Theory," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 191.

<sup>8</sup> Michael L. Westmoreland-White notes that strengthening the U.N. can be seen not so much as a normative practice of just peacemaking, but a "particular strategy for engaging in the practice of promoting global human rights and international cooperation." See his review of *Just Peacemaking* in *Journal of Church and State* 42, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 368-369. Paul W. Schroeder argues that the U.S. foreign policy of overwhelming military force for national interest is devastating to the world order that has been emerging. "International Order and Its Current Enemies," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 24, no. 2 (2004): 198-199.

<sup>9</sup> Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2000), 250.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy Wichert argues that human rights law is a key tool in the pursuit of justice and public order, suggesting that a Mennonite paradigm of human rights would emphasize presence, protection, and persuasion ("A Mennonite Human Rights Paradigm?" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds. *At Peace and Unafraid*, 340-345).

<sup>11</sup> Leo Dreidger and Donald Kraybill in *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1994) demonstrate that in addition to service, terms like "activism" have become more prominent in Mennonite circle over the course of the last half century.

<sup>12</sup> Richard A. Yoder, Calvin W. Redekop, and Vernon E. Jantzi, *Development to a Different Drummer* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2004), 256.

<sup>13</sup> Dreidger and Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*, 269-270.

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- <sup>14</sup> Calvin W. Redekop, *The Pax Story: Service in the Name of Christ, 1951-1976* (Telford, Pennsylvania: Pandora Press, 2001), 22.
- <sup>15</sup> Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 4.
- <sup>16</sup> Tricia Gates Brown, ed., *Getting in the Way: Stories from Christian Peacemaker Teams* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2005), 11-13.
- <sup>17</sup> John A. Lapp, foreword to Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 8.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-77.
- <sup>20</sup> Bertha Beachy, "The Somali Journey: Presence and Patience" in James R. Krabill, David W. Shenk, and Linford Stutzman, eds., *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims: A Calling for Presence in the Way of Christ* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2005), 238.
- <sup>21</sup> Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 86, 92.
- <sup>22</sup> John Paul Lederach, "Mennonite Central Committee Efforts in Somalia and Somaliland" in Cynthia Sampson and John Paul Lederach, eds., *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contributions to International Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 141-142.
- <sup>23</sup> Mary Mae Schwartzentruber, "Canada: Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada" in Krabill et al, eds., *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims*, 195-196.
- <sup>24</sup> Judith A. Gardiner, "Getting Stuck In: Anabaptist Involvement in Local Politics" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid*, 376.
- <sup>25</sup> Bertha Beachy in Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 102. See also Bonnie Bergey, "The 'Bottom-Up' Alternative in Somali Peacebuilding" in Sampson and Lederach, eds., *From the Ground Up*, 155.
- <sup>26</sup> Friesen, Langan, and Stassen, "Just Peacemaking as the New Ethic," 16-34.
- <sup>27</sup> "Foster Just and Sustainable Economic Development" in Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking*, 119.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-132.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-140.
- <sup>30</sup> Martin Doorbos, "Research-Led Policy Deliberation in Eritrea and Somalia: Searching to Overcome Institutional Gaps" in M.A. Mohammed Salih et al, eds. *African Pastoralism: Conflict, Institutions and Government* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 287.
- <sup>31</sup> J.B. Opschoor, "Towards Security, Stability and Sustainability Oriented Strategies of Development in Eastern Africa" in Salih et al, eds., *African Pastoralism*, 24-25.
- <sup>32</sup> Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 115.
- <sup>33</sup> Quoted in Gardiner, "Getting Stuck In," 367.
- <sup>34</sup> Friesen, Langan, and Stassen, "Just Peacemaking as the New Ethic," 23.
- <sup>35</sup> Alan Geyer, "Acknowledge Responsibility for Conflict and Injustice and Seek Repentance and Forgiveness" in Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking*, 87-94.
- <sup>36</sup> "Toward a Sustainable Peace in Somalia" in Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 105-106.
- <sup>37</sup> Lederach writes that while the media was "portraying sensational and often superficial views of famine, and the international community moved in with military force to protect humanitarian aid deliveries, MCC's position clearly represented a minority voice." In "Mennonite Central Committee Efforts in Somalia and Somaliland" in Sampson and Lederach, eds., *From the Ground Up*, 145.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-148.
- <sup>39</sup> Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 92.
- <sup>40</sup> Bergey, "The 'Bottom-Up' Alternative in Somali Peacebuilding," 150-156.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Friesen, "In Search of Security," 62.

