“Our cities need to work for everyone; they need common ground to come together. For people of faith, this work comes from a deep conviction about what it means to seek the shalom of the city: it means not separating physical change from spiritual change.”

—NICOLE HIGGINS (MA ’10, STORY ON P. 12)
“I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety.”

Hosea 2:18

Introduccion
Mark Labberton
p. 38

Shalom as Wholeness:
Embracing the Broad Biblical Message
Leslie C. Allen
p. 40

Conflict: Bringing Shalom to Persons in Situations of Internal Displacement in Colombia
Lisseth Rojas-Flores
p. 44

Embodied Shalom:
Making Peace in a Divided World
Jer Swigart
p. 50
Kerygmatic Peacebuilding as the Practice of Biblical Salam
Martin Accad p. 52

Shalom Justice
Clifton R. Clarke p. 50

Shalom as the Dual Approach of Peacemaking and Justice-Seeking: The Case of South Korea
Sebastian C. H. Kim p. 66

Passing the Peace: A Pneumatology of Shalom
Patrick Oden p. 70
I n its broadest definition the Hebrew word *shalom* means “wholeness,” with a crucial element of that wholeness being “peace.” Yet the word contains a longing that transcends mere definition, a profound hope shared across the world by individuals, communities, and whole nations. Though a complicated concept, no matter whether it is nuanced theologically, spiritually, politically, or psychologically, this all-too-elusive thing called *shalom* is a nearly universal desire.

As Fuller Theological Seminary marks its 70th year in the fall of 2017, this theme seems an obvious one to consider in a world ravishingly hungry for shalom. Nations, regions, tribes, religions, institutions, families, and individuals are intensely aware of its absence, and of the unmet desire for a deep and pervasive sense of well-being.
that it evokes—something to contain all of the extremes of life.

Ours is a world of global turbulence, vicious terrorism, and random violence. After decades of checked hostilities in many parts of the world—albeit punctuated by war, injustice, and abuse—the rolling narratives of instability and unfettered attack seem to be increasingly normative. For the poorest and most marginalized, such vulnerability is bitingly familiar. That a far wider and more shielded swath of people around the world now faces greater daily fear from uncertainty and attack is a significant shift.

The gospel of Jesus Christ comes to and for this very kind of world. The essays in this section present a biblical vision of gospel shalom as it relates to the pain, suffering, and vulnerability for which it is so deeply needed. It is sacrificial love worked out in the midst of struggle, demonstrated by the Maker-of-Shalom who understands human anguish and came in mercy and justice to set things right.

This issue of FULLER magazine considers this shalom from many different dimensions—from different theological disciplines and out of varying social, ethnic, and political worlds, forming a set of windows or doorways through which we can glimpse this peace for which we yearn. Together, they provide just the sort of rich, thoughtful engagement that reflects Fuller’s history—as well as a commitment to drink from the well of our biblical faith, and to love a world parched for the living water of shalom.
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s an Old Testament professor, I find it gratifying that a Hebrew word has passed into Christian currency. “Shalom” basically means wholeness or completeness. An important extended meaning is “peace,” which is also the meaning people generally attribute to the word. But the cognate adjective, shalem, is used of whole, uncut stones used for building an altar in Joshua 8:31. It is also used to describe commercial stone weights of the correct size, not reduced to cheat customers, in Deuteronomy 25:15. A shalem heart refers to an undivided attitude of wholeheartedness, for example in 2 Kings 20:3. This sense of wholeness throws light on that daunting command Jesus gave in Matthew 5:48: “Be perfect,” as God is perfect.1 The Greek adjective teleios employed there is used in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament to render shalem and its Hebrew synonyms tam and tamim. Moreover, in the Hebrew Bible they and a related verb are sometimes followed by the preposition “with” to indicate an inclusive relationship, such as in Deuteronomy 18:13 and 1 Chronicles 19:19. Inclusiveness is the very point being made in the Gospel passage for which this command is the climax. We have to include bad people as well as good ones in our loving, just as God does in sending sunshine and rain on both. That is why the New Jerusalem Bible renders “You must therefore set no bounds to your love,” while the Revised English Bible (REB) states, “There must be no limit to your goodness.” Wholeness of a certain kind is in view. “Shalom” can be used generally to describe the well-being of persons or communities, and “peace” is a particular and common development of that sense. There is “a time for war, and a time for peace [shalom],” Ecclesiastes 3:8 tells us. A related meaning is physical health: in Isaiah 53:5 it is used in this sense as a metaphor. So the REB translates: “The chastisement he bore restored us to health.” Matthew 8:17 takes literally the previous verse, 53:4, about “our infirmities” and “our diseases,” and applies it to the healing ministry of Jesus. In Hebrew narratives there is a colloquial question one asks a newcomer: Hashalom? At 2 Kings 9:11 the King James Version (KJV) renders this “Is all well?” Updating a little, the New Revised Standard Version and New International Version (NIV) both translate it as “Is everything all right?” A type of unimpaired completeness belongs to the idiom here. What I want to do in this article is to apply the idea of wholeness to aspects of the Bible. The Bible has its own shalom, a wideness we ignore to our peril if we try to cut it back.

OLD TESTAMENT/NEW TESTAMENT

On Fridays I volunteer at a local hospital as a chaplain. If patients would like a Bible, I give them a copy of the New Testament and Psalms, donated by the Gideons. That is hospital policy. If patients ask for it they may have a complete Bible, which the hospital has had to buy. Nearly everybody is content with the first option. So many pastors appear to be, in their overwhelming use of New Testament texts for their sermons, while at the start of worship the Psalms provide beautiful calls to praise. Accordingly my own career category, in the field of Old Testament, may appear surprising. It certainly came about by a circuitous route.

At school I was put in the Classics stream, studying Greek and Latin literature. The church where I worshiped happened to be pastorless by choice, believing that church members had various ministry gifts that needed to be cultivated. At 16, since I could read New Testament Greek and potential

SHALOM AS WHOLENESS: EMBRACING THE BROAD BIBLICAL MESSAGE

Leslie C. Allen

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SHALOM AS WHOLENESS: EMBRACING THE BROAD BIBLICAL MESSAGE

Leslie C. Allen
instruction and practice in preaching and conducting services. When I went on to Cambridge University, I was recognized as a lay preacher by churches of the same persuasion in the area. Yet I soon ran into a problem. I felt at home in the New Testament, set in a Hellenistic culture, whereas the Old Testament, quite different in culture and language, remained a closed book. I could only preach on the New Testament! A solution presented itself. Instead of a three-year degree the university offered the option of two half-degree programs, each taking two years. So after two years I switched to Hebrew and Aramaic studies, and eventually was allowed to complete that particular degree program in a fifth year. My vision was to be a lay preacher, preaching the whole Bible, while to make ends meet I would get some “tent-making” job, as Paul did, following the practice of Jewish rabbis. But what and where?

My Hebrew professor wanted me to teach in a secular university, but no position was currently available. Years before he had been in a similar situation, and taught at a seminary in Cairo until a position opened up back home. He urged me to go abroad and promised to be on the lookout for me at home. So I wrote to a theological college in London that trained missionaries as well as pastors, and they in fact needed somebody like me in their Old Testament department. The college encouraged its faculty to enroll for a part-time PhD degree at London University. When I was halfway through the program, the anticipated letter from my professor arrived. I felt I had to say no, for two reasons. First but not foremost, it would mean giving up my part-time study, which was not permissible for British university teachers, and I was finding its rigorous intellectual demands invaluable to equip me for teaching. Second and more important, by now I saw teaching at a secular university as a poor alternative to seminary-type teaching that prepared students already committed in principle to Christian service. So I stayed where I was, until I crossed sea and land to teach at Fuller as an Old Testament professor.

My tent-making job turned into Christian service as a sort of evangelist for the Old Testament, in fact as an anti-Marcionite. Marcion was a Christian heretic in the second century AD who disowned the Old Testament, believing that the New had utterly superseded it. He considered the God of the Old a different deity from that of the New, the one that Christians should worship. I suspect that many Christians and even pastors have implicit Marcionite tendencies, still paying lip service to a whole Bible, but drawn in practice to the easier option of turning to biblical books that from the start were written by Christians for Christians. The other option has not meant cutting myself off from the New Testament. My lecture courses on Old Testament books have contained at the close a relevant New Testament component and along the New Testament parallels. My overall task is twofold: to explain the Old Testament primarily in its own terms and secondarily as preparation for the New. In both cases I am walking in step with God’s ongoing revelation. In 2012 I was pleased to be invited to teach a course in Fuller’s Korean DMin program with the title “Biblical Theology of the Old Testament for Pastors.” I liked that word “biblical.” It gave me the opportunity to link the Testaments. Later I turned the course into a book.

ACADEMIC/SPIRITUAL

As a student my role model was one of my denomination’s leading lights, a professor of Bible (both Testaments!) at Manchester University, F. F. Bruce. Coming across his balanced “Answers to Questions” in a monthly magazine, I became an avid reader of his articles and books to see where he stood on various Christian and biblical issues and why. I later met him and would occasionally write to him, his example stimulating my own thinking. The nature of the Bible as revelation was something I needed to sort out. I read B. B. Warfield and was impressed by the array of self-defining statements from the Bible he amassed to support the straightforward character of its inspiration. Then I read how another evangelical scholar, James Orr, insisted that for a complete picture the phenomena of Scripture should also be taken into account, as a way of understanding those statements properly. I found his wider approach convincing. When Isaiah 40–55 became one of my Hebrew set texts and I reviewed the evidence that it was composed by a prophet living nearly two centuries after the historical Isaiah, I took it in stride and understood that the Holy Spirit had inspired his work for inclusion in the larger work. Later I welcomed in principle Brevard Childs’s “canonical approach” and recognized in him a kindred spirit. For many years I taught a PhD seminar, “Critical Approaches to the Old Testament,” which I always began by comparing the task of a music critic to give appreciative and informed insight into his or her subject. A moderately critical perspective can be a positive way to approach the setting, character, and growth of Old Testament literature and can provide the necessary tools to appreciate its canonical value.

Yet the spiritual side of the Old Testament has never been far from my purview. For some years I taught an elective course on “Spirituality of the Psalms.” At my previous institution, Judaism was part of my teaching load for six years, where my approach was to teach how to think and live like a good Jew. I came to carry this perspective into my
Old Testament classes, teaching students how to think and live like good Israelites. Of the books I have written, my favorite is a commentary on Chronicles in a series for pastors under the general editorship of Lloyd Ogilvie. One spring quarter I taught a course on the English text of Chronicles. I spent the summer writing the commentary, presenting its narratives as sermons the Chronicler was preaching on spiritual values his postexilic constituency needed to cultivate, values that slipped smoothly into Christian equivalents. Once, after I had presented a paper to a group at a Society of Biblical Literature conference, a seminary professor remarked that my papers were always “preachable.” The academic and spiritual sides of Scripture should not be at loggerheads, but take their proper places within a whole portrayal.

**LOVE/WRATH**

One of Marcion’s trump cards was that the God of the Old Testament is an outdated God of wrath and war, over against the God of love in the New Testament. If one could count up on a celestial calculator the number of sermons that have been preached on John 3:16, “God so loved the world . . . .,” as the essence of the New Testament’s message, one might be inclined to agree. And “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16) has become a Christian mantra that seems to say it all. As for John 3:16, one wonders if preachers have ever read to the closing verse of the chapter, verse 36: “Whoever rejects the Son . . . God’s wrath remains on them” (NIV). Paul too took God’s wrath very seriously; he had plenty to say about it in his Letter to the Romans. God’s wrath is demonstrated providentially in the political government’s exercise of justice, the government unwittingly acting as “the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer” (Rom 13:4). Divine wrath is part of the bad news about the Last Judgment that precedes the good news of the gospel (1:18). Even before that judgment, in human experience it is already providentially at work when God abandons wrongdoers to the consequences of their own bad choices (1:24, 26, 28). Christians should “leave room” for that providential wrath to operate, rather than personally retaliate for wrongful treatment (12:19).

