

Transforming Initiatives of Just Peacemaking Based on the Triadic Structure of the Sermon on the Mount

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I have worked to demonstrate that the Sermon on the Mount, from 5:21 to 7:12, is not dyadic antitheses, but triadic transforming initiatives. The Sermon is distorted if it is interpreted as "high ideals," or "hard teachings," or merely as renunciation; its fourteen transforming initiatives are realistic ways of deliverance from our vicious cycles—grace-based breakthroughs of the reign of God. Thus understood, the teachings become much more accessible and doable for living and action.¹ I presented what I believe is overwhelming evidence in an unusually long 42-page article in *The Journal of Biblical Literature*,² and it is receiving confirmation from New Testament scholars. I will not redo that argument here, but merely point to some of the conclusions.³

The leadership of the Matthew Group has asked me to show how I connect some of the triads in the Sermon with the peacemaking initiatives in the new consensus just peacemaking paradigm developed by twenty-three scholars for the ethics of peace and war, *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*.⁴ This is a very wide ocean of a request, and my boat (the space I have been given) is so small! So my objective is to sketch the logic in a way that I hope can be suggestive and fruitful, but is certainly not exhaustive. I will indicate some of my thinking on some representative practices, and then summarize others very briefly. On the way through, I want to celebrate the major new work by Willard Swartley, *The Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Eerdmans: 2006)—in this context for his insightful chapter on Matthew.

How Do We Get From There to Here?

I commend William Spohn's description of "analogical imagination" for the hermeneutical process of interpreting teachings of Jesus for guidance in Christian ethics.⁵ Direct copying, unimaginative and literalistic transposition from Jesus' social context to ours is anachronistic. But on the other hand, developing an allegedly Christian ethic that evades the way of Jesus is hardly Christian.⁶ Neither a hermeneutical procedure that derives legalistic rules nor one that reduces Jesus' way to an abstract principle or doctrine is faithful to the richness of Jesus' guidance. So Spohn asks us to immerse ourselves imaginatively into the narratives of Jesus in the gospels, as in his own Jesuit training in Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*. I identify with this, and

¹ I have recently published a popular version, *Living the Sermon on the Mount: A Practical Guide to Grace and Deliverance* (Jossey-Bass, 2006); and with David Gushee, a Christian ethics textbook, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (InterVarsity: 2003).

² "The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:21-7:12. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/2 (Summer, 2003), 267-308.

³ See appendix for some dialogue subsequent to the article.

⁴ Pilgrim Press: 1998/2004).

⁵ William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999), chapter 3.

⁶ John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972 and 1994), chapter 1, "The Possibility of a Messianic Ethic."

want to add somewhat more emphasis on the social context in Jesus' day than Spohn's virtue ethics focus sometimes produces. Spohn pays attention to social context in his most salient example: The act of footwashing was carried out by "a Gentile slave, someone who would not be contaminated by the impurity that clung to bare feet." So an analogous and imaginative act in our social context occurred when an Irish-American pastor in an inner-city parish in Baltimore, in a "foot-washing" worship ceremony, shined the shoes of twelve elderly African-American men. "Shining other people's shoes resonated with the original example of Jesus. It is the work of the poor, traditionally of poor black men who still bear the effects of chattel slavery. It was a shocking reversal to see the well-educated white pastor shine their shoes. The message was not democratic equality but the last becoming first and the first becoming last, the kingdom of God's reparation of justice long delayed."⁷

My own holistic hermeneutical method was first developed systematically in an article in *The Journal of Religious Ethics* (Spring, 1977), and is partially explained in *Kingdom Ethics*, chapter 3. The four levels of moral discourse that I define are particular judgments, rules, principles, and basic or ultimate convictions. In dialogue with theologian James McClendon, ethicist James Gustafson, and philosopher H.D. Aiken, I seek to show these are four philosophically distinct levels. Richard Hays, for whose work I have wholesale respect, has more recently also advocated a four-level mode of reasoning, with rules, principles, paradigms, and symbolic world.⁸ Although Hays' "paradigms" are important in ethics, they do not define a distinct level of discourse: they may function on any or all of the four levels—as particular judgments, rules, principles, or basic convictions. His "symbolic world" is my basic convictions level. He highlights two variables within that level, "representations of the human condition" and "depictions of the character of God." This exactly matches my two variables of God and human nature, but I also define other crucial variables at this level: Christlikeness and justice, justification and sanctification, and mission of the church.

