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THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF JUST-PEACEMAKING THEORY: MATTHEW 5:38–41 AS ACTIVE NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE WITHIN THE HONOR-SHAME PARADIGM

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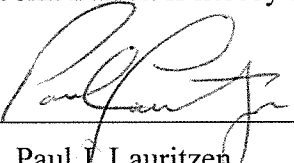
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THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF JUST-PEACEMAKING THEORY:
MATTHEW 5:38–41 AS ACTIVE NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE WITHIN THE
HONOR-SHAME PARADIGM

An Essay Submitted to
The Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
John Carroll University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
John A. Barrett
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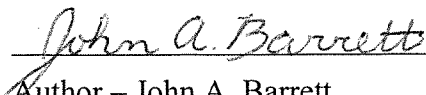


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2 August 2016

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I. Introduction

The late summer months of 1990 signified a critical turning point in international affairs. During that time, Saddam Hussein directed Iraqi forces to prepare for an invasion of a neighboring, smaller power, Kuwait. The invasion was planned for various reasons: Iraqi leaders claimed that Kuwait was stealing Iraqi oil, owed payments to Iraq, and was blocking Iraqi access to its seaport.¹ As mutual frustration mounted and hope for cooperative conflict resolutions dissipated, Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Shortly thereafter, the global community reacted by initiating different movements to oppose the Iraqi forces. In an unprecedented way, the United Nations imposed international sanctions against Iraqi trade. A group of thirty-four nations developed a coalition force led by the United States administration to oppose the Iraqi Army's invasion.² The coalition force engaged the conflict and the Gulf War was underway.

Despite many United States citizens speaking out in opposition to the war before it started, the nation as a whole eventually seemed to commend the coalition force's involvement in the conflict. The war was especially affirmed during and immediately after the coalition force's countering of Iraqi aggression. However, as time passed after the war's conclusion in 1991, many became aware of its destructive power. Wariness and suspicion grew as people realized that well over 100,000 human beings were killed and that the aftermath included bloody and unsuccessful civil wars; disease, a lack of food, water, medical care, electricity, and sanitary living conditions; huge ecological

¹ Steven Brion-Meisels, Meenakshi Chhabra, David Cortright, David Steele, and

² Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 16; henceforth *Transforming Initiatives*.

devastation and deep resentment by millions of Middle Eastern people.³ In time, a consensus emerged that the global community could have done more in its efforts to prevent the invasion by switching from war to peacemaking in the Middle East.⁴

Long before the devastating effects of the Gulf War came to be known, the Society of Christian Ethics (the professional organization of specialists in Christian ethics in the United States and Canada) met at its annual meeting in 1991. One of the topics that arose during the meeting involved Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Just four days before the bombing of Iraq began, the Society debated the different types of war and peacemaking efforts that the United States could employ. One Christian ethicist involved in the meeting, Glen Stassen, recorded his observations of the debate. Stassen wrote:

The speakers expressed their views with passion, clarity, intelligence, and mutual respect. All were well trained in the ethics of peace and war. Yet the debate left me feeling deeply frustrated. Some argued from the ethics of just-war theory and others from the ethics of pacifism. A third group argued for conflict resolution efforts, peacemaking initiatives, to try to get Iraq to leave Kuwait and to resolve the conflicts without the killing. I believe this third position represented the strong majority. It included pacifists and just-war theorists. The positions held by both of these groups imply the need to take peacemaking initiatives, but their debate with each other reduced the issue to making war versus not making war. The guidance for peacemaking initiatives got lost. The resulting resolution was based on just-war criteria and focused on whether we should make war then or not. The resolution was inarticulate about the guidelines for peacemaking. Because we had no clear model of the ethics of peacemaking on which to base our debate, but only the two models of the restraint of war, the points that were made in oral debate about peacemaking initiatives did not have a clear paradigm with which to resonate. Yet precisely here is where I believe the failure in policy lay — the failure to take initiatives to resolve the confrontation.⁵

³ Stassen, *Transforming Initiatives*, 16.

⁴ Stassen, *Transforming Initiatives*, 16.

⁵ Stassen, *Transforming Initiatives*, 17.

With this observation, Stassen highlights a widely held concern regarding the ethics of war and peace, namely, that the two normative paradigms (just-war theory and pacifism) both include criteria directed toward establishing peace without the use of violence yet neither clearly articulate *which* nonviolent practices effectively prevent conflict. Furthermore, Stassen observes that, by focusing primarily on the question of when, if ever, war and military force are justified, pacifists and just-war theorists end up slighting another important question: “What practices of war-prevention and peacemaking should we be supporting?”⁶

Stassen’s observations of the debate held at the SCE meeting in 1991 eventually led to a group of twenty-three Christian ethicists and international relations specialists gathering at the 1993 SCE meeting to develop a new, complementary paradigm for Christian ethics that would function alongside just-war theory and pacifism.⁷ This group acknowledged that just-war theory and pacifism are effective in addressing the question of justification of war, but struggle to address the question of prevention.⁸ The SCE group agreed that each of the two normative paradigms should embrace a third complementary

⁶ Pamela Brubaker, James B. Burke, Duane K. Friesen, John Langan, and Glen Stassen, “Introduction,” in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 9; henceforth “Introduction.”

⁷ Just peacemaking theory could be perceived as an alternative paradigm independent of just-war theory and pacifism. However, in my view, just peacemaking theory is a complementary paradigm that does not supplant, but rather supplements each of the two normative paradigms. The ten principles of just peacemaking theory are not at odds with just war theory or pacifism. Rather, the ten principles give shape to each of the two normative paradigms’ fundamental commitments to peacemaking made evident in the condition of last resort in just war theory and the prioritization of nonviolent direct action in pacifism.

⁸ Glen H. Stassen, “The Unity, Realism, and Obligatoriness of Just Peacemaking Theory,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no. 1 (2003): 171–94, here 171; henceforth “Just Peacemaking Theory.”

paradigm that articulates effective peacemaking practices in order to fulfill their fundamental commitment to avoid the horrors of war. After five years of interdisciplinary work, the SCE group developed a consensus on a set of ten practices “that are not ideals or principles, but realistic, historically situated practices that are empirically demonstrating their effectiveness in preventing war.”⁹ The scholars did not intend that the ten practices serve merely as a list of effective ways to prevent wars; rather, they were attempting to create a complementary paradigm alongside pacifism and just-war theory to articulate which nonviolent practices are effective in preventing conflict. The scholars agreed to refer to the new paradigm as just-peacemaking theory.

Just-peacemaking theory comprises the following ten practices:

Part I. Peacemaking Initiatives

1. Support nonviolent direct action
2. Take independent initiatives to reduce threat
3. Use cooperative conflict resolution
4. Acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice and seek repentance and forgiveness

Part II. Justice

5. Advance democracy, human rights, and religious liberty
6. Foster just and sustainable economic development

Part III. Love and Community

7. Work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system

⁹ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 171.

8. Strengthen the United Nations and international efforts for cooperation and human rights
9. Reduce offensive weapons and weapons trade
10. Encourage grassroots peacemaking groups and voluntary associations

The SCE just-peacemaking group relied not only on empirical evidence to develop the ten practices; they also based the paradigm on deeply held faith perspectives. In doing so, they examined various sectors of Christian tradition including systematic and moral theology, ecclesiology, and biblical studies. Evangelicals among the group focused on biblical foundations; mainline Protestants preferred a general theological grounding; and Roman Catholics worked with natural law and natural rights in addition to scripture and church tradition; finally, peace-church members were in favor of explicitly theological and faith-based materials.¹⁰

This paper seeks to contribute to the work of scholars who adopted a faith perspective on just-peacemaking theory by examining how biblical studies informs the new paradigm. In it, I offer a renewed interpretation of Matthew 5:38–41 to inform the just-peacemaking paradigm. In order to develop this renewed interpretation, I employ a social-scientific method to examine how Jesus' counsel¹¹ in Matt 5:38–41 functions

¹⁰ Brubaker, "Introduction," 18.

¹¹ Traditional Christian use of the gospel materials does not distinguish between the words of the historical Jesus himself and words attributed to Jesus by the evangelists. Since this essay focuses on the reception history of the antitheses in Matt 5:38–41, the question of historicity of these sayings will not be addressed. To prevent using cumbersome language in the essay, I refer to "Jesus" as the speaker in Matt 5:38–41. This usage should not be interpreted as a claim of historicity for the sayings; rather it refers to the character of "Jesus" as depicted in the Gospel According to Matthew and construed in the history of interpretation of that text.

within the honor-shame paradigm characteristic of the first-century Mediterranean world. I argue that the dominical counsel in Matt 5:38–41 invites disciples to perceive themselves in a different context within the honor-shame paradigm. Rather than viewing themselves as “outsiders” in the Mediterranean world of honor and shame, they are encouraged to perceive themselves as “insiders” within an ecclesial community where what constitutes “honor” and “shame” is inverted. Furthermore, this injunction to “resist not an evildoer” functions to motivate this envisioned community to transcend inaction or retaliatory violence to cultivate a new response to evil—the same response to evil that the SCE just-peacemaking group adopted—namely, active nonviolent resistance.