The late Thomas Oden tells in his theological biography how he invented the phrase “unconditional love” to describe the forgiving God. As part of his research into how one could use psychology to communicate theology, he adapted Carl Rogers’s phrase “unconditional acceptance.” Oden’s new phrase caught on. Soon preachers in many church traditions were taking it over; even the pope used it, though he came to regret his neologism. He found the preachers who used it stopped talking about the wrath of God against sinners. “I had drifted,” he wrote, “toward . . . a conversion without repentance.”

John and Paul were building on the broader foundation of the Old Testament in speaking about God’s wrath. Of course, it is by no means silent about divine love. Just to give one instance, Lamentations 3 moves comprehensively from God’s “wrath” to “the abundance of his steadfast love” in verses 1 and 32. Divine wrath and love are not parallel terms. Love is a regular attribute of God, whereas wrath is a moral reaction to human wrongdoing in the name of justice. Without human provocation there would be no wrath, only love. God’s wrath validates the passionate zeal of the Christian champion of human rights. In a creedal statement at Exodus 34:6 God is said to be “slow to anger,” reluctant to exercise it. It does not come naturally; in fact, it causes God grief, according to Hosea 11:8–9. In Ezekiel 33:11 the Lord God declared, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live.” This text is echoed in 2 Peter 3:9. But, to cite Romans again, Paul warned against trading on this patience rooted in God’s natural inclination and ending up victims of divine wrath (Rom 2:4–5). To be true to the Bible, its double message should not be obscured.

**“DO NOT ANSWER FOOLS”**

In 2015 Fuller sent me to China to spend a semester teaching at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. I told the students how fortunate they were to have in their cultural heritage the concept of yin and yang, which describes two opposite entities operating in tension. Western rationalism, conversely, is tempted to simplify truth into a single entity as logically sensible. So those of us who are Westerners react with consternation to the contradictory advice in Proverbs 26:4–5: “Do not answer fools according to their folly. . . . Answer fools according to their folly.” We cannot give a shoulder-shrugging explanation that it does not matter which course one takes; each policy is backed by a good reason why one should do it. Circumstances alter cases. Both recommendations are true, but not at the same time. The book of Proverbs comes from wisdom teachers, and I like to imagine the anachronistic scene of a wisdom seminar. The teacher has assigned rival policies for two of the students to debate. Under which circumstances would the first apply? Under which the second? Then it would be open to the class to weigh in. Good training for potential wisdom teachers! There are times when there is no automatic right or wrong answer. Life can be complex, with a variable set of factors, and so careful discernment is needed for the right advice to be reached. Sometimes in my preaching I tell the congregation the sermon may not be right
for some of them. If so, they are to put it in a mental attic to dust off for future use when it is relevant, or pass it on to a friend for whom it does apply right now.

**CHALLENGE/ASSURANCE**

I like to sum up the Bible’s message to believers in terms of these two words, and both perspectives are necessary if it is to be defined adequately. This truth hit home in a lesson a Jehovah’s Witness once taught me. We were having a lengthy discussion about the Bible and he knew his Scriptures well. On a number of aspects of our respective traditions neither of us could convince the other he was wrong; each came back with counterarguments. At the close I felt it would be courteous to find something we could agree on. “Isn’t Romans 8 a wonderful chapter?” I said. He thought for a while and said, “No, I think it’s a scary chapter.” I wondered how on earth he could say such a thing. I thought of so many verses in chapter 8 that spoke to me in an assuring way, verses I had often heard preached on in evangelical circles. We parted without further discussion.

Afterwards I looked the chapter up to find out what he meant. Part of verse 13 leaped out at me, though others could have done so too: “If you live according to the flesh, you will die.” I cannot remember hearing a sermon on that text. My sparring partner and I were both half right and half wrong. He heard the threat of death and I heard the promise of life. I heard the assurance and he heard the challenge. Has the choice something to say about our two religious traditions? The lesson is that both aspects must find a firm place in Christian preaching if it is to be true to the Bible. Paul in his goodbye sermon to the elders from Ephesus summed up his three years of ministering to their church like this: “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God” (Acts 20:27). The Greek has “all,” as the KJV translates. I like “whole,” which modern translations use. It reminds me of the basic meaning of shalom and its importance for the Bible.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Unattributed translations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.
2. NIV quotations are taken from the 2011 edition.
I was born in Medellin, Colombia, and at the age of 16, left with a broken heart. My heart continues to break over the plight of my home country. Colombia’s long and complicated armed conflict between guerrillas, paramilitaries, and government security forces has inflicted undeniable pain and left far-reaching scars. Last year, however, I returned to my beautiful and conflict-ridden country in pursuit of reconciliation and peacemaking. Accompanied by colleagues and armed with tools, I went with a mission to partner with the local church in learning how to bring shalom to those suffering from the aftermath of the 53-year-long conflict.

Colombia’s protracted internal armed conflict has displaced nearly 7.2 million people. It now ranks as the country with the largest number of internally displaced peoples (IDPs) in the world, surpassing even Syria’s IDP numbers.1 As in most armed conflicts, often the most vulnerable bear the cost. Children and their mothers make up the majority of those forcibly displaced by war in Colombia and number in the hundreds of thousands. Ethnic minorities—including indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups, especially those in the countryside—have disproportionately suffered the devastating consequences of this bloody, cruel, and protracted conflict.

I find that many don’t know much about the devastating effects of internal displacement, or even what internal displacement is. An internally displaced person is anyone who has left their residence because of danger, violence, or conflict, but has not crossed their own country’s borders. This means they are not technically refugees or immigrants; their plight is often invisible to others within and outside their home country.

Brutal violence, terror, and forceful removal from one’s land and property have thrust thousands of Colombians out of their hometowns and farms. The land they occupy is inextricably linked to the lives and livelihoods of many Colombians. Yet their land and its raw materials are too often seized for profit or political gain, with its inhabitants seen as nameless obstacles. Uprooted and seeking refuge, IDPs often go to the cities and end up on the margins of urban settings where they meet with other forms of violence and exclusion. IDPs are usually cut off from their regular jobs, healthcare and sanitation systems, schools, security networks, and means of economic and social support. As a result, IDPs are among the most vulnerable populations, often remaining in danger long after their displacement, with the continued and deepening absence of opportunity for a dignified life.

Although limited peace agreements were signed in November 2016, many Colombians and international humanitarian agencies argue that Colombia has not entered a post-conflict era yet. The country continues to struggle to bring dignity and reintegration to its vast numbers of IDPs. Even in zones where the armed conflict has ended, the majority of internally displaced persons are unable to return home because of devastated local economies. Many have lost their homes and their land and have no one to go back to. Others lack resources to return or are reluctant to do so because they have no confidence in the peace and security conditions. Many have endured displacement for years or even decades.

TRAUMA AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN TIMES OF ARMED CONFLICT
As a Colombian and clinical psychologist,
I worry about my country, for I know well the ill and far-reaching effects of trauma resulting from forced displacement. A traumatic event is marked by perceived and life-threatening terror that renders the victim helpless at the potential loss of one’s life or loved ones. Unsurprisingly, IDPs potentially face a gamut of traumatic experiences before, during, and after their displacement: physical danger, fear, exposure to extreme horror, and many conditions of defenselessness and humiliation.

Violence against women also holds a central place in Colombia’s history of armed conflict. Despite much progress, social expectations have long relegated women to an inferior status. It is no surprise, then, that women often become the targets during unresolved conflict. Domestic, sexual, and other forms of gendered violence force women—many with small children—to flee their hometowns in search of safe havens and anonymity in big cities. Displaced women are particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses and are likely to experience further victimization in their flight and resettlement.

THE CHURCH AND SHALOM IN A TIME OF CONFLICT
Shalom is one of the most outstanding and relevant biblical-theological concepts for human life. It goes beyond harmony, well-being, and prosperity to encompass a fundamental relationship with the Creator, oneself, society, and nature. This biblical peace must not be confused with the more trivialized and elusive type of “peace” that many associate it with. On the contrary, shalom includes the intentional development, reparation, and reconciliation of relationships with God and our fellow human beings (Matt 5:9; John 14:27; 16:33). Further, the biblical concept of shalom calls for a healthy relationship with the land and its resources, a relationship that is deeply broken for so many Colombian IDPs. Not only is the church commissioned to live out and experience shalom but also to share and impart it. The “children of God” must always and in every place be “peacemakers” (Matt 5:9).

In Colombia’s current historical moment, the church must act boldly and wisely. Substantial evidence documents the vital role played by faith leaders in facilitating the emotional recovery and integration of IDPs. The 48 million inhabitants of Colombia are predominantly Christian: 79 percent Catholic, 13 percent Protestant, 2 percent other, and 6 percent with no religious affiliation. These statistics alone highlight the important position the church and faith leaders can have in promoting the health and well-being of IDPs. Throughout history, the Colombian church has had an unquestionable convening power. As a Colombian woman and Christian social scientist, I urge and seek to help Colombian faith communities to address gender-based violence and trauma of IDPs among their people.

The church must address gender-based violence head on from its pulpit and in its daily proclamation of the kingdom of God. Even in the face of historically rooted, gendered trauma, the church can offer a voice that counters mainstream narratives and seeks social justice. Our ecclesiology must use a gender-sensitive approach to break silences and correct stereotypes and misinformation harmful to women created over generations. Responding to our God-given imperative to bring shalom, I believe churches are called to provide a range of interventions to IDPs—from offering basic physical necessities to caring for spiritual
needs, with support that includes resettlement, integration, and legal protection. Churches must themselves be welcoming communities to IDPs, providing them with life-giving relationships by en folding them within their congregations. It is a daunting task, yet our efforts must address the overall vulnerability and needs of the IDP.

Faith communities have not always been places where trauma survivors find support or feel embraced by shalom. In some cases, the clergy have contributed to ongoing abuse, yet many people still seek support from pastors before seeking help from a psychologist or mental health professional. How is the church of Christ to respond to the suffering of displacement and trauma? The church is called to bring shalom—integral peace—to all aspects of a person: spiritual, social, psychological, and economic, among others. As such, our theological position—that the church is a community based on the biblical witness—must be an incarnated reality where suffering is not considered a threat to the power of God. Rather, God has entered into and continues to be present in situations of suffering. This vision exhorts the community of faith to attend to the suffering of the other and to create space for narratives of suffering. Such space emerges from a vision grounded in the knowledge and faith that those marked by the traumas of displacement are resilient and able not only to recover but also to flourish.

Communities of faith must learn and understand the processes and mechanisms associated with trauma, the consequences of exposure to violence, and means of healing. The trauma that IDPs have endured—whose memories wake them up some nights in an anxiety-ridden sweat—must be heard and brought to justice, and their means of life (land, self-worth, shattered identities, housing) restored. As these stories of suffering and victimization are heard, the church must equip itself with tools to protect not only the vulnerable but also their first responders.

**NEED FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING FOR PASTORS AND FAITH LEADERS**

Working with trauma, I’ve seen that those on the front lines—the first responders, often faith leaders and pastors—frequently suffer in silence and pay a high price for their altruistic efforts. The Colombian Christian church and the global Christian Protestant church are doing amazing work with displaced persons, efforts that often go undocumented. Unfortunately, in Colombia, as in most parts of the world, there is little systematic inquiry into faith leaders’ exposure to potentially traumatic events during armed conflict and into their understanding of mental health and trauma.