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- <sup>43</sup> Ahmed I. Samatar, ed. *The Somali Challenge: From Catastrophe to Renewal?* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 6.
- <sup>44</sup> I.M. Lewis, *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa* (New York: Longman, 1980), 10-15, 156.
- <sup>45</sup> Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Somalia: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1993), xxiv.
- <sup>46</sup> Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan, and Rwanda* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 8.
- <sup>47</sup> *Somalia*, xxxiv-xxxvi.
- <sup>48</sup> Samatar, "Historical Setting," 51-52.
- <sup>49</sup> Mike Brislen, "Pacifism Among Muslims in Africa" in Krabill et al, eds., *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims*, 266-270.
- <sup>50</sup> Tom Mitchell, "EMU, Somaliland University Hope Exchange Program Fosters Peace," *Harrisonburg Daily News-Record* online, November 15, 2007 (accessed December 6, 2009), <http://www.emu.edu/news/index.php/1552/>
- <sup>51</sup> Friesen, Langan, and Stassen, "Just Peacemaking as the New Ethic," 15.
- <sup>52</sup> David Steele, Steven Brion-Meisels, Gary Gunderson, and Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., "Use Cooperative Conflict Resolution" in Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking*, 63-82.
- <sup>53</sup> Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 44.
- <sup>54</sup> Duane K. Friesen, "Encourage Grassroots Peacemaking Groups and Voluntary Associations" in Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking*, 186-196.
- <sup>55</sup> Barbara Green and Glen Stassen, "Reduce Offensive Weapons and Weapons Trade" in Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking*, 166-184.
- <sup>56</sup> "Toward a Sustainable Peace in Somalia," in Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 105-106.
- <sup>57</sup> *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 2.
- <sup>58</sup> Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?*, 218, 40.
- <sup>59</sup> Michael Anglade, "Somalia: A Country Without a State," in Action Against Hunger, *The Geopolitics of Hunger, 2000-2001: Hunger and Power* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 41.
- <sup>60</sup> "So that Peace May Reign: A Study of Just Peacemaking Experiments in Africa," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 23, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 223.
- <sup>61</sup> "Just Peacemaking: Challenges of Humanitarian Intervention," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 251.
- <sup>62</sup> "Realist Criticism of Just Peacemaking Theory," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 266.
- <sup>63</sup> Bergey, "The 'Bottom-Up' Alternative in Somali Peacebuilding," 153.
- <sup>64</sup> Gerald Schlabach, "Just Policing and the Christian Call to Nonviolence" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid*, 418.
- <sup>65</sup> "Tracing the Grain of the Universe: Project Overview" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid*, 24-31.
- <sup>66</sup> "In Search of Security: A Theology and Ethic of Peace and Public Order" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid*, 38-54.
- <sup>67</sup> John Paul Lederach, "The Doables: Just Policing on the Ground" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid*, 190.
- <sup>68</sup> "Breaking the Uneasy Silence: Policing and the Peace Movement in Dialogue" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid*, 389-403.

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<sup>69</sup> "A Vision of Power that Engages the World" in Dale Schrag and James Juhnke, eds., *Anabaptist Visions for the New Millennium: A Search for Identity* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2000), 73-75.

<sup>70</sup> Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 101.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>72</sup> "Mennonite Churches in Eastern Africa" in John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder, eds., *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania: Good Books, 2006), 199.

<sup>73</sup> "Somalia: A Country Without a State," 41-42.

<sup>74</sup> Samatar, ed., *The Somali Challenge*, 253-254.

<sup>75</sup> Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 37.

<sup>76</sup> "Reflections on Mennonite Interfaith Work in Somalia" in Peter Dula and Alain Epp Weaver, eds. *Borders and Bridges: Mennonite Witness in a Religiously Diverse World* (Telford, Pennsylvania: Cascadia, 2007), 60.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-64.

<sup>78</sup> Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 7.

<sup>79</sup> Doorbos, "Research-Led Policy Deliberation in Eritrea and Somalia," 289.

<sup>80</sup> Eby, *Fifty Years, Fifty Stories*, 115.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-33, 94-98.

<sup>82</sup> John D. Rempel, "Ambiguous Legacy: The Peace Teaching, Speaking Truth to Power, and Mennonite Assimilation Through the Centuries" in Friesen and Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid*, 361.

<sup>83</sup> "Somalia Ministers Killed by Hotel Suicide Bomb" *BBC News*, December 3, 2009.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8392468.stm> (accessed December 6, 2009).

<sup>84</sup> "Just Peacemaking: Theory, Practice, and Prospects," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 201.



## Peace: An Essential Background for Development

By Abdou Maiga

### Introduction

Many men and women rebel with indignation at the idea that peace between people is a dream, as they realize that humankind has followed a path of violence. World War II cost the lives of millions of people. Millions of people continue to perish with victims of war and violence of all kinds. There are many African countries that invested hundreds of billions of dollars in armaments, which would have been sufficient to provide a comfortable standard of living for African people and to initiate development in many areas. Unfortunately, war-related destruction and widespread insecurity continues today in many of the continent's countries for reasons that are difficult to comprehend. It is urgent that Africans realize that in time of war what people need most are not only humanitarian programs aimed at providing them with food, medicines, and development initiatives that could save or preserve lives, but also programs of peace and reconciliation. What are the challenges for this approach and what are the implications for humanitarian and developmental structures in Africa today?

