

# ENGENDERING PEACE OR VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA:

*A Trajectory of Contextual Biblical Hermeneutics*



A Publication of Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies  
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## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Peacemaking in the Lukan Corpus and Ecumenical Vision of Justice, Peace and Integrity of All Creation**

*Effiong J. Udo, Ph.D & Mbosowo B. Udok, Ph.D*

#### **Chapter Synopsis**

*In the context of growing conflicts, violence, terrorism and wars of all kinds, Africa and indeed, the world at large, have been in search for peace. The twin issues of justice and peace have remained dominant and central in the discussions and programmes of the World Council of Churches since its inception in 1948. However, there have also been concerns that the vision and activities of the global body on these issues are lacking in commitment to sound biblical authority. Thus, in this paper, using the social science critical approach, we examine the Lukan theological framework for peacemaking in relation to the global vision of the World Council of Churches for peace, justice and integrity of all creation. The basic assumption is that the peacemaking strategy of Jesus as eminently captured in the Lukan literary corpus is capable of deepening and clarifying the discussions on the subject matters at the global levels. Accordingly, the paper urges biblical scholars, especially those from African background, to participate in global discussions of these issues in order to help not only to steer them along sound biblical scholarship but also to make known the African perspective.*



## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary Africa, and indeed the world at large where terrorism, violence, crime, war and poverty are the prominent issues of the day, the Lukan presentation of the mission of Jesus Christ being that of peacemaking is acutely pertinent. For Luke, peacemaking, consisting of solidarity with the outcasts, of nonviolent resistance to evil, of the futility and self-destructive nature of hatred and vengeance, remain intrinsic aspects of the churches' missionary message. In this direction, David Bosch is right in pointing out that this is where the church derives its missionary inspiration for peacemaking task in the world (118).

The struggle for justice, peace and human rights and the struggle against war, violence and racism have been issues on the agenda of the World Council of Churches (WCC) since its inception in 1948 (Briggs et. al 331). The ecumenical vision for justice and peace reflects the global churches' concern and response to our world that is plagued continuously with conflict, violence and wars of all sorts. Specifically, during the 4th assembly of the WCC in Uppsala, 1968 and much more at the Vancouver assembly in 1983, the issues of justice and peace took the center stage. This paper seeks to examine the peacemaking mission of Jesus as presented by Luke in his literary corpus in relation to this ecumenical vision; with the assumption that the former is capable of deepening and clarifying the discussions at the global levels. In other words, discussions on the issues of peace and justice can be enriched if consciously checked against the biblical and theological framework on peacemaking such as could be found in the Lukan framework. This study is significant because it is set against the several issues of concern about the mission and activities of WCC since its inception. Foremost among these concerns, as A. Stott-Moreau rightly states, is the perceived lack of commitment to full biblical authority in its discussions (1024).

Accordingly, adopting the social science critical approach combining it with redaction criticism for our discussions, it will be necessary, first of all,

to situate Luke on the subject-matter in its literary context. Next, the Lukan dimension of peacemaking will be examined. Directions of global discussions on peace and justice shall precede our suggestions and conclusion.

In the ensuing discussion, peace (Gr. *eirene*) shall be understood as having both classical Greek and Hebrew underpinnings. Thus, references to peace in the teachings of Jesus and the Gospels will be appreciated fully in the light of Hebrew concept of *shalom*. *Shalom* means well-being, soundness, welfare, peace, wholeness or completeness; and this covers health, prosperity, security, friendship and salvation. It is a desired experience of individuals, groups and nations (Green et al. 604). *Shalom* is a broad concept, embracing justice (*mishpat*), mercy, rightness (*tsedeq*) or righteousness (*tsedeqah*), compassion (*hesed*), and truthfulness (*emet*) all together. There is no peace without justice. But justice (*mishpat*) is not only about fair judgment and rectitude; it is also about giving what is right and just to the afflicted. Therefore, peace (*shalom*) is the effect of righteousness, and the practice of truth and justice. It is a condition where God leads nations to settle their conflicts and beat their swords into ploughshares (Micah 4:3; Isa 2:4). Ultimately, it is a condition where "the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them" (Isa 11:6).

