

The Missing Peace of Evangelical Missiology: Peacemaking and Respectful Witness

by Dr. Rick Love

Christian Theology and Islam

Sponsored by the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology
June 9-11, 2008 Baltimore, Maryland

Christian-Muslim relations comprise one of the momentous challenges of the 21st century. ¹ The relationship between Christians and Muslims is supercharged by the “war on terror,” and exacerbated by the fact that western countries are perceived as “Christian” by many Muslims. On top of this, both Christianity and Islam are missionary religions, committed to sharing their faith with all peoples.

How then can followers of Christ be agents of peace and respectfully bear witness to their faith in a polarized and globalized world?

Modern Evangelical missions have tended to focus on military metaphors and triumphal slogans to describe the Church’s global mandate. ² These metaphors and slogans distort our mandate and negatively shape how we view the people to whom we are sent. In our zeal to fulfill the great commission we have repeatedly misrepresented the way of the cross. We have often depersonalized the ministry of reconciliation. We have failed to model the peaceable way of Jesus.

I have served over twenty-five years among Muslims as an Evangelical. During this time I can remember only one person who shared with me the importance of an integrated approach to peacemaking and evangelism – David Shenk! (So I consider him one of my heroes and mentors). I find biblical evidence of an integrated approach to peacemaking and evangelism to be rich and compelling. By contrast, I find a paucity of “peace” in Evangelical missiology (at least Evangelical praxis).

This isn’t necessarily the case in other Christian traditions. I remember how I felt when I saw a political cartoon about Pope John Paul II on the Aljazeera web site. This Muslim website was famous for its political cartoons which strongly criticize leaders around the world, especially those in the West. But at the death of Pope John Paul II the cartoon was positive – depicting Pope John Paul II as a powerful spiritual leader dedicated to global peace. Tears welled up as I saw this poignant cartoon reflecting the spirit of the Prince of Peace.

¹Evidence indicates that polarization between Christians and Muslims is increasing. A Washington Post/ABC News poll in 2006 found that nearly half of Americans have a negative view of Islam, seven percentage points higher than observed a few months after Sept. 11, 2001. Quoted in *Who Speaks for Islam* by Esposito and Mogahed (2007:45).

² See Love 2001

One of my friends describes the impact of Pope John Paul II during his visit to a Muslim country.

I recall when one small seismic shift took place. Pope John Paul II had chosen to visit our Muslim country on his tour, which would have almost gone unnoticed by me if it wasn't for the local reaction. I was sitting in the local café one morning when a friend of mine, a gentleman on the city council, asserted himself into my table and asked if I "had seen it." Seen what? The Pope had spoken to over 60,000 Muslims at the stadium the day before, but it was when the TV cameras picked up his arrival on the plane that this gentleman was rocked. The Pope, he told me, had knelt and "kissed the ground." Kissed "our" ground. One small step for the Papacy, one giant leap for ministry to Muslims!

The shift in attitude in my friend, in his understanding of a "Christian," had a positive impact that extended exponentially across that entire population. (Gill 2008:6).

My experience and perhaps the perception of many Evangelicals is this: Peacemakers don't do evangelism and evangelists aren't known for being peacemakers. Peacemakers focus on social issues, while evangelists save souls. Peacemakers fear that evangelism among Muslims increases conflict, while evangelists believe that peacemakers compromise the gospel. Overstated? Yes. Stereo types? Yes. But like all stereo types, they reflect an element of truth. Most would agree that peacemaking and evangelism describe important biblical mandates, but rare is the church that practices both and rarer still is the individual who practices both.

In this paper I want to examine the missing peace of evangelical missiology by tracing some of the fascinating connections between peacemaking and evangelism in the New Testament.³ I hope to demonstrate the need for an integrated approach to peacemaking and evangelism that can be summarized as follows:

There should be a strong congruity between our *message* (the gospel of peace), our *mandates* (peacemaking and evangelism), and our *manner* (the irenic way we carry out the great commission).

Because the challenge of peace between Muslims and Christians is one of the defining issues of this era, it is crucial that we understand and practice what the Bible teaches on this important topic.