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## The Challenges

In times of conflict, it is important to promote sustainable development. Nevertheless, actions must be directed necessarily to the promotion of peace, because without it, development would be inconsistent or even impossible. Ad hoc support or emergency programs in times of war or conflict are insufficient; there is a dire need to take time to reconstruct thousands of shattered lives and to rebuild divided communities. Such an approach requires a process of involving strategic actions that can serve as bridges for economic and social challenges that are engendered by war. It is true that nowadays the risk of African civil wars and wars between nations have dropped significantly. However, the modes of conflict and violence have changed: now, more than 1.5 billion people live in a fragile state or are affected by conflict or in a state of very high violent crime.<sup>1</sup> A development based on non-renewable resources, where most of the wealth is concentrated within a fraction of the population leads to an inescapable situation of social instability and violence.

The future of the world cannot rely on oil because making energy is a major challenge that causes the problem of access to water and food security. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of people in Africa still lack access to clean water and do not eat their fill. It also is estimated that in many countries the use of natural resources have played a role either in the beginning of a conflict or in its continuance. This is the case, for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where reliable witnesses report that its natural wealth was the determining factor in bringing conflicts that exploded in recent years. This strife has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and in serious violations of human rights. Thus, the exploitation of minerals and other types of

trafficking such as ivory and rhino horn have greatly contributed to the purchase of weapons of war in several African countries. It is understood that all these anarchic operations and widespread abuse of these resources seriously damaged the long-term human and natural capital of the continent with obvious implications for human health, the quality of the land, the ecosystem, and the wildlife.

On the other hand, is it possible to realize that the structures inspired by the values of the Kingdom have a clear responsibility vis-à-vis the nature that reveal God. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, all actions for peace in conflict areas must also take into account the preservation of nature, for it is humanity’s responsibility. It is a promise that should be considered in the form of priesthood: to help people in times of conflict not only to make peace with man but also with nature.

Where are the efforts of NGO-inspired values of the kingdom in regards to nature? These efforts must be in the sense of better management of water resources and preserving biodiversity. Pending the full and final release of all the creation with the second advent of Christ, “We know that, until now, the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs.”<sup>3</sup>

This approach in the consideration of the environment must be part of a coherent plan for conflict prevention. If it is neglected there will be almost certainly open warfare for access to water and food security, which would cause massive displacement of populations, infant mortality, and other vulnerabilities. Even more so, the conflict in Africa may cause many violations of human rights and it will slow down all development efforts.

In starting with the premise that peace is a prerequisite for development and recognizing that peace and development are inseparable, there still remains a fundamental question. How is it possible then to prevent conflict, and how to work on the rehabilitating peace after conflict? The need to take account of better management of natural resources is a known fact, but it demands a focus on peaceful arrangements and nonviolence, as violence begets more violence. "For all who take the sword will perish by the sword."<sup>4</sup> It is impossible to forget that in the Scripture war and injustice are stigmatized. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people"<sup>5</sup>. People in international development have a responsibility, along with their organizations, to work with a Kingdom-perspective, and to face the troubles that are affecting Africa. It is urgent to recognize that the superficiality of lacking commitment to the Lord, or the lack of courage of Christians in Africa to denounce injustices, and the act of blaming God instead of the devil have contributed greatly to endanger peace and to exacerbate ethnic and community tensions.

Wars have destroyed many communities, divided homelands, and broken millions of lives in many African countries. Yet even today, the violence continues incessantly and with massive and individual brutality. Who will continue to believe that peace is merely a vague ideal or aspiration? Who will work to make peace a reality for the people of Africa? Consequently, Africans must welcome and support all programs whose goal is to search for peace in Africa and in the world. It is imperative in times of conflict to support dialogue between the antagonists, using peaceful logic for conflict resolution, compromising when

necessary, and making concessions in order to achieve a genuine peace. Such an approach is a priority if there is to be consistent and sustainable development. What are the implications?

### **Implications**

A rehabilitation program for the various NGOs in Africa stands out as an imperative, in order to develop action plans that encourage peace and promote the reduction of societal crises. The fundamental principle of development is essentially peace, and its corollary conflict resolution, through negotiation and inter-communal dialogue. No development is possible without serious peace. Wars and other violent conflicts result in disastrous human, environmental, and economic devastation. The conditions of war are often the result of human development problems: a problem of access to clean water, or inadequate food supplies, or widespread poverty. In this sense, the achievement of peace requires primarily the fight against poverty, the promotion of human development, and initiatives against all that destroys the environment.

The rehabilitation of peace implies a respect for human rights, and a culture of peace that leads to disarmament through dialogue and negotiation. It is therefore essential to build peace at all levels using various methods and strategies. It is impossible to stop conflicts with just with monetary donations, but it is the responsible duty of everyone to behave in a manner that does not exacerbate ethnic divide. Reducing community tensions and promoting reconciliation between peoples are endeavors that require a strong spirit of moral and ethical generosity. Such behavior requires major changes because the search for peace and reconciliation of people is never easy. All the efforts in these communities must be founded on the principle of rebuilding

peace if there is to be any effective accomplishment in influencing conflict groups. The outpouring of generosity that is needed in the face of violence in the world is considerable. Africa, in particular, must be placed before God's commandment "Thou shalt not kill."<sup>6</sup> From a kingdom perspective, people of faith need to work for the progress and security of Africa by taking the necessary steps to prevent any threat to peace and by contributing to the development means to achieve real lasting peace. It will entail the reduction of military buildup on a negotiated basis. There also must be action against the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world, and the continuous struggle against terrorism and global crime. People must unite against the Chinese adage that "war must be eliminated by war." Yet, there is an alternative, which does not use weapons; it is Christ's love for the world. It is for the redemption of souls, and for the restoration of creation that Satan corrupted.