This comprehensive meaning of *shalom* is carried over into the New Testament and expressed with the classical Greek word *eirene*. Peace is God's gift, God's blessing. Prosperity and well-being are understood as outward, though by no means exclusive, signs of God's favour. They are regarded to be results of God's commandment to be just, merciful and righteous. (Thus, this is very different from the "Prosperity Gospel" preached in some churches wherein prosperity is understood merely in terms of material wealth and financial success.). In the New Testament, Jesus himself is the source of peace. His life reveals the Spirit of Peace, a



peace that the world cannot give. This peace he bestows upon his disciples: "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 be afraid" (Jn 14:27-28). The peace that Jesus is and gives is a central feature of the kingdom (*basileia*) which manifests itself in all forms of peace both in daily life and in the messianic fulfillment (Jn 14:27; 2 Thess. 3:16). The peace of Jesus makes it possible to overcome enmity and division (Eph 2:14-16), for it is a peace that has come through the blood of his cross (Col 1:20). Through his death, Jesus has overcome the very sources of enmity, making it possible for all creation to be brought together in unity through him and to be reconciled to God (Eph 1:10; Col 1:16, 19-20). This peace is not merely a situation that results from a cessation of hostility or war but can also refer to the state of law and order that makes the fruit of prosperity possible (Mounce 503).

It is commonplace to distinguish between negative and positive peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of war or armed conflicts; while positive peace refers to the absence of the causes of war or conflicts (Stott-Moreau 735). Accordingly, peacemaking means removing the religious, economic, political, social and cultural structures that are regarded as barriers to personal and societal change (Stott-Moreau 735). It appears that it is the positive aspect of peace that characterized the entire mission of Jesus.

## 2. Peacemaking in Proto-Luke Redaction

B. H. Streeter is well known as the most prominent 20th century proponent of Markan priority and the Q-hypothesis. Going beyond the widely accepted "two-source hypothesis", Streeter championed what has come to be called the "the four-source hypothesis". Streeter believed that in addition to using Mark and Q, Matthew and Luke each had written sources of their own on which they drew; Streeter labeled these two

additional sources as "M" and "L" respectively. These supposed sources could account for much of the materials unique to each of these Gospels (333 verses in Matthew; 564 in Luke). Blomberg (92) indicates that Streeter also speculated that Luke wrote a first draft of his Gospel before seeing a copy of Mark (proto-Luke) and revised and expanded it considerably after reading Mark. This would account for the alternation of Markan and non-Markan materials in Luke in large blocks and for the larger percentage of non-Markan, non-Q materials in Luke than in Matthew.

Although it is the view of Craig Blomberg (92) that Streeter's proposal does not currently command consensus acclaim, Streeter's hypothesis, in our opinion, throws unique light, not only on the ongoing search for solution for the synoptic problem, but it also helps in locating the theological distinctives of the different evangelists. This is particularly relevant for our discussion because it will strike the careful reader that Luke's redaction consciously places Jesus' peacemaking teachings and activities within the literary confines that is classified as proto-Luke. This means that in alternating between blocks of Markan and non-Markan materials, it is in Lk 9:51-18:14 which contains the bulk of Jesus' Galilean ministry and includes almost exclusively Q and L materials that transactions of Jesus in peacemaking are recorded by Luke. The point to be noted here is that Luke consciously selects his materials to demonstrate the peacemaking mission of Jesus. This attempt gives a hint of the kind of person Luke is, a peacemaker. John Stott (27) agrees with this assertion. Discussing how Luke develops a political apologetics, Stott avers that

... an example of Luke's 'diplomacy' is that he was a peacemaker in the church. He wanted to demonstrate by his narrative that the early church was a united church, that the peril of division between Jewish and Samaritan Christians, and between Jewish and Gentile Christians, was providently avoided, and that the apostles Peter, James and Paul were in fundamental agreement about the gospel (27).