The hermeneutical point that Hays, Spohn, and I are arguing is that a biblical teaching should not be taken only at the rules level, or only at the principles level, but that we also need attention to the more basic conviction or symbolic world level. At the same time, Hays and I criticize an overreaction against rules and principles in some narrative ethics: rules and principles have a place in biblical narrative and in contemporary ethics, if understood as dependent on the deeper theological levels and not legalistically.

Additionally, my holistic hermeneutical method points not only to the dimension of modes or levels of reasoning (above), but also to three other dimensions: basic convictions, perception of the social context, and loyalties and interests. A fully self-critical effort to interpret a teaching of Jesus analogically in our context requires attention to these four dimensions. For example, both Spohn and Hays pay attention to the meaning of the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching as a guiding factor for our hermeneutics, and David Gushee and I think we are making a contribution on the characteristics of the reign of God in *Kingdom Ethics*.⁹

Hays argues we should look for echoes of a teaching in different parts of the New Testament. Willard Swartley has done so in his *Covenant of Peace*. But that is not what I was asked to do here, and I can display only a few hints in this brief space.

⁷ Spohn, 52-54.

⁸ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 209.

⁹ See especially chapters 1 and 2, *et passim*.

Drop Everything and Go Make Peace with Your Adversary

My assigned purpose is to show how I connect some of the triads in the Sermon on the Mount with the peacemaking initiatives in the new consensus just peacemaking paradigm. I begin with the first triad in the central section of the Sermon on the Mount—Matthew 5:21-26. First, Matthew's Jesus points us to the *traditional teaching* of the Ten Commandments against murder. Second he *diagnoses* ongoing anger and insulting as a *vicious cycle* that leads to judgment (5:22). No imperative, no command against anger, is present. Rather, its central verb is a continuous-action participle. (Had the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount commanded us never to be angry, that would have been a hard teaching, a high ideal, impossible to practice. Instead he diagnoses a vicious cycle that leads to judgment, destruction, and murder, as when a doctor diagnoses an illness that will lead to death if I do not take actions of treatment.) The third member of the triad, vv. 23–26, is the *transforming initiative*—not merely a negative prohibition of murder or anger, but a way of deliverance. It is a command to take initiatives that transform the relationship from anger to peacemaking. To avoid ever being angry would be an impossible ideal, but to go and make peace with a brother or sister is the way of deliverance from anger that fits prophetic prophecies of the reign of God in which peace replaces war. This command is repeated: Quickly make peace with your accuser on the way to court.

I am convinced that this teaching interprets the first murder, by Cain of Abel. That is the first murder, and Jesus begins with the OT command against murder. In both cases a brother is giving his offering to God at the altar, but is angry at his brother, and is admonished by God to do right, or in Jesus' case to do right is specified as to *drop* your worship, *go* to the brother, *make* peace, then come back and *give* your gift of worship; quickly *make peace* with your accuser.¹⁰ Here in the climax, the part of the teaching that goes beyond God's command to Cain, Jesus specifies the transforming initiative with five imperatives in the Greek.

On the rules level, this is a direct command: go make peace quickly. It is not an ideal, a virtue, an option, and certainly not a prohibition or a hard teaching: we talk things over with others regularly to smooth out relations and make some peace. Diplomats do it, parents do it, co-workers do it.

On the principle level, making peace with your adversary is of prior importance to worship. "Those who say 'I love God' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars. For those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20; cf. Hosea 6:6, which is quoted in Matt 9:13 and 12:7). By this principle, Cain's gift at the altar was unacceptable to God because he had anger against his brother and was unwilling to go and make peace (and learn from his brother how to be a more successful and less envious farmer).

On the basic convictions level, "It participates in the way of grace that God took in Jesus when there was enmity between God and humans: God came in Jesus to make peace. This is the breakthrough of the kingdom that we see happening in Jesus. It is the way of grace that Jesus is calling us to participate in."¹¹ In *Kingdom Ethics*, our first chapter is what to us is an important

¹⁰ W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, vol. I (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 510; Pinchas Lapide, *The Sermon on the Mount: Utopia or Program for Action?* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 49; Dale Allison, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 66-78; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (London: SPCK and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

¹¹ *Kingdom Ethics*, 135.

argument that the characteristics of the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching all have their context in Isaiah's passages that prophesy God's coming to reign and deliver us, and that seven characteristics are crucial in that reign: peacemaking, delivering justice, healing the blind, joy, presence, deliverance, and return.¹² Furthermore, God's coming to make peace in Jesus is the basic Christian conviction of the incarnation, which is central to our ethic of "incarnational discipleship."