II. Just-Peacemaking Theory

The just-peacemaking paradigm is marked by numerous distinguishing features, all of which are worth identifying if the goal of this paper is to be accomplished. The following section of this paper identifies the features of just-peacemaking theory that distinguish it as a new, complementary paradigm.

Justifying a New Complementary Paradigm

The twenty-three scholars who developed just-peacemaking theory intended not to create a mere list of ten practices that prevent war. Rather, they were determined to create a complementary paradigm that both just-war theory and pacifism could embrace in order to fulfill their fundamental commitment to avoid the horrors of war.¹² Glen

¹² The just peacemaking scholars argue that pacifism means that Christians must never make war but instead should be peacemakers; from Stassen, *Transforming Initiatives*, 231. They argue that just-war theory indicates that some wars are just and we are obligated to fight them; other wars are unjust, and we are obligated to oppose them. The SCE group acknowledges eight criteria that must be met for a war to be considered just. The criteria include: probability of success, just cause, last resort, just authority, just

Stassen has made a critical observation regarding the development of new paradigms. He clarifies that “a new paradigm needs to be justified by its bringing to attention important dimensions of concern that previous paradigms overlooked, or did not articulate as clearly as needed.”¹³ What is it that just-war theory and pacifism overlook or do not articulate as clearly as needed? The just-peacemaking scholars determined the answers to these questions by turning to different historical forces that have given rise to the new paradigm.

Several historical forces have converged to produce the need for a complementary paradigm. Pacifism and just-war theory arose in a political context “when speaking of the participation of the people and grassroots groups in shaping policy for peace and war would have been an anachronism.”¹⁴ Prior to the modern period, rulers reserved the right to shape policy while their subjects could decide only whether to fight in a war or to refuse it conscientiously. Pacifism as conscientious objection and just-war theory as selective participation guided those decisions. However, those decisions were influenced by the medieval subjects’ history of having a more passive role in the early stages of escalating violence. They focus the debate on the ethic of war and peace on one question only: “is it right to make war?”¹⁵

Today’s political context includes shared civic responsibility for preventing wars. Unlike medieval subjects, who were excluded from shaping public policy, today’s

means, proportionality, just intention, and proper announcement; from Stassen, *Transforming Initiatives*, 232–33.

¹³ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 172.

¹⁴ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 177.

¹⁵ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 177.

subjects function within a political context in which they are responsible for what governments do in their name.¹⁶ Within today's political context, subjects are capable of gathering together to plan movements that can influence their governments to take peacemaking initiatives. Led by a number of citizens in non-governmental positions, the Jubilee 2000 international campaign succeeded in winning the cancellation of billions of dollars of debt for the world's forty poorest nations.¹⁷ This example reflects how today's political context allows citizens to express their desire for peacemaking initiatives to their governmental leaders. If citizens are to fulfill their shared responsibility for preventing war, then they need a complementary paradigm on which they can base their peacemaking initiatives.

Next, the just-peacemaking scholars justify creating a complementary paradigm for the ethics of war and peace by articulating what just-war theory and pacifism fail to articulate: which nonviolent practices are effective in preventing conflict. Although pacifism and just-war theory disagree as to whether war is ever justifiable, each paradigm advocates for a presumption against violence. For example, pacifism (from the Latin *pacificare*, "to make peace") intrinsically opposes violence.¹⁸ Pacifists work to confront injustice without resorting to violence. Two criteria of just-war theory emphasize its presumption against violence: the principle of last resort and the principle of right intention. The principle of last resort signifies that "for resort to war to be justified, all

¹⁶ Stassen, "Just Peacemaking Theory," 177.

¹⁷ The Administrative Board of the United States Catholic Conference, "A Jubilee Call For Debt Forgiveness," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, April 1999, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/debt-relief/jubilee-debt-forgiveness.cfm>.

¹⁸ Brubaker, "Introduction," 15.

peaceful alternatives must have been exhausted.”¹⁹ Similarly, the principle of right intention signifies that any conflict should reflect adversaries’ “pursuit of peace and reconciliation, including avoiding unnecessarily destructive acts or imposing unreasonable conditions.”²⁰

The just-peacemaking scholars acknowledge that “there has been a growing sense of the inadequacy of the debate between just-war theory and pacifism in our time.”²¹ The inadequacy of the debate lies in individuals’ inability to actualize the principles that compose each paradigm’s presumption against violence and war. For example, if pacifists are unable to articulate clearly which nonviolent practices effectively prevent conflict, then pacifism degenerates into inaction and withdrawal. Similarly, just-war theorists can overlook and prematurely abandon the principles of last resort and right intention. The just-peacemaking scholars developed a complementary paradigm “to fill out the original intention of the other two paradigms.”²² By offering debaters ten practices that have successfully prevented wars, just-peacemaking theory encourages pacifists to fulfill their names as “peacemakers.” It also articulates for just war theorists

¹⁹ The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response* (May 3, 1983), n. 96, at <http://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf> (accessed July 4, 2016); henceforth *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*.

²⁰ The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*, n. 95.

²¹ Brubaker, “Introduction,” 15.

²² Brubaker, “Introduction,” 15.

which resorts should be exhausted before trying the last resort to war and how intentionality impacts the restoration of a just and enduring peace.²³

Several contemporary factors in international relations highlight the need to go beyond just-war theory and pacifism to an active peacemaking paradigm. After World War II, the global community was devastated by the war's destructive power and feared nuclear annihilation. The Second Vatican Council's evaluation of modern warfare observes that "the whole human race faces a moment of supreme crisis in its advance toward maturity."²⁴ This moment of crisis (i.e., the threat of another world war and the "mutually assured destruction" that would result from another use of nuclear weapons) has "persuaded people and institutions to develop peacemaking initiatives to prevent another world war and the use of nuclear weapons."²⁵ The real threat of nuclear war demands that we give shape to the fundamental commitments of just-war theory and pacifism to avoid the horrors of war by offering a complementary paradigm that prioritizes prevention and articulates effective nonviolent peacemaking practices.

In addition, the recent global rise in terrorism accentuates the need for a just-peacemaking paradigm. Terrorism involves "the random murder of innocent people. If one wishes fear to spread and intensify over time, it is not desirable to kill specific people identified in some particular way with a regime, a party, or a policy. Death must come by chance."²⁶ Terrorism violates the just-war restriction against attacking noncombatants;

²³ Brubaker, "Introduction," 15.

²⁴The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, i.

²⁵ Brubaker, "Introduction," 14.

²⁶ Brubaker, "Introduction," 14.

thus terrorism is always morally wrong. Yet, a more urgent question for addressing terrorism is that of prevention.²⁷ Just-war theorists and pacifists are left with tunnel vision; they debate to condemn terrorism, justify appropriate military action against it, or rule out inappropriate military action. We need a paradigm of effective peacemaking practices so public debates about terrorism can focus attention on those strategies for peacemaking and conflict-prevention. Empirical evidence demonstrates that the ten practices of just-peacemaking fit this need: they do prevent wars.²⁸

Just-Peacemaking Theory as a Complementary

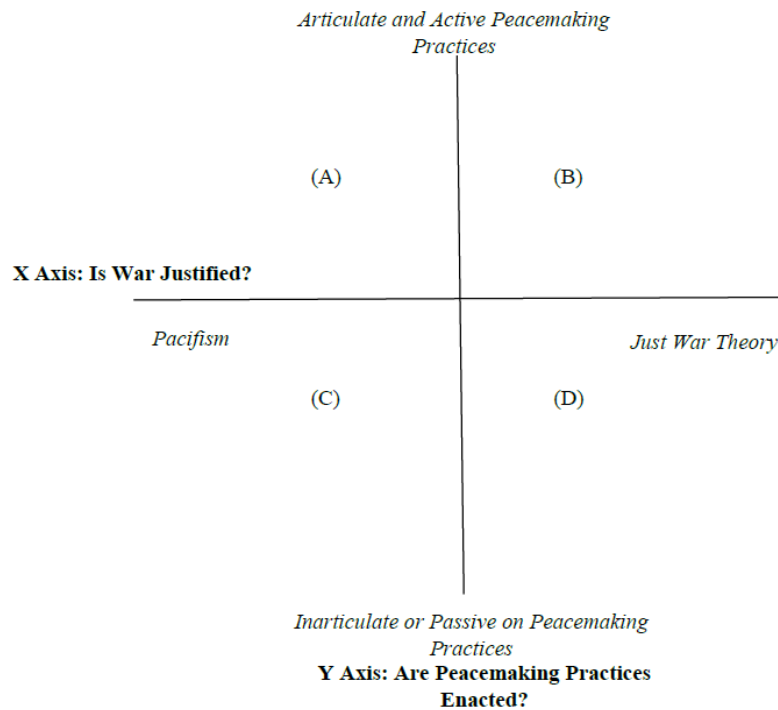
Paradigm

The following diagram demonstrates precisely how just-peacemaking can serve as a complementary paradigm to pacifism and just-war theory.

