

# FRANCISCAN PEACEMAKING: MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH THE WIDER CHRISTIAN TRADITION

By Charles Ringma

## I. Introduction

We are living in anxious and fearful times with the spectre of violence all around us and domestic violence within our own homes. The hope that World War II would be the last war to end all wars lies tattered and bloodied before us. M. Ignatieff calls the 20<sup>th</sup> century “a century of total war”<sup>1</sup> and in this part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are traumatized by images of terrorism and war destroying whole cities and displacing millions. And Syria is only one place of conflict!

As contemporary Christians we are pulled in three directions at the same time. On the one hand, we resonate with D. J. Hall’s assertion that “God is at work healing the creation, [and] making the tragic kingdoms of the earth a kingdom of peace.”<sup>2</sup> He continues, this vision of God’s shalom is “not just the absence of hostilities, but a condition of well-being, justice, mutuality of concern, harmony between all creatures, [and] gratitude for being.”<sup>3</sup> The second impulse, in contrast to this theological “idealism” is to accept with a good dosage of fatalism the violence that continues in our world and which can only be met with stronger violence. In the light of this, mainstream Christianity has always maintained the so-called just-war theory as the “dominant theological position.”<sup>4</sup> The core idea here is to kill in order to create peace,<sup>5</sup> or in the words of M. E. Jegen: “the world still depends on war to put an end to war.”<sup>6</sup> This is pragmatism at its very best. The third move, is not simply to hold the first position and to reject the second, but to live the first option in following Christ and embracing the suffering that it will bring. Not only do many who work for peace and justice “experience emotional and mental fatigue,”<sup>7</sup> but both Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. lost their lives in the cause of peacemaking. With the renunciation of violence a new relationship between opposing forces and adversaries becomes possible with the aim of the “reconciliation of the oppressor and not only the liberation of the oppressed.”<sup>8</sup>

With the intent of further exploring this third option, my purpose is to engage the Franciscan tradition.<sup>9</sup> But I do so with a particular concern and from a particular perspective. My concern is that St. Francis and his tradition can so easily be seen as being so “out there,” so different, and therefore so undoable that we dismiss it even before we start the process of careful listening. And so we leave St. Francis with birds on his shoulders, stroking a wolf, and singing of brother sun and sister moon!<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* (New York: Picador, 2001), 139. It is estimated that 100 million people have been killed in the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> D. J. Hall, *The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 13.

<sup>3</sup> *The Stewardship of Life*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> J. H. Yoder, *The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking*, Eds. G. H. Stassen, M. T. Nation and M. Hamsher (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 95.

<sup>5</sup> *The War of the Lamb*, 102.

<sup>6</sup> M. E. Jegen, *Just Peacemaker: An Introduction to Peace and Justice* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Just Peacemakers*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> J. H. Yoder, *Nonviolence: A Brief History*. The Warsaw Lectures. Eds. P. Martens, M. Porter, and M. Werntz, (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 44.

<sup>9</sup> There is of course a wider tradition within the Christian church on peacemaking. See M. Braswell, et.al., *Corrections, Peacemaking and Restorative Justice* (New York: Routledge, 2015); D. P. Horan, *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton* (Notre Dame: Ava Maria Press, 2014); and I. A. Omar & M. K. Duffy, *Peacemaking and the Challenge of Violence in World Religions* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> For many St. Francis is the icon of ecology, they would not see peacemaking as key to his ministry.

In order to overcome this possible dismissal, I wish to make four moves in which I seek to show that the Franciscan vision of peacemaking and reconciliation is closer to the broad Christian tradition than what may first be expected. These moves involve analyzing some 1,500 hymns, looking at a number of Christian lectionaries, examining the missional documents of the Lausanne movement, and listening to the Anabaptists. I could of course have gone direct to look at the formal theological positions of various denominations to have a similar dialogue. But I am taking this approach because hymns and lectionaries are closer “to home” for most laity, while theological statements tend to be the domain of scholars.<sup>11</sup>

I will then set out some of the salient concepts of Franciscan peacemaking and conclude that these resonate with important, if not dominant, aspects of the Christian tradition.

## II. Voices in Hymnody

In my approach in exploring the church’s understanding of the nature and scope of peace and the task of being peacemakers,<sup>12</sup> I have examined some 1,500 hymns in various church hymnals.<sup>13</sup> The following broad themes that occur in the hymns should be noted:<sup>14</sup>

1. The nature of God the Father: “Father of Peace, and God of Love” (*TinS*, Hymn 482).<sup>15</sup>
2. Christ the Prince of Peace:<sup>16</sup> “Hail, Saviour, Prince of Peace” (*TinS*, Hymn 225).
3. Christ the giver of peace:<sup>17</sup> “in peace that only thou canst give... let me live.” (*TinS*, Hymn 601).
4. Christ as the agent who brings us peace with God:<sup>18</sup> through his blood “sealing our peace with God” (*TinS*, Hymn 221); “while he offers peace and pardon let us hear his voice today” (*BofW*, Hymn 95).
5. The Holy Spirit as peacemaker:<sup>19</sup> through the Spirit’s “fertile ground from which your peace and justice spring like rain” (*TinS*, Hymn 416).
6. Peace in the faith community:<sup>20</sup> “joining together in peace those once divided by sin” (*TinS*, Hymn 423) and “take from our souls the strain and stress and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of thy peace” (*AHB*, Hymn 519).
7. God’s eschatological peace:<sup>21</sup> “with all your church above... in one unbroken peace” (*TinS*, Hymn 521).

It is important to note that the above references do not exhaust all the themes, but they are important ones. A theme that could readily be added is peace as an inner disposition: “take my

<sup>11</sup> With the Anabaptists I have taken a slightly different route by looking at their spirituality. But this too is the domain of the laity and not simply that of the theologians.

<sup>12</sup> The core theological concept I am working with is that peace is a gift from God through Christ and as such becomes a task in that we are called to be peacemakers drawing on the gift given to us.

<sup>13</sup> *The Australian Hymn Book: with Catholic Supplement* (Sydney: Collins, 1977); *Book of Worship* (Geelong: Reformed Churches Publishing House, 1990); *Together in Song: Australian Hymn Book II* (East Melbourne: Harper Collins Religious, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Am using the following abbreviations: *AHB*; *BofW*; *TinS*.

<sup>15</sup> Seldom used.

<sup>16</sup> Used repeatedly, in *TinS* some thirteen times.

<sup>17</sup> Used repeatedly.

<sup>18</sup> Used repeatedly.

<sup>19</sup> Very seldom.

<sup>20</sup> A frequent theme, particularly around the theme of forgiveness: “Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there” (*AHB*, Hymn 503) and that of Christian unity: “Peace with the Father, peace with Christ his Son, peace with the Spirit, keep us ever one” (*AHB*, Hymn 402).

<sup>21</sup> Used often. Further examples; “and take us home to you in peace” (*TinS*, Hymn 550) and “our wanderings cease... our souls arrive in peace” (*TinS*, Hymn 564).

heart... guide it to be at peace” (*TinS*, Hymn 593) and “God blesses you with peace” (*BofW*, Hymn 147).

