JESUS' PRINCIPLES FOR PEACEBUILDING

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Jesus' ideas about peacebuilding in their historical context. The study considers Jesus' teaching within the context of the conflict of first-century Palestine at its center. Jesus conceptualizes peace in the context of the kingdom of God and prioritizes peace over justice. The principles for Jesus' strategy for peacebuilding are motivated by compassion, love, identity, forgiveness, and peace itself as a superior reality. The practical implications of these include reset of conflict realities, recognition of ambivalence of conflict and peace, building a culture of peace in the presence of conflict, reconciliation, repentance, and forgiveness, and human free will. The study identifies four conflict barriers that contribute to present-day conflict perpetuation: a destructive emotional orientation, a compromised vision for peace, compromised pragmatic ethics, and an ethnocentric view of peace.

Key Terms: first-century Palestine, Jesus of Nazareth, peacebuilding.

Introduction

This paper summarizes the finding of my doctoral research which explores Jesus' strategy for peacebuilding for first-century Palestine and seeks relevance for present-day conflicts. The literature generally does not consider Jesus' teachings with the conflict of first-century Palestine at its center. This study uses a conflict analytical approach to the context of first-century Palestine and analysis Jesus' teachings within that framework. The conflict in Jesus' day took up a central place in the daily lives for those who lived in Palestine. I present Jesus' principles for peace from within the context of the first-century Palestine conflict. Additionally, Jesus' announcement of God's kingdom is foundational for interpreting his teachings. Jesus' belief that God was establishing his kingdom in and through his own life and ministry underpinned his message [2].

The Kingdom of God and Peace

Within Israel's tradition the idea of God's kingdom is clearly connected to peace. The book of Jubilees peace for Israel is the result of God's king being enthroned. "And on the day when you sit on your righteous throne of honor, there will be great peace for all the seed of the beloved's sons" (Jub. 31:20)[3][4]. In Isaiah God's king is called the Prince of Peace who sets up a government of peace, with justice and righteousness.

> There will be no end to the increase of [His] government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore (Isa. 9:7)[5].

And in the Qumran document identified as "the Son of God text" the king of God's kingdom shall make an end to wars and make an everlasting peace.

> His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all his ways in truth. He shall judge the earth in truth and all shall make peace. The sword shall cease from the earth … His dominion is an everlasting dominion (4Q246, 1:5-9)[67].

The life that will be experienced when God's kingdom is established, is a life of peace. This means more than merely an end to warfare and violence. The terms "peace" and "Kingdom of God" both refer to the way that God desires Israel, and the whole of his creation, to live life. Jesus held a vision for peace that he, embedded in Israel's tradition, captured with the phrase "kingdom of God". His vision embraced the utopian descriptions found in the writings of Israel's prophets, the end to all warfare (negative peace), and the abundance of life (positive peace) under God's kingship. When first-century Israelites talked about the kingdom of God they simply meant that Israel's God would become king, first and foremost in an earthly, socio-political sense [8]. The idea of Israel's God becoming king was part of the Jewish eschatology of the time and was firmly rooted in Israel's tradition and scriptures of the Hebrew Bible.

> And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and [that] kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever (Dan. 2:44).

For Jesus the establishment of God's kingdom was firmly connected to the realization of peace for Israel and for all of God's creation.

Jesus' Principles for Peacebuilding

The interrelatedness of the concepts of truth and mercy, and justice and peace was already known within Israel's early tradition. "Graciousness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10). Lederach explains how the concepts of grace, truth, righteousness, and peace connect and balance each other in peacebuilding.

> Truth is the longing for acknowledgment of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experiences, but it is coupled with mercy, which articulates the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. Justice represents the search for

individual and group rights, for social restructuring, and for restitution, but it is linked with peace, which underscores the need for interdependence, well-being, and security [9].

Jesus elevates the concept of compassion above that of truth, and peace above justice. In Israel's tradition murder and adultery were clear offenses, forbidden in the ten commandments (Ex. 20:13,14) and universally recognized as sinful. Jesus, in his sermon on the mount, exposes the values that underpin these offenses: anger and lust in one's heart.

> You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not murder,' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be answerable to the court.' "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be answerable to the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty [enough to go] into the fiery hell. Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering (Mt. 5: 21-24).