A number of prerequisites must be in place if there is to be true peace. Among these one should recognize that:

1. A simple desire for peace is not enough because peace cannot be produced by the simple generosity of the human heart. Unfortunately, human natural inclination often resorts to envy and to harm others. Man always has been the enemy of man.
2. The origin of the lack of peace comes mainly from the internal rebellion of man against the divine injunctions.
3. People should cease to underestimate or deny the existence of Satan's power and of its opposition to this world. By not taking into account the activity of Satan in this world, it is not possible to be ready for a massive mobilization for the destruction of

his work in this world. All his work is the enemy of peace, and thus, for sustainable development.

In order to be intentional about building peace, it is essential to analyze the root causes of the problems and conflicts existing in among and within communities, and to understand how to mitigate them. To do this requires being modern, progressive, and scientific in intentional actions without being a conformist. The Christian mission in this world is to reveal the reality of Christ and the reality of the world. The quality of relationships with others depends mainly on a personal relationship with God. The problem is not fundamentally about weapons of war or nuclear energy but about the human heart, its pride and arrogance. Satan obscures the discernment of humanity, although its creative genius can get perform artistic and scientific feats. Therefore, it is urgent that people have in their Kingdom view actions plan that takes into account all dimensions. It is impossible to speak about peace and rehabilitation and to ignore Satan and the principle of evil that drive men to despair and distress, since violence exists in this world because of Satan's strategy. If the world does not realize that Satan is the adversary of God, then people will not understand why there is no peace.

The rebuilding of the peace is inseparable from community reconciliation, as can be seen in Rwanda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea follow in this process. The steps to build peace for a genuine reconciliation of communities in times of conflict require individual and community dimensions. These can be understood through the following dimensions:

### *Individual*

It is vital to emphasize the quality of relationships with others derived from what is maintained with God. This is why the individual dimension involves love, patience, humility, and prayer.

### *Love*

Instinct guides all the behavior of animals. For humans, it is love that should be the guide. Love illuminates humanity and opens its mind to action. If human beings are considered as unique, created in the image of God, then human responsibility is to love. The good or bad actions of men are the product of his inner being, so the true value of a man lies not in what he has, but what he is.

Love is the greatest of divine gifts and the essential rule in building true peace. It lays the foundation for a genuine reconciliation in communities in conflict. Love leads people to pay the price for peace and to seek it at all costs. It determines the degree of commitment for this peace. Because of love, there is awareness that it is necessary to take risks when engaging in the way of peace. Without love all else is unnecessary (1 Cor 12:1-3), so it should guide the Christian approach to the restoration of peace and the triumph of reconciliation.

### *Patience*

The restoration of peace after a conflict requires a great amount of patience. This is because very often, the roots of conflict are very deep and can be traced back several decades in the area's history. Recognizing the need for patience not only helps us to focus on long-term goals, but also helps us to be persistent in waiting for the results. There is no "fast food" in peace

building and reconciliation. Patience is necessary in dealing with others preferences, faults and various backgrounds and experiences.

Internal healing is also an important part of the restoration of peace, yet it takes a lot of time. This is particularly important for donors, who may be looking for faster results, to keep in mind.

### *Humility*

Humility is the antithesis of pride and selfishness, which are unfortunately rooted in our hearts. Pushing us to be arrogant is one of the devil's strategies. Yet any effort to restore peace on our side requires recognition of two unavoidable realities: firstly, the reality of sin and of our own downfall, and secondly, the need to believe that God is sovereign and because of that, he controls the world.

This also implies that the sovereign grace of God is deeper than the whole system of evil and its manifestations in the world including the hatred and rivalry between men. Humility helps us realize that whatever the problems are, within each of us lies the image of God and this helps us to discover that there are also many human values that unite us. This can develop the basis for community understanding and to promote peace and reconciliation.

### *Prayer*

All the things mentioned above - loving the communities we are called to serve, the realization that peace is built over time, a patient and a humble dependence on God's sovereign grace to leads us - flow from prayer and intercession. Active love is inseparable from a life of

prayer since both love and prayer are the manifestations of the Kingdom and necessary for true restoration of peace and a reconciliation of hearts.

### **The Community Dimension**

The Community dimension involves the work of mediation, justice and reconstruction.

#### *Mediation*

If we want to get involved in situations of conflict and achieve concrete results for the restoration of peace, we should first analyze deeply the causes of conflict. Extensive research on the history of warring communities, their current living conditions and the different actors who must be involved in future negotiations should be our primary considerations. -In mediation, knowledge of the diverse communities becomes a necessity in order to find the words and appropriate behaviors to avoid pitfalls in communication.