But what is of particular interest for our purposes is the theme of God’s peace for our world with the cessation of war, the flourishing of goodness and justice, and the role of the people of God as instruments of that peace. This brings us back to the theme of peace as gift and task. There are some important emphases here:

1. God desires a world of peace: “Bring to our world of strife your sovereign word of peace, that war may haunt the earth no more and desolation cease” (*TinS*, Hymn 616).<sup>22</sup>
2. Christ is the way to peace: Hail to the Lord’s anointed “and over every nation His peaceful rule shall be” (*BofW*, Hymn 72).
3. This is the Spirit’s work: “till compassion builds the peace the nations seek,” through the Spirit (*TinS*, Hymn 420).
4. And this is the task of the church: “Cleanse the depths within our souls and bid resentment cease” and thus “our lives will spread your peace” (*TinS*, Hymn 635). And the well-known hymn: “Make me a channel of your peace” in the places of hatred, sadness, injury, doubt, despair and darkness (*BofW*, Hymn 451).

In the light of the above, we can draw these broad conclusions. Most of the hymns focus on Christ the Prince of Peace who brings us peace with God through his redemptive work, calls us to an inner peace, calls us to be a church community marked by love, forgiveness and peace, and promises us an eschatological peace in the age to come. At the same time, there is a Trinitarian emphasis that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are involved in this peace-giving activity.

A lesser, but none-the-less significant theme, is that the peace of God through Christ is a gift for the whole world and that the church is to be an agent for God’s peace to impact and penetrate our wounded, troubled, and war-like world. This peace is not simply the cessation of conflict, but a quality of life marked by God’s shalom.

### III. Voices in Lectionaries

In my further approach in exploring the church’s understanding of the nature and scope of peace and the task of being peacemakers, I have examined various liturgical resources.<sup>23</sup>

#### Anglican Liturgy

In this modern version of the traditional Anglican *The Book of Common Prayer*,<sup>24</sup> there are numerous references to peace in the prayers, the canticles, the litanies, the baptismal liturgies, the Eucharistic liturgies, services for Sunday and other Holy Days, marriage ceremonies, and services for the sick.

The themes that we identified in the church’s hymns are also present here. God is the source of peace: “O God, the author of peace and lover of concord;”<sup>25</sup> Christ is the “Prince of Peace;”<sup>26</sup> peace has come through Christ’s sacrifice: we are “all gathered into peace by his death on the

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<sup>22</sup> See also *TinS*, Hymn 616. And “He [God] causes war to cease; the weapons of the strong destroyed. He makes abiding peace” (*BofW*, Hymn 46).

<sup>23</sup> *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1985); *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Manila: ECCCE, Word of Life Publications, 1994); *Celtic Daily Prayer: From the Northumbria Community* (New York: HarperOne, 2002); *Celtic Daily Prayer, Book Two: Farther Up and Farther In* (London; William Collins, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 130.

<sup>26</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 64.

cross;”<sup>27</sup> and “by his death he opened to us the way of freedom and peace;”<sup>28</sup> the church is to be a community at peace: “may we who share this sacrament live together in unity and peace;”<sup>29</sup> and a promise of final peace: “receive... [name] into the blessed rest of everlasting peace;”<sup>30</sup> and “that we may at length fall peacefully asleep in you.”<sup>31</sup>

What is noteworthy however, is the emphasis throughout on the call to prayer and work for peace in our world: “for the whole human family, that we may live together in justice and peace;”<sup>32</sup> “from civil strife and violence, from war and murder... good Lord, deliver us;”<sup>33</sup> “that justice and peace may increase;”<sup>34</sup> and by way of full integration, we pray: “give peace to your church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts.”<sup>35</sup>

The call to be peacemakers is rooted in God’s call to us: “that we may hear and respond to your call to peace and justice.”<sup>36</sup> It is the call of the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mt. 5:3-12)<sup>37</sup> and finds its beginning in our baptismal vow where we respond to the question: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people” with “I will, with God’s help.”<sup>38</sup> At the end of worship we are reminded of this in the challenge: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”<sup>39</sup>

Clearly this lectionary sees peace as both a gift in the salvation that Christ brings, an inner disposition, a relational reality in the church and a missional task of the people of God in the world.<sup>40</sup>

### **Roman Catholic Catechism**

The Roman Catholic faithful in the reflection on the fifth commandment: “You shall not kill”<sup>41</sup> are challenged to live a life of safeguarding peace. We could also say that they are called to shepherd peace in that peace is no automatic reality in our beautiful yet broken world. Peace is something that needs to be birthed and guided.

The catechism reminds the faithful that peace is to be an inner quality and disposition and thus speaks of a “peace of heart.”<sup>42</sup> This inner peace rejects “murderous anger”<sup>43</sup> and recognizes that “hatred is contrary to charity.”<sup>44</sup> It embraces the call to “love your enemies”<sup>45</sup> and realizes that “peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.”<sup>46</sup> As such, “peace is tranquility of order.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 95.

<sup>28</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 201.

<sup>29</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 291.

<sup>30</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 586.

<sup>31</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 602.

<sup>32</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 116.

<sup>33</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 139.

<sup>34</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 311.

<sup>35</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 677.

<sup>36</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 118.

<sup>37</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 85.

<sup>38</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 159. See also 332, 627.

<sup>39</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 215.

<sup>40</sup> D. Bosch summarizes that “mission is a multifaceted ministry, in respect of witness, service, justice, healing, liberation, peace, evangelism, fellowship, church planting, contextualization, and much more,” but gives peace no treatment in his extensive discussion of “Elements of an Emerging Ecumenical Missionary Paradigm,” even though he acknowledges that peacemaking is: “integral to the church’s missionary existence,” *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 512; 368-510; 119).

<sup>41</sup> *Catechism*, 511.

<sup>42</sup> *Catechism*, 519.

<sup>43</sup> *Catechism*, 519.

<sup>44</sup> *Catechism*, 520.

<sup>45</sup> *Catechism*, 520.

<sup>46</sup> *Catechism*, 520.

<sup>47</sup> *Catechism*, 520.

The catechism thus makes it clear that peace is not simply the absence of conflict and war, but is a quality of life. It is the calling of the Christian community, as well as the government to work for goodness and justice and “the avoidance of war.”<sup>48</sup>

The catechism then moves fairly quickly to the discussion that a government “cannot be denied the right to a lawful self-defense”<sup>49</sup> and can legitimately use military force. It supports the idea that the government can impose on its citizens the call to “national defense,”<sup>50</sup> and points out that soldiers in the execution of their duties contribute to “the common good of the nation.”<sup>51</sup> The catechism then makes three key moves:

1. It allows for citizens on the basis of conscience to refuse to bear arms.<sup>52</sup>
2. It rejects disproportionality in conflict. “Extermination of a people” and “destruction of whole cities” is a “crime against God and man[kind].”<sup>53</sup>
3. It is deeply concerned about the arms race and notes that this “does not ensure peace.”<sup>54</sup>

It is clear that this catechism seeks to instruct the faithful, on the one hand, to forgive enemies and, on the other, to participate in legitimate warfare. The sense that most of the laity would make of this is, that the former is possible in the intra-personal sphere, while the latter takes place in the public sphere. This means that peacemaking is always a possibility in the Christian-Christian and Christian-Neighbour sphere, but less of a possibility at a national level.

That this is so, is hardly surprising when this catechism provides this sober assessment of the human condition: “injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride among men and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars.”<sup>55</sup> This catechetical orchestration forms a sobering minor (or is it a major?) key to the Anglican liturgies we have examined above.<sup>56</sup> This “both-and” approach of the catechism is likely to maintain a dualism that continues to see Christian action in the personal spheres of life, but not in the socio-political domains.