Jesus teaches that being angry is an equal offense to murder. Insulting someone, publicly causing dishonor, provokes retaliation, and a cycle of violence. Likewise, labeling others as "fool", judging them as inferior, dehumanizing the other, is a destructive outcome of anger behavior [10]. Anger comes from the same root that ultimately can lead to murder. Jesus Identifies anger as one of the key root causes that oppose peaceful living according to the kingdom of God ideal. The alternative way he offers is that of reconciliation. Jesus raises the practice of reconciliation above that of the sacred practice of worship to God at the Temple [11]. His way to peace is through reconciliation. Practices that are motivated by anger and revenge are unfit to pursue peace the way he is offering it.

In the same way, Jesus exposes sexual lust as an equal wrong to adultery.

> You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. "Now if your right eye is causing you to sin, tear it out and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your [body,] than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (Mt. 5: 27-29).

Jesus explains that the root of infidelity lies with the uncontrolled pursuit for selfish covetousness. While he uses the example of sexual lust, selfish greed does not limit itself to sexual want. It is conceivable that Jesus viewed the issue of sexual lust in the broader context of other forms of selfish desires. The term translated with "lust" is the Greek word *epithymeo*, which is translated in other texts as to desire, to lust after, to covet. The term is found in Israel's commandments given to Moses:

> You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male slave, or his female slave, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Exo. 20:17).

At other times Jesus warned his followers to "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed" (Lk. 12:15). Jesus warns against lustful intent (hedonism) and covetousness. Both anger and a greed for selfish gain are inefficient as motives upon which to build a strategy for justice and peace the way Jesus sees these. Peace will need to be rooted in alternative principles.

> You have heard that it was said, 'eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' "But I say to you, do not show opposition against an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other toward him also (Mt. 5:38).

When Jesus contrast retributive justice ("an eye for an eye") with mercy ("love your enemies"), he prioritizes and validates the concept of mercy above the concept of justice. For justice to be satisfied retribution needs to address the payback of harm inflicted in order repair the done damage (payback for lost property, return the land, or financial means to substitute for physical harm). In Jesus' view this settlement is not outside of the realm of justice, but it is outperformed by forgiveness, which is motivated by compassion. While forgiveness does not directly satisfy the desire for retribution, it creates the environment in which underlying emotional barriers (anger, hatred, vengeance, greed) can be reoriented towards emotions that forms the right motivation for peacebuilding. In addition, justice has a punitive and deterrence aspect. The eye-for-an-eye approach satisfy both retributive as well as punitive aspects of justice. It provides a remedy that counters, on the one hand, the objective damages inflicted and possibility of ongoing offenses. On the other hand, it addresses the subjective, emotional wounds as well as the perceived danger of repeated offense. In Jesus' strategy the punitive aspect of justice is satisfied by the peacemaking party. Self-sacrificial peacebuilding is present in Israel's tradition in the atonement ritual, and in the writings of the prophets. Jesus directed this concept to himself and to his followers. The altruism Jesus presents goes beyond meekness as an ethical value; it becomes a pragmatic means that has peacebuilding capacity beyond that of conventional punitive measures.

Jesus' view of peacebuilding recognizes that anger and selfish greed hold capacity to corrupt the concept of retribution. Retributive justice, but other form of justice likewise, are concepts that create or allow for space in which negative emotions can develop. When peacebuilding is justice-motivated, entitlement to vengeance and claiming what one believes to be rightfully one's own, become fertile soil for greed and anger to lay claim to the emotional orientation. Therefor Jesus discounts the eye-for-an-eye principle in seeking justice and peace. Jesus' strategy for peace is summed up in the following five principles for peacebuilding.

Compassion-Motivated Peacebuilding

In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32) a wayward younger son comes to his senses and decides to return home to his father who he has disrespected and shamed. The contrasting responses of his father and his older brother exemplify principles for peacebuilding. The father's actions are motivated by compassion (vs. 20). He compassionately welcomes the younger son and over-generously celebrates his return home. The older son is not pleased with the father's merciful response to his rebellious brother, and fears justice is not served. Furthermore, he believes his righteous conduct is more deserving of his father's mercy. His desire for justice however is motivated by anger (vs. 28), jealousy, and self-centered desire for justice (vs. 29,30). The father attempts to make peace through reconciliation, with both his sons. He pursues the older son, who has lost the way of the father, the way of peace, and has become embittered by his perception of injustice. The compassionate action of the peacebuilding father is not dependent on the response of the offender (the younger son). The sincerity of the younger son's repentance is unclear. While the outcome of reconciliation and peaceful relations is affected by genuine repentance of the wrongdoer, the "rightness" and inherent proficiency of compassionate motivated peacebuilding is unaffected by whether or not the offending party comes to repentance. Compassion motivated peacemaking efforts are by definition unwarranted and undeserved. If peace efforts are measured against the worth of any party, or by sincerity or actions, they are no longer motivated by compassion, but become measured in a framework of retribution.