Jesus incarnates the way of going to talk to make peace not only in his entering into the midst of the lives of many marginalized people, but also entering into the midst of the high priests and authorities in Jerusalem at certain threat to his own life. Notice the frequency of *erchomai* in the Gospel of Mark, eighty times, but especially clustered in Jesus' entry into the midst of the lives of the marginalized in 1:21-3:12; his entry into the lives of the demoniac, Jairus, and the woman with the hemorrhage in 5:1-43; in entry into Jerusalem in 11:1-33; and in his entry into death in the anointing and the Garden in 14:1-72. Also notice the significant use of *eisporuomai* as a marker in three of these passages. One dimension of Jesus' going to his adversaries to make peace has caused puzzlement for many commentators: Jesus doesn't only talk sweetness and light, but often confronts and calls to repentance, in direct line with the prophets of Israel, whose tradition he identified with. I propose that those hawkish and self-righteous politicians who refuse to talk with their adversaries because they see talking as a reward for the righteous are missing Jesus' point. Conflict resolution as Jesus practices it often includes confrontation and a call for repentance. It also includes action to remove the log from our own eyes—that is to repent of our own self-righteousness. Here I believe attention to Jesus' practice of his own teaching redefines conflict resolution in a way that moves it out of the context of ideals for the "righteous," and into the realism of honest confrontation in pursuit of mutual peacemaking.

What is the social context for Jesus' teaching here? I am unwilling to fence this teaching in narrowly so that it fits only one narrow context—economic disputes in villages in Galilee in Jesus' day,¹³ or anger at Roman occupiers, or anger between Jewish Christians in Antioch and synagogues that they have recently split from, or disagreements within Matthew's congregation about how to form their new identity. It is grounded in a basic conviction about God's action in bringing the reign of God. Therefore, its application to all of life. Davies and Allison argue cogently that the mention of Sanhedrin, altar, and prison do not fit a narrow interpretation as only applying to a fellow Christian "brother."¹⁴ Willard Swartley argues similarly with reference to

¹² Willard Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 77-79, 83, *et passim*, nicely develops the theme of healing as fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, and sees most of these characteristics of the kingdom.

¹³ I interpret Richard Horsley's limitation of Jesus' peacemaking to economic conflict in villages, with no reference to Rome, in his *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, as a reaction against Hengel's apparent advocacy of passivity as the alternative to Brandon's Jesus-as-a-zealot interpretation. A transforming initiatives interpretation may help cure this dualistic split between passivity and violent revolution. Horsley now has Rome very much in mind in his *Jesus and Empire*. Christopher Bryan's *Render to Caesar: Jesus, The Early Church, and the Roman Superpowers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) makes much sense to me. See also Warren Carter's books on the same subject, and Craig Evans' summary of Rome's claims for its emperors in his commentary on Mark. I interpret Jesus in Matthew as indeed concerned about Rome, especially concerned that Israel should not foment hatred against Rome but make peace not war.

¹⁴ Davies and Allison, 512-513.

"the mixed Jewish and Gentile crowds depicted in Matthew's Galilean narrative as well as Jesus' response to the centurion., and the larger New Testament canon.¹⁵

What does this mean in our context of anger by Iranians, Palestinians, Iraqis, Lebanese against U.S. policy that seems anti-Islam and anti-Arab to them, and U.S. anger at terrorists who attack children, women, the elderly—noncombatants who are not fighting a war. (Our context also includes anger and hostility among ideologies, in families, and in churches.)

I suggest we employ a hermeneutical method of analogy, asking what practice or practices in our context corresponds to and carries out Jesus' command to go and make peace with our adversary. A method of analogy is not an unimaginative and legalistic act of obedience. Nor is it an unimaginative assertion that Jesus' or Matthew's context was different from ours and therefore Jesus' teaching does not apply. Nor is it to reduce the teaching to a thin principle not fleshed out in disciplined practice. Rather it is to ask what kind of practice in our context functions as implementation of the intention in Jesus' teaching in first-century context.

I suggest this is the practice of cooperative conflict resolution. The discipline of conflict resolution or conflict transformation is extensively developed in our time as an academic discipline as well as a regular practice in labor relations, international relations, etc. In the ethic of *Just Peacemaking*, it is called *cooperative* conflict resolution because of our emphasis on treating the adversary as a cooperative partner—with his or her customs, culture, faith, and initiatives—as contributors to the search for a solution. We seek to correct Enlightenment-rationalistic understandings of conflict resolution and replace that with more realistic understandings that I think learn from Jesus' practices.