### 3. The Sitzim Leben of Lukan Peacemaking Challenge

#### i. Circumstance of Writing

It is important to note the prevailing socio-cultural, economic and political atmosphere circumstances under which Luke wrote. In his book, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts*, Tiede warns against reading Luke without reference to its particular historical, cultural or religious setting (13-18). Further, Tiede's book provides a helpful insight into the issues facing the Jewish people towards the end of the first century. He argues that this was a period of intense struggle for the Jewish nation. The revolt against Rome and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE marked a key point in Jewish history and raised the critical issue of God's faithfulness to God's people.

Similarly, Udo (82-95) and Bosch (112) point out that Luke's two-volume work was written in the wake of the devastation of the Jewish War, in which the political hopes of the Zealots were crushed. Many of Luke's readers lived in war-torn areas, occupied by foreign troops who often took advantage of the population.

#### ii. Poverty and Suffering

The Lucan text contains quite a lot of materials about Jesus' attitude to the poor. Eating and meals have an amount of space in the narratives. As one reads this, one suspects that there was either great affluence or serious problems about hunger and poverty (Johnson 39). When one reads about debts and debtors, it suggests a society of serious indebtedness (Horsley 88ff, 123f; 125). Thiessen notes that the cases of exorcism and demon possession and general illness can be explained both historically and sociologically (38ff). Similarly, Brawley points out that Jesus' movement emphasized forgiveness of sin, and in a situation in which sin serves as an explanation for suffering and illness, it signals a suffering society (167). It

is also within such a context that the conflict of Jesus with the religious leaders makes sense – a society which has lost its vision of caring for its subjects.

Luke presents Jesus as moving from the village periphery to the central city which is the scene for the rest of Lucan Gospel and Acts. Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees is therefore to be seen in the context of an exploitative leadership regime and, oppressing the 'people'. With Jesus appearing on the scene, the growing tension between the people and their leadership was contrasted with Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees and their system, a situation that reached its climax, the death of Jesus at the hands of the rulers-the council. The death of Jesus shocked the people. But, it became, according to Wink (139ff), the height of nonviolent resistant strategy to evil. But this strategy received God's vindication in Jesus' resurrection from the death.

#### iii. Exploitation of the weak

The Lucan society also seems to have many people who are poor on account of a few powerful ones exploiting the vulnerability of the weak, the victims of unjust system. By enriching themselves without care and concern for these weak ones, they are seen as unrighteous (Thiessen 21). For example, we hear: 'I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow' (Luke 19:21). This may be regarded as an answer of a wicked servant, but it describes a view of the master which may not be easy to ignore. As it stands, there could be a situation in which some get rich by exploitation of the poor and weak, as the answer suggests.

The behaviour of the soldiers towards the villagers was similar to exploitation according to the words of John the Baptist. So while the rich exploit, their servants and agents follow suit, and 'the people' bear the burden: Rob no one by violence or false accusations, and be content with



your wages' (Luke 3:14).

There were the tax collectors who probably made much gain out of their profession by defrauding people. Zachaeus becomes an example of a wealthy tax collector who could give back fourfold of such ill-gotten wealth to the affected people (Luke 19:8). It could be for this reason that tax collectors generally were looked upon as sinners (Luke 18:9-14). John the Baptist tells them "Collect no more than is appointed to you" (Luke 3:13). It was the people who suffered the weight of such exploitation.

What we also notice in Luke is that while the picture of the hungry and the rich appear almost side by side, the poor and hungry are put on the part of casting doubts on the means and use of the wealthy's riches (Ross 304). The impression then is that it is anomaly for one to eat and be merry while another goes hungry. A picture well illustrated by the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21). He was selfish with his riches. He also probably hoarded the goods waiting for scarcity so that he could extort the poor by making them depend upon him for supply, rather than sharing what God has blessed him with. The rich man and Lazarus story illustrate further the same point. Although the story depicts a rich man living in consonant with his position and wealth and probably in the eyes of society, he did no wrong. However the text necessarily views it as God would – use of wealth and power in relation to the social situation (Luke 16: 19-31). The rich man's good were spent on himself and his five brothers and friends, while Lazarus wasted away. The text castigates the gulf between the rich and their arrogance, pride and selfishness, and that of the poor, needy and helpless. This inequality is emphasized by the way in which the rich spent their wealth, not for the common good but most probably to protect their own position as a group over and against the needy people, ordinary people of the village (Moxnes 140). This was the situation John the Baptist saw and withdrew from it by not eating and drinking, and they said that he was a mad man (Luke 7:33).