African forms of conversation may vary from one community to another and recognizing and acknowledging the different styles can lend credence to the mediation. To do this, the choice of vocabulary, tone of our words and even dress play a crucial role in our efforts and results. This aspect of mediation should be considered very seriously if we want results.

A successful mediation should seek to:

- Establish an appropriate framework for dialogue
- Encourage the cessation of hostilities and other forms of violence
- Secure people and property
- Healing of various injuries in the war

- Build mutual trust
- Seek a peaceful coexistence
- Affirm the right to be different

To achieve the above results, the choice of the mediators will be critical. A mediator in times of conflict will have an excellent knowledge of the general culture, be a person who seeks to know and understand others, be a person of consensus and be humble, discreet and honest. A mediator is a very important position and so should not just be entrusted to just anyone. It is important because it involves the healing of people, restoring broken relationships and establishing a solid foundation for a harmonious development.

### *Justice*

No restoration of peace is possible without the triumph of truth and justice. Responsibility for the conflict must be determined and the culprits identified. This is justice. Even if there is mutual forgiveness, knowing the degree of wrong done by each party in the conflict promotes healing of hearts and the healing of resentment caused by the conflict. No real work of forgiveness is possible without the truth is being known about the causes of conflict and responsibility taken by the various groups. Once the responsibility for the wrong has been identified, forgiveness must intervene to prevent acts of blind revenge. Without forgiveness entire communities can be eliminated from the map, which is the opposite of peace and reconciliation. However, justice must be done and in some cases, the perpetrators must be held accountable for atrocities, because without justice, peace is fragile and temporary. Justice creates

a sense of relief. We should avoid, at any cost, a feeling of impunity but also guard against blind revenge.

### *Reconstruction*

Without reconstruction the rebuilding of society will not be a reality, because many conflicts are caused by poverty and social and economic insecurities. To remedy the consequences of conflict, it is essential to set up development programs that affect childhood, health of women and children, education, microfinance and other rehabilitation projects for the dignity of women such as income-generating activities. It would also help to develop structures of social, economic, political and reliable ways to ensure lasting peace. This requires the creation of appropriate economic activities, the revitalization of public administration and implementation of fair and just laws and principles, even in the financial realm and not just for the benefit of an oligarchy. A framework for fair elections and a system of political alternative must be created.

The “Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region” supports this approach by encouraging the participating heads of state to “Promote effective participation of the different socio-economic actors, specifically the private sector, civil society, women and youth in the consolidation of democracy and good governance.”<sup>7</sup>

In terms of challenges and their implications, our organizations should no longer remain indifferent to the needs of peace, because peace is a prerequisite for development. If we aspire to see our various programs of aid and development in Africa more inclined towards sustainable development, we must make the search for peace our primary concern. We must act in a way

that our actions for peace can also work towards the physical and social well-being of people.

Peace is essential to any sustainable development action.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank, Report on Development 2011. <http://wdr2011.worldbank.org/fulltext>

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:20

<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:22

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 26:52

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 14:34

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 20:13

<sup>7</sup> International Conference for peace, Security, Democracy and development in the great Lakes region, First summit of Heads of State and Government, "Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region", Dar es Salaam, 19-20 November 2004.



## **Book Note: Peacemaking Insights on Africa from Jimmy Carter's Books and Interview**

### **By James Butare**

"Jimmy Carter was the recipient of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize, the only U.S. President to have received the Prize after leaving office. Carter and his wife Rosalynn founded the Carter Center in 1982, a nongovernmental, not-for-profit organization that works to advance human rights. He has traveled extensively to conduct peace negotiations, observe elections, and advance disease prevention and eradication in developing nations. Carter is a key figure in the Habitat for Humanity project, and also remains particularly vocal on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."  
(Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy\\_Carter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Carter)).

What caught my attention from the interview which Jimmy Carter gave on PBS NewsHour while launching his new book, *Living Faith*, was his thorough research about the countries where he goes to do peacemaking. I was impressed by his detailed and unbiased knowledge of the historical, cultural, social and political situations in Rwanda, Burundi and Congo. In *Living Faith* and in his interview, he comfortably uses his Christian faith and beliefs to propose workable solutions. That, in my opinion, is what makes him one of the most respected peacemakers in the world.

Jimmy Carter is also openly critical of the US policies as far as peacemaking and combating poverty in Africa is concerned. "Our nation is not looked upon as a champion of peace and as the most generous country on earth. In fact, we are the stingiest country on earth. Every time a Norwegian gives a dollar in foreign assistance for needy people, we give three cents. And so I think, there's a great difference and a great way that we can go to realizing the hopes and dreams of Africa, which will exemplify the characteristics of a great superpower."  
[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/religion/carter\\_11-19.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/religion/carter_11-19.html)

Jimmy Carter is also critical of Christians. On page 57 of *Our Endangered Values*, he points out that Jesus announced that his ministry was to "bring good news to the poor, to

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proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and to release the oppressed.” Jimmy Carter says that after a lifetime of responsibilities in both religious and political arenas, he reached what was to him a surprising and somewhat reluctant conclusion that government office-holders and not church members were more likely to assume responsibility and be able to fulfill the benevolent missions.