If someone would say that if one particular administration refused to talk with adversaries in North Korea, Iran, and Palestine, it would be acting opposite to the way of Jesus and the effective practices of just peacemaking, disempowering itself from being able to solve problems with these adversaries, and therefore less likely to be effective in solving problems with them, that would be a particular judgment. A particular judgment is not a general rule, but a judgment about a particular case.

Nonviolent Direct Action and Independent Initiatives

Matthew 5:38-43 has eye for eye as the traditional teaching, and "not to retaliate by revengeful or evil means" as the vicious cycle. ("Do not resist evil" is a bad translation. My translation concurs with Clarence Jordan, Willard Swartley, and the apostle Paul in Romans 12:17-21.) The transforming initiatives all command us not simply to comply but to invent a surprising initiative—not only the right cheek but the cheek of equal dignity, not only the shirt but also the coat, not only the first mile but the second mile, not only giving but also lending. Willard Swartley argues that Walter Wink's interpretation of these initiatives has much to commend it, but it emphasizes the shock value of confrontation too aggravatingly. Instead, he suggests, Luise Schottroff's account is more persuasive, especially since it pays attention to the central teaching of love for the enemy, which precedes it in Luke (and climaxes it in Matthew).¹⁶ I have argued for a chiasmic structure in the Sermon on the Plain, in which Luke 6:32-35—the teaching on love for enemies—is the pivotal core—

¹⁵ Willard M. Swartley, 58, 67.

¹⁶ Swartley, 64-65 and 68-72.

thus also supporting Swartley and Schottroff.¹⁷ I understand Jesus' teaching on love as "delivering love," which includes a confrontational dimension, as in the parable of the Compassionate Samaritan.¹⁸ "Delivering love" enters incarnationally into the midst of the concerns of the other and confronts where needed. "Delivering love" may be seen as basically identical with Swartley's understanding, with our shared attention to Jesus' connection with the prophetic tradition and especially Isaiah, and as integrating Schottroff's and Wink's insights. Wink's argument is based on 5:38-42; Schottroff adds 5:43-48; I add the structure of the fourteen triads from 5:21-7:12 as consistently climaxing in transforming initiatives. We each developed this independently of each other, and thus provide some mutual confirmation.

Delivering love that confronts adversaries nonviolently, hoping for transformation in the adversary, in ourselves, and in our relationship, has an analogous practice in our time of "nonviolent resistance." John Howard Yoder shows that the strategy of nonviolent resistance was practiced three times by Jews against Roman governors at about Jesus' time.¹⁹ Therefore we do not need much "analogical imagination" to suggest this as a crucial practice of just peacemaking in our time.²⁰ It is spreading throughout the world, toppling dictators, transforming nations from dictatorships to democracies, achieving better justice while preventing revolutionary war.

Less widely known, but highly important as a practice of just peacemaking, is the strategy of "independent initiatives."²¹ It has been working to achieve the Partial Test Ban Treaty, reduce nuclear weapons, help end the Cold War, open up negotiations for the Oslo Accords, and it is the key to the Roadmap for Peace between Israel and Palestine.

In *Just Peacemaking*, we write that these two strategies have several features in common (which connect them by analogy with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:38-42 as well as with the basic conviction of a theology of grace and the reign of God in which God takes the initiative for reconciliation and does not merely wait passively):

These...practices embody the same seven essential ingredients of Christian peacemaking: (1) they are not simply passive withdrawal, but proactive ways of grace that empower us to take peacemaking initiatives; (2) they acknowledge the log in our own eye and take our own responsibility for peacemaking rather than simply judging the other; (3) they affirm the dignity and interests of the enemy, even while rejecting sinful or wrong practices; (4) they confront the other with an invitation to make peace and justice; (5) they invite into community in a way that includes, rather than excludes, former enemies and outcasts; (6) they are historically embodied or situated—they are in fact happening in our history; (7)

¹⁷ "The Politics of Jesus in the Sermon on the Plain," in *The Wisdom of the Cross*, ed. Hauerwas, Huebner, and Nation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 150-167—gently modifying François Bovon's insightfulness.

¹⁸ *Kingdom Ethics*, chapter 16.

¹⁹ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, chapter 5, "The Possibility of Nonviolent Resistance."

²⁰ *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices*, chapter 1.