This paper is exegetical and thus relates to any context. But I have written this primarily for those who work among Muslims. In order to demonstrate that an integrated approach to peacemaking and evangelism is possible, I will begin with a story.

The following story illustrates how peacemaking and respectful witness have worked in a conflict zone. This story comes from Nigeria, where a Christian pastor named James, and

³ The idea for the title of this paper came from Willard M. Swartley's excellent book: *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (2006).

a Muslim Imam named Ashafa founded the Interfaith Mediation Centre to bring about reconciliation and peace in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Pastor James was born in Kaduna... As a teenager James joined the Christian Association of Nigeria, and at 27 became general secretary of the Youth Wing. When fighting between Christians and Muslims reached Kaduna in 1987, James became the head of a Christian militia. James used Scriptures to justify the violence.

At age 32 a fight broke out between Christians and Muslims over control of a market. The Christians were outnumbered, and 20 of them were killed. James passed out and when he woke up he found that his right arm had been sliced off with a machete.

Imam Ashafa comes from a long line of Muslim scholars. In 1987 when religious violence hit Kaduna, Ashafa, like James, became a militia leader. He says, "We planted the seed of genocide, and we used the scripture to do that. As a leader you create a scenario where this is the only interpretation. But Ashafa's mentor, a Sufi hermit, tried to warn the young man away from violence.

In 1992, Christian militiamen stabbed the hermit to death and threw his body down a well. Ashafa's only mission became revenge: he was going to kill James. Then, one Friday during a sermon, Ashafa's imam told the story of when the Prophet Muhammad had gone to preach at Ta'if, a town about 70 miles southeast of Mecca. Bleeding after being stoned and cast out of town, Muhammad was visited by an angel who asked if he'd like those who mistreated him to be destroyed. Muhammad said no. 'The imam was talking directly to me,' Ashafa said. During the sermon, he began to cry. Next time he met James, he'd forgiven him entirely. To prove it, he went to visit James's sick mother in the hospital.

Slowly the pastor and imam began to work together but James was leery. 'Ashafa carries the psychological mark. I carry the physical and psychological mark,' he said... At a Christian conference in Nigeria... a fellow pastor pulled James aside and said, in almost the same words as the Sufi hermit, 'You can't preach Jesus with hate in your heart.' James said 'That was my real turning point. I came back totally deprogrammed.

For more than a decade now, James and Ashafa have traveled to Nigerian cities and to other countries where Christians and Muslims are fighting. They tell their stories of how they manipulated religious texts to get young people into the streets to shed blood. Both still adhere strictly to the scripture; they just read it more deeply and emphasize different verses."

Sadly, the imam is frequently accused of being a sellout because he associates with Christians. He identifies himself very much as a fundamentalist and sees himself as one who emulates Muhammad. Although he and Pastor James don't discuss it, he also proselytizes among Christians. 'I want James to die as a

Muslim, and he wants me to die as a Christian. My Islam is proselytizing. It's about bringing the whole world to Islam.'

Such missionary zeal drives both men, infusing their struggle to rise above their history of conflict . . . Pastor James still believes strongly in absolute and exclusive salvation mandated by the gospel: 'Jesus said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life.' He still challenges Christians to rely on the strict and literal word, and he's still uncompromising on fundamental issues of Christianity.⁴

Please note: both Pastor James and Imam Ashafa engaged in peacemaking and respectful witness! In a conflict zone, the Muslim carried out da' wa (the Arabic term for Muslim outreach), while the Christian evangelized – and yet they remained friends and worked together for peace. Peacemaking and evangelism are not mutually exclusive!

Now let's look at the biblical evidence for an integrated approach to peacemaking and evangelism.

Peacemaking

The biblical magna carta of peacemaking is found in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God” (Matt. 5:9).

Please note that this verse does not talk about “peaceful, peace-keepers, or peace-loving” people. In fact, it has nothing to do with personality types. It talks about people who defuse hostility and build bridges; people who resolve conflict and seek concord; people who call warring parties to peace, work toward the end of alienation, and pull down walls of hostility.