### Celtic Liturgies

In the Northumbria Community’s liturgical resources, Morning Prayer ends with the blessings: “May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever He may send you.”<sup>57</sup> And in the daily readings there is reference to finding again the sacred paths: “well-walked with the Gospel of Peace.”<sup>58</sup> It stresses speaking a “word of peace”<sup>59</sup> and notes St. Aidan’s peace prayer for the Holy Island of Lindisfarne: “Here be the peace of those who do thy will. Here be the peace of brother

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<sup>48</sup> *Catechism*, 520-521.

<sup>49</sup> *Catechism*, 521.

<sup>50</sup> *Catechism*, 521.

<sup>51</sup> *Catechism*, 521.

<sup>52</sup> *Catechism*, 521.

<sup>53</sup> *Catechism*, 522.

<sup>54</sup> *Catechism*, 522.

<sup>55</sup> *Catechism*, 522.

<sup>56</sup> A key document on peacemaking and just war is “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response” (U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1983). It sets out OT and NT perspectives; points out that “peace is both a gift of God and a human work” (p.507); holds the right of countries to defend themselves against aggression (p.508) while it maintains that the church’s position is an “overriding ...presumption *in favour of peace*” (p.511); expresses deep concern about nuclear proliferation and makes the overall conclusion that “we are called to be peacemakers...by our Lord Jesus” (p.562) in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary History*. Eds. D. J. O’Brien & T. A. Shannon. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992. M. E. Jegen, *Just Peacemakers*, believes that “nonviolence has moved closer to the center of Catholic social teaching on peace and war” (p.44). J. H. Yoder, *The War of the Lamb*, gives an extensive critique of “The Challenge of Peace” (pp.95-101), but notes that in the light of this document “morally accountable pacifism is making great strides” (p.102).

<sup>57</sup> *Celtic Daily Prayer: From the Northumbria Community* (New York: HarperOne, 2002), 19.

<sup>58</sup> *CDP*, 55.

<sup>59</sup> *CDP*, 63.

serving man. Here be the peace of holy monks obeying. Here be the peace of praise by dark and day.”<sup>60</sup>

The complines are riddled with the theme of peace. The Ita Compline: “Be the peace of the Spirit mine this night. Be the peace of the Son mine this night. Be the peace of the Father mine this night. The peace of all peace be mine this night.”<sup>61</sup> In the Aidan compline there is reference to a peaceful sleep<sup>62</sup> and the prayer, “Circle me, Lord, keep peace within, keep evil out.”<sup>63</sup>

The Felgild compline opens with “Let all the tumult within me cease. Enfold me, Lord, in your peace.”<sup>64</sup> And the Boisil compline has this prayer, “that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep may rest in his peace.”<sup>65</sup>

Clearly in these themes on peace the focus is on one’s inner disposition gifted and blessed by Christ the peace giver. But in the Celtic liturgies there is also an emphasis on the calling and task of peacemaking. While inner peace is the source through rooting out “resentment and argument”<sup>66</sup> so that “all the strife that my life once was made of turn to peace,”<sup>67</sup> the calling is to “go peaceful in gentleness through the violence of these days.”<sup>68</sup>

The lectionary cites three historical examples on the topic of peacemaking. Telemachus (d.391) as a Christian tried to stop a gladiator in the arena. He lost his life as a result. The lectionary uses this example to call us all to a life of prayer and “active peace-making.”<sup>69</sup> It goes on to suggest that in “facing the powers” we are to extend “the peace of Christ” and “amidst conflict and violence” we are to live and proclaim “the peace of Christ.”<sup>70</sup>

The second example is that of St. Pedrog (n.d.) who as a former soldier becomes a “soldier” of Christ. Associated with this saint are two symbols: a “broken spear” and a “tame wolf.”<sup>71</sup> By the former symbol the cessation of violence is illustrated. But with the taming of the wolf we have the transformational theme of a whole new way of being. Peace is not simply the absence of war. It has to do with the “fullness of life.”<sup>72</sup> It is a state of being that reflects God’s shalom.

The third example is that of Reinfrid (d.c.1084) who was a former mercenary. He became a monk at Evesham in the UK. The reflections in relation to Reinfrid are noteworthy. Peace does not just fall out of the sky. Peace is costly. It must be won by suffering not by vengeance. “Peace must often be made before it can be enjoyed.”<sup>73</sup>

To be a peacemaker is not withdrawing from conflict. It is entering the conflict but in a different way. This different way is articulated by the lectionary as follows: to be a peacemaker is to be a “remedy finder; bridge-builder; breach-repairer; a new-way maker; a relationship broker.”<sup>74</sup> Thus peacemaking is a constructionist project. It is about rebuilding but on a new foundation. And at its most basic level, it is about love and forgiveness and “going the extra mile” and “not returning evil for evil.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> CDP, 61-62.

<sup>61</sup> CDP, 29. This line is repeated in the other complines of the week.

<sup>62</sup> CDP, 31.

<sup>63</sup> CDP, 33.

<sup>64</sup> CDP, 38.

<sup>65</sup> CDP, 43.

<sup>66</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1099.

<sup>67</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1135.

<sup>68</sup> CDP:Book Two, 898.

<sup>69</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1098.

<sup>70</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1100.

<sup>71</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1198.

<sup>72</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1222.

<sup>73</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1134.

<sup>74</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1135.

<sup>75</sup> CDP:Book Two, 1496.

## Conclusion

The Roman Catholic Catechism strikes a note of bitter realism. While suspicions and hatreds continue in our world, conflict and war are the likely result. However, the task of governments is always to seek for peaceful solutions, even though war may be the final result. Christians need to work out whether they will support the government at this point or not. However, peacemaking is the major theme of the Christian life.

In both lectionaries we are struck by the familiar theme that peace is God's gift in Christ which calls us to peace with God and with each other in the faith community. This peace, however, is a gift not only for ourselves, but for the whole world. Christians, therefore, are not only called to live in interior peace but are to be peacemakers in our world. This is a sacrificial and costly ministry. Through the power of forgiving love, we are called to disarm the power of "the powers"<sup>76</sup> by embracing a whole new way of being and acting in the way of Christ.

## IV. Voices in Evangelical Missional Documents

So far we have made two moves. We have listened to voices in hymnody and liturgy regarding peace and the call to peacemaking. We are now moving much closer to home. And the question we are pursuing is a most basic one: to what extent do the missional documents of the Lausanne movement "representing" global Evangelicalism incorporate the notion of peace as gift and task in the mission of the church in their reflections.<sup>77</sup>

### The Earliest Lausanne Documents

"The Lausanne Covenant" (1974) highlights the urgent need for world evangelization and emphasizes that "evangelism is primary"<sup>78</sup> over social concern and societal and cultural change, even though it acknowledges that the Christian community is to "transform and enrich culture."<sup>79</sup>

This document does not significantly engage the topic of peace and does not call the Christian Church to the task of peacemaking in our world.

The main reference to peace is in relation to the task and responsibilities of governments. The document states: "It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace."<sup>80</sup> And the main orientation of this call is so that the church can play its missional role in conditions of societal peace.<sup>81</sup>

This reflects the older Christendom model of thinking where society has one task – governance, and the church has another task – evangelization. The former creates the conditions for the latter to do its work and the latter leaves that domain of life to governments.

It is difficult to see how this kind of dualistic thinking allows the call to "transform and enrich culture"<sup>82</sup> to be outworked in significant ways. Surely the faith community is also to play a role in creating societal peace.