## **Significance of the Humanity of the Other in Peace Making: An Acholi Perspective**

Peace is an elusive subject that costs time, energy, money and sometimes lives to attain. The news headlines around the world attest to this, and they explicitly call for the need to cultivate a culture of peaceful co-existence in a world yearning for peace. For the Acholi people of northern Uganda, enduring peace depends upon human total determination and commitment to uphold the humanity of the other even in circumstances that seem illogical to do so.

I shall argue here that enduring peace does not come from human action per se; it is an overflow of one's being expressed through one's corresponding actions toward the other. I am basing this proposition on an understanding that life is relational above all else. The extent to which personal desires are abandoned in order to embrace another person determines someone's capacity to understand oneself as a human being. It also determines their ability to enjoy life and live in harmony with one another. This does not mean that personal desires and needs are completely disregarded. Rather, it means that a sense of self develops based upon the belief that one cannot exist in isolation. When personal wants and desires are made secondary to the needs and desires of others, (even at personal expense), true humanity is revealed. That is, when people are equipped to respect human dignity, they act humanely. Therefore, how one views and treats the other has far reaching implications for peace.

The aforementioned approach to peace making describes the Acholi traditional system of conflict resolution which the international community adopted unanimously as an

alternative viable solution to the northern Uganda armed conflicts that engulfed the Acholi region since 1986. Faced with extinction, the Acholi people resorted to their cultural self-understanding to respond to their plight. Unlike the capitalist theory which premises peace on market exchange because of its power to create social bond among exchange-partners (Rist 1997, 18), the Acholi people premise peace on their understanding of the true nature of humanity. Who are the Acholi people?

### **The Acholi People**

The Acholi people of northern Uganda are part of cattle-keeping Luo-speakers who migrated from their homeland along the Nile River in Southern Sudan in the sixteenth century and settled in different parts of East Africa (Atkinson 1994, 78). Prior to colonialism, the people known today as the Acholi referred to themselves as *An-loco-li*, which means “I am a human being”, or “black” (Doom 1999, 10). The label *An-loco-li* did not have any ethnic delineations or geographical boundaries initially, although the Acholi people had a collective identity encapsulated in cultures and customs that governed their existence for thousands of years. As a result of the Acholi people’s self-understanding as human beings, they embraced peaceful co-existence among themselves and their immediate neighbors (Doom 1999, 11). However, since the colonial period, the Acholi people developed a distinct ethnic identity that characterizes them as “northerners” or dark people, something that sets them apart from the people in the “South” commonly referred to as *southerners*.

### **The Armed Conflicts and their impacts on the Acholi people**

The Acholi people have been victims of many armed conflicts. The first conflicts occurred in pre-colonial Acholi, and then came the 1966 Buganda crisis. The second was the 1979 Uganda National Liberation Army/Front (UNLA/F) war of liberation against Idi Amin’s dictatorial regime that led to formation of the UNLF government (1979-1980). The third conflicts

include the 1980-1986 National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) war against Dr Apollo Milton Obote's second regime (1980-1985) and the Tito Okello-Lutwa's military junta (1985-1986). Fourth, the northern Uganda armed conflicts that started in 1986 and which have continued to the present. According to Oloya Opiyo the northern Uganda armed conflicts is rooted in:

the colonial project of classifying and highlighting cultural differences rather than similarities fragmented indigenous people into "bantu", "nilotes", "hamitics" and so forth, thereby planting the seeds of intolerance, suspicion, and present day ethno-cultural conflicts. Concerned only with winning at all cost against the perceived enemy, all sides to the northern Uganda conflict acted with total disregard for the welfare of civilians generally, and especially children (Oloya 2010, 69).

As a result, the Acholi people suffered immensely. According to Martin Owuor, the Commissioner in-charge of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees in the Office of Prime Minister in Uganda, the cost of the armed conflicts in northern Uganda is too large to calculate and to attach a figure (Nyongesa 2010). In the eyes of a prominent Acholi who pioneered the peace initiative, Macleod Baker Ochola 11, the former Anglican bishop of Kitgum diocese:

Amin's terror affected the military, the civil servants, but it did not really affect ordinary people. That's the difference with this government—our cattle, granaries and houses. The cattle rustling of the Karimojong was the first step in a process that has left the Acholi people deep in the pit of poverty (Leggett 2001, 29).

Overall, the Acholi people experienced unprecedented vices on a wide scale. Some of the vices that both the Uganda government soldiers and the Lord Resistance Army committed are captured in the following paragraphs.

The (worst thing about) the NRA soldiers was having forced sex with women one after the other. Men and women were collected during what they [NRA] called a "screening exercise to flush" out the rebels [LRA] from the community. The men and women were then put in separate groups. Then in the evening, the

NRA soldiers started [raping] the women in the compound. One woman could be [raped] by up to six men; and this went on for three days (Buijs 1996, 99).