Thus, I believe the New Living Translation best captures the intent of Matt 5:9, “***God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.***”

In contrast to the other beatitudes, the term “peacemaker” describes an assertive action rather than a mere spiritual attitude. Thus, even the brash prophet, John the Baptist could rightfully be described as a peacemaker. God raised him up to “turn the hearts of the fathers to their children” (Luke 1:17) and “to guide our feet in the path of peace” (Luke 1:79).

The context of Jesus' ministry provides an important insight into the meaning of peacemaking. Jesus lived under Roman rule, ministering in an occupied territory. In the original context of the beatitudes, this emphasis on peacemaking was most likely directed against the Zealots, Jewish revolutionaries who hoped to throw off the yoke of Roman oppression and to establish the kingdom of God through violence. In contrast to the

⁴ This is a summary with some direct quotes from The Atlantic, March 2008, “God's Country,” by Eliza Griswold, pages 40-55. The same story is found in “Warriors and Brothers” from Peacemakers in Action (Little 2007).

Zealots, Jesus speaks of a peaceable kingdom and a non-violent extension of that kingdom.

The theme of peacemaking– if not the term -- pervades the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, Glen Stassen, Professor of Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, considers the Sermon on the Mount “the *locus classicus* for Christian peacemaking” (1992:37) Teaching on the following subjects directly relate to the tasks of peacemaking. To heed these topics is to follow the peaceable way of Jesus:

- Anger and reconciliation (5:21-26)
- Not resisting an evil person (5:38-42)
- Loving ones enemies (5:43-48)
- Forgiving (6:12,14,15)
- Not judging others (7:1-5)

The immediate context of this beatitude focuses on the social dimensions of peacemaking among friends, family and community. But since Jesus mentions no qualifications to the nature of peacemaking, nor limits to the scope of peacemaking, it certainly relates to global challenges such as racism, poverty and war as well. We should interpret peacemaking as broadly as the Bible does.

Jesus’ use of the terms *opponent* (5:42); *gentiles* (5:47; 6:7; 6:42), *enemies* (5:43-44); *unrighteous* (5:45) and *persecution* (5:10,11,12,44) in the Sermon on the Mount indicate that peacemaking is not restricted to believers only. It takes place in an unbelieving world, beyond the boundaries of the Church. Other passages in the NT confirm this. Paul urges the church in Rome: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom 12:18 NIV). The author of Hebrews exhorts Christ’s followers to “make every effort to live in peace with all (Heb 12:14 NIV). Children of God do peacemaking between believers *and* among unbelievers, both in the Church and in the public arena.

Jesus describes peacemakers as blessed. This pronouncement of blessing expresses God’s approval on those who work for peace. They are called children of God because they are acting like their Father: the God of Peace (Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23) who sent the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6) to bring about a world of peace (Luke 2:14).

P.S. Widjaja, contributor to the Dictionary of Mission Theology, summarizes it well:

We need to understand peace witness as a continuum, beginning from peace with God, moving into peace with ourselves, our families, our churches, those of other faiths, work colleagues, at national and international level, and, most challengingly, with our enemies. Each Christian will be at a different point on the continuum, and must be encouraged to move on through it.” (Widjaja 2007:280)

Evangelism

The strong social dimension of peacemaking isn't all that's emphasized in the New Testament. There is also an evangelistic component. The gospel is the gospel of peace (Eph 2:13-17; 6:15). We have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:19-21). We call people to peace with God (Acts 10:36; Rom 5:1).

Matthew 10 describes Jesus' commission of his disciples to extend the kingdom. In modern terms we would say that Jesus sent the apostles out on a "short term missions trip." Jesus makes two references to peace in the context of evangelism. First, he tells them how to discern receptivity of the people: "If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace. But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace (Matt 10:13 NAU). When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples (another "short term mission") he describes the process of discerning receptivity in a slightly different way: "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace *be* to this house.' "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you (Luke 10:5-6). This emphasis on the receptor's response to peace seems to be related to Jesus promise a few verses later: "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me (Matt 10:40).

The concept of discerning and working with a man or woman of peace is a well recognized missiological principle. People of peace become bridges to reach others because they respond to the gospel or because they at least support those sharing the gospel. What is not a well recognized missiological principle is the spiritual dynamic of discerning the person of peace by imparting or withdrawing peace!