"The Glen Eyrie Report on Muslim Evangelization" (1978), while not addressing the peacemaking role of Christians in the world, does touch on some themes that have implications for peacemaking.

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<sup>76</sup> C. Ringma, *Resist the Powers with Jacques Ellul* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2009 ).

<sup>77</sup> J. Stott ed. *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) and the Cape Town Commitment (2010), [www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment](http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment).

<sup>78</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 28.

<sup>79</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 39.

<sup>80</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 44.

<sup>81</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 44.

<sup>82</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 39.

First of all, the report acknowledges that historically both Christians and Muslims have used “various forms of coercion.”<sup>83</sup> Thus violence is not simply a societal problem, it is also a religious problem.

But the report probes a little deeper. If peacemaking does indeed involve reconciliation and embrace, and at its most minimum, includes an appreciation of “the other,” then Christians have not always reflected these values. The report acknowledges that “Christians ... have all too readily cherished and cultivated an antipathy towards Muslims”<sup>84</sup> and have often been “critical of Islamic culture.”<sup>85</sup> It goes on to point out that our own culture is also flawed.<sup>86</sup>

While the document does not further develop this point, there is a startling implication here. To the extent that contemporary Christianity is significantly influenced by Western culture,<sup>87</sup> its Christianity is therefore also to some extent flawed.

All of this opens up some key insights, which the report does not explicitly make, to the dynamics of peacemaking. Most simply put, this involves a sympathetic understanding of “the other” and a critical view of oneself.<sup>88</sup>

While “An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle” (1980) makes no direct reference to the Christian task of peacemaking, there are some important themes that play into this task.

This document seeks to challenge the personal values of contemporary Western Christians.<sup>89</sup> The focus here is our self-focused lifestyle, our commitment to “much-having” and our lack of concern about poverty and injustice.<sup>90</sup>

We are called in this document to pray and act, recognizing that “saving-faith” is exhibited in “serving love.”<sup>91</sup> It highlights that serving love calls “all Christians... [to] participate in the active struggle to create a just and responsible society.”<sup>92</sup>

This struggle is based on the recognition that “poverty and excessive wealth, militarism and the arms industry, and the unjust distribution of capital, land, and resources are issues of power and powerlessness.”<sup>93</sup> And as we have seen in the Roman Catholic Catechism, these conditions are often also the conditions for oppression, violence, and war.

There are several important implications here for the Christian task of peacemaking. The first, is that we need to undergo a conversion in relation to our “much-having.” Secondly, there is a direct link between the work of justice and that of peacemaking. The rectification of injustices make a way for peace to flourish. And thirdly, this document calls all Christians to be involved in the task of working for a more just society and in this way contributing to conditions that make for peace.<sup>94</sup>

### **The Grand Rapids Report**

While only several years later than the Thailand Statement (1980), “The Grand Rapids Report on Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment” (1982) makes

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<sup>83</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 134.

<sup>84</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 122.

<sup>85</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 123.

<sup>86</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 123.

<sup>87</sup> L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) and his concern about the cultural captivity of the Western church.

<sup>88</sup> See D. Andrews’ acknowledgement of these dynamics in *The Jihad of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 146.

<sup>90</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 145.

<sup>91</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 149.

<sup>92</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 148.

<sup>93</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 148.

<sup>94</sup> “The Thailand Statement” (1980) adds little to the above. It retains the emphasis on the priority of evangelization while calling for a commitment “to seek... relief and justice” for the poor. *Making Christ Known*, 159, 162.



important transition points regarding the matters under discussion. Its opening gambit with its emphasis on the importance of evangelization states: “the people of God should become deeply involved in relief and development and the quest for justice and peace”<sup>95</sup>

This statement is framed within the broader discussion of the relationship between evangelization and social concern where the point is clearly made about these facets of ministry: “evangelism and social concern, while distinct from one another, are integrally related in our proclamation of and obedience to the gospel.”<sup>96</sup>

The document calls Christian to penetrate the world and every dimension of life,<sup>97</sup> including the realm of politics.<sup>98</sup>

In looking at Scripture, it concludes that: “The Bible lays great emphasis on both justice (or righteousness) and peace.”<sup>99</sup> And makes the claim that “churches which visibly demonstrate the righteousness and the peace of the Kingdom... will make the greatest evangelistic and social impact on the world.”<sup>100</sup>

In a world of “terrorism and war”<sup>101</sup> Christians are to work and pray for the “evangelization of the world” and “the quest for peace and justice.”<sup>102</sup>

This document clearly places peacemaking as part of the church’s mission in the world. It also rightly recognizes the link between peacemaking and the work of justice and carefully points out that “the emergence of justice and peace in the wider society” cannot be called “salvation” in full sense of the word.<sup>103</sup> It also notes that, “war may be in some circumstances the lesser of two evils.”<sup>104</sup> But concludes that “we should all... seek to be peacemakers.”<sup>105</sup>

This document reflects the stance of the Roman Catholic Catechism which emphasizes the importance of peacemaking as part of the calling of the people of God in the world, while at the same time recognizing the role that governments may need to play in executing war as a last resort.<sup>106</sup>

### **Cape Town Commitment (2010)**

Regarding the gift and task of Christian peacemaking in the world, the Cape Town Commitment (CTC, 2010) is much more explicit than any of the previous Lausanne documents. This document recognizes the challenges of our time as including: “global poverty, war, ethnic conflict, disease, the ecological crises, and climate change.”<sup>107</sup>

It clearly calls Christians to love the neighbor, including the foreigner and the enemy,<sup>108</sup> and calls Christians to embrace a way of life, that includes among many other themes, the call to

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<sup>95</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 177.

<sup>96</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 182.

<sup>97</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 189.

<sup>98</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 199.

<sup>99</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 198.

<sup>100</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 198.

<sup>101</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 202.

<sup>102</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 200.

<sup>103</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 185-186.

<sup>104</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 194.

<sup>105</sup> *Making Christ Known*, 194.

<sup>106</sup> “The Manila Manifesto” (1989) does not significantly move the discussion further. In discerning present-day evils including violence, corruption, and exploitation, it makes no mention of war. However, it does helpfully state, but does not develop, the statement: “the proclamation of God’s Kingdom of justice and peace demands the denunciation of all injustice and oppression both personal and structural,” *Making Christ Known*, 231.

<sup>107</sup> [www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment](http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment), 3.

<sup>108</sup> *ctcommitment*, 4.

compassion, hospitality, the work of justice, and “peace-making [and] non-retaliation.”<sup>109</sup> It rejects the posture of retaliation and revenge,<sup>110</sup> calls for love of enemies,<sup>111</sup> and calls Christians “to denounce evil and injustice wherever they may exist.”<sup>112</sup>

This document framed within the over-arching theme of the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for each other, the church, all humanity, and the creation, with a view to the full restoration of all things, sets out a major discussion on building the peace of Christ in our divided and broken world.<sup>113</sup>

It contains discussions on Christ’s peace in ethnic conflict, for the poor and oppressed, those with disabilities, people with HIV, and has a major section on expressing the love of Christ to people of other faiths<sup>114</sup> and makes this commitment: “in the name of the God of peace, we reject the path of violence and revenge in all our dealings with people of other faiths, even when violently attacked.”<sup>115</sup>

The document also expresses that the peace of Christ is “for his suffering creation.”<sup>116</sup> It suggests that this too is part of the church’s “missional calling,”<sup>117</sup> and challenges our consumptive lifestyles and urges us into the work of “the protection and restoration of the earth’s habitats.”<sup>118</sup>

The Cape Town Commitment in conclusion calls us not only to witness and service in the cause of Christ, but also calls us to pray. These prayers include: “the establishment of justice, the stewardship and care of creation, and the blessing of God’s peace in communities.”<sup>119</sup>

While this document does not elaborate on the Christian stance towards war, it makes the peace of Christ not simply an internal disposition, or a relational dynamic within the faith community or the blessing of God in an eschatological future, but makes it part of the church missional ministry to the wider world, particularly in places of poverty, marginalization, and violence.