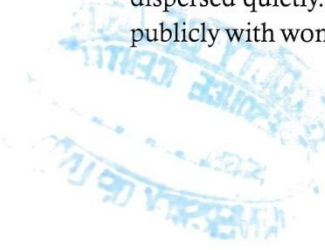


This was a very grave problem that needed to be tackled and the early Christians made a conscious effort to address the issue through common sharing out of their resources and possessions (Acts 2:45). For Luke Johnson, the fact that this is mentioned at all about the character of early Christians would suggest that such a situation not only existed but posed a serious threat to social equilibrium (183-204). Similarly, Ilu rightly identifies poverty as being the greatest source of civil strife and conflicts in Africa. According to him, when people are hungry and lack the basic necessities of life, they are easily prone to violence. There is a lot of discontentment in most African societies. Most of the recruits in many wars are unemployed youths (198). It is in Acts that Luke describes how the early church finds a solution through sharing according to the needs of all. A situation where some are dispossessed of land, house, and food for Luke-Acts suggest a social anomaly which God is fully concerned about.

#### iv. Condition of Women

What about the cultural situation of women of the early Palestine? They were part and parcel of the people whom Luke was particularly observant in respect of Jesus reaction to their plight. Abogunrin observes that:

Judaism, in spite of its high moral values, did not have high regard for women. A man in prayer was to give thanks to God daily for not creating him a woman. A woman could not be called on to bear witness in a Jewish court. In theory, one of the seven synagogue lessons could be read by a woman but in practice she was never allowed to read any. She could not be entrusted with the teaching of the Word of God and could be divorced at will. When a woman was in labor, dancers and singers surrounded the house and waited for the news. If a male child was born, the crowd burst into singing, drumming, and dancing, but if the child was female, the crowd dispersed quietly. Also, a rabbi was not supposed to discuss topics publicly with women (38).





#### v. The Gap between the Poor and the Rich

Even clothes in Lucan material could stand for society's extravagance when its subjects are wasting away in poverty. The description of the rich man in the story of Lazarus is carefully worded to show that the rich man actually was clothed in purple and fine linen... feasting sumptuously everyday – that is both the clothing and its quality... and the feasting went on daily (Luke 16:19). Similar description occurs in the words, 'Those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' court (Luke 7:25). The description of clothes, food, and luxury are all recognized as a life-style but viewed with criticism so much so that it is represented as a life that must take a drastic reversal to favour even the poor in the Lucan community (Luke 16:22-24) (Brown 363).

The Scribes (and Pharisees?) put on long robes as a sign of their social status. But Jesus perceives that to be a pretence to cheat and devour the poor windows (Luke 20: 46-47). Therefore, clothing bears a symbol of wealth or poverty. To go without clothes is a sign of poverty and humiliation. To put on gorgeous clothes is a sign of power and authority. The story of the trial of Jesus carries, 'Herod with his soldiers... arraigned him in gorgeous apparel...' making Jesus look like a king he was accused of daring to be – a mockery (Luke 23:11). Jesus probably wore simple unidentifiable clothes (Luke 9:3; 10:4) and the Pharisees and scribes wore long distinguished robes (Luke 20:46) and Herod wore gorgeous apparel (Luke 23:11; 7-25). With pictures of robes alone Lucan text puts Lucan social life as one characterized by abuse of power. This unjust and inconsiderable life of the rich and powerful suppresses the poor. It pushes them to the periphery of society, and naturally causes conflicts (Stambaugh and Balch 102).