²⁷ Brubaker, "Introduction," 2.

²⁸ Stassen, "Just Peacemaking Theory," 175.

Figure 1. Distinguishing the Dimension of Debate over the Justification of War from the Dimension of Obligation to Engage in the Ten Peacemaking Practices.²⁹



Glenn Stassen has outlined the roles of the people belonging to each quadrant of the diagram:

Persons or churches at (A) in the diagram are pacifists who are active peacemakers, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and many Quakers and other participants in the New Call to Peacemaking. Persons and churches at (B) in the diagram are just-war theorists who are active peacemakers, such as Kofi Annan and many Presbyterians. Persons and churches at (C) in the diagram are pacifists in the sense that they would not participate in war, but they are not articulate about or actively engaged in peacemaking initiatives. Persons and churches at (D) in the diagram support a just war, and are inarticulate or inactive in peacemaking.³⁰

²⁹ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 176.

³⁰ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 177. The just peacemaking theorists would argue that those who fall into quadrants (C) and (D) function within an outdated Christian ethic and need to acknowledge the existence of a new, complementary paradigm that includes peacemaking initiatives.

The point of this diagram is to demonstrate that, despite presenting distinguishable concerns, just-war theory and pacifism can both embrace just-peacemaking theory as a necessary component for their fundamental commitment to peacemaking: “If you believe in the rightness of some wars, you still need an ethic that helps you think clearly about initiatives to make peace. If you believe ‘war is not the answer,’ you need to be able to answer the question, ‘then what is the answer?’”³¹

Just-peacemaking theorists abstain from developing a unified position on the x-axis of the diagram for two key reasons: (1) to draw attention to the y-axis question of prevention rather than letting the x-axis question of justification dominate the discussion; and (2) to establish clearly that one can be a just-peacemaker whether one is a just-war theorist or a pacifist; there are just-peacemakers at both positions A and B.³²

Just-Peacemaking Theory and Realism

The just-peacemaking scholars intentionally rejected basing the new paradigm on an ethics of principles or ideals and instead turned toward realism. The scholars chose to “focus on practices that are in fact demonstrating their effectiveness in the realistic conditions of present history.”³³ Throughout their five years of interdisciplinary work, the scholars kept in mind what Reinhold Niebuhr had observed: “Institutions of international cooperation are not created out of nothing by fiat or wish, but are built bit by bit as nations act day by day in ways that strengthen their usefulness.”³⁴ Just-peacemaking

³¹ Brubaker, “Introduction,” 9.

³² Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 177.

³³ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 172.

³⁴ Stassen, “Just Peacemaking Theory,” 172.

theory is about those bit by bit practices which, expressed in unison, can change the way nations relate to one another.

Empirical evidence demonstrates that the ten practices of just-peacemaking theory are incrementally changing the way nations relate. For example, nonviolent direct action effected revolutions in Poland, East Germany, the Czech Republic, and the Philippines without requiring a war.³⁵ Independent initiatives taken by adversaries in the Cold War achieved peaceful change and nuclear-weapons disarmament.³⁶ Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter initiated cooperative conflict resolutions to help achieve peace between Egypt and Israel and turn an impending violent invasion of Haiti into a nonviolent one.³⁷ Turning to democracy decreases the frequency of war by establishing that no democracy with human rights has fought a direct war against another democracy in the twentieth century.³⁸ The more nations are engaged with international organizations, the less frequently they engage in wars.³⁹ Economic development brought Kurdish rebellion and terrorism led by the PKK (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan*) in that country to an end in

³⁵ John Cartwright and Susan Thistlethwaite, "Support Nonviolent Direct Action," in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen H. Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 42–57.

³⁶ Glen Stassen, "Take Independent Initiatives to Reduce Threat," in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen H. Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 59–62.

³⁷ Brion-Meisels, Chhabra, Cortright, Steele, and Gary Gunderson, "Use Cooperative Conflict Resolution," in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen H. Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 71–98.

³⁸ Bruce Russert, "Advance Democracy, Human Rights, and Independence," in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen H. Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 116–132.

³⁹ Paul W. Schroeder, "Work with Emerging Cooperative Forces in the International System," in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen H. Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 154–166.

2000.⁴⁰ Just-peacemaking practices cut military spending and arms trade by three-fourths from \$60 billion per year to \$15 billion dollars per year in the seven-year period from 1988-1995 and reduced nuclear warheads from 47,000 to 15,500.⁴¹ Finally, the *Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo* (GAM), a citizen grassroots peacemaking group in Guatemala, utilized nonviolent methods to return disappeared Guatemalans to their families.⁴²

The validity of a just-peacemaking strategy resides in its effectiveness in preventing some (not all) wars. If the empirical evidence is reliable and these ten practices effectively prevent wars, then “we have an obligation to identify, support, and strengthen the practices and ... the paradigm can enable us to see conflict situations from a new and fruitful angle.”⁴³

A Theological Basis for Just Peacemaking Theory

The Christian faith perspective of just-peacemaking theory is grounded in three specific theological principles:⁴⁴ peacemaking initiatives, justice, and community. Each theological principle emerges in a different way: peacemaking initiatives (part I) develop

⁴⁰ Brubaker, “Introduction,” 4.

⁴¹ Barbara Green and Glen Stassen, “Reduce Offensive Weapons and Weapons Trade,” in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen H. Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 177–201.

⁴² Duane K. Friesen, “Encourage Grassroots Peacemaking Groups and Voluntary Associations,” in *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War*, ed. Glen H. Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2008), 204.

⁴³ Friesen, “Encourage Grassroots Peacemaking Groups and Voluntary Associations,” 204.

⁴⁴ Just peacemaking theory is not only for Christians. Although the three theological principles mentioned derive from Christian tradition, the scholars intentionally worded the ten practices in such a way that they could be adopted by persons of any faith or even no faith at all. They hope that many, from diverse practices, will make these peacemaking practices their own.

out of a biblically-informed concept of discipleship and peacemaking initiatives grounded in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; justice (part II) depends on the experience of churches committed to seek the peace of the city where its people dwell; to further God's reign, not by withdrawal or quietism or by uncritical support of or reliance on the government, but by engaging the issues of peace and justice actively within a broken world; and finally, community (part III) rests on the conviction that church communities are eschatological signs of God's love and reign in the world, embodied in a concrete gathering of persons who seek to discern together what just-peacemaking means and to model peacemaking practices in corporate and individual lives.⁴⁵

Each theological principle informs the just-peacemaking paradigm in a unique way and does in fact reward further examination. However, for the purposes of this paper, I will focus entirely on the first theological principle (peacemaking initiatives) because of the way it incorporates the biblical tradition.

III. Informing the Just Peacemaking Paradigm:

Matthew 5:38–41 and Peacemaking Initiatives

Just-peacemaking theory is a conceivable paradigm in the first place because of the advances made by New Testament scholars following the Second World War. Prior to World War II, New Testament scholars generally understood that whatever was to come out of the Beatitudes for disciples would be a product of God's own initiative and that the antitheses' purpose was to encourage disciples to remain passive while evil abounds. The dominant trend in New Testament scholarship comprised a spiritualization of Jesus'

⁴⁵ Brubaker, "Introduction," 18–19.

counsel and a passive modality of Christian behavior. The Nazi regime's mass murder of millions of people (Jews, Slavs, political prisoners, persons with disabilities, and more) during the Holocaust forced biblical scholars (and all theologians for that matter) to rework their interpretations of God and humanity. As the atrocities of World War II came to be known, scholars realized that their work up to that point had been stopped short. They knew that they needed to readdress questions dealing with the problem of evil, the Christian response to violence, the scriptural accounts of nonviolence, and more. As theologians addressed these questions anew, a seismic shift in theology was underway.