Most Western readers may see this as nothing more than a formality, a mere greeting (typical in the Jewish world, "shalom aleichem" and in the Muslim world, "Assalamualaikum"). But Jesus' guidelines for these sent ones describe something more dynamic and spiritual than a greeting. According to New Testament scholar Donald Hagner, peace "is a benediction or blessing . . . , which cannot ultimately be separated from the deeper sense of well-being associated with the gospel and its reception. The peace that the disciples can bestow is not available where the gospel and its messengers are rejected."⁵

This passage implies that in some sense those on mission are bearers of peace (cf. John 14:27), whose fruitfulness depends on the discernment of peace in evangelistic contexts. While the practical implications of how to do this needs to be verified through further experience and reflection, no one who takes Scripture seriously can doubt that peace is related to bearing witness.

The second mention of peace in Matthew 10 relates to persecution and suffering brought about because of fruitful evangelism:

⁵Hagner, Donald A.: *Word Biblical Commentary : Matthew 1-13*. electronic ed. Dallas : Word, Incorporated, 1998 (Logos Library System; Word Biblical Commentary 33A), S. 272

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.' "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me (Matt 10:34-38 NIV).

Jesus' followers are peacemakers who speak the blessing of peace on families where they stay. Nevertheless, response to the message of the kingdom will be mixed; some will accept the message, others will reject it. Because of this, families will be divided, conflict will ensue. Jesus uses the metaphor of the sword to describe the divisive fallout that sometimes accompanies the extension of the kingdom.

I am well acquainted with the painful consequences that can ensue because of the gospel. I have had friends who were renounced by their families because they were followers of Christ. I have had friends and acquaintances who were imprisoned and even martyred for the gospel. And I realize the greatest peacemaker who ever lived was crucified.

Among Evangelicals, Matt 10:34-38 (quoted above) rather than Matt 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers") provides the dominate perspective re: peace and evangelism in the New Testament. In other words, there is the assumption that conflict will prevail. With this mindset, could it be that conflict sometimes ensues because of the non irenic manner in which we communicate the message? Could this be a something of a self-fulfilling prophecy?

How do we reconcile Matt 10:34-38 with Matt 5:9? At the very least we need to affirm both truths, since the Bible does. Walter Kaiser gives wise guidance: "When Jesus said that he had come to bring "not peace but a sword" he meant that this would be the *effect* of his coming, not that it was the *purpose* of his coming." (1997:378 Electronic edition). As children of God, our purpose is to represent the prince of peace, regardless of the effect it has.

The great commission in the gospel of John provides another window into the relationship between peacemaking and evangelism.

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "***Peace be with you.***" And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "***Peace be with you;*** as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (John 20:19-21)

This passage describes Jesus' post resurrection appearance to his disciples. He greets his followers with the standard Hebrew greeting: "Peace be with you." He then repeats this blessing of peace when he gives the great commission. Why the repetition? He seems to be hearkening back to his earlier promises of peace:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27 NIV)

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33 NIV)

These promises show the vital link between Jesus and peace: “***My peace*** I give to you,” “so that ***in me*** you may have peace.” They also show that peace is not the absence of anxiety or trouble. Rather Jesus’ peace enables us to remain calm and confident in the midst of conflict.

Therefore the blessing of peace becomes a key component of fulfilling the great commission.⁶ The follower of Christ enjoys personal peace as s/he shares the gospel of the peace. The media is the message!

The Gospel of Peace

The gospel itself expresses the integral relationship between peacemaking and evangelism. There are five texts in the New Testament that explicitly state or imply that the gospel is the gospel of peace (Acts 10:36; Rom 5:1-11; Eph 6:15; Eph 2:11-17; Col 1:15-20).