During a recent visit to my country I began, along with Colombian and foreign psychologists, to explore the impact of trauma
on faith leaders’ own mental health and ministry. Approximately 250 pastors and ministry workers in the Medellín area—Colombia’s second largest city, with one of the highest numbers of IDPs—participated in a five-hour workshop to promote education about trauma and gender-based violence. Topics included the multidimensional consequences of trauma: psychological, social, and spiritual. We discussed the impact of trauma on family roles and relationships, sexual trauma, abuse reporting practices, and the role of pastors and ministry workers in minimizing the occurrence of rape and gender-based violence toward women.

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS FOR BRINGING ABOUT SHALOM

It is time for the church to heed new findings of the social sciences to inform its moral imperative to bring shalom to IDPs. A plethora of excellent resources with particular focus and data on IDPs is available from both local and international agencies dealing with internal displacement. Among many Colombian resources, the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provides useful tools and best-practice frameworks in dealing with IDPs. A renewed theology of integral missiology, enriched by empirical social-scientific analysis, can mobilize local churches to nurture the holistic human flourishing of Colombian IDPs.

Complex multidimensional social problems require multidisciplinary solutions. Peace-making efforts in Colombia must be inextricably woven into multilayered national and global efforts that are laced with patience, endurance, creativity, love, and deep belief in God’s ultimate plan for redemption and reconciliation. Bearing in mind the complexity and gravity of the internal displacement problem in Colombia, a seminary in Medellín, Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia (FUSBC), one of the largest in Latin America, has been intentionally engaging theologians and faith leaders in formulating an appropriate church response. Supported by a generous grant from the Templeton World Charity Foundation, many professors are engaged in a large research project entitled “Integral Missiology and the Human Flourishing of Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia.”

This research project has been designed from a “participatory action research” perspective that seeks to empower IDPs and promote self-reliance by engaging them as planners, implementers, and beneficiaries. I celebrate this approach: as an inquisitive and observant teenager, I remember being very put out by the fact that my denomination was mostly managed by foreigners. I would rant about how our theology and even our modes of worship were colonized. Going back to Colombia today, I fear that I would end up doing the same—forcing what I assume to be brilliant solutions onto someone else’s problems. I have been humbled by the efforts of the Colombian church and Colombian theologians to...
remain true to our roots, to pay attention to our unique cultural history and underpinnings, and to engage both local and international help. It has been inspirational and transforming to partner with internally displaced persons and with Colombian theologians, sociologists, economists, lawyers, psychologists, and educators—all armed with their unique expertise and views, all coming together to bring forth their best God-given gifts to bear witness and to bring about shalom in a time of conflict.

God moves in mysterious ways. Large movements of people also bring opportunities for healing and reconciliation. As I work with FUSBC and Fuller, I bear witness to the many willing Christian servants who move beyond borders, using their Christian consciousness, theology, and the knowledge of their disciplines, to push these peace conversations into different spaces in the Protestant church in Colombia. We are attempting to learn from and support pastors and faith leaders working with IDPs and to amplify the voices of IDPs who seek justice in their own individual cases, but also, more broadly, for all who are seeking shalom. I saw my diverse and brave clinical psychology doctoral students—Josi Hwang Koo, Byron Rivera, Miko Mechure, Stephanie Banuelos, Marissa Nunes—and my American, South African, and Colombian colleagues wrestle with the horrors of armed conflict in their attempts to create spaces where the church can bear witness to the suffering of IDPs. I chuckled yet was deeply moved when my Fuller colleague, Dr. Tommy Givens, observed that he had never participated in a research project that required so much crying. These brave Fuller students and colleagues—Colombian and foreign alike—and their attempts to learn, support, and accompany the Colombian Protestant church in peacemaking efforts among IDPs have given me a glimpse into the depth and magnitude of the meaning of shalom.

Going back to Medellin—to the seminary where my father taught for several years and to the playgrounds where I formed unforgettable memories of community, good friends, laughing, and eating mangos—all felt surreal. Multiple times I had to stop to take it all in. I was overwhelmed to see God’s integral and transcendental peace—shalom—at its best in my own life. Here I was, the Colombian in diaspora in the United States, returning to my country of origin, making peace with my past, having the privilege to contribute my grain of salt and little sparkle of light to the peacemaking process, blessed to be part of God’s grand master plan to bring shalom to humanity. Indeed, no borders limit God—and his peace transcends all understanding.

ENDNOTES
3. Internal Displacement Division of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). See also the websites of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (www.refugees.org), Refugees International (www.refintl.org), and www.reliefweb.int.

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”
—Jeremiah 29:7
Years ago, as I was only embarking upon my peacemaking journey, I sat with a mentor on a porch overlooking the Rocky Mountains. We were in an hours-long conversation about shalom. Playing devil’s advocate, he pushed on my every thought about peace: what it required, what it looked like, whether it was the same as justice or something far more.

The conversation, equal parts exhilarating and discouraging, zeroed in on the point with one question: “What do you mean when you speak of peace?”

I didn’t know what to say.

Recognizing that his young mentee was in a necessary moment of disequilibrium, my mentor smiled, sat back, gestured toward the meadows and aspen groves and to the mountains looming in the distance. With a seasoned sarcasm, he said, “This is peace, is it not?”

On the one hand, I couldn’t help but agree. My experience in that moment matched what I had learned about peace as a young, white, evangelical faith leader. I was in a beautiful place, relaxed, on a spiritual retreat, and among good friends. There was no conflict that I could see, hear, or read about. All seemed “right” in the world—or at least on the porch of that particular cabin.

But on the other hand, I knew that peace meant something far more than the general experience of tranquil stability or absence of conflict. I knew that the very moment of “peace” we were experiencing in the mountains was likely, at the same time, a moment of terror for countless friends around the country and world.

I knew this because I arrived at the mountains having just left encounters with pain. A month prior, I had been in the epicenter of the very complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict where I had experienced, firsthand, the trauma of this decades-old struggle. Just a week before, I had been in the borderlands between San Diego and Tijuana where I had encountered the trauma of Central American migrants, Latino deportees, Haitian asylum seekers, and Syrian refugees. Closer yet, I had just traveled to the mountain lodge from my home in San Francisco’s East Bay, where the divide between the black and white communities was growing dangerously wide and where conflict between my neighbors was destabilizing the neighborhood.

While I was at ease on that porch, my life and work had me in the thick of conflict in my own neighborhood, within my country, and throughout the world. My experiences had convinced me that the peace God waged in Jesus resulted in something far bigger than a sense of calm and stability for the privileged.

But to define it? I was stumped. After listening to my silence, my mentor offered this counsel:

Everyone defines peace differently. The vision for peace that you have is holistic and has the potential to inspire people of faith to embody it in ways that will change the world. But your definition needs to flow from the Scriptures. Start with the cross and then work to define what it is that you’re hoping to bring to life in the midst of our divided world.

Identifying the cross as the starting point of theological exploration was something I had never been encouraged to consider. As I had
only ever encountered the story of God from a chronological perspective, I had come to understand the cross as the continuation of the violent, warrior God motif of the Hebrew Scriptures. My Christian upbringing had led me to understand the cross not as a place of peace but as a tool of torture, wielded by a wrath-filled God, and focused exclusively on my sin.

Imagine, therefore, the moment when my odyssey took me through the Gospels to Colossians 1:18–19 and face-to-face with a cross that declares the extravagance of God’s restorative wingspan. It was there I realized that not only did the cross redeem the human soul, but it also heals broken identities, renews creation, mends divided relationships, renovates and replaces unjust systems, and repairs international conflicts.

Peace, then, as defined by the cross, is the restoration of all things. It is the holistic repair of severed relationships, the mending of the jagged divides that keep us from relationship with one another. According to Colossians 1, the implications of the cross were comprehensive and conclusive: God had waged a decisive peace in Jesus, and it had worked. That meant that God is the Great Peacemaker and restoration is the mission of God.

Accompanying the emergence of shalom’s elusive definition was a more expansive understanding of who God is, whom God is for, and what God accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. I had discovered a God who sees the humanity, dignity, and divine image in every human being. Here is a God who sees our pain and our plight and, instead of remaining distant or walking away, chooses to immerse himself into the radical center of it. Here is a God who, from within the complexities of our conflicts, contends for our flourishing in costly, creative ways. Ours is a God who stops at nothing to see restoration spring to life.

While all of that is both true and exciting, we’re left with a new set of questions. If God’s peace was so decisive, then why do we yet live in a world divided by pain, misunderstanding, fear, and hatred? Why does conflict seem to rule the day? Why are our neighborhoods saturated with violence-fleeing refugees and our prisons disproportionately filled with people of color?

Turns out, the unveiling of shalom’s definition was not the finish line—it was simply a new beginning. The very next destination along the way was 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 where Paul, reflecting on what the cross and empty tomb had accomplished, identifies us as the reconciled beloved who are commissioned as beloved reconcilers. While God’s peace was decisively waged in Jesus, God’s peace becomes real in the world when we embrace our vocation as everyday peacemakers.

As we become women and men who, like God, learn to see the humanity, dignity, and image of God in every human being and immerse ourselves into the world’s divides, intent upon listening long, and contend for others’ flourishing in collaborative, costly, creative ways, we actively join God in ushering in the restored world that God is making. Our physical presence and practice in sync with the Spirit of the Resurrected One cause us to become the ongoing embodiment of God’s restorative mission—his shalom—here and now.

Shalom takes years, is always costly, shows up in myriad forms, and usually surprises us when it arrives. It looks like my friends Ben, an Israeli Jew, and Moira, a Palestinian Muslim, who both lost family members to the conflict. They are former enemy-neighbors who now refer to themselves as a family, co-creating a mutually beneficial future by teaching the children of their divided land to choose love over fear and reconciliation over revenge. It looks like my Egyptian-American friend Catherine, who offers artistic avenues for healing and rehabilitation for incarcerated kids. Shalom looks like my Mexican friend Samuel, who created a simple set of raised garden beds in Tijuana called “border farms” to remind recently deported men of their dignity and value through the creation of jobs. It looks like my friends Bethany and Matt and Sandra and Kevin, who have chosen to rescue kids from the foster care system and become family with them.

The shalom God is making and that we get to be a part of ushering in looks like a world where sisters and brothers no longer kill their sisters and brothers and where women and children are no longer exploited for the pleasures of men. The shalom God is making is one in which senseless gun violence no longer produces dead kids in our streets and in which immigrants and refugees no longer hide in fear in the shadows of overcrowded apartments. It’s a world where human beings are no longer trapped in cages, where addiction no longer has power, and where hunger and thirst no longer plague humanity.

This shalom is possible only because God waged peace in Jesus and it worked. Joining the Spirit in making that peace real in our world is the adventure to which we’ve all been called.

The above is excerpted from an article available in its entirety online.
KERYGMATIC PEACEBUILDING AS THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL SALAM

Martin Accad

CURRENT PEACEBUILDING PRACTICES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In our current world, it is usually assumed that those holding a position of power have the responsibility to call conflicting parties to the negotiation table. Peace brokers, such as the United States, European countries, Russia, or some other “strong nation,” will engage in diplomatic gymnastics to prepare conflicting parties for negotiations through the “Track I” approach—via professional diplomats or governmental authorities. Each of the parties in the conflict, in the meantime, makes every effort to gain a stronger hand, usually by taking greater hold of what they know their enemy wants (whether land, control, influence, demands, arms, or power), so that they would have a stronger position at the negotiation table. This approach, however, usually leads either to a temporary truce or to no deal at all. It is often a sinister power dance between parties mostly driven by self-interest and ambition. No permanent peace has been brokered in the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations through such Track I diplomacy, from Camp David (1978) to Madrid (1991) to Oslo (1993), or any of other countless attempts. Similarly, little advance has been made in the Syrian conflict beyond temporary cease-fires, across a series of Geneva and Astana talks, from 2012 to the present.