What is clear is that the Cape Town Commitment has engaged the peacemaking theme far more than the earlier Lausanne documents.

## **V. Voices of the Radical “Other”: The Anabaptist Tradition**

In case you are surprised that these voices are being included in our attempt to understand peace as gift and task, it can be pointed out that Anabaptism is not only part of the larger Christian tradition, as much as Evangelicalism or the Roman Catholic tradition, but there are always blessings and challenges in listening to the voice of the “radical other.”<sup>120</sup> We learn not through a tired monologue, but through dynamic dialogue.<sup>121</sup>

Several of the very early Anabaptist leaders can get us started in this challenging journey. Hans Denck in referring to Moses killing the Egyptian (Exodus 2:12) comments: “if Moses had...

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<sup>109</sup> ctcommitment, 8.

<sup>110</sup> ctcommitment, 10.

<sup>111</sup> ctcommitment, 9.

<sup>112</sup> ctcommitment, 9.

<sup>113</sup> ctcommitment, 16-19.

<sup>114</sup> ctcommitment, 19-22.

<sup>115</sup> ctcommitment, 20.

<sup>116</sup> ctcommitment, 19.

<sup>117</sup> ctcommitment, 19.

<sup>118</sup> ctcommitment, 19.

<sup>119</sup> ctcommitment, 25.

<sup>120</sup> See E. Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*. Transl. N. Poller (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

<sup>121</sup> See H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Transl. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (London: Sheed & Ward, 1993), and C. Ringma, *Gadamer’s Dialogical Hermeneutics* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999).

perfect love, he would have given himself to be killed in the place of his brother.”<sup>122</sup> He goes on to say that we are called “to forsake all violence for the Lord’s sake.”<sup>123</sup>

Menno Simons suggests that the matter of peacemaking is not simply an event in the face of violence, but is a lifestyle. He hopes that, “we may walk our whole life long... in peace” before the Lord.<sup>124</sup>

The most penetrating insight, however, comes from Peter Walpot in the Hutterite Anabaptist tradition. He suggests that “greed is a serious and evil sickness”<sup>125</sup> which is the cause of “many wars.”<sup>126</sup> Pointedly he notes that wars arise “from private possessions and greed.”<sup>127</sup> Hans Hut theologizes this by recognizing that “peace in our world will be born from... [the] assault on the flesh”<sup>128</sup> which is the perishing of the old man “in baptism”<sup>129</sup> and bearing “suffering after the example of the head [Christ].”<sup>130</sup>

Moving fast forward to contemporary Anabaptist voices, we note D. Augsburger’s central thesis that peacemaking involves “habitual nonviolence” as a way of life.<sup>131</sup>

In discussing a variety of possible responses to one’s enemy, Augsburger calls us to “uncalculating enemy love.”<sup>132</sup> This he says reflects the way of Jesus and cuts across the “domination system” of our present culture.<sup>133</sup>

He concludes that finally no one is an enemy, no one is disposable, and that through repentance good can triumph if we seek reconciliation and commit to peacemaking.<sup>134</sup>

S. Murray gives a very sober assessment of the Anabaptist, and modern Mennonite, tradition regarding its peacemaking position. He makes it clear that “peace is fundamental to the gospel”<sup>135</sup> but “through the centuries [Anabaptists] have been guilty of passivity in the face of injustice.”<sup>136</sup>

While supporting the Anabaptist pacifist position, Murray raises the following concerns: it may allow injustice to flourish; it may be effective only at the micro level; and it can be easily confused with passivism.<sup>137</sup> But he strongly rejects what he sees as the position held by mainline churches: they “have endorsed lethal violence, blessed the weapons of war, prayed for military success, celebrated victories [of war] in acts of worship, and deployed missionaries under the protection of conquering armies.”<sup>138</sup> This approach Murray notes is based on what he calls “the myth of redemptive violence”<sup>139</sup> which is the opposite of the biblical vision of redemptive suffering.

Noting with approval the many contemporary Anabaptist/Mennonite initiatives such as Christian Peacemaker Teams, conflict transformation initiatives and victim-offender reconciliation

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<sup>122</sup> D. Liechty ed. *Early Anabaptist Spirituality: Selected Writings*. The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 114.

<sup>123</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 120.

<sup>124</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 272.

<sup>125</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 192.

<sup>126</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 139-140.

<sup>127</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 139-140.

<sup>128</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 78.

<sup>129</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 77.

<sup>130</sup> *Early Anabaptist*, 79.

<sup>131</sup> D. Augsburger, *Dissident Discipleship: A Spirituality of Self-Surrender, Love of God, and Love of Neighbor*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 134.

<sup>132</sup> *Dissident Discipleship*, 140-142.

<sup>133</sup> *Dissident Discipleship*, 138.

<sup>134</sup> *Dissident Discipleship*, 142-144.

<sup>135</sup> S. Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010), 124.

<sup>136</sup> *Naked Anabaptist*, 130.

<sup>137</sup> *Naked Anabaptist*, 128.

<sup>138</sup> *Naked Anabaptist*, 126.

<sup>139</sup> *Naked Anabaptist*, 131

programs,<sup>140</sup> Murray concludes that many Christians are now convinced that peace is at the heart of the gospel and this calls the church to love of enemies.<sup>141</sup>

The most important contemporary voice in this tradition is that of J. H. Yoder. A salient but very basic summary of his extensive writings on Christian nonviolence and peacemaking make the following points:

First, the Old Testament wars did not have the theme “fight boldly,” but trust in Yahweh. And do not make military alliances with other nations whom you will then trust instead of Yahweh.<sup>142</sup>

Secondly, we cannot reduce Jesus’ preaching to a gospel that has relevance only for the inner life and only for the future life of God’s final kingdom.<sup>143</sup> Jesus’ way was “neither quietism nor zealotry,”<sup>144</sup> but a whole new way of life based on reconciliation, healing, and peace in the form of a community that was a witness to the false powers of the time.

Thirdly, Yoder rejects the logic of the just war tradition. He notes that predominantly Christians rejected military service in the first three centuries of the Christian era and that all the church fathers condemned participation in war.<sup>145</sup> Changes to this position occurred with Constantine. He goes on to note that the limits set by Augustine and Aquinas in their articulation of a just war no longer apply, as wars today are no longer subject to proportionality,<sup>146</sup> and the “entire economy is mobilized for military production.”<sup>147</sup> Importantly, Yoder notes that the just war position in the Roman Catholic tradition is “not *the* official” position of the church.<sup>148</sup> Here Yoder makes reference to *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) of the USA Catholic Bishops<sup>149</sup> which holds that pacifism is close to the New Testament; that the just war theory and pacifism “are complimentary;”<sup>150</sup> that strategies such as those used by Martin Luther King, Jr. are positive; and that the use of some weapons, nuclear or biological, are morally wrong.

