

Preface

This short book started around the year 2000 as an interview project. I was a graduate student at the conflict-transformation program at Eastern Mennonite University where the two streams of peace studies and justice studies were held together in one program. In the one stream, scholar-practitioners were engaged in international peacebuilding and in the work of conflict transformation. In the other scholar-practitioners were working at restorative justice. These two groups worked in different contexts, with different methods and with somewhat different goals. Yet they knew that at some level they had much in common. The goal of my research project was to test if there was some kind of shared imagination that guided their work. I interviewed faculty and surveyed much literature and tried to come up with a way of speaking about the shared imagination that guided their work. The goal was to listen to people who were acting their way into a new way of thinking. The goal was to learn how thought and action overlapped, or how those working at the concrete practice of peace and justice engaged and incarnated peace and justice in settings of conflict and violence. What emerged we called the justpeace ethic.¹

1. Sawatsky, "JustPeace Ethic."

As I began to deepen my understanding and practice of peace and restorative justice, I often came back to those guiding virtues—to analyze a conflict, to design a peacebuilding project, to evaluate restorative-justice literature, to teach the heart of peacebuilding and restorative justice to undergraduate students. I realized the justpeace ethic that had emerged through the interview project had connections and ramifications well beyond the narrow context from which it first arose. The second manifestation of the project was to expand the project from a narrow interview project of like-minded people, namely Christian (Mennonite) peace and justice workers, to a more general audience and focus, namely, the restorative justice movement. With the help of a grant from Menno Simons College, I attended the sixth International Conference on Restorative Justice, where I presented the paper “Restorative Values: Where Means and Ends Converge.”² This was an attempt to show how the practices and theories of restorative justice could be both understood and challenged from the perspective of the guiding virtues. That paper was well received. Simon Fraser University put the paper on their most-popular-essays Web site.³

I started hearing from a diverse collection of people on how helpful the paper was to them: the Thames Valley Police in the United Kingdom, a traditional elder from a First Nations group in Canada, a Chilean domestic-abuse recovery program, a high school alternative-justice measures program. And Howard Zehr kept urging me to find some way to share this framework more broadly. I knew I needed to take the project a step further.

2. Sawatsky, “Restorative Values.”

3. Online: <http://www.sfu.ca/cfrj/popular.html>.

This third manifestation is in your hands. In this short book I try to bring together the past versions with a fresh approach and focus. This book is written as a guide to moral thinking and acting as it relates to peace- and justice building. The taking-off point is still the virtues that guide the work of justice building and peacebuilding, but by now my understanding of these virtues has been further shaped by the people I have shared my life with. These include people of many different faith or spiritual traditions. I am a Christian peacebuilder deeply influenced by my Mennonite roots. This particular orientation has led me to be keen to learn how God has moved in and through other faith traditions. My work and research have allowed me to explore some of these connections in relation to a range of other faith traditions. These explorations inform and sometimes even transform how I read, participate, and practice within the Christian tradition. This book then is also a result of such spiritual cross-fertilization.

In this short book I try to highlight how a justpeace ethic comes out of grassroots practitioners, connects with a broad section of scholars and practitioners, and draws on various faith traditions. My hope is that it creates a fruitful meeting space where people from diverse traditions can hold on to their particularity while drawing on common aspects of a shared imagination of just peacebuilding. Such a space might open up paths for more fruitful peacebuilding.

Included in this book are ten sections of questions related to ten virtues of justpeace building. For each section, I list a number of questions arising out of the virtue. These questions are an attempt to let the light of this virtue shine on various aspects of our imagination and work. Each section asks questions about eliciting vision, about design issues of

peace and justice initiatives, about intervention issues, and about evaluation issues. Practitioners or scholars of peace and restorative justice can use these questions as they try to embody justpeace within a particular location. Church groups and other communities can also use these questions as they reflect on the resources within their communities that might lead to justpeace.

As a Mennonite Christian, I try to draw out some of the aspects of my traditions that come into focus as one looks through the lens of justpeace ethics. I try to point toward ways that other faith traditions also share some of these teachings, but it is, of course, up to people from those traditions to decide if the justpeace ethic presented here is indeed shared territory that could act as a meeting place for people from diverse backgrounds.

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