Acts 10:36. Luke summarizes Peter’s ministry to the Roman Centurion Cornelius in Acts 10. In the Jewish Apostle’s first major outreach to Gentiles the content of the gospel is described as “peace:” You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling **the good news of peace** through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all (Acts 10:36 NIV). The context implies that the good news about Jesus results in peace with God and peace between Jews and Gentiles.⁷

Romans 5:1-11. The second text about the gospel of peace is Romans 5:1-11 (only quoting the three most relevant verses 1, 9-11):

⁶ His words “peace be with you” (repeated in 20:19 and 21) were a standard Hebrew greeting (Judg. 6:23; 19:20; 1 Sam. 25:6; 3 John 1:15), still used in the Middle East today. But here these words are far more than a greeting. At a profoundly personal level, Jesus is summing up the essence of his work and presence in the world. Peace is the gift of his kingdom. In 14:27 and 16:33 Jesus promised that this peace would be his gift to them; now he has delivered it. Burge, Gary M. “Jesus and the Upper Room (20:19 - 23)” In *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: John*. By Gary M. Burge, 558. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2000.

⁷ “The author of Luke-Acts saw the word “peace” as a capsule for that which the good news about Christ contains. It is incorrect to restrict the meaning to peace between God and humans ... especially in this context of the gentile mission—where the universality of God’s love and acceptance is being proclaimed—it is not irrelevant that one of the greatest human divisions of ancient society, that between Jew and gentile, is described as overcome. The similarities between this and Ephesians are worthy of note” (WILLIAM KLASSEN Freedman, David Noel: *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992, S. 5:206).

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* ...⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, *we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son*, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!¹¹ Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The good news of justification by faith results in peace with God – an objective peace with God (or status before God) established through faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The nature of this objective peace is clarified in verse 9. Justification means that we are no longer threatened by God’s wrath.

Paul then shifts from a legal metaphor (justification) to a relational metaphor (reconciliation) to give further understanding to the nature of this peace we enjoy. We are no longer God’s enemies because we have been reconciled to God through Christ. The estrangement of sin and the resulting hostility have been dealt with on the cross, so our relationship with God has been restored. The peace of the gospel, then, includes both objective status and subjective experience.

There is no explicit social dimension to the Gospel of peace in Romans 5:1-11. However, *inherent* in the gospel of reconciliation itself are massively important theological foundations for peacemaking. We were reconciled to God “while we were still helpless, ungodly, sinners and enemies” (Rom 5:6-10). God’s love towards us is infinite and indiscriminate. This same kind of love enables us to embrace and make peace with the undeserving – including even our enemies.⁸

Ephesians 6:15. The next text describing the gospel of peace is found in the great spiritual warfare passage of Ephesians. Paul paradoxically speaks about peace in the midst of war: “and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the *gospel of peace*” (Eph 6:15 NIV).

This piece of armor has to do with the Christian warrior’s feet. The Roman *caliga*, a half boot used for long marches and studded with sharp nails for a firm grip (Morris 1994:205-206), is comparable to the cleats modern athletes wear in football, baseball or soccer.

Admittedly there is some difficulty in interpreting this metaphor. The metaphor of boots could refer to *mobility* provided by the boots, in which case the focus would be on readiness to share the gospel of peace. Or the boots could refer to *stability*, in which case the focus would be on the peace the gospel gives the Christian under spiritual attack.

⁸ See Miroslav Volf, “The Social Meaning of Reconciliation” (2000) for an excellent summary of this theme.

For both biblical and practical reasons, I would argue that the metaphor speaks of both mobility and stability.⁹ The gospel of peace is a gift to be received and a message to be proclaimed. It must be appropriated personally and proclaimed publicly. Standing firm against the spiritual forces of darkness involves both experiencing the peace of the gospel and proclaiming the gospel of peace!

Ephesians 2:13-17. Evangelicals rightly focus on the *gospel of grace* as outlined in the first half of Ephesians chapter two (2:1-10). But too often the same focus is not given to the *gospel of peace* as outlined in the second half of Ephesians chapter two (Eph 2:11-22, esp. 13-17). Because of this, the traditional evangelical proclamation of the gospel has sometimes (often?) lacked social impact. But the same twofold emphasis on peace with God and peace between Jews and Gentiles asserted by the apostle Peter in Acts 10:36 is also emphasized here by the apostle Paul.

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our **peace**, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making **peace**, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached **peace** to you who were far away and **peace** to those who were near (Eph 2:13-17).