In the case of Lebanon, the Taif Accord of 1989 is the Track I achievement seen as having brought the 15-year civil war to an end. But having brought internecine hostilities to a merciful halt, very little real reconciliation was achieved through the Taif Accord, either at the grassroots level or indeed among our political players, who are still for the most part warlords and war criminals with deep-seated antagonism for one another. These so-called Track I diplomacy efforts, therefore, if useful to bring wars to a formal end, do little to actually resolve conflict or address the deeper issues that will likely lead to further conflict and war. To address deeper issues in conflict, we need to look elsewhere than Track I diplomacy, partly perhaps because though immediate reasons for hostility may be land, water, or tribal and ethnic belonging, these triggers tend to stir deeper issues that often express themselves along religious and sectarian lines. In a 2009 article entitled “Secular Roots of Religious Rage,” Barker and Muck argue that in most cases historically, conflicts did not begin for religious reasons. In many cases, however, religious rhetoric enters the conflict in order to capture the popular imagination. “Once this shift occurs,” they argue, “the religious identities become so salient that all future interactions tend to be defined along religious lines, which in turn lends itself to intractability.” Numerous examples, from Northern Ireland to Israel/Palestine, from Afghanistan to Iraq, from Lebanon to Syria, confirm this hypothesis. The question then becomes this: Why should a conflict saturated with sectarian and religious complexities be solvable through negotiations undertaken by politicians and diplomats with little influence among the religious grassroots?

In the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the realization gradually emerged that Track I diplomacy was no longer sufficient to bring about permanent, long-term peace between nations. Joseph Montville, a former foreign service officer who had participated in Arab-Israeli negotiations, coined the concept of Track II diplomacy, which involved citizens in nonformal peacemaking efforts. Increasingly today, a multitrack approach to diplomacy is viewed as most promising for bearing fruit and achieving deeper gain in complex conflicts. Track I, however,
can never be abandoned or replaced. Somewhere along the line, heads of states will have to sign those documents. But it is the multitrack efforts that will rebuild trust, addressing intercommunal hurt and considering multiple narratives of history. These will usually be undertaken in the shadows, often under the media radar, with no handshakes on well-trimmed lawns and no signing of official agreements in the media limelight. The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy proposes a holistic approach comprising nine different tracks. It identifies Track 7 as “Religion, or peacemaking through faith in action,” defining it as an examination of “the beliefs and peace-oriented actions of spiritual and religious communities and such morality-based movements as pacifism, sanctuary, and non-violence.” Multitrack diplomacy may still be too fresh for proper long-term evaluation, and it is perhaps not clear yet whether it can harvest national- or international-scale results. But the approach seems the most promising for now in resolving the numerous intractable conflicts currently in existence that are imbued with religion and sectarianism.

If the “way of the world” in building peace has been failing us, and if there is increasing recognition that religion renders conflict intractable, then it is perhaps time for the church to reexamine its legacy in the realm of conflict as well as its biblical mandate for peacebuilding. We must ask ourselves, as people of God, whether we have been part of the problem or part of the solution, and how we will tackle the way ahead.

A BIBLICAL EXPLORATION OF SHALOM AND METAPHORS OF PEACEBUILDING

In a recent blog on biblical peace, I examined the concept of shalom in the Old Testament as the semantic framework for our understanding of the New Testament teaching on peace. I discovered that God’s peace is a state of well-being into which God invites his people in fulfillment of his part of his covenant with them. The Israelite people are promised God’s shalom on condition that they remain faithful to him, keep the Sabbath, and obey his commandments (Lev 26:1–3). Under these conditions, they are promised that “the ground will yield its crops and the trees their fruit,” that he will “grant peace in the land,” that they will have victory over their enemies, and that he will increase their numbers and keep his covenant with them. And crucially from an Old Testament perspective, God promises, “I will put my dwelling place among you . . . I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Lev 26:1–12).

When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, he affirmed: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” adding that the second is “like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matt 22:37–39). Clearly, Jesus agreed that our faithfulness to God is at the heart of the covenant and the core condition of our experience of God’s shalom. But he established as well the second commandment at the same level of importance. We cannot affirm that we truly love God if we don’t also love our neighbor. The Apostle John warns in his first epistle: “Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20).

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to peacemakers as the “children of God” (Matt 5:9). It is hard to think of any higher status than this in our understanding of the
Jesus’ calling that we should be “the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13) contains at least two implications for the church in a position of numerical minority. The first is that it is often when we are small in number that we can be most effective in bringing meaning to a meaningless world. As I have argued elsewhere in an exploration of the sociopolitical process of “minoritization,” the majority/minority dynamic is not merely a question of numbers. Numerically large communities can behave with a minority mindset, just as numerically small communities can behave with a majority mindset. Furthermore, I would argue that Jesus calls us, even when we become a numerical majority, to continue to walk humbly as though we were a numerical minority. An overbearing church in contemporary society, when it seeks to dictate morality, behavior, and even global politics, is as unpleasant to society as too much salt in food. The second lesson from being salt, and effectively the reverse of this same coin, is that if we blend into society to the point where we provide no prophetic challenge and no alternative vision for our world, we lose our raison d’être—and it would be just as well for us to be thrown out as trash! The second lesson is reaffirmed in Jesus’ use of the “light” metaphor (Matt 5:14–16). If a lamp is lit and then hidden under a bowl, it is useless. A third lesson—again from the “light” metaphor—is that we can sometimes try so hard to be light that we leave people blinded in our paths. If we become saturated with the teaching and spirit of Jesus, however, then our “good deeds” will reflect the light of Jesus in the world, rather than our own, and people will glorify our Father in heaven (v. 16).

Our third metaphor, of yeast, is used both positively and negatively in the New Testament. The common thread is always that a little of it transforms the entire dough. Jesus warned about the “yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt 16:6) and that of Herod (Mark 8:15), and later his disciples understood that he was referring to their teaching (Matt 16:12). In Luke’s Gospel, the yeast of the Pharisees is used as a reference to their hypocrisy (12:1). Paul uses the yeast metaphor in similar ways, warning the Corinthians that their boasting is like yeast that will corrupt the whole dough (1 Cor 5:6), and the Galatians that the false teaching to which they are falling prey, like yeast, “works through the whole batch of dough” (Gal 5:9). But the more significant use of the metaphor in the New Testament is for positive reference. Similar to his use of the mustard seed metaphor, Jesus uses it to describe the irresistible power of his kingdom message. In Matthew 13:31–33, Jesus uses the parables of the mustard seed and of the yeast in parallel, to capture the imagination—as he often does—of both men and women. Both the sower and the baker are thus able to understand the power of his message. Though small and apparently insignificant, children of the kingdom, both women and men, are invited to transform their reality, to invite many into the shade and shelter of the mustard tree and to feast around the bread.

GLEANING INSIGHT ON PEACEBUILDING FROM THE CAIN AND ABEL NARRATIVE

Working toward peace in multifaith contexts has its particular challenges. Aren’t people of faith supposed to affirm the propositional truths of their religion with confidence, to the exclusion of other contenders? How do we build peaceful relationships with people...
who—we are convinced—are in the wrong? Furthermore, how do we do this when we perceive them as being violent? If you are an Arab Christian, how do you respond when you have been ostracized through the centuries as a religious minority, even actively excluded and persecuted by the Muslim majority? I have found the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 to contain invaluable lessons for Christians living in multifaith contexts under duress.

In this primordial encounter between Genesis’s third human person and God lies the embryonic presentation of human history’s most recurring and ever-present problem: religion at the heart of conflict. Cain has just failed to please God through his religious ritual, and he is sorely aware of it. His brother Abel, conversely, has also just performed a ritual upon which, we are told, “the Lord looked with favor” (v. 4). To the ill-prepared reader, God’s attitude toward each of the sacrifices seems rather arbitrary, even capricious. Why should Cain’s offering of “some of the fruits of the soil” (v. 3) be received less favorably than Abel’s offering of “fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock” (v. 4)? There are few clues in the text to help us understand God’s stance, and I will not dwell too long on this question here. I will focus, instead, on the symbolic meaning of the sacrifices. Both sacrifices were acceptable in the Israelite tradition, yet only the blood sacrifice was valid for the forgiveness of sins. From an Israelite perspective, the Cain and Abel story seems to stand as an affirmation of the Israelite religious ritual, in exclusion of other religious rituals of surrounding nations.

“Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil,” we read in verse 2, so each naturally brought to God the fruit of their labor. From an immediate reading of the text, they could hardly have done otherwise. Likewise, most of us will die with the religion in which we were born. I did not choose to be born Christian, and neither did my neighbor choose to be born Muslim. Some of us search and question religious matters more actively than others, even shifting religious allegiance in certain cases, and Genesis 4 affirms that not all ways to God are the same. From the overall perspective of the Hebrew scriptures, the narrative is likely best understood as an early signal promoting the centrality of the sacrificial system in Israelite religion. But though the cultic message of the narrative is important, this particular passage seems to be more interested in the human response to the existence of other “paths,” rather than in the correctness of the ritual. My intention is not to minimize the importance of correct worship ritual, but to focus on the message of this particular passage. This brings us face to face with Cain, a man who was “very angry,” and whose “face was downcast.”

What we learn from God’s address to Cain in verses 6 and 7, first of all, is that God had not abandoned him as a result of his ritualistic failure. He is still there, close to him. He questions him, beginning with a description of his state: “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?” (v. 6). God addresses Cain in this way as a sort of consolation. His botched sacrifice has neither cast him away from God’s face, nor does it necessitate anger and shame on his part. Cain is simply invited to correct his path: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?” (v. 7). Yet God’s consolation and correction comes with a warning. Given to anger and shame, Cain is exposing himself to a terrible fate. His anger and shame are referred to with a description fit for a wild and dangerous animal, lying in wait for its prey. As we reach verses 11–12, we learn that it was not inadequate religious ritual that would place Cain under a curse and turn him into “a restless wanderer on the earth” (v. 12), but rather it is the fact that he had given in to his anger and shame, leading him to the murder of his brother Abel.

This brings us to the reality of our multireligious world. The pursuit of truth is certainly important. Theologians and philosophers of religions should and will continue to explore truth. People of faith will continue to invite others into the good news of the message of which they are convinced, presenting as best they can the coherence of their faith system. But besides this noble task of affirming “orthodoxy,” which is passionately argued in the affirmation of Abel’s offering and the rejection of Cain’s, the more important challenge...
that Genesis 4 seems to pose is the question of correct “orthopathy” and correct “ortho-
praxy.” How will we react when we are con-
fronted with those of a different “doxy,” or
system of belief? Will we give in to our anger
and frustration and seek their destruction,
or will we seek proper “praxy”? Will the
appropriate “pathos” lead us to engage with
them patiently and lovingly, ever seeking to
remain, alongside them, in the presence of
God’s gracious face? It is easy, when reading
this narrative, to identify with the victim
and to condemn the aggressor far too quickly
and dismissively. This is where Miroslav
Volf’s insight is particularly helpful:
For within primal history, the story about
a murderous “them” is a story about a mur-
derous “us.” Cain is “them” and Cain is “us.”
. . . The story takes the perspective of the
victim not only to condemn the perpetrator,
but at the same time to contravene the ten-
dency of the victim to turn into perpetrator.