Finally, Yoder sets out all sorts of strategies for peacemaking. He notes that peacemaking is activist. It empowers people, builds coalitions, demonstrates and is willing to suffer for an alternative vision of what it means to build a just and humane society.<sup>151</sup>

What we learn from the Anabaptist or Mennonite tradition and the other historic “peace churches” including the Friends and Brethren is that Christ is the normative human being, the New Adam, and Christ’s way in the world is how we are to live. The way of Jesus is not simply the way of our personal lives, but our social life as well. Thus peacemaking in the way of Christ is how we live, not simply what we believe. And within this tradition this means that we refuse to participate in all forms of violence including that of war.

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<sup>140</sup> *Naked Anabaptist*, 130-131.

<sup>141</sup> *Naked Anabaptist*, 129.

<sup>142</sup> J. H. Yoder, *Nonviolence*, 75.

<sup>143</sup> *Nonviolence*, 77.

<sup>144</sup> *Nonviolence*, 91.

<sup>145</sup> *Nonviolence*, 50-51. G. Kalantzis in a major review of the scholarly debate about the early Christian involvement in war confirms much of the Yoder thesis. He summarizes: “the literary evidence confirms the very strong internal coherence of the Church’s non-violent stance for the first three centuries,” *Caesar and the Lamb: Early Christian Attitudes on War and Military Service* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 7. And he concludes: that the early Christians saw themselves as peacemakers as an expression “of the Kingdom on earth” (p. 202).

<sup>146</sup> *Nonviolence*, 57.

<sup>147</sup> *Nonviolence*, 56.

<sup>148</sup> *Nonviolence*, 125.

<sup>149</sup> For the entire text see D. J. O’Brien and T. A. Shannon eds. *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 492-571.

<sup>150</sup> J. H. Yoder, *The War of the Lamb*, 97.

<sup>151</sup> *War of the Lamb*, 156-157.

## VI. Peacemaking in the Franciscan Tradition

In this section, we will first summarize this theme from the primary writings of St. Francis before engaging the wider Franciscan tradition.

### The Writings of St. Francis

One can easily be surprised that in these writings of St. Francis,<sup>152</sup> the peace theme does not seem to be that prominent. In “The Testament,” Francis states: “The Lord revealed to me a greeting, as we used to say: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’”<sup>153</sup> In “The Admonitions,” he makes a more significant statement: “The true peacemakers are those who preserve peace of mind and body for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ despite what they suffer in the world,” and goes on to say: “where there is inner peace and meditation there is neither anxiousness nor dissipation.”<sup>154</sup> Here Francis notes that peace is a profoundly Christological matter<sup>155</sup> and that peace is to be maintained in the face of difficulty.

This theme, of maintaining peace in the face of difficulty, occurs elsewhere. In “The Canticle of Brother Sun,” Francis states: “Blessed are those who endure in peace” and in “The Canticle of Exhortation to Saint Clare and Her Sisters,” he states: “Those who are weighed down by sickness and the others who are wearied because of them, all of you: bear it in peace.”<sup>156</sup>

Apart from these bare bones statements, Francis only gives a number of peace benedictions. In the first, “The Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful,” he states: “To all Christian religious: clergy and laity, men and women, and to all who live in the whole world, Brother Francis, their servant and subject, [offers] homage and reverence, true peace from heaven and sincere love in the Lord.”<sup>157</sup> And in “A Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples,” he exclaims: “To all mayors and consuls, magistrates and rulers throughout the world...peace to all of you.”<sup>158</sup>

None of this is very significant. But what is key are Francis’ statements in “The Earlier Rule” and “The Later Rule.”<sup>159</sup> Here he speaks about a way of life in Christ shaped by the Gospel that created the basis and conditions for being peacemakers in our world. These two rules should be read by all and I will only make a point by point summary:

- The Franciscan brothers were not to own any property. Thus they could live a “disarmed” lifestyle, for they had nothing to protect or defend. And since much violence is about possessions, the cause of violence is removed.
- The Franciscan brothers were not to exercise leadership and dominance over each other and over others. Thus there was no one to “put down” and no one to dominate. Power over others can so easily lead to various forms of oppression and issue in violence.
- The brothers were to see themselves as nothing much except for the grace of God. Thus they had no sense of being powerful or privileged. They saw themselves as God’s “little

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<sup>152</sup> R. J. Armstrong & I. C. Brady, transl. *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1982).

<sup>153</sup> *Francis and Clare*, 155.

<sup>154</sup> *Francis and Clare*, 32, 35.

<sup>155</sup> In “The Parchment Given to Brother Leo” Francis in speaking about God states: “You are inner peace,” *Francis and Clare*, 100.

<sup>156</sup> *Francis and Clare*, 39, 41.

<sup>157</sup> *Francis and Clare*, 67.

<sup>158</sup> *Francis and Clare*, 77.

<sup>159</sup> *Francis and Clare*, 107-135; 136-145.

ones” in God’s grand scheme of things. This posture of humility dynamited all sense of power.

- The Franciscan brothers were called to love of neighbour and love of enemy.
- The brothers were called to see others – including Muslims – as part of God’s world. Thus they were to respect those who were so different.
- And finally, the Franciscans were invited to see the whole created world – both the social world and the natural world – as reflecting the image of the incarnate Son of God. This called them to care for all rather than to destroy some.

The implications of the above, is that Francis did not see peacemaking as a strategy, but as a way of life in Christ. Peacemaking is not something that one did in certain circumstances. It is what one was through the birthing of the life of Christ in the brothers and in the world. Thus being a person of peace was ontological rather than pragmatic.

### **The Franciscan Tradition**

In this section, we seek to remain as close as possible to the heartbeat of St. Francis by taking note of what Francis *did*, and not only what he wrote, and by engaging a number of older and contemporary Franciscan scholars. Since this is a huge field, I will set out this material in an eight point summary:

- As the Franciscan scholar, I. Delio, points out: Francis saw peace as a gift from God as he “encountered the God of peace in the crucified Christ.”<sup>160</sup> Thus to be a “peacemaker is to accept the gift of peace given to us by Christ.”<sup>161</sup> This means that gift precedes the task of peacemaking.
- To grow in the love of God is to become even more a person of peace. And “peace...is the path of active love.”<sup>162</sup> Sanctified service includes peacemaking.
- A person of peace is “willing to suffer...out of love for another.”<sup>163</sup> Peace comes at a price. Rather than retaliation it involves redemptive suffering.
- Bonaventure (1221-1274), the Franciscan theologian and Minister General of the Franciscan Order, points out that Francis “in all his preaching...proclaimed peace” and that he received this “in a revelation from the Lord.”<sup>164</sup> Peace was thus central to Francis’ gospel.
- Francis sent out his brothers as emissaries of peace: “Go, my dear brothers two by two...*announcing peace* to the people and *penance for the remission of sins*.”<sup>165</sup> And this was possible because the brothers were to be “children of peace.”<sup>166</sup> Francis makes the point: “Let everyone be drawn to peace and kindness through your peace and gentleness.”<sup>167</sup> Peace is thus a way of life. A gift of grace that has become deeply embedded in the brothers.

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<sup>160</sup> I. Delio, *Franciscan Prayer* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2004), 165.

<sup>161</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 155.

<sup>162</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 165.

<sup>163</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 168.

<sup>164</sup> Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*. Harper Collins Spiritual Classics. Transl. E. Cousins. (New York: HarperOne, 2005), 24

<sup>165</sup> Quoted in *Franciscan Prayer*, 167. Italics in original.