Paul makes a number of stunning affirmations about the peacemaking work of Christ on the cross. First, *Christ's death has broken down every barrier* between Gentile and Jew. The "dividing wall of hostility" is a metaphor that probably refers to the wall that separated Jews and Gentiles in the temple. The "law of commandments" seems to refer to the strict dietary and cultic laws which separated Jews and Gentiles from social interaction. Many of these laws dealt with food, which means that the "table" – the place

⁹It is difficult to decide between these two possibilities, since the text allows for either interpretation. "Readiness" to preach the gospel fits with the OT background most likely shaping Paul's thought: "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, "your God reigns!" (Is 52:7). Moreover, it fits best with the whole concept of spiritual warfare and evangelism as set forth by Paul: we preach the gospel "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). On the other hand, the more immediate context slightly favors the other interpretation. Paul mentions standing firm four times in this passage, which point towards an understanding of this verse in terms of stability.

In light of the rest of Scripture and the actual realities of spiritual warfare, I would say that both meanings must be emphasized. As Barth has pointed out, these boots provided both stability and mobility. They gave Roman soldiers stability in combat and enabled them to go on long marches (1974, 2:798; cf. Lincoln 1990:448). Thus, implicit in this metaphor is not only the image of a defensive stance but also an offensive thrust. F.F. Bruce wisely summarizes: "Those who must at all costs stand their ground need to have secure footing; in the spiritual conflict, this is supplied by the gospel, appropriated and proclaimed" (1984:408).

of where people talk most personally and intimately over food – was not shared by Jews and Gentiles. Because of the death of Christ these OT laws were no longer relevant to one's relationship to God. Table fellowship was established!

Second, Paul makes three positive affirmations about Jesus: *Jesus is our peace; Jesus makes peace; Jesus proclaims peace.*¹⁰ These three affirmations dramatically underscore the reconciling purpose and unifying power of Jesus' person and Jesus' death. Third, Ephesians 2:11-22 implies that *peacemaking should find embodiment in and through the Church.* The two other references to peace in Ephesians further strengthen this view of the Church as an instrument of peace (cf. Eph 4:3; 6:15). Andrew Lincoln summarizes well the practical implications of these profound truths:

As the rest of the letter indicates, what has been achieved in the Church in the overcoming of the major division within humanity in the first century is an anticipation of God's purpose for the still-divided cosmos (cf. 1:10; 3:10). That major division can be seen as a prototype of all divisions (cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). If the Church in Eph 2 stands for the overcoming of that fundamental division of humanity into either Jew or Gentile, it stands for the overcoming of all divisions caused by tradition, class, color, nation, or groups of nations. Anything less would be a denial of that nature of the Church which this writer takes as axiomatic.¹¹

Colossians 1:19-20. The fifth and most comprehensive text on peace in the New Testament is found in Colossians 1:19-20:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by **making peace** through his blood, shed on the cross.

This is one of the most profound and astounding claims in Scripture! The Gospel of peace has cosmic proportions – extending to both heavenly and earthly realities.¹² God's reconciling purpose at the cross is to restore the harmony of the original creation. The disharmonies of nature and the inhumanities to humankind will be put right.

These five texts describing the gospel of peace should significantly impact our approach to evangelism. Surely there should be congruity between our message and our

¹⁰ Paul draws on Isaiah to explain the "peacemaking" nature of the cross. Most NT scholars note two key texts that Paul alludes to: "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Is 52:7). "Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "and I will heal him." (Is 57:19).

¹¹ Lincoln, A. T. 1998. *Vol. 42: Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Word Biblical Commentary. Word, Incorporated: Dallas

¹² For an excellent summary of the all the exegetical details see O'Brien, Peter T.: *Word Biblical Commentary: Colossians-Philemon*. electronic ed. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998 (Logos Library System; Word Biblical Commentary 44), S. 56.

missiology. Surely the message of peace should be communicated in an irenic manner worthy of this message!

Peacemaking among Jesus' Followers

I have had the privilege of studying under some of the best theologians and missiologists in America. I learned many valuable lessons about hermeneutics, biblical theology, strategy, culture and contextualization. ***Yet no one prepared me for the challenge of peacemaking*** I faced as I confronted broken relationships in the church, on teams and in emerging churches around the world.