A paramount moment in this shift occurred in 1963 when Pope John XXIII delivered an encyclical on universal peace entitled *Pacem in Terris* to all men and women of good will. In the encyclical, Pope John XXIII challenges humankind to replace their fear and anxious expectation of war with a sense of true world peace that consists only in mutual trust, not the equality of arms.⁴⁶ He urges humankind to realize that peace will only be an empty-sounding word unless it is based on an order founded on truth, built according to justice, integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom.⁴⁷ He establishes that Jesus Christ is the author of peace who brings peace to humankind.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he reminds everyone that peace cannot exist among people unless there is peace within each one of them first.⁴⁹ In short, John XXIII advises humankind in its

⁴⁶ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris: On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty* (April 11, 1963), n. 113, at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html (accessed July 29, 2016).

⁴⁷ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 167.

⁴⁸ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 165.

⁴⁹ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 170.

entirety to reconsider the fundamental principles of peace and to initiate practices that redress violence and oppression.

In the 1970s, the seismic shift in theology continued with the emergence of liberation theology. Developed primarily by Latin American theologians, liberation theology emphasizes liberation from social, political, and economic oppression. Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez is accredited for naming the movement and remembered for composing a moral reaction to poverty and injustice in Latin America in *A Theology of Liberation*.⁵⁰ Brazilian theologian, Leonardo Boff advanced the liberation theology movement as he sought to articulate indignation against poverty and marginalization through a faith perspective.⁵¹ Furthermore, Jon Sobrino contributed to liberation theology as he committed to help the poor and oppressed by advancing studies on Jesus' earthly ministry.⁵² The work of liberation theologians like Gutierrez, Boff, and Sobrino helped deter Christians from complying in their own suppression as it offered a pragmatic, nonviolent response to oppression.

The emergence of social-scientific criticism in the 1980s marks a critical moment for the post-war shift in biblical studies. In this exegetical method, biblical scholars create sociological and anthropological models that explain developments in ancient Israel and early Christianity. Social-scientific scholars do not intend on developing models that exhibit precisely how the early Christian world functioned; rather, they intend on

⁵⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).

⁵¹ Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).

⁵² Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993).

developing the best sociological and anthropological reconstructions possible. The ultimate purpose of social-scientific criticism is to utilize sociological and anthropological evidence to create a model of the ancient Christian world so to reconstruct developments of that world.⁵³

Biblical scholars utilized this paradigm to redefine dominical counsel on resistance. Sociological and anthropological models of the first-century Mediterranean world allowed biblical scholars to reconsider how Jesus' response to evil would have functioned. The results of the scholars' research marked a major shift in the way Christians can interpret Jesus' response to evil. No longer did Christians have to adhere to the dominant trend in interpretation that emphasized the spiritualization and pacification of Jesus' teaching on resistance; they could begin imagining how dominical counsel encourages Christians to take concrete nonviolent actions to redress evil and oppression. Since this shift in interpretation, biblical scholars have been able to perceive Jesus' teaching as a practical program for active nonviolent resistance.

Biblical scholars' work to reimagine the Christian response to evil has profound implications for just peacemaking theory. Ethicists like those in the SCE group could now begin developing nonviolent practices because of the way biblical scholars considered how Christians can redress evil nonviolently. In order to utilize biblical studies to inform the just peacemaking paradigm, it is necessary to employ the social-scientific method. The following section of this paper offers a reinterpretation of Matt 5:38–41 made possible because of the social-scientific method.

⁵³ Dale B. Martin, "Social-Scientific Criticism," in *To Each its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (Louisville: John Knox, 1999), 125–142.

Matthew 5:38–41 as Active Nonviolent Resistance

Within the Honor-Shame Paradigm

Matthew 5:38–41 traditionally has been interpreted to emphasize nonresistance to evil: Jesus counsels the oppressed to endure suffering and not stand up against evil. Yet, is it possible that Matt 5:38–41 could signify active nonviolent resistance instead? This paper addresses this question. In it, I employ a social-scientific method to examine how this pericope functions within the honor-shame paradigm characteristic of the first-century Mediterranean world. I argue that Jesus' counsel invites disciples to perceive themselves in a different context within the honor-shame paradigm. That is, Jesus' counsel discourages disciples from considering themselves "outsiders" living in the generic Mediterranean world of honor and shame; it encourages them to perceive of themselves as "insiders" who exist within an ecclesial community where what constitutes as honorable and shameful is inverted. Furthermore, I argue that Jesus' injunction to "resist not an evildoer" functions anew within his envisioned community; it transcends inaction and violence to cultivate a new response to evil, namely, active nonviolent resistance.

Matt 5:38–41 marks the fifth of six antitheses in Matt 5:21–48. In 5:38, Matthew depicts Jesus as summarizing the *lex talionis* ("law of retaliation"): "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth....'" The *lex talionis* was a judicial measure (e.g., in Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21) that was meant "to keep revenge within certain boundaries, and to avoid the escalation of violence."⁵⁴ It effectively

⁵⁴ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 88.

affirmed “personal responsibility for one’s actions, the equality of persons before the law, and just proportion between crime and punishment.”⁵⁵

Yet Jesus goes beyond the *lex talionis*: “But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer (5:39a).” With this injunction, Jesus radicalized the traditional judicial approach to mitigating retaliation and violence. Precisely *how* Jesus’ injunction radicalized the *lex talionis* is a matter of debate. Some interpreters have insisted that Jesus’ counsel forbids all forms of resistance to evil; others argue it does not forbid all forms of resistance to evil, but only violent ones.

The Traditional Interpretation: Antistēnai and Nonresistance to Evil

From the patristic era to the twenty-first century, a significant strand of interpretation has held that Jesus’ injunction in Matt 5:39a excludes all forms of retaliation or resistance. This interpretation depends largely on taking the verb *antistēnai* as meaning “to give resistance” broadly construed.⁵⁶ According to this translation, Jesus did not intend to specify whether “resistance” has forensic, juridical, or militaristic connotations; rather, he intended for the verb to remain unqualified. Thus, Jesus meant to exclude all types of resistance (physical, legalistic, or violent ones) in oppressive situations.

For example, Hilary of Poitiers (310–367) argues that, in this pericope, Jesus expresses hope that his followers not only resist evil in every way, but also be

⁵⁵ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 88.

⁵⁶ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 329; henceforth *Matthew 1–7*.

continuously tested by it so as to have opportunities to tolerate it. Hilary argues “the very toleration of a hidden injury should be a witness of our future judgement.”⁵⁷ Jesus’ followers who abandon resistance may not find anything rewarding in the present moment, but will be commended by God at their future judgement.

John Chrysostom (347–407) similarly insists that the oppressed are to “surrender [themselves] to suffer wrongfully” so as to prevail over their oppressors.⁵⁸ Although Chrysostom does not specify precisely how the oppressed will prevail by suffering wrongfully, he maintains that retaliation should not displace non-resistance.

As recently as 1988, commentators like William David Davies and Dale C. Allison insisted that “[this pericope] could not but have had pacifist implications.”⁵⁹ Other commentators offered similar interpretations. In 1991, Daniel Harrington maintained that Jesus encourages his disciples to simply turn away from oppressors and not retaliate.⁶⁰ In 1993, Douglas Hare insisted that “Jesus, in this pericope, challenges his followers to renounce their right to retaliation and suffer loss without seeking recourse.”⁶¹ He also argued that Jesus encourages his disciples to let their oppressors have their way and leave vengeance to God.⁶² In 2012, Craig Evans argued that “Jesus commands his

⁵⁷ Thomas C. Oden, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Matthew 1-13* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 117; henceforth *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*.

⁵⁸ Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 188.

⁵⁹ William David Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark: 1988), 542.

⁶⁰ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 88.

⁶¹ Douglas Hare, *Matthew* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 55.

⁶² Hare, *Matthew*, 56.

disciples not only to forego revenge but even to forego just compensation.”⁶³ In short, many interpreters continue to argue that Jesus’ injunction “to resist not evil” signifies his intention to disallow all forms of resistance to evil.

The Traditional Interpretation and Jesus’ Three

Illustrations

In verses 39a–41, Matthew portrays Jesus as providing three examples to illustrate his injunction to resist not an evildoer. In the first illustration (in 5:39b), Jesus counsels his followers to offer their other cheek when slapped on the right one.⁶⁴ To strike the right cheek, the blow must come from the back of the assailant’s right hand.⁶⁵ A backhanded slap was delivered not to hurt but rather to insult, degrade, or dehumanize. “A backhanded slap in the face was regarded as an expression of hate and as an insult; the insult is even more important than the pain.”⁶⁶ The backhanded slap was the usual way for admonishing inferiors; thus, it went without question that the victimized would not retaliate against the assailant. Masters would backhand slaves; husbands, wives; and parents, children. In this set of unequal relationships, the expected “rational”—and culturally appropriate—response was submission.

⁶³ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University, 2012), 131.