²¹ *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices*, chapter 2.

they are empirically validated—they are making a significant difference in international relations and domestic conflict.²²

Being historically validated, in my ethical method, is an analogous implementation of "by their fruits you will know them." In our work developing the just peacemaking theory, we were aware that our social context includes a private/public dualism in which Jesus' way and also peacemaking get interpreted as idealistic and individualistic. To counter this distortion, we intentionally focused on ten *practices*—not ten ideals—and on historical and political-science evidence showing each practice is in fact working to prevent some wars. Furthermore, with the human nature variable in mind, a realistic understanding of human sin argues that these practices need to be institutionalized in policies, international networks, and laws in order to check and balance concentrations of political, economic, and military power.

Include Your Enemies in the Community of Neighbors

Jesus' teaching of love for the enemy is his interpretation of Leviticus 19:17-18 on loving your neighbor as yourself. The question was, "who is my neighbor?" Jesus based his answer on a basic conviction about God's nature: God gives sun and rain to just and unjust alike. Therefore we are to include enemies as well as friends in the community of neighbors. The teaching is not only about attitudes or only about individual relations; it is a teaching about inclusion in community, based on God as sovereign over relations with diverse adversaries.

What is the analogous just peacemaking practice in our time? In *Just Peacemaking*, the outstanding historian of international relations, Paul Schroeder, demonstrates that four trends are developing increased cooperative networks among nations in our time, by comparison with previous centuries. The continued existence and success of organizations like NATO, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the UN, and others go a long way to make it demonstrable fact. These four trends are the decline in the utility of war; the priority of trade and the economy over war; the strength of international exchanges, communications, transactions, and networks; and the gradual ascendancy of liberal representative democracy and a mixture of welfare-state and laissez-faire market economy. The new introduction to the second edition of *Just Peacemaking* adds a fifth reality: terrorist networks are in perhaps eighty nations, and so cannot be combated by one nation acting alone. International cooperation is needed to gather intelligence, cut off funding, arrest terrorists, and especially to grow national cultures that oppose recruitment to terrorism. And international cooperation is needed to reduce the anger that leads people to overcome their normal human opposition to suicide in the act of massacring noncombatants. Unilateral domination by military action is leading to a United States that is relatively isolated, disdained, and hated in much of the world. It has contributed to an increase in the number of terrorist incidents and the number of deaths from terrorism each year since the Iraq War.²³

²² *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices*, 19.

²³ "The U.S. State Department's annual report on global terrorism...concludes that the number of reported terrorist incidents and deaths has increased exponentially in the three years since the United States invaded Iraq.... The report said there were 111,111 attacks that caused 14,602 deaths in 2005. Those figures stand in contrast to prior State Department reports, which cited 208 terrorist attacks that caused 625 deaths in 2003; and 3,168 attacks that caused 1,907 deaths in 2004" (*Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 2006, pg. A.7). Secretary Rumsfeld has admitted that more

Therefore, the just peacemaking practices for our time analogous to "include your enemy in the community of neighbors" is "Work with emerging cooperative forces in the international system," and "Strengthen the United Nations and International Efforts for Cooperation and Human Rights." We wrote—well prior to the George W. Bush presidency—that empirical data show that nations that do engage in such international cooperation make war and have war made against them less frequently. The present administration has withdrawn support from nine international treaties, removed the protection of international law from prisoners and therefore made them vulnerable to abuse and torture, ignored the evidence from the international inspectors in Iraq that weapons of mass destruction were not there, and worked to weaken the authority of the United Nations. Just peacemaking theory predicts a greater likelihood of war as a result. This administration has declared three wars (against terrorism, Afghanistan, and Iraq), and has seen a steadily increasing international hostility against it. I do not know of a historical precedent for declaring three wars in one four-year presidential term.

Practices of Economic Justice, Human Rights, and Democracy

Matthew 6:19-34 teaches practices of economic justice: not hoarding money for ourselves, but making God's justice and God's reign our priority. In the limited space that I have, I cannot make the argument for four dimensions of justice as a central characteristic of the reign of God, and central to Jesus' many confrontations of the power structure in Jerusalem and the Pharisees, that I have developed in *Kingdom Ethics*, chapters 1 and 17, and also in *Living the Sermon on the Mount*. They are deliverance from economic oppression of the poor, domination, violence, and exclusion of the outcasts.

The analogous just peacemaking practice that follows quite naturally for our time is "Foster Just and sustainable economic development." This is spelled out in the longest and fullest of the ten chapters in *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices*, chapter 6. It makes significant implicit connections with Jesus' practices beyond what I can try to spell them out in the present essay.