When including the offender in the peacemaking and reconciliation process, his or her repentance from wrongs is needed. The father, therefor seeks and pleads with his sons. No, or insincere, remorse (cunning for self-interest), can cause the opposing party to drift from compassion and chose the path of anger (older son). Next to the motivation of compassion stands forgiveness as a pragmatic act that establishes reconciliation. The father seeks peace through compassion and forgiveness, the older son would have preferred him to apply retribution so that justice would

have been restored first. His quest for justice is tainted by his feelings of anger and selfish entitlement, and as such corrupt the course of peace. The father's compassion leads to abundance of generosity (in forgiveness and material ways). Justice is found in the pursuit of peace, somewhat as a byproduct. Compassion requires the capacity to have mercy on those belonging to the out-group, to allow oneself to love one's enemy. It requires the individual or the group to reorient its emotional orientation from anger and entitlement to mercy and compassion. Although emotions of fear, hatred, anger, and feelings of revenge are strong human emotions in conflict situations [12], Jesus teaches that these are obstacles when they become part of the motivation for peacebuilding. Compassion, is the kind of emotional foundation that has the capacity to produce a different kind of peace, the way Jesus envisions it. Compassion-motivated peacebuilding does not disregard injustice. Its pursuit of justice choses a different means. It is not motivated by retribution, because it recognized the pitfalls of such an approach for peace.

Love-Motivated Peacebuilding

A compassion-motivated outlook, demands its peacebuilders to not use their negative emotional orientation as the driving force, but instead to make use of their positive emotional predisposition. Love, as pragmatic action, becomes the means that is motivated from a reoriented emotional reservoir. The emotional reservoir contains both positive and negative emotions towards the out-group. Reorientation refers to the prioritizing of positive emotions in relating to the rival groups. It might become easy to categorize Jesus' ideas as non-violent or pacifist, yet one needs to realize that these domains were not ideas articulated in the first-century.

"You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies" (Mt. 5:43). The term neighbor indicated anyone belonging to one's in-group, this could be other Galileans, or most likely, other Israelites. It could additionally, refer to a specific in-group (those in your village, social class, or socio-religious group). Jesus mentions "those who love you" and "those who

are brothers and sisters" as those belonging to the in-group. The enemy then, consists of those who do not belong to one's in-group; the Romans, the socio-political elite with its center in Jerusalem, and local Israelites and non-Israelites aligning with the aristocratic elite (local tax-collectors, landowners, religious leaders, local government officials) or other ethnic groups [1314].

Jesus envisions a kingdom in which Israel lives together with their enemies in peaceable, loving relationship. Lederach has found that turning points in the process of peacebuilding are based on perplexing paradoxes.

> The turning points must find a way to transcend the cycles of destructive violence while living with and being relevant to the context that produces those cycles. A horizon, though visible, is permanently just out of touch, suggesting an epic journey, the pursuit of which in peacebuilding is the forging of new ways to approach human affairs with an enemy [15].

Jesus reminds his listeners that Israel's God does not show favoritism, and that his people therefore ought to do the same. Love for enemies and praying for those who mistreat you, should be based on the way God loves all people (the evil and the good, the righteous and the unrighteous)[16]. This kind of love, should be emulated by those who want to follow Jesus and his teachings. Jesus anticipates that opposition to the existing injustice and oppressive occupation will lead to persecution and violent conflict. He incites people to respond to mistreatment in love and prayer for the offenders. Those that chose this perfect way of "your heavenly father" are thus, like those who are peacemakers and children of God (Mt. 5:9). Peacemaking and love for enemies go hand in hand in Jesus' teaching. Love as an ultimate value and superior pragmatic action is Jesus' modus operandi for peacebuilding. Peaceable life as he views it in his kingdom of God vision is typified by loving relations. Jesus told his followers "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:12,13). Self-sacrificial love is

part of Jesus' peace strategy. Altruism is Jesus' way of reshaping Israel's traditional way of understanding sacrifice. As animal sacrifice removed the wrongdoings of the offender and restored relationship (Israel's concept of atonement), self-sacrifice accomplished the equivalent in building peace. Self-sacrifice certainly, not always requires the actual giving of one's life, but in figurative ways is representative of love.