<sup>166</sup> Quoted from the “The Assisi Compilation” in M. H. Crosby, *Finding Francis, Following Christ* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 186.

<sup>167</sup> Quoted from the “The Anonymous Perugia” in *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 188.

- In case one might think that Francis was only concerned with helping people find peace with God or finding an inner or relational peace, we must note that in an age “rent by civil wars,”<sup>168</sup> Francis helped to settle political disputes not only in Assisi, but also in Arezzo, Perugia, Siena and Bologna.<sup>169</sup>
- Francis’ era was not only a time of civil wars – he was involved in one before his conversion – but it was also the time of the Crusades. While there is no evidence that Francis publically condemned the Crusades, he nevertheless subverted them by his very actions. The Franciscan brothers made many attempts to engage Muslim leaders. Five brothers, as only one example, went on a mission to Seville which was under Mohammedan control. They were expelled from the city. They returned and were beheaded.<sup>170</sup> In 1221 Francis and some brothers joined a crusade as peacemakers in order to get to the Sultan, Malik al-Kamil. While first mistreated, Francis was able to get the Sultan’s respect and they were able to talk about matters of faith.<sup>171</sup> M. H. Crosby observes that Francis moved “from a violence-based approach to Islam, to a respectful way of dialoguing with it.”<sup>172</sup>
- And finally in terms of some of the key dimensions of St. Francis’ comprehensive understanding of peacemaking, we note his approach to creation and the environment. As W. J. Short points out, Francis was never simply a lover of nature. For him, all creatures reflected “the face of the beloved Son.”<sup>173</sup> And all things “bear the traces of him [Christ]”<sup>174</sup> As Bonaventure helpfully observes, Francis saw a “universal reconciliation with each and everything” and “perceived a heavenly harmony “in all things.”<sup>175</sup> Thus peacemaking is not simply God oriented, relationally relevant and reflective on an inner Christlikeness, it is also related to stranger and enemy and our care for nature.

These eight key points now need to be expanded to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Franciscan peacemaking.

- Franciscan peacemaking is not simply a strategy for creating harmony that reduces everything to some common – and often anaemic – denominator. Peacemaking is at the heart of the Gospel for through the cross of Christ peace with God, each other, the enemy and the whole created order becomes a possibility. Furthermore, peacemaking is a whole way of life in obedience to the Gospel. St. Francis is clear: “that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.”<sup>176</sup>
- Peacemaking has everything to do with our Christology. Constantine conquered in the name of Christ with a sword in his hand. Colonialism acted in the name of a conquering Christ. Peacemaking, however, becomes a possibility when we follow the incarnate and

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<sup>168</sup> J. Jorgenson, *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography*. Transl. T. O. Sloane (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913), 99.

<sup>169</sup> *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, 99; *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 186. Francis also settled a powerful family feud in Bologna and brought reconciliation between a mayor and a bishop, *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 193-194; 190-191. Bonaventure notes that Francis did not see these peacemaking initiatives in programmatic terms. In Arezzo “shaken by civil war” Francis was able to “command the devils to leave the city,” *The Life of Francis*, 64.

<sup>170</sup> *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Biography*, 163, 192, 199-200.

<sup>171</sup> *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 194-197.

<sup>172</sup> *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 194.

<sup>173</sup> W. J. Short, *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 111.

<sup>174</sup> *Poverty and Joy*, 113.

<sup>175</sup> *The Life of Francis*, 79, 94.

<sup>176</sup> Quoted in *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 125.

suffering Christ into the world. St. Francis cries out: “Look, brothers, at the humility of God”<sup>177</sup> in the incarnation.

- I. Delio points out that peacemaking involves the rejection all forms of “dominion theology.”<sup>178</sup> The way of God in the world is not one of conquest, but of redemptive suffering. The church in history has often not taking this road. It too, has thought that the more power it has the better will be its mission. But Celano, the earliest Franciscan biographer, has rightly noted: “only a wounded body can bring about peace.”<sup>179</sup> And L. Boff, the Latin American Franciscan scholar, reminds us that the urge to dominate and to have power *over* others is present in all of us.<sup>180</sup> He points to the subtlety of this when the church even relates to the poor “through power” by its ministries of “assistance” marked by “paternalism.”<sup>181</sup>
- A key concept in Franciscan peacemaking is that this should arise from a maternal spirituality. Bonaventure notes that Francis “seemed like a mother who was daily in labor pains bringing...[others] to birth in Christ.”<sup>182</sup> I. Delio reiterates this. Francis displayed a “mysticism of maternity,” that is, giving birth to Christ in our lives and in the life of the world.<sup>183</sup> As such, we as the people of God are to be a “second incarnation” through the birthing of the Holy Spirit.<sup>184</sup> L. Boff helpfully points out that in a world of paternalism, Francis was able to integrate “the feminine.”<sup>185</sup> Without buying into the over-generalization that men make wars and women make homes, we do need to recognise both the historical reality of male dominance and current male domestic violence. Boff reminds us that “the heart and spirit of kindness constitute the central reality of the human being and of humanizing culture.”<sup>186</sup> And notes that “true gentleness is born of strength” and not of passivity or cowardice.<sup>187</sup>
- So far we have noted that St. Francis and his brothers, St. Clare and her sisters, as well as the early formation of lay tertiaries, lived in a world of regional wars, crusades and paternalism. But they also lived in a feudal world of hierarchy with its inherent propensity for oppression and other forms of the misuse of power. In contrast to this, and in contrast to the powerful land-owning monasteries of that time,<sup>188</sup> Francis created a “fraternal” order.<sup>189</sup> Thus as Crosby notes, Francis created a new familial order of the Kingdom of God.<sup>190</sup> And this way of being “breaks the rigidity of the feudal hierarchy,” as Boff observes.<sup>191</sup> Such a fraternal order based on relationships of mutuality

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<sup>177</sup> Quoted in *Poverty and Joy*, 43.

<sup>178</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 170.

<sup>179</sup> Quoted in *Franciscan Prayer*, 174.

<sup>180</sup> L. Boff, *Saint Francis: A Model of Human Liberation* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1984), 39.

<sup>181</sup> *Saint Francis: A Model*, 78.

<sup>182</sup> *The Life of Francis*, 80.

<sup>183</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 13.

<sup>184</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 69.

<sup>185</sup> *Saint Francis: A Model*, 28.

<sup>186</sup> *Saint Francis: A Model*, 15.

<sup>187</sup> *Saint Francis: A Model*, 22.

<sup>188</sup> Some monastic orders, particularly the Templars, the Knights of Malta and the Teutonic Knights, participated in the crusades. See D. Steward, *The Monks of War: The Military Orders* (London: The Folio Society, 2000. First published in 1972).

<sup>189</sup> *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 62.

<sup>190</sup> *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 135.