Furthermore, according to Oloya, the NRA subjected men to rape as well:

Meanwhile the rape of a man in front of other men and family had no cultural description or name because of its outrageous and alien nature. To describe the brutality of rape orchestrated by the NRM/A on Acholi men in villages in places like Alero, Amuru, Guruguru, the Acholi developed the phrase *tekgungu*, meaning as soon as one kneels one is raped from behind (Oloya 2010, 80).

### **The Acholi People's Resolve on Peace**

However, in spite of the aforementioned atrocities and many more that are not captured here like the suffering in Internally Displaced People's camps, the Acholi people opted for peaceful conflict resolution against the spirited opposition to it both at home and abroad. Internally, President Museveni Yoweri of Uganda mounted a philosophical obstacle to peaceful conflict resolution until the Acholi people prevailed upon him later on during the armed conflicts. From the beginning of the armed conflicts, President Museveni in particular believed in the supremacy of a military solution over a peaceful solution to political and armed conflicts. The president's belief in the supremacy of a military solution over a peaceful option was first witnessed in his thesis while still a student at Dar es Salaam University in the early-sixties. Later on, when he lost the 1980 presidential election, he overruled the resolution of the council of his party to pursue legal redress to the alleged election fraud. Instead Museveni opted for a military option that led him to form the NRA to protest the results of the 1980 election (Bidandi 2011). The 1986 success of the NRA guerilla war in the Luwero Triangle led to the northern Uganda armed insurgency. Globally, the International Criminal Court (ICC) represented the international community. On its part, the ICC favored retributive justice as the antidote to impunity. It opposed vehemently the path of restorative justice upon which the Acholi traditional system of conflict resolution is built.

In this section, I will briefly discuss what makes the Acholi people passionate about peaceful conflict resolution in spite of the suffering and death they experienced for over twenty years. I will also point out the impact of the Acholi traditional system of conflict resolution on justice.

### **Embodied Spirituality**

Culturally speaking, for the Acholi People just like for most ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, the key word that defines their lives is “connectedness” (Gitari 1982, 119; Tutu 2004, 26). Connectedness describes their relationship as an ethnic group, relationships between humans and God, and relationships with the rest of creation. Human connectedness among the Acholi is generally referred to as *Ubuntu* or “human beings” (Doom 1999, 10). *Ubuntu* recognizes that the entire creation is the mental expression of the divine or the entire creation is a thought in the mind of the creator; it relates to everything transcendent and forms the understanding that a person is a person because he recognizes the humanity of others. Therefore, social harmony is the highest goal of the Acholi community.

In Acholiland, spiritual life permeates the whole of their lives and it expresses itself through rituals, songs, dances, myths, proverbs, stories, and riddles just to mention a few. According to this worldview, the Acholi people derive their identities and their behaviors from their spirituality and in return their identity and their behaviors inform and shape their spirituality (Mbiti 1991, 24). For the Acholi people, the whole of life is a sacred act of expressing and of growing into the image of God. Dallas Willard identifies this kind of spirituality as “embodied spirituality” where faith is not removed from everyday life. It is “the relationship of

our embodied selves that has the natural and irrepressible effect of making us alive to the Kingdom of God—here and now in the material world” (Willard 1988, 31). Hence Acholi spirituality is a living spirituality that is written on the lives of its people (Mbiti 1991, 126).

In the Acholi region, being human is being spiritual. Spirituality affirms one’s humanity through humane actions toward other humanity. The central goal in life is to live in harmony in order to develop a true integrated life which is expressed by the famous proverb, “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am”. Under this framework, a sense of one’s own integrity empowers one to resist dehumanization of any sort (Tutu 2004, 26). According to Desmond Tutu, Africans, “know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were lesser than who they are” (Tutu 2004, 26). I confirmed this for myself when I visited northern Uganda three times in 2002, 2007 and 2008. During my visit to the Internally Displaced People’s camps, the people in camps addressed me as *omera* which means “brother”. During my entire visit, the hospitality the Acholi people lavished upon me enabled me to experience the true richness of Acholi brotherhood and sisterhood.

Therefore, according to the above African life-view, the majority of the Acholi people concur that life is relational above anything else. Humans are humans because of other humans (or “I am human because I belong”). Most Acholi people derive their wellbeing by caring for the wellbeing of others first. For that matter, the collective physical and material condition of the Acholi people is secondary to their human relationships. Hope and common humanity dictate their actions regardless of the human physical conditions pertaining on the ground. They focus ultimately not so much on either what members are doing to each other or what

others are doing to them but rather on what they are becoming in relation to what it means to be human. Their underlying life philosophy is, "I belong therefore I am" as opposed to other philosophies such as, "I think therefore I am" or "I possess therefore I am". The traditional community here means mutual community and the human need of the other is the criterion of all human behavior in community (Shorter 1980, 27).

With regard to conflict, the Acholi people believe that violence mars human identity, which destroys the capacity to create the harmony required to build a mutual community. The famous Acholi mindset concerning nonviolence for example is summarized in the following statement:

If you have harmed my child, it is because something has gone wrong with you to such an extent that you could do that. That which has gone wrong for you is now harming my life. It means I cannot be the kind of human being I want to be because you are no longer human. So it is in my interest – my interest – as the victim, to get you and assist you to get your humanity back so that I can become human again (Allen 2006, 137).