Yet the New Testament abounds with references to peacemaking for believers! For example, Paul addresses peacemaking in everyone one of his epistles either through specific commands or concrete examples:

- If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men (Rom 12:18)
- So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another (Rom 14:19)
- 1 Cor 5:1-13. The whole chapter describes a peacemaking problem
- Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Cor 13:11
- Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted (Gal 6:1)
- being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3)
- I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in *the cause of* the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life (Phil 4:2-3)
- Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful (Col 3:14-15 NIV).
- Live in peace with one another (1 Thess 5:13)
- If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. Now may the Lord of

peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! (2 Thess 3:14-16)

- This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my* son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme (1 Tim 1:18-20)
- Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2 Tim 2:22).
- to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men (Titus 3:2)
- Philemon: The whole letter addresses a peacemaking situation.

According to Jesus, peace in the Church has an important evangelistic impact. He makes this clear in His High Priestly prayer: "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, *so that the world may believe that You sent Me* (John 17:20-21).

This is one important aspect of the missing “peace” of Evangelical missiology!¹³

Peacemaking and Respectful Witness

Evangelism should be carried out in a way that befits the gospel of peace and the mandate to work towards peace. Thus, it should be done in a positive, respectful way. A good example of this is Paul’s approach to the Athenians in Acts 17.¹⁴

The idolatry of the Athenians incensed Paul’s monotheistic heart—“His spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols” (Acts 17:16). Nevertheless, he demonstrated a respectful, gracious, and bridge-building approach to the Athenian heart. He affirms their religiosity (17:22), uses an altar as a point of contact (17:23) and quotes their own poets to help clarify the meaning of the good news (17:28).

¹³I wrote *Peacemaking: Resolving Conflict, Restoring and Building Harmony in Relationships* to help fill this gap (Love 2000).

¹⁴ There is no mention of peace in this passage. However, it is noteworthy that Paul the apostle, “more than any other writer in the NT canon, makes peace, peacemaking and peace-building central to his theological reflection and moral admonition” (Swartley 2006:190). As noted above, he describes the gospel as the gospel of peace in four out of the five times it is described as such in the New Testament. In addition, the word peace is mentioned over forty times in his letters. Finally, more than any other New Testament author he refers to God as the “God of peace” (Rom 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor 14:43; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16).

But please note: to bear witness in a respectful manner does not mean that we cannot be bold in our proclamation. Paul was respectful and bold. He called the Athenians to repent because of coming judgment (17:30-31).

Last month I had the privilege of meeting with nine Egyptian Sheiks and two Syrian Muftis. In both meetings, we discussed the importance of *da 'wa* for Muslims and evangelization for Christians. Both the Egyptians and the Syrians agreed that we must bear witness to our faiths, yet live in peace. One of the Egyptian Sheiks said, "You must share your faith! But just don't attack Islam!"¹⁵

In the spirit of the Prince of Peace, respectful witness focuses on giving a positive presentation of the gospel, and it does not attack the other.

Peacemaking and Respectful Witness Revisited

This story comes from Indonesia, where a Pastor and a Commander of the Hizbullah work together for peace.¹⁶

In 1998 serious conflict broke out between Christians and Muslims in the city of Solo, in Central Java. Consequently, the religious leaders formed an interreligious peace committee to rebuild trust and work towards concord. A young pastor on this committee tells of his first visit to the Hizbullah command center:¹⁷ The commander greeted him gruffly, 'You are a Christian and an infidel, and therefore I can kill you!' Unfazed, the pastor returned again and again to the commander's center to drink tea and converse.

Then the pastor invited the commander and his officers to fly with several Christian leaders to Banda Aceh to work with Christian teams in the post-tsunami reconstruction...Remarkably, the Hizbullah leaders accepted, and for two weeks they worked with the Christian teams in rebuilding projects. The commander slept in the same room with the pastor, and they became friends! ... He confided in the pastor, 'I have discovered that you Christians are good infidels.'

*Afterwards they met again for further peacemaking talks. They had invited David Shenk to speak to the group and offered to translate the book he co-authored with Badru Kateregga entitled: *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (1997). When the pastor handed the book to the commander, he broke down. When he regained*

¹⁵According to a recent Gallup poll the majority of Muslims in the world believe that the West does not respect them. When asked what they admire least about the West, Muslims said, "hatred or degradation of Islam and Muslims." (Esposito and Mogahed 2007:61).