⁶⁴ Luke 6:29 does not specify which cheek was struck. Scholars argue that Luke redacted this particular piece of Jesus’ counsel so as to refrain from having to address resistance.

⁶⁵ In Jesus’ time, the left hand was reserved for unclean acts and those who gestured with it in public were penalized so the blow could only have come from the right hand. Since it would be impossible to strike the right cheek with an open palm, interpreters conclude that the strike signifies a backhanded slap.

⁶⁶ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 271.

Jesus' second illustration in 5:40 is set in a court of law and depicts a case in which someone being sued is required to offer his tunic as a pledge for an unpaid loan.⁶⁷ Jesus counsels his followers to offer their cloaks when someone who sues them has already taken their tunics. In Jesus' time, a creditor would have had to return a debtor's cloak by nightfall because the law guaranteed that individuals had the right to have a covering to keep warm at night.⁶⁸ When Jesus counsels his followers to give their cloak as well, they are relinquishing the final piece of clothing they possess. According to the traditional interpretation, Jesus teaches his followers to give up all they have, let the oppressor have his way, and leave vengeance to God. The oppressed are seemingly commanded to offer even the last thing they own to the one who asks of them.

Finally, in 5:41, Jesus offers a third illustration involving compulsory service. The verb *aggareuō* (presses) is "a Persian loanword, having reference originally to compulsory service in the postal system."⁶⁹ In the first-century Mediterranean world, the occupying Roman force allowed its soldiers to press civilians into service for one mile. The primary allusion to this practice is in Mark 15:21 where the author describes how Roman soldiers impressed Simon of Cyrene into helping Jesus carry his cross.

In this illustration, Jesus is depicted as commanding his followers to not only obey the soldier's command, but also to double the amount of required service. Desiring to uphold the traditional interpretation of this pericope, commentators have offered multiple suggestions as to why Jesus would encourage such an action. One commentator

⁶⁷ Hare, *Matthew*, 56.

⁶⁸ Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 152.

⁶⁹ Hare, *Matthew*, 56.

argues that the victimized should go an extra mile because doing so would “demonstrate to the oppressor their inner freedom from oppression.”⁷⁰ Another commentator argues that a reward from God along with full freedom from unworthy passions in a human and passible body awaits those who duly perform.⁷¹ In short, Jesus’ followers are encouraged to extend themselves when pressed into service.

In each of Jesus’ illustrations, the oppressed ultimately are encouraged to trust that God will hold their oppressors accountable for their actions. This argument has been upheld since the patristic era. For example, Hilary argued that the oppressed are neither to wish for vengeance nor express resentfulness to their oppressors because God’s future judgment will offer greater consolation.⁷² In 2012, Evans offered a similar response by stating: “It is God, as the only true and just judge, who will compensate or punish humans. The disciples of Jesus are to leave the judging and the vengeance to God.”⁷³ Within the traditional interpretation, the oppressed are encouraged to trust that God will account for the evil done to them. In the meantime, victims are called to endure suffering and remain hopeful that their nonresistant efforts might convince their abusers to act differently.

Those following Jesus’ supposed prohibition of all forms of resistance could be dissatisfied by the way “his demands might not consider consequences: it could happen that the one who strikes winds up for another hit, that the poor person without a cloak has

⁷⁰ Hare, *Matthew*, 57.

⁷¹ Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 119.

⁷² Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 117.

⁷³ Evans, *Matthew*, 132.

to freeze, and that the hostile occupation power is strengthened.”⁷⁴ Christians choosing not to resist evil may grow weary as their suffering, pain, and injustice are perpetuated. If Christians seek actively to resist violence, then they either must ignore Jesus’ counsel or reinterpret it. Since Jesus’ message should not simply be ignored, the latter is a task worth undertaking.

Shortly after Matthew composed his gospel, Ignatius of Antioch (dates) noticed it was necessary to reinterpret this pericope when he frequently witnessed how soldiers became progressively worse when the oppressed expressed good deeds toward them.⁷⁵ His ambiguity toward the pericope grew as he became less assured that Jesus’ injunction signifies non-resistance. Despite being attentive to the consequences of non-retaliation, Ignatius did not provide an alternative interpretation of the injunction and as history progressed, interpretations emphasizing non-resistance prevailed.

In the later portion of the twentieth century, interpreters began examining the pericope anew. Dissatisfied with the way the traditional interpretation can lead to further violence and abuse, they offered a renewed reading that depends primarily on two elements: a more specific translation of the verb *antistēnai*, and social-scientific method.

Toward a Renewed Interpretation: Antistēnai and

Nonviolent Resistance to Evil

The traditional reading of *antistēnai* construes it broadly to mean “give resistance,” that is, as an unqualified prohibition of all types of resistance to evil. This is an odd conclusion given that, on four occasions prior to 5:38–41, Matthew portrays Jesus

⁷⁴ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 327.

⁷⁵ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 327.

as exhorting his audience not to accept evil, but rather to resist it. For example, Jesus resists the devil (4:1–11), enacts God’s empire against the evils of disease (4:17–25), teaches that God’s reign transforms evil (5:3–6), and creates a community to continue his mission (5:7–16).

With this predicament in mind, translators recently have noted how frequently *antistēnai* is used in a militaristic context.⁷⁶ Ephesians 6:13 is an exemplary case: “Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand⁷⁷ in the evil day....”⁷⁸ Here *antistēnai* does not signify general resistance but rather militaristic and violent opposition. With these examples in mind, translators have concluded that “*antistēnai* means more in Matt 5:39a than simply ‘to stand against’ or ‘to resist.’ It means to resist violently, to revolt, or to rebel, to engage in an insurrection.”⁷⁹

This translation of the verb significantly affects the meaning of Jesus’ injunction to “resist” not an evildoer. With this new translation, Jesus is no longer depicted as forbidding all forms of resistance, *but only violent ones*. As a result, the interpretation of Matt 5:38–41 has developed; the same passage that once forbade all types of resistance to evil can now be perceived as encouraging victims to employ active nonviolent resistance to counter their oppressors’ unjust actions. No longer are the oppressed motivated to

⁷⁶ Walter Wink, “Beyond Just War and Pacifism, Jesus’ Nonviolent Way,” *Review and Expositor* 89 (1992): 199. *Antistēnai* is used in the LXX to signify armed resistance in military encounters forty-four out of seventy-one times; Josephus uses the term to signify violent struggle fifteen out of seventeen times; and Philo uses it as such four out of ten times.

⁷⁷ “*Antistēnai*,” literally, to draw up battle ranks against the enemy.

⁷⁸ Wink, “Beyond Just War and Pacifism, Jesus’ Nonviolent Way,” 199.

⁷⁹ Wink, “Beyond Just War and Pacifism, Jesus’ Nonviolent Way,” 199.

endure their suffering and rely on God to punish their evildoers at some future occasion. Instead, they are called actively to resist the evildoers who have afflicted and shamed them. Encouraged to act in the moment, the oppressed are capable of moving beyond nonresistant methods and developing active nonviolent resistant ones.

By translating *antistēnai* in this way, interpreters are able to consider how Matt 5:38–41 signifies active nonviolent resistance to evil. However, a linguistic analysis is not the only method that can illuminate such a meaning for the pericope. In order to argue in favor of the renewed interpretation of this pericope, it is essential to set it in the backdrop of the first-century Mediterranean social world by employing a social-scientific method. This method will highlight the cultural values of the overarching social system in which Jesus' message functioned. Articulating the values related to the pericope allow for the fullest development of the renewed interpretation.

***Social-Scientific Criticism: Developing the Honor-
Shame Paradigm***

Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey have both worked toward developing social-scientific models to illuminate elements of the world in which early Christianity functioned. Both scholars have directed significant portions of their research toward developing an honor-shame model: two values that were pivotal elements of the first century Mediterranean world. The following section of this paper will include an honor-shame model subject to those models previously developed by Malina and Neyrey.

*Socially Contrived Lines of Demarcation and the
Mediterranean World*

According to Neyrey and Malina, it is natural for humans to draw socially contrived lines among themselves to demarcate certain individuals or groups and to determine expected roles and statuses. The purpose of developing such lines is to “provide all humans with a sort of socially shared map that helps and urges [them] to situate persons, things, and events with special emphasis on the boundaries. They show us that there is a place for everyone and everything, and they teach us that persons and things out of place are abnormal.”⁸⁰ Socially contrived lines of demarcation function within a cultural continuum; they were created by ancestors and continue to be transmitted to the present day through the process of enculturation.⁸¹

In order to understand how socially contrived lines of demarcation functioned within the Mediterranean world, it is first necessary to identify the primary organizing principle of that world. The focal institution in the Mediterranean world was the family. The primary organizing principle of such an institution was belongingness. An individual’s belongingness depended primarily on that person’s adherence to the traditional rules of order by which Mediterranean social groups were organized and maintained. In the Mediterranean world, the traditional rules of order were rooted in the codes surrounding two particular values: honor and shame.⁸²

⁸⁰ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 29; henceforth *The New Testament World*.