> And he was saying to [them] all, "If anyone wants to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, this is the one who will save it (Lk. 9:23-25).

Altruism, to Jesus, includes self-denial and taking up one's cross. A willingness to suffer, in extreme cases even unto death, for the right cause [17]. Self-sacrifice satisfies the need for payback. The socio-psychological need for retribution, the feeling that some form of payback is needed to accomplish justice, is provided by willingly taking on the suffering that comes from the opponent's wrongdoing. According to Jesus, non-loving means, are incapable to accomplish the goals of peace. Violence means to accomplish peace, such as just warlike strategies[18], are by this principle disqualified as valid options. Only peaceful means can establish peace the way Jesus envisions it [19].

Identity-Motivated Peacebuilding

When Jesus is asked who, in the context of first-century Israel, one's neighbor is to whom one ought to extent love, Jesus tells a story of a good Samaritan, an unlikely hero who exemplifies love for one's neighbor (Lk. 10: 30-37). The question is posed to Jesus by a lawyer "and who is my neighbor?" is a legal question. He wants to know to whom he is obligated to apply the law to love one's neighbor, and to whom he does not have this obligation. It is a question of in-group boundary setting.

> The legal issue posed is, "Whom are we Judeans obligated to treat as neighbors and whom are we not?" It is a boundary question of an exclusionary type. So put, it enables Judeans to determine those who fall within the obligation of the law cited from Lev 19:18 and those who do not. Whom does God require us to love as ourselves and whom are we not required to love [20].

The parable brings out two principles that are part of Jesus strategy for peacebuilding. Collectivist societies, like first-century Israel, are prone to ethnocentrism [21] and would be quick to interpret Israel's law "to love one's neighbor" to strictly apply to the in-group [22] [23]. Collectivist cultures use self-categorization to strengthen the in-group's identity, and likewise, categorize (name-call, stereotype, prototypes) the out-group to create a barrier between in- and out-group [24]. The question raised in the parable "who is my neighbor?", in peacebuilding would translate to "what group is my in-group extending peace to?". Jesus' re-orientation of the boundaries (prototypes of self-categorization) answers that question in an unexpected way. The in-group prototype is one who loves and extends compassion as a tool of peacebuilding. The in-group is made up of all those who are compassion motivated peacebuilders, impartial to the party they extend it to. By using a typical out-group individual (a Samaritan) as a prototype of the new in-group, Jesus radically set forth his envisioned redefined in-group. Jesus' peacebuilding aims are not for those ethnocentrically seeking peace that is limited to one's in-group (Israel). Jesus aims to

mobilize those who first and foremost, seek peace as a greater good (Mt. 6:33), not as a "peace for my in-group first".

This brings out the second principle. Jesus turns the question "who is my neighbor?" (deserving of my peace efforts), into a case of becoming like a neighbor who extends peace to others impartially [25]. Compassion, the capacity to empathize with others, becomes the key attribute to neighborly love, the key to peacebuilding [26]. Being a "loving neighbor" is not merely a moral goal or ethic ideal. Compassion motivated acts of love are key to Jesus' peace strategy. Jesus redefined his in-group and includes all those who responded to the invitation to join his kingdom of God movement. He drew new demarcating lines around his movement, inclusive of all, yet demanding loyalty to his ways of defining the kingdom and peaceable life. Those belonging to his in-group would be exemplified by love for their neighbors and enemies. Those deserving of compassion and love would not be defined by conventional in- and out-group boundaries. Love would be extended on the basis of in-group characteristics, not out-group identity markers. Love-motivated peacebuilding was a characteristic of all who claimed to be of Jesus' in-group.

Jesus reidentification of a good neighbor in the good Samaritan story, meant that the identity of those who allied themselves with Jesus' kingdom vision, would be defined by compassion, extend love to all others. Peacebuilding was not directed by the nature of the out-group, but would be implanted into the nature of those who took on Jesus' way of peace. To Jesus, those who take on this vocation make peace the way God intended, and thus true representatives – children – of God; to them belongs the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God … for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5: 9,10). Lederach explains how the vocation of peacebuilding is more about exploring life's purpose than it is about professional achievement of making peace [27]. Vocation in these terms, is the role that comes with one's identity. The vocation of peacebuilding is first and foremost embedded in the personhood of those Jesus considered part of his in-group.