In addition, the twenty-three interdenominational scholars who developed just peacemaking theory advocate another analogous justice practice in our time: "Advance democracy, human rights, and religious liberty." Subsequent to the publication of *Just Peacemaking*, New Testament scholar Christopher Marshall has written a theologically sophisticated and highly perceptive argument for grounding human rights in biblical ethics.²⁴ Marshall demonstrates that "human rights categories have become an almost universal currency of moral debate."²⁵ He argues that

If Christians are to engage meaningfully with the great moral issues of our day, they will need to master the rhetoric of rights and to use it sensitively to articulate key Christian

terrorists are being recruited than the U.S. is killing or capturing. "According to the Brookings Institution, the number of incidents of sectarian violence [in Iraq] recorded in May 2006 was 250, compared with 20 in May 2005 and 10 in May 2004" (*Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 2006, pg. B.11). Go-it-alone militarist strategy is not achieving security from terrorism; it is increasing anger and terrorism.

²⁴ Christopher D. Marshall, *Crowned with Glory & Honor: Human Rights in the Biblical Tradition* (Pandora, Herald, and Lime Grove House: 2001). For a New-Testament-based understanding of restorative justice very similar to my "delivering justice," see Christopher Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Eerdmans, and Lime Grove House: 2001).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17; cf. 26.

insights and perspectives. At the same time, Christians will also have to recognize the limits of a rights-based morality.... A one-sided emphasis on individual rights can obscure the characteristic Christian stress on duty and self-sacrifice.... Yet ...the notion of human rights is deeply, and uniquely, grounded in the biblical story and Christians therefore have something special to say about human rights.²⁶

I would not do justice to his argument by trying to summarize it in this short space. Marshall interprets scripture as narrative and paradigm, a la Richard Hays. His focal convictions are Creation, Cultural Mandate, Covenant, Christ, Church, and Consummation.

What I can add are three points documented by *Just Peacemaking*: (1) The worldwide pressure for human rights, supported by many churches, human rights organizations, and President Carter's building human rights into U.S. economic aid decisions, have provided steady pressure on many governments. Almost all Latin American nations have moved from authoritarian or dictatorial governments toward democracy, and something similar could be said of many Asian and East and Central European nations. (2) Until Israel's recent attacks on Hamas-led Gaza and Lebanon, no democracy with human rights had made a war against another democracy with human rights for a century. (3) Therefore, advancing human rights and thus pressuring for democracy has had a major influence for preventing war and moving toward justice. *Just Peacemaking* supports president Bush's effort to spread democracy, but it explicitly opposes seeking to do that by making war to seek regime change. The multiple deaths, hatred, religious and ethnic conflict in Iraq after such a war are vivid demonstrations of the problems that arise, by contrast with the many countries that have recently made that transition by means of nonviolent direct action, a push for human rights, and pressures from cooperative forces in the international system. *Just Peacemaking* also supports president Bush's commitment to increase economic aid to overcome poverty in the Millennium Challenge by \$5 billion, and would urge Congress to make that commitment a reality.

Acknowledge Responsibility for Conflict and Injustice, And seek Repentance and Forgiveness

Repentance and forgiveness are of course central to Jesus' message. They need little argument here. We see a call to the practice of repentance in Matthew 7:1-5 on taking the log out of our own eye, and I believe this teaching is likely to connect with the petition in the Lord's Prayer for forgiveness of our sins as we forgive others.²⁷

Donald Shriver has argued eloquently that the public/private split made a serious error in limiting "forgiveness" to individual relations. Nations cannot live together peacefully without some practice of national forgiveness. And in fact the practice of leaders acknowledging error and apologizing to other nations has spread from Dietrich Bonhoeffer and German churches to German president Von Weizsäcker and Chancellor Willy Brandt, and presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, the previous Prime Minister of Japan who apologized in writing to South Korea for war atrocities, and leaders who have apologized to Rwanda for not intervening to

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁷ I develop the teaching on forgiveness in *Living the Sermon on the Mount*, chapter 8, and throughout that book I suggest a proposal for how Jesus' Prayer may coordinate the order of the Sermon on the Mount. I also support that proposal in the *JBL* article, as an interesting question, independent from the much more solid evidence for the fourteen transforming initiatives.

prevent the massacre there. In two remarkably eloquent and moving books, Shriver shows this spreading practice of just peacemaking eloquently.²⁸

Reduce Offensive Weapons and Weapons Trade

Wars between nations have become less frequent in recent years because something like the practices of just peacemaking are making a difference, and because weapons have become so powerful that the cost of the retaliation is so great that war does not pay.²⁹ The exception occurs when one nation believes it has such overpowering offensive capability that the adversary cannot retaliate. Therefore, a just peacemaking practice is to reduce offensive weapon capability, including the trade in offensive weapons.