If we condemn Cain too swiftly, without
taking the time to ponder our own negative
and exclusivist attitudes toward our broth-
ers and sisters of other faiths, as abomina-
able as his act was, we will quickly give in
to self-righteousness. By identifying too
strongly with Abel, we risk inadvertently
turning into Cain. But when we take the
time to ponder the mark that God put on
Cain as a protection from harm (4:15), we
begin recognizing ourselves in Cain, and
we begin to give heed to God’s invitation
that we should “rule over” our anger and
and shame, and respond to his plea that we be
our “brother’s keeper” (4:9).

Our exploration of the concept of peace in
the Bible brings us before Christ’s invitation
to his followers to be peacemakers. Bogged
down as we often are by conflict within our

Building Peace through Hospitality

In Henry Nouwen’s classic work The Wounded Healer, he identifies the
virtue of hospitality as the most suitable metaphor of ministry in our
wounded world. “Hospitality,” he affirms, “makes anxious disciples into
powerful witnesses, makes suspicious owners into generous givers, and
makes closed-minded sectarians into interested recipients of new ideas and
insights.”

Through the Institute of Middle East Studies at the Arab Baptist Theological
Seminary in Lebanon, we have been working to cultivate hospitality for the
past 14 years in the area of interfaith dialogue. Muslims, who were largely
absent from the life of the seminary since its inception in 1960, have
become familiar faces as guests, as occasional lecturers, and as conference
speakers. They have also become our regular hosts, offering us hospitality
when I take students to attend mosque prayer and hold conversations with
imams as part of their study of Islam.

Two years ago, we began taking further steps by launching a pilot project
in peacebuilding among Christian, Muslim, and Druze young people, called
khebz w meleh. The name of the initiative means “bread and salt,” a symbol
of sharing a meal in the Arab world. It carries strong connotations of hospita-
lation and implies that when a meal has been shared, it becomes much harder
to separate us or to sow enmity between us. Small groups of a dozen young
people from different faith traditions come together in various regions of
Lebanon and are invited to speak to each other about their faith, following a
set of guidelines that encourage good listening and dialogue. Khebz w meleh
offers a unique opportunity to young people, both Christian and Muslim, to
witness clearly to each other about their faith and its power and relevance in
their everyday life.

This year, we are launching a set of multitrack initiatives for building peace
at the heart of churches and mosques. Through a growing network of faith
leaders who have become friends, faith communities will be invited into each
other’s spaces of worship to ponder together their feelings, attitudes, and
conflicting narratives. They will seek ways, together, to develop a greater
sense of a “common good” in the complex setting of Lebanon. In paral-
lel, we are seeking to bring our own evangelical constituency to a place of
healing through the exploration of our own woundedness vis-à-vis our Muslim
neighbors. The ultimate goal of our multitrack peacebuilding initiatives is that
our various communities of faith will be able, together in a second phase, to
speak truth, healing, and reconciliation to our political powers. Only then will
a new era of peace be ushered in, nationally and eventually regionally, that
does not seek primarily its own self-interest but rather the interest of the
“other,” as the self-giving love of God in Christ emerges as the model for a
different kind of peace that is “not as the world gives.”

day, 1972), 89.
2. More details can be found on our blog site, with the guidelines in question at https://imes.blog/
guidelines-for-dialogue-transforming-interfaith-encounters/.
churches, we can understand Christ’s call as if it applied primarily to in-house conflict, easily overlooking his call that we are to bring about biblical shalom in society at large. As we have struggled with this realization at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, we have been reflecting on what it means to be peacemakers while at the same time holding onto our distinctive calling of being witnesses for the mission of God in the MENA region. This has led us to coin the expression “kerygmatic peacebuilding.” As followers of Jesus, we are called to be catalysts for peace at both the grassroots and national political levels. The challenge, however, is not to so take on the peacebuilding methods of the world that we forget the uniqueness of how Jesus has redefined peace and peacemaking. The gospel warns us about blending to the point of “losing our saltiness,” about lighting a lamp only then to “hide it under a bowl.” Jesus claims that the peace he gives us is a different kind of peace when he says, in John 14:27, “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.”

This is where the word kerygmatic comes into peacebuilding. Kerygmatic peacebuilding distinguishes itself from mainstream peacebuilding in that it embraces Jesus’ model, method, and ultimate outcome of peacebuilding. To this we now turn.

**REPOSITIONING THE CHURCH AS A KERYGMATIC PEACEMAKER**

The challenge that presents itself to us as Christ-following peacemakers is this: Are we so vexed at the reality of pluralism that, like Cain, we are prepared to get rid of our “brother” in a violent expression of exclusivism? Or will we heed God’s call to “do what is right,” to follow his model of peace as the greatest peacemaker—and to see God’s face in the face of our “brother” as we seek to establish truth, justice, and peace in the world?

The church in the MENA region is so wounded that it will fail to practice its role as peacemaker and reconciler unless it learns how to find healing first in the one who was “pierced for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities” (Isa 53:5). Our wounds too often drive us away from our Muslim neighbors: our hurt contributes to fear, and as a result we develop bitter representations of the “other” and listen only to our own narratives.

The church globally needs restoration and healing when it comes to its relationship with Muslims. We need to begin with a confession of our own inadequacies if we are to become reconcilers in our societies. Until we do that, we will remain too blinded by our sense of rage, fed by our own version of the narrative of Christian-Muslim history.

I am convinced from my work in the formation of leaders for the church in the MENA region that the greatest threat to the future of Arab Christianity is not Islam, but rather the perception that Christians have of themselves and of their Muslim neighbors. I worry that the kind of slanderous representations of Islam and Muslims that are so common these days, not just in the MENA church but in the church globally, are becoming so toxic and hazardous that they are having a long-term negative impact on the ongoing health of the church. And I worry that our self-perception as victims will neutralize our ability to break the cycle of violence and prevent our wounds from becoming a source of healing rather than of a festering stench.

Kerygmatic peacemaking is rooted in our self-giving God who, in Christ, not only revealed his willingness to become vulnerable before his enemies, but also chose to reconcile the world to himself through a selfless life that led him to his death. The cross needs to become again a central symbol for the church’s kerygmatic peacemaking, not one that carries connotations of crusading, but one that carries the wounds of self-giving. When the church truly learns how to usher in God’s salam in the world, the cross itself becomes its kerygma, and the resurrection of Christ becomes the manifestation of a direly needed hope.

**ENDNOTES**

6. Many other writers on conflict and violence have been inspired by the Cain and Abel narrative as well. See, for example, Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), where he discusses other uses in the literature, and provides insightful perspectives on the story in his second chapter, “Exclusion” (pp. 57–98).
7. Volf, Exclusion and Embrace, 93.
He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” —Isaiah 2:4
Sitting in a crowded airport waiting for a delayed plane, I tuned in to a heated debate raging on the television just above my head. I heard someone assert: “Violence is a natural reaction for people who are brutalized. We must not focus on the reaction but on the cause of the reaction.” As I gathered my attention, I realized that the response came from a black activist who was asked to condemn the violent clashes that followed the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson. The rebuttal from the TV host, who seemed energized by the raw emotion of his guest, was swift: “I hear that, but why can’t they protest peacefully?” More conversation followed, but the guest’s initial comment stuck with me throughout the course of my journey.

Speaking just weeks before his assassination, which catalyzed rioting across America, Martin Luther King Jr. offered his thoughts on the type of civil unrest that devolves into violence and looting:

> It is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard.¹

I would like to use these two comments as the catalyst for my discussion on the meaning and nature of peace as a biblical concept as well as how peace is commonly understood. What does peace look like through the eyes of the oppressed and marginalized? Why do oppressed groups often view advocating for peaceful reaction to their oppression as a camouflaged or muffled adaptation of oppression? Are popular notions of peace tantamount to the deflation or abandonment of striving to transform the lives of those whom Frantz Fanon called “the wretched of the earth”?² The consensual ideal seems to be: “Let’s differ, but let’s differ peacefully without conflict or violence.”

According to this reasoning, peace is the very antithesis of conflict and violence; therefore, anything that advocates or supports violence is unequivocally “anti-Christian.” But is it? Is such an understanding of peace—or, to use the Hebrew expression, shalom—the antimony of violence or conflict? Or is this a reductionististic or privileged rendering of the biblical concept that calls for a “hermeneutic of suspicion”? To answer these questions, I will briefly sketch what the Bible aims at when it talks about peace. I will look at the Hebrew meaning of shalom, with particular focus on the Old Testament prophets at the cusp of Jerusalem’s destruction in 587 BC.

**THE MEANING OF SHALOM**

According to Old Testament scholar Perry Yoder,³ shalom has three shades of meaning. First, it refers to a material and physical state of affairs. This is important because shalom, far from having an abstract and intangible connotation, has to do with the physical well-being of a person or persons. Examples of this are seen in Genesis 37:14, where Joseph is asked by Jacob, his father, to check on the shalom of his brothers and of the cattle. Shalom, however, is not only concerned about the well-being of people but also speaks to situations in general: “Are things the way they should be?”⁴
The shalom generally invoked is one of abundance, blessing, and freedom from danger, disease, war, and poverty. These are the natural corollaries of shalom. Checking on someone’s physical shalom and that of their family is the first priority when meeting them, especially if you have not seen the person for a while. I experienced this during my time in West Africa. Whenever I would visit the homes of friends, they would first give me a glass of water to ensure that my physical shalom from the journey was cared for, and then they would ask about the well-being of my wife, children, and extended family before getting to the purpose of my visit.

The second shade of meaning according to Yoder is one linked to social relationships. Shalom refers to the healthy relationship between nations, society, and family groupings (1 Kgs 5:12; Judg 4:17; Josh 9:15; Gen 26:29, 31). Whereas shalom in this sense can be viewed as the opposite of war, as it is more commonly understood from the Greek eirene, it is so much more than that. Just as war marks the lack of shalom between nations, injustice is the measure of the absence of shalom within a society. In this regard, there is a close synergistic relationship between shalom and justice. In Isaiah 32:16–17, for example, shalom is clearly shown to be the fruit of righteousness (righteousness understood as the state or quality of being just):

Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field
And the effect of righteousness will be peace [shalom]
and the result of righteousness, quietness and truth forever.

This passage asserts that shalom will be the reward of righteousness/justice. We see this pairing of righteousness and shalom also in Psalm 35:27, which is a cry to God for deliverance from adversaries who are oppressing the petitioner. At the end of the Psalm, we read:

Let those who desire my vindication [righteousness/justice]
shout for joy and be glad,
and say, “Great is Yahweh who delights in the welfare [shalom] of his servant!”

The prophets knew clearly that God’s help and restoration of their nation was predicated upon justice being done in the land and oppression removed. Passages like Isaiah 9:1–7 and Jeremiah 23:5–6 distinctly mention the presence of justice/righteousness as a mark of hope for the future. The reason prophets like Amos and Jeremiah proclaimed such messages of doom in the face of looming captivity was because of the degree of social injustice among God’s people. They pleaded for the exercise of justice and expressed indignation at the sight of oppression (Amos 5:21–24; Jer 22:1–17), which accounted for the absence of shalom in the present and possibly the future. For the prophets at least, shalom-making is working for justice and righteousness, which is at its core a quest for health-giving relationships between people and nations.