Forgiveness-Motivated Peacebuilding

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt. 6:11). Jesus conceptualizes peace with regard for forgiveness. If peace is relational, and conflict is damaged relations, then forgiveness is a means, perhaps the main means for peacebuilding. Israel's God is the God of forgiveness (Neh. 9:17; Ps. 130:4; Dan. 9:9), and it was believed that only God could forgive man his sins (Lk. 5:21). If retributive and penal concept no longer are sufficient for establishing justice, than forgiveness becomes the key principle by which wrongs are resolved. Forgiveness is the concept by which reconciliation is accomplished and peace is fostered. Reconciliation, the renewal of a through conflict strained relationship, is the result of forgiveness. Forgiveness also removes the burden of indebtedness (Mt. 6:12-14). God's forgiveness towards his people, is the model by which his people forgive others.

Jesus uses the terms sins *(hamartia)*, offenses (*paraptoma*), and debt (*opheilema*) in connection with forgiveness. In Jesus' teaching forgiveness addresses all aspects of indebtedness. God forgives sins, to those who forgive others their (material) debt, and those who forgive other their wrongdoings. Forgiveness then has a dual function. First, it removes the burden of indebtedness that out-group offenses create, making retribution no longer necessary. It supplies an objective payment for wrongs committed. Second, the atoning quality of forgiveness restores the broken relationship, subjectively removing guilt and shame from the reconciling parties. Both aspects are represented in Israel's atonement ritual. An unrepenting attitude of the offender, does not affect the ethical weight or the effectiveness and worth of forgiveness in reconciliation and peace. Forgiveness has an emotional motivation, a merciful willingness to extend forgiveness, and it has a cognitive impetus, understanding the effectiveness as a means to peace. To Jesus, forgiveness is the way in which wrongs are being made right [28]. Forgiveness is the way through which God's will is done on earth, the way through which God's kingdom is implemented into a yet unjust world in conflict. The elimination of debts (moral, inflicted harm, and financial) neutralizes the social space

in which relationships can be renewed (reconciled). The New Testament meaning includes the concept of the psychological experience of being released from guilt and shame and of restoring broken relations, both with others and with God [29].

Peace-Motivated Peacebuilding

The notion that Israel's God, Yahweh, is king over all the earth is firmly established in Israel's tradition. Jesus has taken up this universal outlook of the kingdom of God. His vision of peace, encapsulated in his message of the kingdom of God, is not limited to Israel, but is inclusive of all the nations of the earth (Lk. 24:47; Mk. 13:10; 11:17). A narrow vision for peace, particular to Israel, would make a war strategy an acceptable option. An in-group focused goal for peace encourages violent means towards the enemy. A universal vision of peace that includes all out-groups as participants, makes violence as a means appear as contradictive to the goal. Peace is to be built within the complex and multiple-group "web of interdependent relationships", which includes our enemies [30].

Jesus' notion of peace determined his means. Peace to Jesus was not ethnocentric, as many in first-century Israel would have envision peace. Peace was a greater good that became available to all, because Israel's God was establishing his kingdom peace on earth. This greater-good, superior-valued, universal concept of peace, was a realm that all nations could enter into. This peace concept differs from peace concepts that allow for ethnocentric views of peace, when peace means peace for one's in-group first. Peace as a greater-good demands peaceful strategies; in-group focused peace allows for, even encourages the use of violent strategies. Ethnocentric motives for peace, a desire for a better life for the in-group is not an effective way for peacebuilding [31]. The realization of a superior value of peace that includes moral reasoning can create a vision for peace that aims for an inclusive peace culture. This notion of peace is connected to Jesus' redefinition of the in-group. All those joining the universal invitation to Jesus' vision of peace form the new in-group. The paradigm shifts from perceiving and pursuing an ethnocentric peace, to

seeing peace as a greater than any group reality. Jesus' peace is inclusive of the nations (Zech. 9:10), "peace on earth" for all those who have the same desire for this peace (Lk. 2:14).

Practical Implications for Peacebuilding

Jesus' strategy for peace offers a number of practical ideas for peacebuilding.

1) *Reset.* The concept of repentance (see below) goes beyond the idea of acknowledgement of sin and the resolve to do better. Repent (*metanoeo*) refers to the act of turning (from one's way of wrong, to God's way), it implies the changing of one's mind. Jesus, in his proclamation "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" reorients his audience to a new vision and a new way of thinking. Turning away from the conventional narrative and traditional ways of thinking to a new alternative way he terms "the kingdom of God". In his sermon and his parables, he explains the vision and the new ways of the kingdom, the ways of peace.