Given the above, violence and banditry became the meat and drink for populace. And now, Luke presents them with a challenge: Jesus and his powerful message of nonviolent resistance, and above all, of loving one's enemies in word and deed.

#### 4. Dimension of Peacemaking in Lukan Narratives

The dimension of peacemaking in the mission of Jesus is captured in Luke's literary corpus in a variety of ways. The preaching of the gospel, the teaching and healing activities carried out by Jesus constituted entire package in the removal of causes of conflict and violence (Acts 10:38). Specifically, the following may be noted:

**a) Jesus' Identification with and Accenting to the Powers of the Outcasts:** It is common knowledge that Luke has a particular interest in the marginalized groups. Blomberg maintains that in Luke Jesus' humanity and compassion for the outcasts of society is centrally fascinating. The four groups that were despised and counted for nothing within the religious and economic structures of the day, were i) Samaritans and Gentiles ii) Tax-collectors and sinners iii) Women and children, and iv) the Poor (145). To these, Jesus identified with and empowered, to the amazement and anger of the rulers of the day. Yet, unaware to them that this was Jesus' strategy not only to ameliorate but also to remove the causes of conflicts, violence and war that the system of domination, oppression and inequality, as well as poverty had enthroned.

**b) Nonviolence Resistance:** For the Lukan Jesus, peace does not come through weapons but through love, forgiveness and acceptance of one's enemies into the covenant community. Jesus repudiates violence. When his disciples requested permission to call down fire from heaven on inhospitable Samaritans, Jesus rebukes them (Lk 9:51-56). He warns against using repressive means to fight against repressive Powers (Lk 13:1-3). When a disciple cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave in an attempt to save Jesus from arrest, Jesus is portrayed as commanding, "No more of this!" (Lk 22:51). Matthew has Jesus say, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword (Matt. 26:52).



Second Cor. 10:4 summarizes this view: "The weapons we use in our fight are not the weapons of the Domination System (kosmos) but God's powerful weapons to destroy strongholds". On their missionary journeys they are not to take staffs for self-defense. When reviled, Jesus' followers are to bless; when cursed, they are to pray for those who abuse them. They are to conform their lives to the life of Abba by loving their enemy, just as God does, doing good to those that hate them. For Walter Wink, this is far from being a counsel of perfection or an incitement to cowardice, Jesus' nonviolent orientation is premised on a power seldom recognized by oppressor and oppressed alike- a power so integral to the new reality of God's reign. Its heart is the refusal to mirror evil, to let one's response be determined by what one deplors (127).

In his work, *Peace on Earth*, Joseph Grassi emphasizes the practical means Jesus suggests to make peace a reality. He focuses on the roots of peace and justice found in the non-violent and compassionate life. Grassi teaches that Luke's summary of Jesus' teaching in the "Sermon on the Plain" has a central place as a practical guide for believers to develop a life of peace and non-violence in imitation of Jesus as a non-violent Messiah. Luke's Jesus goes to the roots of true peace through the practice of non-violence, love, compassionate justice, true repentance, and forgiveness. External power and domination are renounced and replaced by inner power, humble service and a priority for the needs of the poor and marginalized (Web).

c) **Forgiveness of sins:** In Jesus' mission, there is no room for vengeance and so there must be no room for vengeance in the heart of his followers. This message permeates both the Gospel and Acts. It culminates in the account of Jesus praying for his crucifiers (Lk 23:34) which is echoed in the prayer of the dying Stephen (Acts 7:60). His prayer, together with the word of pardon to the criminal on the cross (both reported only by Luke), show that even while dying a slave's and criminal's

death, Jesus turned in love and forgiveness to outcasts and enemies, thus living out an ethic that was completely contrary to the militant ideology of both oppressor and oppressed.