¹⁶This is a summary with some direct quotes taken from Shenk 2008. "*The Gospel of Reconciliation Within the Wrath of the Nations.*" International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol 32, No. 1 Pp 3-9, 2008.

¹⁷Hizbullah means "party of God." This is not the same organization as the Shi'ite Hizbullah in Lebanon.

his composure he said, 'I am overcome, for this book is revealing another way, the way of peacefully sharing faith instead of violently confronting one another.'

When asked about his evangelism, the pastor says, 'my calling is to bear witness, mostly through praxis, to the reconciling love of Christ. I give account of my faith in Jesus to all who ask. Conversion is not my responsibility that is the work of God.' Remarkably his church has grown from 40 to 250 in the last dozen years, and with the advocacy of Hizbullah, they are planning to build a second church in Solo.

Finding the Missing Peace for the Future of Evangelical Missiology

So how should the mandates of peacemaking and evangelism fit together? The biblical foundation layed in this study, along with the poignant stories from Nigeria and Indonesia demonstrate that peacemaking and evangelism go hand in hand. There should be a congruity between our message (the gospel of peace), our mandates (peacemaking and evangelism), and our manner (the irenic way we carry out the great commission) We preach of peace, we work towards peace, and we imitate the Prince of Peace. This approach to obeying Christ's last command elicits particular urgency since the challenge of peace between Muslims and Christians is one of the defining issues of this era.

The Church should be a place where people study, practice and proclaim peace. Moreover, the Church's mandate to disciple all nations should be carried out in the spirit of the Prince of peace – graciously and respectfully. May God raise up a new generation of peacemaking apostles.¹⁸ If we seek the lost in this way, we will find the missing peace of Evangelical Missiology!

¹⁸ I define apostle as a cross-cultural disciple maker serving in a pioneer context -- a "sent one" who forms communities of Jesus' followers where Christ is not named (Rom 15:20).

Bibliography

- Barth, M.
1974 *Ephesians*. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday.
- Bruce, F.F.
1984 *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Dunn, James D.G.
1996 *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*
Eerdmans: Grand Rapids
- Esposito, John and Dalia Mogahed
2007 *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*
Gallup Press: New York
- Gill, Brad
2008 “*IJFM: Born to be Wild.*”
International Journal of Frontier Missiology, January-March 2008,
Volume 25:1, pp. 5-8.
- Griswold, Eliza
2008 “*God’s Country*” In *The Atlantic*, Vol 301, Number 2, March edition. Pp
40-55.
- Kaiser, Walter C.
1997 *Hard Sayings of the Bible*.
Downers Grove, IL : InterVarsity, Electronic version
- Kateregga, Badru D. and David W. Shenk
1997 *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue*
Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press
- Kung, Hans
1991 *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*
Wipf & Stock Publishers: Eugene, Oregon
- Lincoln, A.T.
1990 *Ephesians*. Vol. 42. Waco, TX: Word.
- Little, David, editor
2007 “*Warriors and Brothers*” in *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in
Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge University Press. Pp247-277.
- Love, Rick
2000 *Peacemaking: Resolving Conflict, Restoring and Building Harmony in
Relationships*. William Carey Library: Pasadena, California.

2001 “Muslims and Military Metaphors.” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, January

Megoran, Nick Solly

2007 *The War on Terror: How Should Christians Respond?*
InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois

Morris, Leon

1994 *Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians.*
Grand Rapids: Baker.

Shenk, David W.

2008 “*The Gospel of Reconciliation Within the Wrath of the Nations*”
International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol 32, No. 1
Pp 3-9.

Stassen, Glen

1991 *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*
Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky

2004 *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*
The Pilgrim Press: Cleveland, Ohio

Swartley, Willard M.

2006 *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics.* Eerdmans: Grand Rapids

Volf, Miroslav

2000 “*The Social Meaning of Reconciliation*”
Interpretation April 2000 pp158-172

Widjaja, P.S.

2001 “*Peace*”
The Dictionary of Mission Theology. John Corrie, Editor. Consulting editors: J. Samuel Escobar, Wilbert Shenk. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove: Ill
Pp 279-281