The third and final major use of shalom is the moral or ethical one. Here there are two important moral distinctions. First, shalom is the opposite of deceit or speaking lies. To seek shalom is therefore to love truth and walk in integrity. Psalm 37:37 speaks of a “man [or woman] of shalom”—a
person of honesty and straightforwardness. Shalom’s second moral meaning is blamelessness or innocence: to be without guilt. In this realm, we can say that shalom-making is working to remove deceit and hypocrisy and to promote uprightness, integrity, and straightforwardness.

To summarize, shalom speaks to material and physical conditions, to the quality of our relationships, and to moral behavior. In short, shalom defines how things should be; it is the music that indicates we are living in harmony with God, our material world, and our relational world. To grasp how shalom relates to our situation today, it is important to keep these three aspects in mind. Walter Brueggemann captures the goal of shalom beautifully when he notes, “The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature is one, every creature in community with others, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every other creature.” 6

SHALOM, MORE THAN PEACE

Our three aspects of shalom are linked critically to ethics, behavior, and practice; they are not merely abstract constructs. The kind of peace shalom represents, says Randy Woodley, is active and engaged, going beyond the mere absence of conflict. 7 This takes us back to the conversation I heard at the airport, between the black activist and TV host about the clashes that resulted from the death of Michael Brown: “Why can’t they protest peacefully?”

Why were calls for peaceful protest in the face of brutality so readily dismissed by the activist? I would like to suggest two possible reasons. First, it seemed that peace, or shalom, meant to many a mere avoiding of physical violence at all costs. One ought to refrain from lethal force and oppose those who use such overt violence to challenge an existing oppressive social order. On the surface, such rhetoric appears incontestable, especially from a Judeo-Christian viewpoint. Yet it seems inconceivable to those who bear the crushing weight of the prevailing order that structures of oppression will ever be lifted off their shoulders without struggle and even violence. From their point of view, peace advocates are useless idealists far removed from the misery and existential structures of death that prevent human flourishing or shalom.

Second and more important, the binary characterization of peace as merely the opposite of violence, and as a value that condemns attempts to change the status quo by force, seems perverse to oppressed peoples—whether on the streets of Ferguson or under any other oppressive regime across the world. They, after all, feel daily the violence of existing hostile conditions, and see the benefits of this violence accruing to the very people who preach nonviolence to them and urge the moral higher ground of “peace.” They experience the present economic and social order as oppressive and murderous—leaving many landless, homeless, hungry, unjustly incarcerated, and, above all, in deadly fear and voiceless about their destiny. By no means do I sanction violence as a justifiable response to these or other miscarriages of justice. I seek rather to draw attention to the fact that the violent reaction of the oppressed is merely a rejoinder to the perceived systemic violence to which they are subjected day after day. They ask, “Is it not those people who, while advocating nonviolence for us, benefit, at least indirectly, from the violence that victimizes us daily?”

FALSE PROPHETS OF SHALOM

Like the false prophets in the days of Jeremiah and the impending fall of Jerusalem, these modern-day false prophets and peace advocates rush to a shallow and skewed idea of peace, seeking to rearrange deck chairs and tables on a sinking ship. They neutralize those sounding the alarms, branding them as troublemakers and enemies of peace; they pacify the people with what Martin Luther King Jr. called in another context “the fierce urgency of now.” They declare peace and safety when sudden destruction is looming. Not that they are against justice or necessarily have evil intent, but their understanding of shalom is dangerously defective. It is flawed because the foundation upon which they seek shalom is also flawed and built on “fallow ground” (Jer 4:3).

For the true ancient prophets in Israel, justice was indispensable for shalom,
so they condemned social injustice and oppression. For the false prophets, however, peace was merely defusing conflict without addressing the cause, forcing harmony without dealing with the social dissonance and proclaiming security without pressing for justice. They proclaimed a cheap shalom that placed no demand on their daily lives or called them to repentance, and they ran roughshod over the three foundations of shalom. First, on the material level, though some people prospered—a sign of shalom as material well-being—this prosperity flourished side by side with misery and poverty. The rich lavished themselves with affluence while the cries of hunger outside their doors went unheeded. Second, this economic and material inequality fractured social relationships. The rich oppressed the poor for their own material gain and, in doing so, profited from their misery. Their prosperity gave them the outward appearance of shalom, which they held to be tacit divine approval for their position of power—a state of affairs that damaged social relationships (Amos 3:9–11).

Third, the legal system and political process was not working with integrity and due process. The moral and ethical foundations upon which the practice of shalom was built were flouted with impunity. As Isaiah (10:1–2) puts it, they were making unjust laws to support their own interest, with catastrophic consequences for the poor and powerless. They cheated the poor through lucrative bribes of legal officials, which created an unfair advantage for the wealthy and led to gross miscarriages of justice.

**THINGS ARE NOT AS THEY SHOULD BE!**
The essential difference between the true and false prophets was their view of whether proclaiming shalom brought about justice and prosperity (the position of the false prophets) or whether justice and prosperity was a prerequisite for shalom (the position of the true prophets). If shalom referred to a state of well-being, or “okayness,” the promise of shalom
could never cover up things that were not okay. This is the point behind Ezekiel’s harsh critique of the false prophets who proclaimed shalom when there was no shalom, thereby lulling the people to sleep with a false sense of security—as he put it, whitewashing a wall that was about to collapse (Ezek 13:10, 16). Are those who make peacemaking the highest good guilty of whitewashing in that they think we can have peace in spite of oppression, racism, exploitation, and injustice? Could this be what the black activist mentioned above was alluding to by making the comment, “Peace is a luxury we do not have”?

In the face of massive protest and rioting it is safer to focus on peacemaking and surface gestures of equality, yet these provide a smokescreen for the cancer of injustice that lies beneath the surface. This was the bait Dr. King refused to bite in his quote earlier in this article. To maintain a situation of oppression, material want, and deceit is not to keep peace but to do the opposite! Shalom-making means transforming these situations into ones of fairness, equality, and justice. Brueggemann aids our understanding here:

Shalom is the end of coercion. Shalom is the end of fragmentation. Shalom is the freedom to rejoice. Shalom is the courage to live an integrated life in a community of coherence. These are not simply neat values to be added on. They are a massive protest against the central values by which our world operates.

God is for shalom and, therefore, against sin. In fact, we may safely describe evil as any spoiling of shalom, whether physically (e.g., by disease), morally, spiritually, or otherwise. The work of shalom is therefore not merely the coming together of token representatives of the strong and the weak, grasping hands and singing “Kum ba yah”—but rather, to adjust Cornel West’s words, “Justice is what love looks like in public,” to say, “Justice is what shalom looks like in public.” Riots and violence are by no means acceptable or effective means of pursuing shalom, but they are symptoms that “things are not as they should be.” In the absence of shalom and in the face of oppression and injustice, the questions that dogged W. E. B. Dubois until the end of his life still perplex us today:

How shall Integrity face Oppression? What shall Honesty do in the face of Deception, Decency in the face of Insult, Self-Defense before Blows? How shall shalom and Accomplishment meet Despising, Detraction, and Lies? What shall shalom look like in the face of and suited to meet Brute Force?

In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. outlined the most perplexing evils of our time—and they are as evident now as they were then: racial injustice, poverty, and war. It is in the context of these three evils that today’s search for shalom is most challenging. We ask ourselves, what does shalom look like when a young black teenaged youth is shot dead in the streets and his body is left sprawled on the cold concrete for hours? Or when a young white man sits quietly in a historic black church during a Bible study and then kills nine black parishioners?

Do we speak about shalom when racism is a moral catastrophe, most graphically seen in for-profit prison complexes and targeted police surveillance of black and brown people? When arbitrary uses of the law—in the name of the “war” on drugs—have produced, in legal scholar Michelle Alexander’s apt phrase, a new Jim Crow of mass incarceration? What should shalom look like when, in the richest nation in the world, one in three kids lives in poverty? Or when the top one-tenth of one percent of Americans own almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent? When poverty is an economic catastrophe, inseparable from the power of greedy oligarchs and avaricious plutocrats indifferent to the misery of poor children, elderly citizens, and working people? What should shalom look like when military force is being used actively to maintain an unjust and oppressive status quo and to stifle those who would change the situation? When the doctrine
of peace through strength is experienced by its victims as oppression through violence? It is only when we recognize these death vices that the questions posed by Dubois can be seriously pondered and the true meaning of shalom be wrestled with in our time.

PRACTICING SHALOM

The questions posed by Dubois earlier stand as a roadblock to our hope for biblical shalom. Indeed, how are we to struggle, live, and act when things are not as they ought to be, when shalom is all but a distant dream? There is obviously no easy answer to this problem, but the prophet Micah gives us three key insights in Micah 6:8: “To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” These three insights are related to the three key foundations upon which shalom is based—the material and physical, social and relational, and moral and ethical. Beginning with the moral and ethical, to “act justly” would have been understood by Micah’s audience as living with a sense of right and wrong. In particular, the judicial courts had a responsibility to provide equity and protect the innocent. Shalom justice requires that we challenge the corrupt and unjust laws and practices that oppress and discriminate on the basis of race and class.

The social and relational piece is related to “love mercy.” Here mercy is the Hebrew word hesed, which means “loyal love” or “loving-kindness.” Along with justice, Israel was to provide mercy. Both justice and mercy are foundational to God’s character (Ps 89:14). God expected his people to show love to their fellow humans and to be loyal in their love toward him, just as he had been loyal to them (Mic 2:8–9: 3:10–11; 6:12). It is on the basis of this love that shalom justice will be based, not upon retribution or retaliation, but nonviolence. Lastly, related to the material and physical, the prophet admonishes us to “walk humbly,” a description of the heart’s attitude toward God. God’s people depend on him rather than their own abilities (Mic 2:3). With a heart of humility and an awareness that God is all-sufficient, we can look away from ourselves and tend to the physical well-being and “okayness” of others. It is through humility that we can live a life of kenosis, in which the physical well-being of the poor, the weak, and the oppressed is at the center of our understanding of shalom.

ENDNOTES

1. Taken from “The Other America,” a speech given by Dr. King at Grosse Point High School on March 14, 1968.
4. Yoder, Shalom, 12.
5. Ibid., 15.
8. Yoder, Shalom, 15.
10. Woodley, Shalom, 22.
13. Cornel West’s popularized phrase states: “Justice is what love looks like in public.”
Shalom, usually translated “peace,” is a key theme in the Hebrew Bible. It refers to general well-being in all areas of life, which is given by Yahweh alone, since he is peace (Judg 6:24). Biblical scholars point out that shalom has a “public significance far beyond the purely personal.” It also has social and political dimensions. Moreover, the “divine covenant of peace” includes righteousness, or justice (Isa 48:15; 62:1–2). As Christopher J. H. Wright explains, the kingdom of God—as expected by Israel and preached by Jesus—means both “true peace for the nations” and also “justice for the oppressed.”

In the New Testament the kingdom of God is described as righteousness, peace, and joy (Rom 14:17), and Christians have the missional responsibility to seek and establish all of these by the grace of God. The Cape Town Commitment of the Lausanne Movement recognizes the public and social obligation of Christians to work for both peace and righteousness when it declares: “We are to be peacemakers, as sons of God,” and “We give ourselves afresh to the promotion of justice, including solidarity and advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed.”

In this short article, I will discuss the relationship between peace and justice, drawing on insights from peace studies as well as biblical reflections. I will then show how some Christians in South Korea under the rule of military-backed governments addressed the tension between peacebuilding and justice-seeking, and argue theologically for their integration as part of the mission of shalom.