⁸¹ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 29.

⁸² Malina, *The New Testament World*, 30.

*Understanding Honor and Shame in the
Mediterranean World*

Within the first-century Mediterranean world, honor and shame were social constructs, ideas created by humans, which they filled with meaning.⁸³ To begin, honor was characterized by two complementary parts: the value of a person as perceived in his own eyes (in other words, one's claim to worth, value, prestige, or reputation) along with that same person's value as perceived in the eyes of his larger social group.⁸⁴ In short, honor included a claim to worth plus a social acknowledgement of worth.⁸⁵ The purpose of honor was "to serve as a sort of social rating which entitled a person to interact in specific ways with his or her equals, superiors, and subordinates, according to the prescribed cultural cues of the society."⁸⁶ The first-century Mediterranean world was characterized by a love of honor that spurred men, who were obsessed with praise and renown, to excellence and ambition.⁸⁷

When individuals did not act in accordance with the existing social expectations, they would be perceived as shamed. A shamed person was an individual "with a dishonorable reputation beyond all social doubt, one outside the boundaries, hence a

⁸³ Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 15; henceforth *Honor and Shame*.

⁸⁴ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

⁸⁵ It is important to note that only men could acquire honor in the first-century Mediterranean world. Women could not acquire honor for themselves; the surrounding community based a woman's honor on that which was acquired by males in the family.

⁸⁶ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 54.

⁸⁷ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 17.

person who must be denied the normal social courtesies.”⁸⁸ Both honor and shame existed in the eyes and perceptions of the public who expected individuals to act in accordance with societal norms. According to Malina, the societal norms of the first-century Mediterranean world existed within three “boundary markers”: power, gender status, and piety.⁸⁹

Power in the ancient Mediterranean world signified “one’s ability to exercise control over the behavior of others.”⁹⁰ Power would have manifested within relationships existing within both the private and public sphere. For example, in the private sphere, masters had power over their slaves; husbands over their wives; and parents over their children. In the public sphere, peers would have competed with one another to establish power over each other. For example, within the social realm, merchants and consumers, public officials and commoners, and even friends of equal status would have wrestled for power over each other. Once power was established within a relationship, it was presumed that those with power would maintain it and those subject to power would submit to it.

Gender status referred to “the set of duties and rights—what you ought to do and what others ought to do to or for you—that derive from symbolizing biological, gender differentiation.”⁹¹ The first-century Mediterranean world was gender divided; “maleness” and “femaleness” carried unique expectations. Male roles and statutes functioned within

⁸⁸ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 51.

⁸⁹ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31–32.

⁹⁰ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

⁹¹ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

the public world while female roles and statutes kept them within the private world. Males and females were expected to maintain separate social codes. While males were expected to show bravery, demonstrate loyalty to their families, maintain self-control, and strive to promote the honor and worth of their families, females were expected to show obedience and submission, maintain sexual exclusivity, and guard the valuables of the family. Out of these all these expectations, it is most important to note that only males could promote the honor of their families; a woman's honor was subject to whether or not her male family members gained honor in the social realm.⁹²

Finally, piety referred to “the attitude one must have and the behavior one is expected to follow relative to those who control one's existence.”⁹³ Those subject to power were expected to foster respectful attitudes and follow the commands delivered by their superiors. For example, slaves were expected to respect their masters and fulfill the commands prescribed to them; students were expected to observe their teachers' directions; and commoners were expected to behave in accordance with the institution's laws.

Societal norms existed within these three boundary markers. As such, societal norms functioned directly with the values of honor and shame; for a person living in a Mediterranean society concerned with honor and shame, “there was a constant dialectic between the norms of society and how one ought to reproduce those norms in specific behaviors.”⁹⁴ When a person perceived that his actions upheld the expected societal

⁹² Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 30.

⁹³ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 31.

⁹⁴ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 32.

norms, he expected others in the community to uphold this claim and offer a grant of honor. To offer a grant of honor was to acknowledge publicly that a person who claimed to be honorable did in fact conform to the community's social ideals. When a person's claim to honor met the requirement for a grant of honor by others, then that person could then be perceived as honorable. But when a person's claim to honor was not matched with a grant of honor, then that person's actions, along with the person himself, would have been perceived as shamed and treated accordingly.⁹⁵

Sources of Honor

How did individuals in the first century Mediterranean world acquire a grant of honor? Neyrey and Malina have identified two general strategies: a grant of honor was either *ascribed* to individuals by others or it was *achieved* by them.⁹⁶ Ascribed honor is best defined as "the socially recognized claim to worth that befalls a person, an occurrence that happens passively so to say."⁹⁷ In other words, ascribed honor was granted to an individual simply for being that individual, not for anything that he or she may have done. There were two primary derivations for ascribed honor: family or politics. Ascribed honor derived from being born into a certain family. Within Mediterranean villages, families would have been rated by their neighbors in terms of their reputation, standing, and wealth; some would be considered noble while others would be considered poor. Children born into honorable families automatically would have acquired the honorable public evaluation of their family. The birth order and gender

⁹⁵ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 33.

⁹⁶ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 33; Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 15.

⁹⁷ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 33.

of children played an important role in ascribing honor. For example, male children would acquire more honor than any other children and the firstborn male, presumably the heir of the family, would have acquired more honor than his younger siblings.

Another derivation for ascribed honor was politics. That is, honor could be ascribed to someone by another person of notable power. For example, honor could be ascribed to a person by God, an aristocrat, or a king. In sum, a person could receive a grant of honor from those possessing prominent rank and power.⁹⁸

The second source of honor was achieved honor, which “refers to the reputation and fame an individual earned by way of his own merits.”⁹⁹ Honor was achieved as such when a person claiming honor excelled over others in social interactions. Honor was perceived as a limited good in the first-century Mediterranean world. Like all other limited goods, honor was perceived as existing in short supply. The individual who acquired more honor than others became the subject of great envy and was vulnerable to confrontations and challenges.

Such challenges were exacerbated by the undergirding culture of the Mediterranean world. Anthropologists identify first-century Mediterranean culture as *agonistic*: “the word *agon* is Greek for an athletic contest between equals of any sort. The society we are considering looks upon all social interactions as a contest for honor.”¹⁰⁰ Every social interaction would have included a challenge to honor, “elites and peasants alike engaged in a social competition for incremental increases in reputation and prestige

⁹⁸ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 15–16.

⁹⁹ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 16.

¹⁰⁰ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 37.

through an interminable game of push-and-shove called challenge and riposte.”¹⁰¹ The game of challenge and riposte plays a prominent role in the honor-shame paradigm and thus requires a thorough examination.

Challenge and Riposte

The ubiquitous game of challenge and riposte consisted of four major phases: (1) a challenge would be made by way of word, deed, or both on the part of the challenger; (2) the individual receiving the challenge would analyze its potential for bringing him dishonor/shame; (3) the individual receiving the challenge would react to the situation; (4) the surrounding crowd would grant a public verdict of success to either of the two men.¹⁰²

First, a challenge would have been delivered in the form of a claim, either positive or negative, that signified the challenger’s desire to enter the social space of another individual. A positive claim would have involved one individual desiring to gain a share in the social space of another honorable individual while a negative claim would have involved an individual’s desire to dislodge another person from his social space, either temporarily or permanently. Positive claims would have come as gifts, dinner invitations, or words of praise, while negative claims would have come as words of insult, physical affronts (e.g., a backhand slap), or threats (verbal and physical). In first-century Mediterranean society, both the challenger and receiver would undoubtedly be males. Since claims of honor can only be affirmed in public, all legitimate challenges would have occurred before a larger group of surrounding community members.

¹⁰¹ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 16.

¹⁰² Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 20.

Second, the individual receiving the challenge would have analyzed the claim, placing special emphasis on its potential to dishonor his self-value or self-esteem. The challenged man would have considered whether and how the claim fit within the socially acknowledged range of such actions: a question of his self-esteem, an attack on his self-esteem, or an outright denial of his self-esteem. It is important to note that the challenge-riposte properly fit social equals. Thus, the man receiving the challenge also must analyze whether he was equal to the challenger, whether the challenger honored him by perceiving him as an equal, or whether the challenger dishonored him by implying equality where it did not exist.