Most of the biblical images of forgiveness involve eradication or removal of sin. The key to understanding forgiveness is that it views sin as something that needs to be eradicated. It revolves around solving a problem through either the removal of something or reconciliation with someone (Ryken 302). It is in this sense that Udo relates how unforgiveness has fueled conflicts in Africa, and calls for the entrenchment of the culture of forgiveness. He says

There is today in virtually every community in Africa a stockpile of accumulated hatred, prejudice and bitterness. This is engendered by wounded memories of failed political and religious promises. This situation has given rise to ethnic and religious conflict, as well as violence of all kinds in the land. But, as the forgiveness of sins was the hallmark of salvation in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, ... calls on everyone to develop and entrench the culture of forgiveness. All should follow the path of Jesus whose "fountain of forgiveness" never dried up even when he was hung on the cross. African church and societies cannot progress in the midst of hatred and selective association founded on the unjust structures. Let there be a Jesus' kind of forgiveness that anticipates the vindication of God; for it is God who will ultimately decide whether vengeance or forgiveness pays (257).

Having examined the Lukan context and challenge of peacemaking as exemplified in the mission of Jesus, next, we will survey the direction of discussions of the subject matter in the global ecumenical circles.



## 5. Global Discussions on Peace and Justice

Justice and peace have been ecumenical concerns for more than 100 years. The WCC has spoken out for and intervened in the interests of justice and peace continuously since its foundation in 1948. One of the most comprehensive statements on the subject was issued by the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC in 1983. It declared: "Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires anew international order based on justice for and within all nations and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is, as the prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness." (Kinnamon 207)

Responding to growing threats to survival, the same assembly at Vancouver initiated a conciliar process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. In the light of the new assessments after the end of the Cold War, lack of progress towards an international order of peace with justice and in the face of new wars and failing states, the WCC Central Committee in Johannesburg (1994) established a Programme to Overcome Violence (POV). A brief chronological account of this programme and of its related Peace campaigns may be useful here. Beginning with earlier WCC statements on violence and nonviolence:

1948 First Assembly, Amsterdam: Serious doubts were expressed about the applicability of the just war criteria still used as a guide by churches of several traditions. The Assembly affirmed that

"War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a degradation of man." (Kinnamon 207) An Assembly report on "The Church and the International Disorder" referred to the discovery of atomic and other new weapons and said that "In these circumstances the tradition of a just war, requiring a just cause and the use of just means, is now challenged. (The

inescapable question arises – can war now be an act of justice?" (Kinnamon 207)

1968 Fourth Assembly, Uppsala: During this assembly a "Martin Luther King Resolution" directed the Central Committee "to explore means by which the World Council could promote studies on nonviolent methods of achieving social change." This resolution was implemented, partly in response to the WCC consultation which led to the formation of the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR).

1975 Fifth Assembly, Nairobi: The Nairobi Assembly adopted a guideline on "The need to exercise a ministry of peace and reconciliation and to explore further the significance of nonviolent action for social change and the struggle against militarism." (Kinnamon 207)

1979 Central Committee, Jamaica: The Central Committee meeting in 1979 encouraged "further exploration and continuing implementation of the report on 'Violence and nonviolence and the struggle for Social Justice', paying serious attention to the rights of conscientious objectors and the need to promote peaceful resolution of conflicts." (Kinnamon 207)

1983 Sixth Assembly, Vancouver: During this assembly, the churches were called to "emphasize their willingness to live without the protection of armaments" (Kinnamon 207). In a statement on Peace and Justice, it affirmed that "... Christians should give witness to their unwillingness to participate in any conflict involving weapons of mass destruction or indiscriminate effect." And it instructed the WCC to "engage the churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of all creation (JPCI)".

The phrase "justice, peace and the integrity of creation" (JPIC), according to Niles, is a shorthand for a fuller statement: "To engage member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation should be a priority for World



Council programmes" (Kinnamon 207). Originally intended as a programme priority for the WCC by its Vancouver assembly (1983) and addressed to its member churches, it was subsequently expanded to include churches that are not members of the WCC, regional and national ecumenical organizations and all other movements committed to these issues (233).