**Justice and Peace Will Kiss Each Other**

We see that the concept of shalom contains a strong message about our engagement in society with a just attitude toward our fellow human beings (Amos 5:7; 6:12; Ps 33:5). In this sense, the meaning of shalom needs to be understood not only as the existential state of being in peace and being “without war” (peacekeeping) but also in the transformative sense of actively making righteous and just relationships with others, or peacemaking. For this reason, the relatively unknown biblical text “righteousness (justice) and peace will kiss each other” (Ps 85:10) is one of the most pertinent in the Old Testament when we try to understand and implement the biblical teaching of shalom. There are ample discussions on righteousness (justice) and peace in isolation from each other, but the psalmist particularly emphasizes their integral relationship.

The connection between justice and peace is recognized by secular scholars. Johan Galtung, perhaps the most well-known figure in peace studies, presented models of conflict, violence, and peace. He defined “negative” peace as the cessation of direct violence and “positive” peace as dealing with structural and cultural violence as well. He saw that both approaches could be implemented since both have strengths and weaknesses. The problem of negative peace is that it can be maintained through terrible injustice, as in the case of the Pax Romana and the Pax Britannica. Yet, as Oliver Ramsbotham and others argue, positive peace is also problematic: the question of injustice usually amounts to “perceived injustice,” which involves the “whole of politics.” Often all parties involved genuinely believe they are victims of injustice, and their thinking can be manipulated by outsiders for their own agendas. Nevertheless, lasting peace is not achievable without justice-seeking, even if this is a fraught area. As the Roman Catholic Church has recognized:

> Peace is more than the absence of war; it cannot be reduced to the maintenance of a balance of...
Shalom requires the dual approach of peace-making and justice-seeking.

**Which Comes First: Peace or Justice?**

Those who are working on peacebuilding and conflict resolution agree on the integral nature of the two components of justice and peace. However, there is always the question of priority: whether peace or justice is most important in the process of building trust and resolving conflict in a sustainable way. Scholars of peace studies are quite divided on the priority of justice or peace. In the case of protracted war, Todd D. Whitmore, in his discussion of this issue, questions what he sees as the priority of justice over peace in Catholic social teaching and argues that negative peace could be a precondition for justice. He points out that starting with justice is a problem since the various parties are all accountable, and it is almost impossible to achieve positive peace until hostility is brought to a halt. So he concludes that, on the balance, the practical priority must be on the negative peace.⁸

Conversely, Pauline H. Baker insists on the importance of seeking justice in the peacebuilding process. She identifies the tension between peacebuilding, which involves conflict resolution, and justice-seeking, through establishing democracy and human rights. She regards those working for peacebuilding as “conflict managers” and those seeking justice as “democratizers.” However, she argues that “peace is no longer acceptable on any terms; it is intimately linked with the notion of justice. Conflict resolution is not measured simply by the absence of bloodshed; it is assessed by the moral quality of the outcome.” She further emphasizes the importance of public accountability and basic human and political rights and criticizes the “conflict managers” as seeking short-term solutions, insisting that a solid democratic foundation provides a better chance of sustainable security and peace.⁹

The above discussions are focused on approaches that balance justice and peace. One can say that, in a conflict situation, justice without peace leads to a fragmented and fragile situation that will continue to perpetuate injustice, and peace without justice is often used by those of power to continue to exercise their oppression over victims of the conflict. Justice and peace must “kiss each other.” However, very often the situation demands sacrificing one dimension to the other. In the complexity of human society, there is no absolute justice—the concept of justice is fluid and relative. Justice for one group or individual may be injustice for the other party. Justice can be misused for sectarianism, communalism, partisanship, and so on. “Justice for all” is an ideal concept, which in reality is always challenged by individuals and groups who differ for whatever reason. At the same time, peace can be misused for maintaining security, the status quo, and stability, which are priorities for those in power. Often temporary measures for keeping peace become the norm and there is little opportunity to pursue justice, which poses a great risk to lasting peace. This was a tension that the people and the government of South Korea encountered during the middle of the 20th century.

**Justice and Peace in South Korea**

During its period of military-backed governments (1961–1988), South Korea faced various political and economic challenges: poverty and inequality in society, governmental human rights abuses, and confrontation with communist North Korea. In this period South Korean churches were deeply divided theologically into conservative and liberal positions, which posed a dilemma for Christians grappling with the political situation. Two key agendas of successive governments were economic development as well as peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula. In pursuing these goals, the government often legitimized its oppression of the opposition party and disregarded the civil liberties of the people on the grounds of economic growth and national security. The civil movement was sparked in 1970 when some Christian leaders started to stand for, and with, the poor and exploited. As a secular scholar acknowledges, this “marked the beginning of South Korea’s working-class formation” and “awakened the intellectual community to the dark side of the export-oriented industrialization.”¹⁰ These Christian theologians captured many people’s imaginations. They raised in the churches, and also in the wider society, issues of poverty and exploitation. They refused to accept the argument of the government and large companies that the labor rights and conditions of ordinary workers and farmers could be sacrificed with the justification that they would eventually reap the benefits of general economic development. They also rejected the government’s justification of human rights abuses on the basis of threats to national security, and so they led movements for civil rights and democratization.¹¹

One of these theologians was Ahn Byeung-mu who, in a talk on “justice and peace,” criticized...
people who believe that peace can be achieved without discussing justice. He insisted that the basis of peace could only come with the achievement of “true justice” in Korea—that is, when people were liberated from exploitation, with democratization and human rights restored. He argued that when we discuss peace, we have to talk about sharing of material wealth on the basis of our faith that everything is under God’s sovereignty and authority. As the early Christians shared their food with one another, so we should share what we have with others. He related God’s kingdom to the concept of a food-sharing community. This concept of sharing food was highlighted in the poetry of Kim Chi-ha:

**Rice is heaven**  
*As you cannot possess heaven by yourself*  
*Rice is to be shared*

**Rice is heaven**  
*As you see the stars in heaven together*  
*Rice is to be shared by everybody*

**When rice goes into a mouth**  
*Heaven is worshipped in the mind*  
*Rice is heaven*

**Ah, ah, rice is**  
*To be shared by everybody.*

Against protests by the opposition party, the military-backed government tried to persuade the people to support its rule on the basis of peace, security, and prosperity. This is understandable, since the government was facing the enormous challenge of national reconstruction after the Korean War, in the face of a continued perceived threat from the North. The government argued that, in order to maintain security and see economic progress, peace, and well-being, citizens would have to sacrifice themselves. They asked people to sacrifice economic justice (fair distribution, workers’ rights, working conditions in factories) and political justice (aspects of freedom of speech, civil liberties, political opposition activities) for this end. Since overcoming poverty and maintaining security were critical issues for South Koreans, who still vividly remembered the Korean War that cost nearly 3 million lives in the early 1950s, South Koreans were prepared to accept limits on civil liberty for the sake of maintaining security. And many church leaders also supported the government’s efforts.

However, successive governments gradually took advantage of this willingness to suppress opposition parties and groups and began to abuse their power. Through a series of emergency acts, any civilians could be arrested and charged without going through proper trial processes. There were numerous cases of human rights violations as many were accused of associating with the North.

The majority of the South Korean church leadership tended to hold an anti-communist position due largely to the persecution of Christians in North Korea. Many of the Christian leaders in the South had fled from this. During large Christian gatherings throughout this period, the association of Christianity with anti-communism was very explicit, and this close identification is still strong among many older Christians. Members of this generation also regarded the adoption of a capitalist market economy as a necessary measure, at least temporarily, and they believed that, despite injustices, it would eventually lead to benefits for the poor as the economy grew. Korean Protestant churches themselves adopted competitive approaches to gather congregations, which resulted in the rapid growth of megachurches in large cities. With hindsight, however, it seems that, in the debate over the emphasis on peace and security on the one hand and justice and human rights on the other, in the Korean case, people were too easily persuaded that peace, security, and well-being must take precedence. Movements for civil and human rights were eventually successful, overthrowing the military-backed government in 1987. Since then, South Koreans have enjoyed growing societal peace with a greater measure of justice, although the larger issue that protestors also raised of peace and justice for the Korean Peninsula as a whole is as yet unresolved.

My argument drawn from this South Korean experience, as well as from biblical and sociopolitical sources, challenges the notion that peace must take priority over justice. This article supports the idea that the two seemingly opposed ideas should be applied in equal measure. If one is pushed to prioritize, one should choose justice rather than “negative peace” in order to achieve lasting peace. Justice is not a value-free concept and differs from one group to another. In the Korean context, the twin aspects of justice-seeking and peacebuilding were vital in the struggle to meet the challenging economic and political problems in the era of military-backed governments.

**INTEGRATING JUSTICE AND PEACE**

This conclusion is also supported by political philosophers. Although there are shortcomings in his argument, John Rawls made an important contribution to integrating justice and peace in conflict situations. He challenged John Stuart Mill’s approach to the utilitarian concept of justice for the common good of the majority of the members of society. Rawls saw “justice as fairness,” which derived from the rational choice of individuals in a fair setting, resulting in a distributive principle that benefits the less advantaged. His theory is based on two aims: maximizing the
liberty of the individual (provided it does not impinge on others’ freedom) and providing disadvantaged people in society with the best opportunities possible.¹⁴

I would like to go even further concerning the integration of justice and peace, pointing out that this question is also related to the ideological standpoint of any philosophy or theology: Does it support the status quo, or does it represent the interests of the minority, the poor, and the oppressed? Justice is not only fair treatment for all, but active support of the weak, oppressed, and poor. That justice requires not only impartial treatment or equal opportunity is another conclusion of biblical studies. Justice is not merely a legal matter but one of active compassion. According to Walter Zimmerli, justice in the Hebrew Bible is “never blind Justitia. It is always understood as an aspect of open-eyed compassion … divine demand for compassion towards the weak and the poor.”¹⁵ Conversely, compassion demands doing justice, as the Cape Town Commitment puts it: “love for the poor demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor.”¹⁶

The Korean experience of the struggle for democratization in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates the key importance of conceptualizing and practicing justice and peace together, as the scripture “justice and peace will kiss each other” implies. Shalom is most commonly translated as peace, but it is not achievable without compassionate justice. Our missional commitment to God and

ENDNOTES
7. Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; 1965), para. 78.
In 1947, a new movement began that sought to be more attentive to the whole message of Scripture, not only in content but also in method. A group of people got together and thought this movement needed a name, which they called neo-evangelicalism, and it needed a journal, which they called Christianity Today, and it needed a seminary so that pastors and leaders could be trained to teach, preach, and live out this renewal in their context. They called this seminary Fuller Seminary, after Henry Fuller, father of the well-known radio evangelist Charles E. Fuller. This was fortuitous, as the name “Fuller” also invited broad application. It was, after all, intended to be a fuller seminary than the fundamentalist Bible colleges the founders emerged from and a fuller seminary than the liberal institutions at which so many were trained. They wanted to offer a fuller engagement with the academy and a fuller engagement with culture, all while deepening a fuller understanding of Scripture and a fuller commitment to evangelism, ministry, and missions. As Carl Henry put it, “The new evangelicalism embraces the full orthodoxy of fundamentalism in doctrine but manifests a social consciousness and responsibility which was strangely absent from fundamentalism.”

As a renewal movement, evangelicalism has been widely successful in many metrics and, as its flagship seminary, Fuller has contributed over 40,000 women and men to its cause. Like all renewal movements over time, however, evangelicalism faces being co-opted. While never really becoming the “establishment,” evangelicalism has increasingly become something even worse: it has become a demographic. It competes for power and influence and money and cultural cachet among many other claimants. This status as a demographic has led many to say evangelicalism has lost its way.