2) *Ambivalence of peace and conflict.* Jesus' vision of peace held both a utopian future aspect as well as a present-day, peace-in-conflict aspect. Jesus knew that utopian, heavenly peace (God's will for his creation on earth) was not fully accomplished, and yet in a way had already come to have its effect upon earthly relations. In one of his parables Jesus teaches that wheat (ways of peace) and weeds (ways of conflict) grow together, until the time that God will fully establish his kingdom on earth (Mt. 13: 24-30). Another time Jesus speaks about the ambivalence of peace on this earth and that in the midst of conflict the peace of the kingdom of God is a reality. "For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Lk. 17:21). "These things I have spoken to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (Jn. 6:33). Peace and conflict are coexisting realities. In the midst of predominantly cultures of conflict and

war, Jesus invites people to join in building a culture of peace, representative of the kingdom of God vision.

3) *Culture of peace*. Jesus' implementation of his vision of the kingdom of God on earth can be understood in terms of building a culture of peace among coexisting cultures of conflict. Jesus envisions a community or society that embraced God's peace-on-earth vision as expected in Israel's eschatological future; a present society that lives already according to a future reality. The way of life within this culture of peace is reflective of the utopian vision of God's kingdom, described in Israel's prophetic writings and adopted in Jesus' vision for peace.

4) *Reconciliation.* Reconciliation, with God and with others, is an important concept in Israel's tradition as seen for example in the atonement ritual (Lev. 4), and the commandments to love God (Deut. 6:5) and one's neighbor (Lev. 19:18) and Jesus' emphasis on these values. Reconciliation is at the heart of peacebuilding because human relations are at the heart of conflict. Reconciliation in Jesus view includes the confession of wrongs, the genuine turning away of these, and forgiveness. Repentance includes both the turning away from one's ways of wrong, as well as the change of mind that reorients one toward a new, better reality. The ultimate goal of reconciliation is not merely the absence of visible conflict between neighbors, but a loving relation between rivals: love for one's enemy (Mt. 5:44).

5) *Repentance*. Repentance refers to the acknowledgement of wrongdoing, and to the commitment to not continue with acts of wrongdoing. A first step is confession of sins before God, which clears the way for confession to others. Repentance removes the belief in one's own superiority (morally or behavioral) for it acknowledges one's own shortcomings. It creates space to humanize the out-group and acknowledge their grievances and wounds. The process of repentance equalizes inequalities between

groups by normalizing the in-groups view of themselves and allowing the in-group to take a new, less bias, look at the out-group.

6) *Forgiveness.* Forgiveness was a core concept in both John the Baptists movement as it was in Jesus'. Forgiveness by God was the model to follow in extending forgiveness towards others. By that standard, forgiveness was unlimited ("seven times seventy) and abundantly generous. Forgiveness was not contingent upon the severity of the rival's offense, but upon the measure of God's forgiveness towards his people. Forgiveness thus, was motivated by the knowledge and experience that forgiveness before God for one's own wrongs was available. The acknowledgement that all people and groups are in need of forgiveness weakens the boundaries between in- and out-groups, humanizes the out-group, and creates social space for genuine relationship that recognize the common dilemma of fellow humans.

7) *Human choice and free will.* Jesus' strategy included the mobilization of followers who would embrace and live out his kingdom vision. His teaching had a utopian aspect, a standard that seemed heavenly, maybe ungraspable for earthly humanity. And yet, it inspired and invited people to join the vision. His teachings insisted that people made a choice. His alternative vision and way of life, could be rejected or embraced. This frames the concept of peacebuilding foundationally different that many peace theories. The theories addressed in this study identify intractability qualitatively dissimilar from more common tractable conflicts. Within the complex system of conflicts, a socio-psychological dynamic has developed that makes the conflict intractable, difficult, maybe even impossible, to end. The complex dynamics within conflict system, become the primary cause of the conflict perpetuation. In other words, solving the "malignancy" of complex dynamics (socio-psychological infrastructure) is the answer to intractability.