As does Willard Swartley, I connect this in Matthew with Jesus' admonition to put up the sword, and "those who take up the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt 26:51-52). Swartley's discussion of this passage is instructive,³⁰ but his whole book may be seen as supporting this theme throughout the New Testament. Of course, this discussion has produced many books in Christian ethics. I simply want to clarify that the debate between pacifism and just war theory focuses on the question of permission to make war. that diverts attention from the equally important question of practices that prevent war. These are two different questions. Most authors of the new paradigm of just peacemaking are just war theorists, and some are pacifists. They disagree on the permissibility of just war, but they agree that practices of just peacemaking need to be made articulate and to be enacted. Just peacemaking theory does not answer the question of the permissibility of war. Its question is a different one, and we think an equally important one. I believe Jesus teaches more about the transforming initiatives of just peacemaking practices than about the impermissibility of war. To have successful public debate, both questions need a widely understood paradigm around which to cluster the debate. Now at last we have a paradigm to guide debates about the obligatoriness of practices that are in fact working to prevent wars. It was deeply influenced by serious wrestle with the ethics of Jesus. And it is spreading extensively.

²⁸ Donald Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Honest Patriots: Loving a Country Enough to Remember its Misdeeds* (Oxford University: 2005).

²⁹ Most wars in recent years have been civil wars, insurgency wars, and terrorism within nations.

³⁰ Swartley, 76.

Appendix: Some dialogue subsequent to the initial JBL article

I am grateful to several New Testament scholars who affirmed the transforming-initiative structure prior to publication. They are cited in a footnote of gratitude in that article. Since then, two scholars have published affirmation, and if anyone learns of other comments in the future, I would be grateful for notice.

I celebrate Willard Swartley's major work, *the Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Research*. It helps New Testament scholars notice the central theme of peacemaking in the New Testament in its semantic and theological context. I am also naturally thankful for his clear statements of affirmation of my efforts on the Sermon on the Mount. He writes, for example, the "structural analysis is impressive and persuasive, in that the repeated use of the same grammatical features for the three elements (negative command, descriptive indicative, and imperative verbs) are hardly coincidental." We are in agreement, and I need not say more.

I am also deeply grateful for Dale Allison's graciousness in writing, "I accept the correction of Glen H. Stassen, 'The Fourteen Triads of the sermon on the Mount,' *JBL* 122 (2003), pp. 267-308, that these are not appended illustrations but climactic 'transforming initiatives,'" and that Stassen's "scheme—'Traditional righteousness' + 'Vicious cycle plus judgment' + 'Transforming initiative' —does work remarkably well for much of the Sermon on the Mount and is a contribution to interpretation."³¹

I do want to make clear that I dedicated the article to Dale's and my teacher, W. D. Davies, and that I put Dale Allison and Don Hagner in the same category of highly respected predecessors. I was not "correcting" Allison so much as arguing for a correction in the broad tradition of interpretation. I know of no one who had proposed the transforming initiatives structure for each of the fourteen teachings previously, so by no means was I singling out Allison for correction. Despite the extent of the "correction," it has been accepted by all the New Testament scholars I have heard from, and I know of no dissent. It was gracious of Allison to write so supportively.

Allison and I also agree on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount in grace. He sees the theme of grace in 4:23-5:2; 5:3-12; 6:25-34; and 7:7-11. He concludes: "The Sermon on the Mount sets forth God's grace in the past (4:23-5:2), in the present (6:25-34; 7:7-11), and in the future (5:3-12); and this circumstance is the theological context for 5:13-7:12. Amos Wilder was justified in writing that Matt. 5-7 offers 'not so much ethics of obedience as ethics of grace.'"³² The "correction" that the transforming initiatives structure suggests is that this theme of grace rightly identified in these defining parts of the Sermon applies also to the other parts. All the central section is consistent with Allison and Wilder's observation here; it is consistently transforming initiatives of deliverance, and never a negative prohibition. I am arguing for a correction of the old tendency to speak of "hard" teachings or a "hard" road. The transforming initiatives are where the imperatives occur, and they are all breakthroughs of grace; not one is a legalistic negative prohibition. I would not write "Before delivering his hard imperatives, Matthew's Jesus first encourages and consoles the faithful." Nor "After the Beatitudes, uncompromising demands constantly bombard the disciples. Respite comes only in two places, in 6:25-34 and in 7:7-11." I believe the transforming initiatives structure places the emphasis on

³¹ Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), note 24, page 183, and note 41, page 193.