I’m not convinced that evangelicalism as a movement is over, but I am convinced we are at a key crossroads and in need of a new vitality. Such a reorientation can’t be about establishing defensive boundaries or making strategies to take the fight to our demographic opponents. That is the way of Rome, of Empire. Instead, if we are to continue as a renewing movement, we need to return to our initial goals of putting our focus on Christ’s call for us and the Spirit’s power in us. This evangelical call includes an emphasis on peace. Fortunately, this peace is part of Christ’s promise for us in sending the Holy Spirit.

In John 14–16, Jesus sets the stage for his departure. His leaving is not loss but gain. It is good because it will inaugurate a transformative experience of the Spirit. It is good because it will initiate a transformative experience of life and hope. This life is one of love; the hope is that there will be peace. As Jesus puts it in 14:25, the promised Spirit will “teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.” In the next verse, he emphasizes the element of peace: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

We cannot just stop at these verses and then pursue these themes with our own tactics and strategies, as if Jesus left us with a set of vague goals, as if the gospel were just a set of statements with which to agree. The gospel is not just a set of doctrines; it is a way of being, an orientation in life. These verses on the Spirit and peace are intentionally connected and part of the promise of Jesus to the people of God, the new promise of the
arriving kingdom. The peacemaking Spirit passes the peace to us and we pass this peace to those around us. The gospel is an invitation to peace. We are to be peacemakers. This peace has three movements, each interconnected and mutually informing. First, we experience peace from God; next, we experience peace with our own self; and then we can pass this peace to others. This is a peace the world needs but cannot find. In this experience and expression of such peace we can regain a fuller sense of what it means to be evangelical.

PEACE FROM GOD
The term peace has often become limited to a narrow definition: peace as the absence of violence. Indeed, this is not surprising, since generally people originally used the words shalom and eirene this way. Peace was the rare interlude between the constancy of war. Scripture, however, invests more meaning in shalom, and this meaning extends into the New Testament. Peace, in a biblical sense, involves wholeness and completeness, an experience of well-being that comes in experiencing God’s presence and extends outward. As Nicholas Wolterstorff puts it, “To dwell in shalom is to enjoy living before God, to enjoy living in one’s physical surroundings, to enjoy living with one’s fellows, to enjoy life with oneself.” Only peace with God allows for thorough peace in any other way.

Yet peace with God seems an impossibility because of brokenness and suffering on one side, and privilege and ego on the other. Some cannot find it and others do not want it. These distortions are a result of sin—and sin, at its core, opposes peace. Indeed, Cornelius Plantinga defines sin as “culpable disturbance of shalom.” It’s not supposed to be this way, of course. “God is for shalom,” as Plantinga puts it, “and therefore against sin.” God is against sin, but for us, loving us and inviting us into a peace that comes through a justifying faith in Jesus Christ, an emphasis Paul makes in Romans 5. This is good news precisely because it offers rest and hope in a world that so often denies those possibilities. It is good news because this is the Spirit’s work, and not within our own power. “It is,” Sarah Coakley writes, “the Spirit’s interruption that finally enables full human participation in God.” Having been invited, we invite, which is the orienting call for evangelism. This emphasis on evangelism was indeed a hallmark of the early decades of Fuller Seminary, with Fuller professors often spending significant time on their own or with students engaged in spreading the Good News in all sorts of places. Shalom does not stop with this, however. Peace with God leads into a new experience with the Spirit in our own lives, something many Fuller faculty struggled with as they sought to do the Lord’s work in their own energy.

PEACE WITH OURSELVES
The peace we have is the peace we pass. If we lack peace within, we cannot pass the peace elsewhere. Can we lose this peace once it is given? It seems troublingly so. The orientation in peace is an orientation in the ways of the Spirit, so grieving the Spirit (Eph 4:30–31) is the quickest way of losing this peace, inviting frenzy back into our minds. We can forget or ignore this calling and we can easily become evangelized by this world, falling back into the stories of meaning and identity that it offers. The world says that if we do a certain thing, we will have peace—or identify in a certain way, and we will have peace. And maybe we will, for a moment. Then there’s something else after that, and onward we go away from true peace—the peace that surpasses all understanding—never whole, never settled, propelled back into desperation and division. Reality becomes unmanageable and untenable even as we may hold onto words about Christ.

In contrast to the peace of the world or the narrowed peace offered by a religious demographic, the peace Christ gives us in the Spirit is a transforming peace. It is the Spirit who awakens our self-imagination. Someone who is free in the Spirit, who has peace in the renewing life of Jesus, “knows himself in his spiritual essence,” as Anthony the Great once wrote, “for he who knows himself also knows the dispensations of his Creator, and what he does for his creatures.” This knowledge is given by the Spirit, and as we participate with the Spirit, we are given discernment about “all things,” even our own self. Sometimes this Spirit says go and sometimes this Spirit says stop, enabling a life-giving rhythm in our lives instead of exhaustion. The Spirit of holiness is also the Spirit of Sabbath. I’ve had to remind myself of this again and again.

This experience with peace is a beginning of liberation, a liberation of perceiving oneself entirely, seeing the self in the context of God’s self. In the peace with God that comes from the Spirit, we are led to a new encounter with all of reality, where there is “no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female.” This peace is part of the Spirit’s freedom for us, an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit that is a contrast to the fruit of the world. In the Spirit, we become truly alive, as the source of life is the power of life guiding and empowering our every step. This is generally called sanctification, but it might better be called enlivening. We begin to see as God sees, love as God loves, hope with God’s hope, and that
transforms how we live in this world in all sorts of ways with ourself and with others.

This experience of enlivening peace itself has three expressions. The first involves embracing hope and faith in the midst of crisis. We are steady when the world around us is caught in panic. The second involves understanding our calling and gifts. We are able to embrace our story instead of being jealous or frustrated about not being in other stories. We contribute as God has made us and find joy in the Spirit in this community connection. Finally, this peace is a way of discernment for us. The more we experience this thorough peace, the less tempted we are to reenter the alternative narratives of this world. We must be ever faithful to the path of peace and to trust God’s mission through it, which never leaves the important tasks of either evangelism or social action behind. The mission of the Spirit is always about a transformation of peace that extends outward.

PEACE FOR OTHERS
Peace that is with us is the peace that is sent with us. We who experience peace with God, who find identity in God and confidence in God’s work in our lives, extend this peace to others. The holistic work of the Spirit is a work from God that transforms us so that we become a resonating presence of peace in, with, and for this world.

Pursuing peace apart from participation in the Spirit can be dangerous because good goals can shelter destructive motives. In his book on the Holy Spirit, Moltmann writes:

Anyone who wants to fill up his own hollowness by helping other people will simply spread the same hollowness. Why? Because people are far less influenced by what another person says and does than the activist would like to believe. They are much more influenced by what the other is, and his way of speaking and behaving. Only the person who has found his own self can give himself. What else can he give? It is only the person who knows that he is accepted who can accept others without dominating them. The person who has become free in himself can liberate others and share their suffering.12
this peace enables peace to be possible for the whole world, people and nature together.

Peace that is expressed in the power of the Spirit is thus certainly not passive. Peace can and should be disruptive. Not everyone wants peace; indeed, some thrive in the chaos. The early Christians, for instance, offered a contrasting way to the world and the world responded with persecution. “But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us,” Tertullian wrote. “See how they love one another, for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves would sooner put to death.” Even in the persecution, the early Christians resisted the temptation to fight back. In this, they participated in a developing movement of the Spirit that brought more and more into this field of peace, responding to this world in real ways that brought life and hope.

CONCLUSION
In John 20, we encounter Jesus on the other side of the crucifixion. Now resurrected, his work is indeed finished as well as inaugurated in a new way. On the evening of the first day, Easter, Jesus appears to the gathered disciples. As John relates in verse 21, “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” This chiastic restatement of his promise in John 14 emphasizes that Spirit and peace go together. Now that it is time for the giving of the Spirit, the disciples can take hold of this peace. Having this peace, they are now the ones being sent, sent as Christ was sent, participants in the messianic mission that loves the world and offers peace to the world.

But like the Israelites in the wilderness, the church has often lost sight of God’s promise and sought resolution in less sufficient ways: war, control, division, negation, fracturing the unity of the Spirit back into divided factions and competing demographics. This is our present danger as we wrestle with our identity as evangelicals in today’s world. If diverted, we can easily fall back into triumphalism or apathy and become fractured. We must also avoid both an idealized anthropology and an individualized pietism, the old dangers of liberalism on one side and fundamentalism on the other. If we lose our way, if we try to derive peace from our experiences in this world or an isolated religiosity, we lose peace with others and with ourselves, and we lose peace with God. Only the peace from God in the Spirit leads us into the to-and-fro of love, as Jean Vanier puts it: a love expressed in real relationships and real communities oriented towards reconciliation in all ways that the Spirit offers. This is why shalom is a spiral, leading us around and upward together. Life with the Spirit is truly a dance of peace.

Rather than conflict, we have peace. Rather than chaos, we have peace. Rather than frustration or anxiety or domination, we have peace. This is not the peace of the world, but a deeper peace, a lasting peace, a thorough peace. It is not just the ceasing of violence and war, it is more; it is an entering into a
rhythm with the Creator of all that is, and living in light of this rhythm. This is truly, thoroughly, good news. This is the gospel, in which we discover not just a message about heaven but a message about all of reality, a reintegration into life with God that transforms our very experience of this world and leads us to resonate this experience back into this world. It is this peace Jesus promises to us. It is this peace that Jesus passes to us in the Spirit, and it is in participating with the Spirit that we pass this peace to others. This is the continuing call of a fuller evangelicalism.

Because Spirit and peace arrive together, peacemaking should be definitive for contemporary approaches of evangelism, for understanding of sanctification, for engagement in social activism and advocacy. These have long been part of Fuller Seminary’s institutional story—key elements of the “good ship Fuller” that have kept us afloat throughout the turbulent cultural seas of the last 70 years. Indeed, each of our three schools can be seen as specializing in one of these areas while seeking thorough integration together with them all. This gives us a significant role in leading evangelicalism back into shalom, as we train women and men for leadership and participation in this world in light of the gospel. The promise of peace is not elusive but indeed a promise that was inaugurated with the giving of the Spirit. We need to be reminded and to remind others what Jesus taught, incorporating wisdom about “all things” and reemphasizing the element of peace again and again in all our pursuits.

May this peace be with you.
May we be people who, wherever we are, also pass this peace to others.

ENDNOTES

1. This is an extremely streamlined description of what happened. For a more detailed account see George Marsden’s great book, Reforming Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). Over time, the prefix was dropped in most cases, and the movement is more commonly simply called evangelicalism now. However, the prefix is helpful in distinguishing between historical and global forms of evangelicalism. By “fuller” I am intending the contemporary understanding of “being more full,” not the older, traditional term applied to those who prepared cloth. Though it does not take too much of a stretch to include this latter meaning in a figurative way, I’ll not venture into that tub. 2. By “fuller” I am intending the contemporary understanding of “being more full,” not the older, traditional term applied to those who prepared cloth. Though it does not take too much of a stretch to include this latter meaning in a figurative way, I’ll not venture into that tub.

5. Cornelius Plantinga, Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 16.
7. See Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, 91.
8. Ibid., 193, notes, “Carnell and Roddy were only the best-known cases from what over the years was a distressingly high number of serious psychological crises or breakdowns among Fuller’s faculty.”
10. See, for instance, Isaiah 63:11–14.
11. See Galatians 5.

“For thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I extend peace to her like a river, And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream: And you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees.’”

—Isaiah 66:12