In issuing this invitation, Vancouver was responding to a situation of crisis as outlined in the assembly statement on peace and justice: "Humanity is now living in the dark shadows of an arms race more intense and of systems of injustice more widespread than the world has ever known. Never before has the human race been as close as it is now to total self-destruction. Never before have so many lived in the grip of deprivation and oppression." (Kinnamon 233) It goes on to state what the Christian response to this situation should be: "The churches today are called to confess anew their faith and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice or threats to peace. The biblical vision of peace with justice for all is not one of several options for the followers of Christ but is an imperative for our times." (234) And it repeats what it considers to be the nature of the Christian response at this time: "The [single, though twofold] foundation of this emphasis should be confessing Christ as the life of the world and Christian resistance to the powers of death in racism, sexism, caste oppression, economic exploitation, militarism, violations of human rights, and the misuse of science and technology." (234)

In taking this position, Vancouver clearly shifted from the position of understanding Christian involvement in world affairs largely as a concern of Christian ethics - to translate the values of the kingdom into achievable social goals (the middle axioms of the responsible society). Instead, it placed the emphasis on confessing the faith, which calls for a new understanding of the missionary task of the church. To realize this intention, the assembly envisaged a conciliar process of mutual

commitment that would bring the churches together to take a common stand on the urgent issues concerning the survival of humankind. It envisioned such a council taking the churches to a new stage in the covenant relationship into which they had entered at the inaugural assembly at Amsterdam (1948).

In synthesizing Justice, peace and the integrity of creation, Vancouver intended these elements to be viewed as three aspects of one reality: as a single vision towards which we work and as three entry points into a common struggle in these areas. The addition of the term "integrity of creation" to help clarify "the biblical vision of peace with justice" was particularly useful. Besides alluding to the damage being done to the environment and the threat posed to the survival of life, the term also gave a new prominence to the doctrine of creation and the opportunity to reaffirm our Trinitarian faith, beginning with God as Creator and therefore also Liberator and Sustainer.

1990 World Convocation on JPIC, Seoul: Here, participants in the JPIC Convocation endorsed an appeal "to reject the spirit, logic and practice of deterrence based on weapons of mass destruction", and called for the development "of a culture of active nonviolence which is life-producing and is not a withdrawal from situations of violence and oppression but is a way to work for justice and liberation." (Kinnamon 440)

The convocation made ten affirmations, regarding the exercise of power as accountable to God, God's option for the poor, the equal value of all races and peoples, male and female as created in the image of God, truth is at the foundation of a community of free people, the peace of Jesus Christ, the creation as beloved of God, the earth as the Lord's, the dignity and commitment of the younger generation, and human rights as being given by God. The participants at Seoul also entered into covenant regarding four concrete issues: a just economic order and liberation from the bondage of foreign debt; the true security of all nations and peoples and a culture of non-violence; building a culture that can live in harmony with



creation's integrity and preserving the gift of the earth's atmosphere to nurture and sustain the world's life; the eradication of racism and discrimination on all levels for all peoples and the dismantling of patterns of behaviour that perpetuate the sin of racism.

1991 Seventh Assembly, Canberra: At its Canberra assembly (1991) the WCC gave prominence to JPIC. The assembly section reports have extensive discussions on JPIC, with specific recommendations on why and how it is to be continued. Reflecting the work in the sections, the assembly programme policy committee said:

Working towards justice, peace and the integrity of creation will help the churches understand their task in the world, provided we develop a rigorous social analysis, deepen our theological reflection and vigorously promote these concerns. This has emerged as the central vision of the WCC and its member churches (Kinnamon 124).

The theme was re-affirmed in the Harare assembly programme guidelines committee report.

1992 Central Committee, Geneva: Following a debate on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the Central Committee agreed "that active nonviolent action be affirmed as a clear emphasis in programmes and projects related to conflict resolution". A May meeting of international experts in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil developed a policy and plan of action for WCC engagement in micro-disarmament. And in response to calls coming from many people, a July POV reference committee meeting in Cyprus resolved to "encourage the Assembly to call for the years 2000-2010 as an Ecumenical Decade for a Culture of Peace". Thus it was that in December 1998 at the WCC Assembly in Harare/Zimbabwe, a WCC Central Committee member speaking from the floor requested the establishment of a Decade to Overcome Violence to continue the work already done through the POV.