Jesus' strategy raises the question of the role of human free will[32] in conflict, and in intractability. The question goes something like this. What if there is already sufficient knowledge and theory about conflict and peace to "solve" the problem of intractability, but a sizable segment of society's population chooses not to participate in the peaceful solution? What if the difference between intractable conflicts and tractable conflicts lies in the percentage of members in conflicting societies that choose to either reject or embrace peaceable ways to end the conflict? In other words, the "solution" is already available, yet conflict is preferred by too many within the conflicting parties. This could be as a result of ignorance, in which case educative measures seem reasonable, or this could be because of personal preferences, such as personal interests, disinterest in peace, or dislike toward change.

Jesus mobilized a community that prioritized peaceable ways to build peace, sharing vision and the ways of peaceable life, but also the cost and challenges that came with it; the way of peace caused conflict with those rejecting it. Jesus was committed to building a community or society of peace in the midst of conflict, realizing peace would be ambivalent until the time that God would act to complete it. Human choice to join or to reject was and is a real factor in the outcome of peacebuilding.

Jesus' Strategy in Sum

When taking all of Jesus' views and teachings in their first-century context, holding them with care against the frameworks that conflict and peace theory provides, I surmise that Jesus' identified the core reason behind conflict as a harmful psychological orientation of those involved in the conflict. This orientation is best understood by these four aspects that contribute to the perpetuation of violent conflicts:

1) *Destructive emotional orientation*. Negative emotions such as anger, hatred, vengefulness, entitlement, lust, and the desire for selfish gain, used as motivations to establish justice and peace, are ineffective and inadequate for peacebuilding.

2) *Compromised belief in peace vision*. Jesus held an unswerving belief in a utopian and yet tangible vision of peace. The belief that a future utopian peaceable life is the standard by which to live a peaceful life in the present underpins the principles of peacebuilding. Compromised vision results in compromised means, which in turn results in compromised peace. Many believe in a peace that is less than an envisioned utopian reality. Strategy and means to accomplish such a peace, are compromised, will allow for warlike strategy to coexist with peace strategies. This compromised approach, even well intended, will contribute to perpetuation of conflict. Compromised beliefs about the conflict and peace in intractable conflicts are fueled by hopelessness about the possibility of peace [33]. Peace as ceasefire or merely absence of violent episodes, zero-sum "peace" scenarios, and other options that agree to "acceptable" levels of violent conflict and war become acceptable, yet compromised, options for peace. Jesus offers a different kind, or quality, of peace (Jn. 14:27).

3) *Compromised pragmatic ethics*. Related to Jesus' uncompromised belief in a vision for peace, he likewise held an uncompromising view of ethics in practice. Jesus' strategy was intolerant of unethical thought, feelings, and actions in partaking in the peace he proclaimed. Emotional orientation that included anger, hatred, greed, and selfish gain are not only morally unfit but also pragmatically ineffective in building the kind of peace Jesus aimed for.

4) *Ego and ethnocentric peace*. Utopian peace is universal. Pursuits of peace that seek peace for one's in-group first will likewise maintain a culture of conflict. Ego and ethnocentric views are barriers to peacebuilding. First, these oppose an uncompromised universal view of peace, weakening the belief in peace and the commitment to peaceful means. Second, they will build barriers around the in-group that foster a culture of conflict.

The solution then, is to be sought in a reorientation of the destructive emotional disposition, selecting positive emotions from one's personal or collective emotional reservoir. Love, compassion, and mercy are draw on as motives to act with forgiveness and reconciliation. Second, the development and sharing of an ideal, utopian and real, concrete vision of peace is the foundation upon which peace is built. Only when peace is uncompromised will it actually be real peace. Jesus challenged people to choose the way of peace as he envisioned it. Third, means and motives are to be pragmatically ethical. Ethics are not merely held to an uncompromising high standard for ethics sake, but ethics are the measure by which methods of peacebuilding are effective. Lastly, a reorientation from seeking the interests for one self or one's in-group, to seeking a universal peace-oriented in-group who pursues peace as a superior valued greater good will contribute to the breaking of perpetuating cycles of conflict.

The uncompromising nature of Jesus' vision, methods, and goals are inseparable connected to his beliefs about the heavenly realm and its continuity with the earthly reality as seen in his prayer "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10). It is also connected to his faith in the uncompromising goodness of Israel's God: "Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). This unbending belief and attitude have both ethical as well as pragmatic implication. It is not only morally correct; it is also the only foundation with the capacity to build peace the way Jesus perceives peace.