After analyzing the challenger's claim, the receiver would offer a response, which could include one of three possible reactions. (1) The receiver could have refused the challenge positively by dismissing it with a display of scorn, disdain, or contempt. If the challenger were inferior to the challenged man, he would have to take steps to obliterate such an insulting reaction lest he be recognized as inferior. (2) The receiver could accept the challenge as such and offer a counter-challenge in the form of a riposte. Such a reaction would have brought shame to the original challenger. The situation could have been settled there, leaving the challenger dishonored, or the two men could have continued challenging each other in an ongoing competition. (3) The receiver could react by offering no response. However, failing to respond in itself implied dishonor for the receiver.¹⁰³

Finally, the surrounding crowd, acting as a collective witness, would grant a public verdict of success either to the challenger or the receiver of the challenge. Since

¹⁰³ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 34–37.

every claim of and challenge to honor had to occur in public, a gathering of community members surrounding the action would have to affirm who gained in honor and who was shamed.¹⁰⁴

Critiquing the Model of Honor and Shame

Although the honor-shame paradigm defined women as permanently belonging to the shame “side” of the model in the first-century Mediterranean world, it is inappropriate to do so today. Therefore, for the remainder of the paper, I will include women within the paradigm by exploring how they too may or may not receive grants of honor.

Reading Matthew 5:38–41 through the Honor-Shame Paradigm

In an effort to understand how the antitheses function in terms of the cultural values of the first-century Mediterranean world, Neyrey has examined Matt 5:38–41 using the honor-shame paradigm. Neyrey begins his examination by analyzing the *lex talionis* and argues that “the law of retribution included in its very functioning notions of honor-shame and challenge-riposte.”¹⁰⁵ Neyrey supports this argument by observing that the challenge in view (the eye and the tooth) inflicts the most honorable parts of a man’s body: the head and the face. Thus, within Mediterranean society, a man would have been “permitted and even expected by the legal code to give a riposte in kind and to restore his damaged honor.”¹⁰⁶ Neyrey proceeds to argue that Jesus’ remarks in the remaining verses of the pericope are best viewed as “prohibiting disciples from playing the honorable

¹⁰⁴ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 34–37; Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 16–21.

¹⁰⁵ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 204.

¹⁰⁶ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 203

game of seeking satisfaction and revenge and from delivering ripostes to challenges.”¹⁰⁷

According to Neyrey, Jesus’ disciples are not to engage in the ubiquitous game of challenge and riposte at all; they are called neither to preserve their own honor nor to maintain their positions of power. In short, Neyrey depicts Jesus as rejecting the honor-shame paradigm and prohibiting his disciples from engaging it.

I appreciate Neyrey’s interpretation of Matt 5:38–41 in terms of the cultural values of the world of Jesus and Matthew. But precisely how does this pericope function within the context of the honor-shame paradigm? In his argument, Neyrey primarily considers how the honor-shame paradigm functioned within the wider Roman world, but he does not address the significance of Jesus’ encouragement that the disciples cultivate the values of a counter-cultural community. While reading Matt 5:38–41 through the lens of the honor-shame paradigm, Jesus is not rejecting the paradigm; rather, he discourages his disciples from considering themselves as “outsiders” living in the generic Mediterranean world of honor and shame and encourages them to perceive of themselves as “insiders” who exist within a counter-cultural ecclesial community where what constitutes as honorable and shameful is inverted.

Jesus’ Counter-Cultural Community and Open

Commensality

Jesus’ table ministry was a primary element of the counter-cultural community that he envisioned for his disciples. It was especially significant because of the important role that eating plays within societies. Indeed, “in all societies, simple and complex, eating is the primary way of initiating and maintaining human relationships...to know

¹⁰⁷ Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 204.

what, where, how, when and with whom people eat is to know the character of their society.”¹⁰⁸ Anthropologists seeking to understand the character of a society by examining its eating habits would gauge what they refer to as commensality: a word deriving from the Latin root, *mensa* (table) which signifies how the rules of tabling and eating act as miniature models for the rules of association and socialization. Commensality signifies how table fellowship acts as a social map to determine social hierarchy, political differentiation, and economic discrimination.¹⁰⁹

In Jesus and Matthew’s world, the wider, generic Roman society would have been characterized by an exclusive commensality in which it would have been a social nightmare if classes, sexes, and ranks mixed together at the table.¹¹⁰ Slaves would have been separated from their masters as would the socially low from the socially high and the ritually impure from the ritually pure. Jesus’ ministry occurred within the Roman society as such. However, he fostered a separate commensality that did not function in accordance with that of the wider community.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was notorious for making neither distinctions nor discriminations in choosing with whom he ate. He was known to eat alongside “sinners, tax collectors, and whores – derogatory terms for those with whom, in the opinion of the name callers, open and free association should be avoided.”¹¹¹ Jesus advocated open

¹⁰⁸ Peter Farb and George Armelagos, *Consuming Passions: The Anthropology of Eating* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 211.

¹⁰⁹ John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), 68.

¹¹⁰ Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 68.

¹¹¹ Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 69.

commensality, or in other words, a non-discriminatory table. Jesus' table ministry included significant implications for his vision of community. By fostering a non-discriminatory table, Jesus effectively created a non-discriminatory community, which was the "symbol and embodiment of radical egalitarianism, of an absolute equality of people that denies the validity of any discrimination between them and negates the necessity of any hierarchy among them."¹¹² Jesus' envisioned community fundamentally clashed with the wider Roman worldview, and a primary differentiation between the two communities included how each implemented the honor-shame paradigm.

Within Jesus' counter-cultural community, the disciples' identity shifted contextually. That is, Jesus' disciples no longer had to consider themselves as "outsiders" in the wider Roman society where they were prevented from receiving grants of honor. Jesus' counter-cultural community, which fostered open commensality and radical egalitarianism, invited disciples to perceive themselves as "insiders" who could gain honor among themselves for the way they embodied values unlike those praised in the generic Roman society. For example, within the counter-cultural, ecclesial community, grants of honor did not derive from those values and expectations characteristic of the Roman society like excessive displays of power, status, or gender differentiation. Instead, honor was granted to those who either challenged the injustices of the wider Roman society or extended Jesus' egalitarian invitation to others. In short, Jesus' disciples created an ecclesial community where what constituted as honorable and shameful was essentially inverted. Jesus' counsel in Matt 5:39–41b helps illustrate this notion.

¹¹² Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 71.

The Honor-Shame Paradigm in the Counter-Cultural Community

Jesus' three illustrations in Matt 5:39b–41 reveal two particular elements: first, that Jesus recontextualizes which community the disciples are to perceive themselves as belonging to; and second, that he counsels his disciples to employ active nonviolent resistance. In the first example (5:39b), a disciple is depicted as being struck on the right cheek by way of a backhanded blow. Since a backhanded strike signifies an insult rather than an injury, a challenge for honor most certainly would have been made on behalf of the striker. The individual delivering the backhanded strike makes a claim to honor that he hopes will be approved by surrounding individuals. At the same time, he is attempting to instill shame in a subordinate victim. However, the striker's challenge is disrupted if the victim turns the other cheek. In turning the other cheek after being struck on the right one, the victim offers his or her left cheek to the striker. Such an action denies the striker the ability to deliver another insult since it is impossible to strike the left cheek with a right backhand.¹¹³

In turning the other cheek, Jesus' disciples utilize active nonviolence to resist evil by way of preventing the striker from extending his abusive habits without having to resort to violence. Furthermore, this illustration shows how Jesus invites his disciples to perceive themselves as existing within a counter-cultural community where what constitutes as honorable and shameful is inverted. The victim, who normally would have been ashamed by the wider Roman community for being struck, would actually gain in honor within his or her counter-cultural community members for two reasons: first, the

¹¹³ Wink, "Beyond Just War and Pacifism, Jesus' Nonviolent Way," 201.

victim displays courage in undergoing what is perceived as shameful by the Roman community (receiving a backhanded strike); second, the victim is honored because of the way that he or she instills shame upon the striker. The striker, who normally would have received a grant of honor for backhanding a subordinate, returns to his community ashamed since a subordinate had denied him the opportunity to assert power.

The second illustration (Matt 5:40) also signifies a challenge for honor. In this situation, a creditor takes a debtor to court to exact repayment on a defaulted loan. The debtor is depicted as having to relinquish his tunic in repayment of the debt.¹¹⁴ In this example, the creditor publically shames the debtor by stripping him of all his goods, even his tunic. In Roman society, the creditor would be granted a claim of honor for exerting power and control over a shamed subordinate.

However, Jesus' instruction once again disrupts the honor-shame paradigm. Jesus' counsel to the debtor to offer cloak as well as tunic creates a profound counter-challenge. Such a one would be left standing naked in the courtroom. Public nakedness was taboo in Mediterranean culture, and shame would have fallen less upon the naked one than on the one causing the nakedness in the first place.¹¹⁵ Once again, this illustration shows how Jesus invites his disciples to perceive themselves as existing within a counter-cultural community where what constitutes "honor" and "shame" is inverted. The debtor, who would be shamed by the wider Roman community for having to relinquish the tunic to pay off the debt, instead has shamed the creditor. The creditor retires from public view shamed by having caused the other's nakedness, while the debtor

¹¹⁴ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 329.