This is a fundamentally different way of looking at relationships in a community and what to do with evil. According to this mindset, the worst evil is to live in complete disregard of the humanity of others. It is built upon a sense of a moral universe, which is predicated upon God's love and power to transform the worst of the human situation to the best of what it should be despite all the evidences that seem to be to the contrary. According to the Acholi people, neither evil nor injustice nor oppression nor lies have the last word (Tutu 2004, 2). This mindset endears the Acholi people to see others as humans who are capable of being human no matter what their condition might be. According to above analysis, the Acholi traditional system of conflict resolution is holistic, communal, proactive, participatory and restorative among other things. These values have informed and have shaped the Acholi people's response to their plight in the armed conflicts that have lasted for over twenty years.

## **The Impact of the Acholi Traditional System of Conflict Resolution on Justice**

*Fair Justice is Justice for those who seek justice*

The Acholi traditional system of conflict resolution demands fair justice- justice for those who seek justice. This is occasioned by a belief that human life is sacred and it is inherently redeemable. The underlying assumption is that humans should preoccupy themselves with: preserving human dignity under all circumstances and at all cost; redeeming human dignity where it is impaired; and protecting it through means which uphold that dignity when it is under imminent threat. Therefore, for the Acholi, people, should respond to all life situations by faith, love and living hope rather than fear, hatred and despair.

The failure to understand the underlying assumptions that govern the Acholi people's response to life situations has always led people to make wrong assumptions about Acholi traditional system of conflict resolution. For example, the assertion that the Acholi people are opposed to the ICC trials of the LRA master-minds is misplaced (Allen 2006, 136). Their argument is rather that if there must be criminal prosecution of the master-minds of the armed conflicts in northern Uganda, then the ICC must prosecute all the people who perpetrated human rights violations in northern Uganda (Human Rights Watch 2004). Since they are the victims of injustices in northern Uganda, the Acholi people rather than the Uganda government should determine who the defendants are. The trial of Kony and his henchmen serves the Uganda government rather than the Acholi people. If the ICC fails to investigate and to prosecute the perpetrators of human rights violations on the side of the Uganda government, then no one on the Kony side deserves prosecution. For the Acholi people, such a process only benefits those who administer justice, not those who seek it (Allen 2006, 99). Justice that placates the Uganda government (the dispenser of justice) at the expense of the Acholi people (who are the primary victims of the northern Uganda armed conflicts) is inhumane and thus injustice. The Acholi people contend that justice is justice and humane only when it preserves, protects

and restores the human dignity of victims without jeopardizing the redemption of the victimizers.

*True Justice is Comprehensive because Human Conflict by Nature is Complex*

Secondly, the Acholi people contend that justice that establishes peace is not merely judicial; justice by essence is comprehensive. The injustices meted out in northern Uganda by both the Uganda government soldiers and LRA rebels require more than simplistic judicial remedies. There are legal and moral guilt; political and socio-economic disenfranchisements that are systemic; incalculable holistic losses that are irreparable and above all, indestructible values that stand threatened by the judicial process envisaged by the ICC. Mere legal remedies cannot heal the Acholi community let alone transform it. For example, remedying the historic north/south divide will certainly require effective spiritual, political, social and economic initiatives aimed at building northern Uganda's stake in the central government, while at the same time, enhancing the framework for local decision-making and participation alongside the government. In the absence of such a process, the Acholi people consider the ICC judicial trials as a government strategy to hoodwink them. After all, it has since been fully established that the Uganda government only wanted the ICC trials as way to gain victory in the war rather than to settle the armed conflicts in northern Uganda and deal with the long-term problems there (Allen 2006, 82).

In conclusion, the Acholi traditional system of conflict resolution points out clearly that human immediate and apparent concerns have deeper roots, which lie in the realm of human identity, dignity and relationships. For instance, the armed conflicts in northern Uganda and the humanitarian consequences are rooted in Uganda's violent political history since the colonial days. The violence is in turn rooted in human marred identity, dignity and unjust relationships at individual, ethnic, national, international and cosmic levels. It is extremely difficult to solve the current crisis without referring to all the encompassing factors that fed into the northern Uganda armed conflicts.

The northern Uganda armed conflicts call for a clearer differentiation of the primary issues at stake from secondary issues to avoid the dangers of being held captive to the prioritization of secondary causes over primary causes and the resultant false worldviews, priorities and prescriptions.

Therefore, for the Acholi people, retribution in this case belongs to the past, which should define neither their present nor their future. The Acholi people want to secure their future through forgiveness and reparation, which offers hope for reconciliation, healing and a fresh start for the Acholi people and Uganda at large. This is because the Acholi people derive self-confidence for self-determination and self actualization from their spirituality, which is deeply rooted in their cultures. In this regard, the Acholi self-understanding as *An-loco-li* (I am a human being) is a cornerstone for peacemaking.

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