In response, the Assembly decided to establish the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) 2001-2010.

## **6. Evaluation and Recommendations**

In the foregoing survey, some points of importance can be noted. First, it would not be difficult for anyone to appreciate the persistent concern and prominence given to the issues of justice and peace in the world by the global fellowship of churches. This is evidenced in the adoption of these issues as central to the vision and programmes of WCC since its beginning in 1948. Second, we can also notice the depth and richness, in terms of the quality of discussions that attend the subject matters at the global level. Of course, it cannot be anything less.

However, a look at the drivers of these discussions in the ecumenical circles reveals that they are mostly missiologists, historians and systematic theologians and less of biblical scholars. The few biblical scholars that may be seen are from the West and virtually none from African background. A casual look at the contributors of the Dictionary of Ecumenism as well as other ecumenical encyclopedia and documents of note will show this to be true. Given these observations, it will mean that discussions concerning justice and peace as well as on other important subject matters would lack a disciplined biblical approach. In the absence of the latter, generalizations as well as dogmatism will always carry the day.

Regarding the relationship between the Lukan theological framework for peacemaking and discussions on peace and justice by the ecumenical body, it is quite in place that both categories agree to the extent that peacemaking involves working to eradicate the structures that impede human prosperity and wholeness. Nonetheless, the eschatological dimension of peace and justice seems lacking and minimized in WCC's understanding and discussions vis-à-vis its vision and programmes. For



instance, since after the decade for overcoming violence has the world been free from violence or a better place? For Margot Kaessmann, the past ten years have not turned the world into a peaceful place. Since September 11, 2001 terrorism and the so called “war against terrorism” have caused nameless suffering. Terrorists like Bin Laden have seen themselves as in the name of Islam fulfilling God’s will. Nations that declare themselves a democracy have been led astray, using terms like “crusade” and “axis of evil” in order to legitimate military action and a seemingly legitimate demand to “kill or capture”! Trade of weapons is increasing fast and steadily. According to SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) the German part of the world market of weapons has risen to eleven percent between 2005 and 2010 only being surmounted by Russia with 23 and the USA with 30 percent. That means: our economies profit from violence and war that we lament. Churches cannot stay silent with regard to that dreadful evidence (Web).

However, the ecumenical vision, policy and programmes such the DOV have succeeded in some ways. According to Niles “The POV has succeeded in providing means by which churches and Christians who have not reached full ecumenical agreement can together take concrete steps to challenge and transform the global culture of violence in the direction of a universal culture of just peace. However, the theological discussion on the hard issues related to violence and nonviolence remains unavoidable.” (255).

There is, therefore, need for more biblical scholars and theologians, either as individuals or groups such as NABIS, to join and partner the world body. By so doing they will help steer discussions along authentic biblical authority. This is especially required of African associations such as NABIS because of the need to decolonize biblical interpretation.

## 7. Conclusion

In Luke's Gospel and Acts, peace means wholeness. It is the point when two great qualities, justice and peace – kiss one another. Peace or wholeness cannot exist where justice is lacking, and justice is what produces peace. Shalom means restoring right relationships, individually and communally. It means ensuring equality, well being for the other; justice in the shape for equal distribution of land and resources, being open to the concerns and needs of the poor and the oppressed. In short it means learning how to live well, and live well together.

The kissing of justice and peace is a symbol of the restoration of harmony. Jesus spoke of good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, release from debt, restoration of land, property, relationships – what is elsewhere called Jubilee. Jesus invitation is to 'live Jubilee'.

The vision, policies and programmes of the WCC towards the entrenchment of peace, justice and integrity of all creation are commendable. However, discussions on these issues deserve the touch of disciplined biblical scholarship to clarify and enrich them.

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