¹¹⁵ Wink, "Beyond Just War and Pacifism, Jesus' Nonviolent Way," 202.

is twice honored: (1) by returning to his counter-cultural community having endured the humiliation of relinquishing the very clothes off his back in payment of the loan; and (2) by shaming the creditor for causing the debtor's nakedness and utter destitution. Furthermore, the disciple achieved this victory through active nonviolent resistance.

The final illustration (5:41) depicts a situation in which one of Jesus' disciples is forced into service by a Roman soldier (a common occurrence during both Jesus and Matthew's lifetimes).¹¹⁶ This illustration also signifies a challenge for honor on behalf of the soldier. By forcing a bystander into service, a soldier displays his power over that individual. Within the wider community, honor would be granted to the soldier while shame would befall the bystander.

Why does Jesus counsel his disciples to perform an extra mile of service? Roman soldiers were permitted to force bystanders into service for one mile only.¹¹⁷ If a Roman soldier was seen forcing a bystander into service for more than the one allotted mile, he could be flogged, forced to hold clods of dirt, forced to camp outside the fortifications, or other punishments. Again, this illustration shows Jesus inviting his followers to perceive themselves existing within a counter-cultural community where what constitutes honor and shame is inverted. The soldier, who normally would have been perceived as honorable by the surrounding community, would have been shamed by the extra mile: (1) he would be disciplined by his superior officer; and (2) he would be perceived as weak and foolish for choosing a bystander who embarrassed him. The soldier would return to his cohort shamed, while the disciple pressed into service would return to his

¹¹⁶ Wink, "Beyond Just War and Pacifism, Jesus' Nonviolent Way," 203.

¹¹⁷ Wink, "Beyond Just War and Pacifism, Jesus' Nonviolent Way," 204.

community to receive a grant of honor. The disciple would be honored for two reasons: (1) he or she underwent the embarrassment and humiliation of being pressed into service by a Roman soldier; and (2) the disciple would be honored by having turned the tables on the soldier, sending him back to his community shamed when he had expected to be honored for exerting his power.

Each of the previous illustrations functions similarly. In each case, an individual challenges one of Jesus' disciples. According to the values of the wider Roman society, the altercation would bring honor to the challenger and shame to the disciple. However, in each case Jesus' disciples are depicted as being called to extend themselves beyond what would have been expected of them by the surrounding Roman community—by turning the other cheek when slapped on the right one, offering their cloak alongside their tunic, and serving a Roman soldier for an extra mile. In doing so, the disciples do not receive a grant of honor from the wider Roman community. However, that does not matter since the disciples are “insiders” in an ecclesial community where what constitutes honor and shame are inverted. The disciples do in fact receive a grant of honor when they return to the counter-cultural, radically egalitarian community envisioned by Jesus. All of this occurs while the initial challenger returns back to his community to find that what he expected would result in a grant of honor actually results in shame. By not being able to meet the wider community's expectation that those in control should be able to maintain power over their subordinates, those once seeking to instill shame have themselves become shamed. In each case, Jesus' disciples employ active nonviolent resistance to confront an evildoer. They do not respond to violence in kind, but neither do they submit to it. Rather, they construct a nonviolent riposte in counter-cultural ways.

Matthew 5:38-41 as Active Nonviolent Resistance:

Why Does It Matter?

Matt 5:38-41 as active nonviolent resistance within the honor-shame paradigm matters because it helps transform the Christian understanding of resistance to evil. This renewed interpretation of Matt 5:38-41 is a concrete illustration of post-World War II biblical scholars' vision to determine how Jesus' teaching offers a practical program for active nonviolent resistance. Addressing the question of Christian resistance to evil in a new way, this interpretation extends beyond the previous trend in biblical scholarship to spiritualize and passivize dominical counsel on resistance. The renewed interpretation demonstrates a practical program for concrete nonviolent actions that can be taken to redress evil and oppression.

Matt 5:38-41 as active nonviolent resistance has significant implications for Christians who rely on the New Testament for counsel on resistance to evil. The renewed interpretation not only affirms that the New Testament outlines transforming initiatives for justice and peace (actions that confront injustice to deliver the oppressed from cycles of violence and create opportunities for peace to be established among adversaries); it also suggests that God is not the sole enactor of these initiatives. That is, the renewed interpretation invites Christians to reconsider waiting on God to enact transforming initiatives for justice and peace by the way it illustrates concrete ways they can participate in these initiatives. Each illustration within the pericope (turning the other cheek, relinquishing the cloak and tunic, and going an extra mile) is fundamentally a human activity. In no way does Matt 5:38-41 suggest that Christians remain inactive and wait for God to intervene while evil abounds. Rather, the pericope demonstrates how

Christians belonging to ecclesial communities can redress evil and oppression in practical, human ways.

Furthermore, this renewed interpretation of Matt 5:38-41 matters because it offers the SCE group a specific pericope to adopt for the faith-based perspective of just-peacemaking theory. The paradigm is founded not only on empirical evidence, but also a biblically-informed concept of discipleship and peacemaking initiatives grounded in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is a necessary task for the SCE group to locate and examine pericopes within the New Testament that signify active nonviolent resistance. The work put forth to develop the renewed interpretation fulfills such a task.

Just-peacemaking theory can adopt the counter-cultural model portrayed in Matt 5:38-41. Like the disciples called in Matt 5:38-41 to perceive themselves within the context of a counter-cultural community, those who employ the ten practices of just-peacemaking theory can perceive themselves in a different context within the global community. Torn by violence, terror, and hatred, the global community presently values the use of force to resolve conflicts. However, Matt 5:38-41 demonstrates how those seeking to redress oppression and evil without submitting to violence or responding in kind can develop counter-cultural communities where what constitutes as effective conflict resolution is inverted. In just-peacemakers' case, the counter-cultural community would prioritize peacemaking initiatives over against the use of force. The practical program for active nonviolence illustrated in Matt 5:38-41 can serve to guide the values of the just-peacemakers' counter-cultural community.

Finally, the renewed interpretation of Matt 5:38-41 matters because it helps transform the idea that Jesus was simply an über-polite man who always encouraged his disciples to be pacifists. This interpretation signifies how Jesus was concerned about working to establish peace, even if the moment called for confrontation. Jesus was not perpetually pleasant. Spurred to establish righteousness, he fought to confront a cultural system that fundamentally excluded his followers. To accomplish creating a counter-cultural ecclesial community, Jesus would have been in situations that demanded him to be bold and confrontational. Jesus may call his disciples to be polite, but he also calls them to be courageous, firm, and innovative so that radical egalitarianism may persist within ecclesial communities.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored many things. We have described the emergence of the just-peacemaking paradigm. We have illustrated how the seismic shift in biblical interpretation following the Second World War allowed scholars to reconsider the Christian response to evil. Most importantly, we have contributed to the work of scholars who adopted a faith perspective on just-peacemaking theory by examining how Jesus' counsel in Matt 5:38-41 informs the new paradigm.

This paper has offered a renewed interpretation of Matt 5:38-41 that just-peacemaking theorists can adopt to construct the paradigm. I employed a social-scientific method to examine how Jesus' counsel in Matt 5:38-41 functions within the honor-shame paradigm characteristic of the first-century Mediterranean world. I argued that the dominical counsel invites disciples to perceive themselves in a different context within the honor-shame paradigm. Rather than viewing themselves as "outsiders" in the

Mediterranean world of honor and shame, they are encouraged to perceive themselves as “insiders” within an ecclesial community where what constitutes “honor” and “shame” is inverted. Furthermore the injunction to “resist not an evildoer” functions to motivate this envisioned community to transcend inaction or retaliatory violence to cultivate a new response to evil – the same response that the SCE just peacemaking group adopted – namely, active nonviolent resistance.

The twenty-three scholars who developed just-peacemaking theory made significant contributions to the paradigm. As hatred, violence, and terrorism continues to plague our world, new efforts need to be taken to promote the ten practices that constitute the just-peacemaking paradigm. I encourage biblical scholars to continue developing the faith-based perspective of just-peacemaking theory. I encourage scholars and activists alike to draw on their empirical experiences and find ways that enliven the biblically informed concept of peacemaking initiatives. Finally, I encourage all humans to remain steadfast in our hope for a more peaceful world. May the work of peacemakers outlast the ill-will of evildoers everywhere and may we work together in enacting transforming initiatives that deliver us from oppression and render justice, righteousness, and peace.

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