³² *Ibid.*, 198.

grace-based initiatives of deliverance, so that the central section is consistent with what Allison has well pointed out about the other sections. Nor would I write of "the hard road (7:14)." The Greek says the road is narrow, not hard.³³

The transforming initiatives structure indicates that Jesus' teaching about anger in 5:22 is no command not to be angry, but a participle functioning as a diagnosis of a vicious cycle that leads to judgment and sometimes to murder. As Allison writes in his 1999 book, early Christian tradition did not clearly know an injunction against all anger: Eph 4:26; Mark 1:41 (where the original text may have had Jesus "moved with anger"), Mark 3:5, Matt 21:12–17. . . . For the most part later Christian tradition followed Eph 4:26 and did not demand the elimination of all anger—only anger misdirected." Matthew 23 shows Jesus angry, and in 23:17 Jesus calls his opponents fools.³⁴ A dyadic reading that treats Matt. 5:22 as if it were an imperative leads to insoluble contradictions. Allison has accepted the transforming initiative structure; this means Jesus did not here command us not to be angry or not to call anyone a fool; Jesus commanded us, in effect, not to let the sun go down on our anger, but to drop everything and go make peace. This means Allison need no longer treat what he calls the "command" against anger as an insoluble contradiction, as he does in his 2005 book.³⁵

Allison also gives truly extensive support for Matthew's (and likely Jesus') proclivity for triads, and avoidance of dyads.³⁶

Allison and I also agree in seeing symmetry in the section whose structure has not yet reached scholarly consensus—6:19-7:12. We both see extensive evidence that 6:19-34 and 7:1-12 are parallel in structure. We both see that "symmetry and triads are the compositional keys."³⁷ In his recent chapter here cited, he presents additional supporting evidence, as my *JBL* article also presented additional supporting evidence. Our one difference is that he does not see the transforming initiative pattern in 6:19-7:12, although he refrains from offering evidence for his disagreement.³⁸

The pivotal difference is that his scheme has 7:6 as concluding the unit on not judging but taking the log out of our eye in 7:1-5, while I see that unit as having clearly concluded with verse 5, and verse 6 beginning the next unit. The consistent pattern throughout all the fourteen triads except the incomplete third unit on divorce is to conclude with an imperative that shows the way of deliverance, plus an explanation. 7:5 is clearly contains the imperative that climaxes the teaching: "first take the log out of your own eye." The explanation that ties directly to it is "then you will see clearly to see the speck in your brother's eye." This finishes the unit, as clearly as a unit can be finished.

Verse 6, about dogs and pigs and holy things, is not about logs, seeing, judging, and repenting. It is a new topic. In his new essay, Allison sees that 7:6 begins with "a proverb or traditional line."³⁹ Throughout the other thirteen triads, a traditional teaching begins a new triad.

³³ Ibid., 178, 179, and 197. See my *Living the Sermon on the Mount*, 186-188.

³⁴ Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1999), 66 and 71.

³⁵ Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 237, 246-8. Allison is supported by his pointing out that Matthew softens Mark 3:5's explicit statement that Jesus was angry, but then he has to discuss (he does it insightfully) Matthew's clear portrayal of Jesus' anger in turning over the tables, and Jesus' clear anger throughout Matthew 23, as well as his calling his opponents "fools."

³⁶ Ibid., 198-215.

³⁷ Ibid., 188.

³⁸ Ibid., 193, note 41.

³⁹ Ibid., 190.

The verse begins with a negative command; a negative command consistently begins a new unit in 6:2, 6:5, 6:7, 6:16, 6:19, 6:24 or 25, and 7:1, and if consistency applies at all, surely also 7:6. But Allison's scheme places 7:6 not as the beginning of the concluding unit, but as the trailing end of the previous unit—which it does not fit, since it is not about judging and taking the log out of my own eye. It leaves 7:6 without convincing context.

Two other small problems: Allison writes sometimes as if a new unit begins at 6:24, and sometimes as if it begins at 6:25.⁴⁰ Allison sees 6:25-34 and 7:7-11 as "encouragements," a form which is anomalous, not occurring anywhere else in the central section, and lacking in triadic form, while I show they fit the triadic transforming initiative structure characteristic of the other units of the central section of the Sermon.

But I repeat: we have come very close, and I have no desire to disparage Allison's careful and insightful work. His help in dialogue as well as his extensive writing assisted me greatly in my small writing, and I am deeply grateful. I consider Allison an ally, and a brilliant one at that. I hope my effort to support what I think is a small improvement is not read by anyone to change that. I am arguing for a significant change in perception, and I know that habitual perceptions do not change easily.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 189.