<sup>191</sup> *Saint Francis: A Model*, 22.



undermined the potential of the misuse of power inherent in all forms of hierarchy. It thus created a movement of peace. This was revolutionary for its time.<sup>192</sup>

- In “The Anonymous Perugia” Francis exclaims: “Lord, if we had any possessions, we would need to protect them because they cause many disputes and lawsuits. And possessions usually impede the love of God and neighbour. Therefore, we do want to possess anything in this world.”<sup>193</sup> Bonaventure notes: because “they possessed nothing” as a consequence “they had nothing to defend and feared to lose nothing.”<sup>194</sup> This means that Franciscan asceticism is inherently oriented towards peacemaking. And the move from privilege to identification with the poor meant that Franciscanism is about the empowerment of the weak not the pulling down of the strong. Moreover, in this identification St Francis discovered the surprise of God: “what seemed bitter to me [in kissing the leper], became sweetness of body and soul.”<sup>195</sup> This caused Francis to embrace a spirituality of descent. Our present-day orientation is towards a spirituality of ascent. We assume that the more socially powerful we become as a Christian community, the greater will be our influence. This simply follows the old Christendom model with all its propensity towards the misuse of power. L. Boff makes the point that Francis led a life of “de-class-ification”<sup>196</sup> as a counter move to the inherent oppression of the class system of his day. Thus Francis orientation to life was one of “disappropriation”<sup>197</sup> which is the opposite of much-having with its orientation towards exclusion.
- Francis’ core passion expressed in “The Testament” is clear: “that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.”<sup>198</sup> Crosby notes that Francis believed “that the pattern of Jesus’ life might be replicated in our own.”<sup>199</sup> And this Christification made Francis a builder. This is evident in his heavenly call: “Francis, don’t you see that my house is destroyed? Go, then, and rebuild it for me.”<sup>200</sup> This rebuilding was multi-directional: one’s relationship with God, with one’s self, the church, the stranger, the human community and all of created reality. Crosby notes: it involved “everyone and everything in it [as] part of God’s domain or household.”<sup>201</sup> This commitment to building up in following Christ demonstrates relational peace-building. This poses a challenge to us. We tend to be self-serving rather than other-person-regarding. We are denominationally and missionally territorial and tribalistic. We thus divide rather than build the whole. Just think of our fragmented and competitive Evangelicalism!
- Francis did not see “the other” as one to be feared, but as one to be loved. He did not denigrate the other, particularly not radical stranger. As Bonaventure notes, Francis rejected “the vice of detraction”<sup>202</sup> which not only allows one to pull the other down but justifies some sort of violence towards the other. So instead of hatred towards Muslims he saw them first and foremost as fellow creatures wrapped in the love of the crucified

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<sup>192</sup> M. von Galli in his *Living Our Future: Francis Assisi and the Church Tomorrow* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972) is right to call Francis a revolutionary figure.

<sup>193</sup> Quoted in *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 162.

<sup>194</sup> *The Life of Francis*, 37.

<sup>195</sup> Quoted in *Saint Francis: A Model*, 68.

<sup>196</sup> *Saint Francis: A Model*, 67.

<sup>197</sup> *Saint Francis: A Model*, 69.

<sup>198</sup> Quoted in *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 125.

<sup>199</sup> *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 105.

<sup>200</sup> “The Legend of Three Companions” in *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 52.

<sup>201</sup> *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 57.

<sup>202</sup> *The Life of St. Francis*, 82.

God. We sadly are all too quick to label others and to demonize them. The more we do this, the more we justify to ourselves the legitimacy of violence towards them. I. Delio agrees: “we are fragmented, divisive, dominating and oppressive.”<sup>203</sup> She continues, and sadly “Christians play a part in the constant violence in our world.”<sup>204</sup>

Much more could be explored,<sup>205</sup> but we are already faced with multiple challenges. It should be clear, however, that Franciscan peacemaking is not simply about certain strategies – though strategies are involved<sup>206</sup> - but has to do with a whole way of life in following Christ. I. Delio helpfully points out that the Franciscan way is a “disarmament of the heart.”<sup>207</sup> It is embracing, imbibing and living a “crucified love” which is a “love for the sake of the other.”<sup>208</sup> The implications for peacemaking is that the Franciscan way explores and practices the “connection between peace in your heart and peace in the world.”<sup>209</sup>

J. Jorgenson concludes us well. He notes: “by paying evil with evil” we simply participate in and accentuate the sins of others. Instead, we are to lead others “love God in peace and joy.”<sup>210</sup> This peace is not simply an internal disposition. But a peace for all, for the whole world. Thus M. von Galli is right: “a non-violent revolution is the only possible revolution for Christians.”<sup>211</sup>

## VII. Integration and Conclusion

In this paper we have engaged the hymns, liturgies, catechism, spirituality and missional praxis of the Anglicans, the Reformed, the Evangelicals, the Roman Catholics and the Anabaptists regarding their perspectives on the topic of peace and peacemaking.

It is clear from these Christian resources, that peacemaking is an important part of the Christian tradition. Peace with God through Christ, the inner peace of faith and relational peace within the Christian community are key themes. The theme of the church being a peaceful presence in the world is also readily acknowledged, but is a much weaker theme, except in the Franciscan and Anabaptist traditions. Some of the clearest statements are the following:

- In the hymns we sing “bring to our world of strife your sovereign word of peace, that war may haunt the earth no more, and desolation cease”<sup>212</sup> and “our lives will spread your peace.”<sup>213</sup>
- In the liturgies we pray “give peace to your church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts.”<sup>214</sup> And *Celtic Daily Prayer* calls us to prayer and “active peace-making.”<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 178.

<sup>204</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 175.

<sup>205</sup> For example, Francis’ theme of peacemaking with the environment. See *Saint Francis*, 34-35 and *Finding Francis, Following Christ*, 198.

<sup>206</sup> See K. Butigan, et.al., *Franciscan Nonviolence: Stories, Reflections, Principles, Practices, and Resources* (Las Vegas, NV: Peace Bene, 2003).

<sup>207</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 178.

<sup>208</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 177.

<sup>209</sup> *Franciscan Prayer*, 178.

<sup>210</sup> *Saint Francis of Assisi*, 216.

<sup>211</sup> *Living Our Future*, 169.

<sup>212</sup> *TinS*, Hymn 616.

<sup>213</sup> *TinS*, Hymn 635.

<sup>214</sup> *Book of Alternative Services*, 677.

<sup>215</sup> *CDP: Book Two*, 1098.

- In Lausanne documents the clearest call to active peacemaking is the call to compassion, hospitality, the work of justice and “peace-making [and] non-retaliation.”<sup>216</sup>
- D. Augsburg reflecting a contemporary Anabaptist perspective, notes that in this tradition the emphasis is on “habitual nonviolence” as a way of life.<sup>217</sup>
- And the Franciscan perspective is well summarized by Bonaventure: because “they possessed nothing” as a consequence “they had nothing to defend and feared to lose nothing.”<sup>218</sup> This freedom centred in Christ, gave them the freedom to work for peace in their world

There is a clear division between Christians, like the Anabaptists, who hold a pacifist position and those who maintain that Christians, along with others, need to play their part in supporting the war effort of their respective countries. This is their supposed civic duty. However, there are always legitimate questions that need be raised regarding the political justification for a particular war. And while Christians may not be pacifist they may object to supporting a particular war, as was the case with the Western invasion of Iraq.

It is clear from the above, that while all the Christian traditions we have considered, hold that the Christian church should be an instrument of peace in the world, both the Franciscans and the Anabaptists give this task a much greater priority.

And where the Franciscan tradition poses a particular challenge, is that peacemaking in the world for them is not simply a task. It is intrinsic to what it means to be a follower of Christ. Salvation and peacemaking are linked. Peacemaking is thus ontological and not simply pragmatic. And when this is backed by a life-style of radical relinquishment, then the fruit of the peace of Christ can all the more readily blossom in our world.

Charles Ringma

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<sup>216</sup> [www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment](http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment), 8

<sup>217</sup> *Dissident Discipleship*, 134.

<sup>218</sup> *The Life of Francis*, 37.