ENDNOTES

1 Robert Ottenhof belongs to the Institute of Religion, Culture and Peace at Payap University, Chiangmai, Thailand

2 James D. G. Dunn, Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Volume 1, Edition Unstated (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 387; John P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume II: Mentor, Message, and Miracles, Illustrated edition (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 1994), 237; N. T. Wright, ed., Jesus and the Victory of God, 1st edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 199.

3 The writer of Jubilees places Judah on the throne, a messianic reference. From Outside of the Bible. The book of Jubilees is a Hebrew text written sometime in the second century BC. Jubilees was one of the most popular Jewish books in circulation in the late Second Temple period, also found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

4 James L. Kugel, "Jubilees," in Outside the Bible Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture, ed. Louis H Feldman, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and James L. Kugel (Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 272.

5 Isa. 9:7. (New American Standard Bible 2020; all subsequent citations are from this version).

6 The "Son of God" fragmentary Aramaic text 4Q246 is also known as the "Aramaic Apocalypse", or the" Aramaic Apocryphon of Daniel". It is generally dated to the first century BC.

7 John J. Collins, "Son of God," in Outside the Bible Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture, ed. Louis H Feldman, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and James L. Kugel (Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 620.

8 Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 202.

9 John Paul Lederach, Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 29.

10 Warren Carter, Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical And Religious Reading (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2003), 145.

11 Scot McKnight, Sermon on the Mount, ed. Tremper Longman III, Ebook (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2013), 19.22.

12 Daniel Bar-Tal, Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 213.

13 Gerd Theissen, "The Political Dimensions of Jesus' Activities," in The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina, and Gerd Theissen (Fortress Press, 2002), 234.

14 A reading of Jesus' use of the term enemies that includes other socio-political and ethnic groups is confirmed in the use of "enemies" in Lk. 1:74 and the Testament of Moses.

[15] John Paul Lederach, The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29.

[16] Non-discriminatory love, does not refute the fact of Israel's election. God chose Israel for his special purpose that he intended for all people and nations. All nations would be blessed by God, through his chosen people Israel (Gen. 12:1-3).

[17] Sverre Bøe, Cross-Bearing in Luke, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 278 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 78.

[18] Israel's first-century tradition had developed the concept that behind all earthly conflict dark forces (Satan, a kingdom of darkness, the sons of darkness, Beliar) formed the real enemy that needed to be defeated for the kingdom of God and peace on earth to be established. Satan's means included violence and war. To overcome the enemy, other means would need to be employed.

[19] Jesse P. Nickel, The Things That Make for Peace: Jesus and Eschatological Violence, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, Volume 244 (Berlin ; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 129–32.

[20] Philip F Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict," in The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina, and Gerd Theissen (Fortress Press, 2002), 190.

[21] Bruce J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 65.

[22] The connection of the two "love commandments" in Israel's law (Lev. 19:18 and Deut. 6:5) leads to the conclusion that love should be extended to all of humanity.

[23] J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament: Fresh Light on the Parable of the Good Samaritan," New Testament Studies 11, no. 1 (October 1964): 72, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500002927; Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict," 187.

[24] Nickolas Fox and Thorsten Moritz, The Hermeneutics of Social Identity in Luke-Acts (Eugene. Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2021), 14.5.

[25] Mark A. Proctor, "'Who Is My Neighbor?' Recontextualizing Luke's Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)," Journal of Biblical Literature 138, no. 1 (2019): 218, https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1381.2019.486329.

[26] Ruben Zimmermann, Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 323–25.

[27] Lederach, The Moral Imagination, 165.

[28] Scot McKnight, "Ethics of Jesus," in Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. Jeannine K. Brown, Joel B. Green, and Nicholas Perrin (IVP Academic, 2013), 27.124.

[29] McKnight, 247, 248.

[30] Lederach, The Moral Imagination, 173.

[31] Maria Jarymowicz, "Fear and Hope in Intractable Conflicts: The Automatic

vs. Reflective Attributes of Collective Emotional Orientations," in The Social Psychology of Intractable Conflicts Celebrating the Legacy of Daniel Bar-Tal, Volume I, ed. Eran Halperin and Keren Sharvit (Springer, 2015), 127.

32 Philosophically and theologically, there are different ways in which to approach the theory of free will. While this fall outside the scope of this study, I have found these works helpful as an introduction to the debate: Scardigli et al. (2019) Determinism and Free Will: New Insights from Physics, Philosophy, and Theology; Martin et al. (2007), Four views on Free Will.

33 Bar-Tal, Intractable Conflicts, 48.

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