



Sacred Heart University

From the Selected Works of Brian Stiltner

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"A Growth Industry" (Review of "Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis" edited by Schreiter, Appleby, and Powers)

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A Growth Industry

Peacebuilding

Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis

Edited by Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, and Gerard F. Powers
Orbis Books, \$30, 480 pp.

Sr. Mary Taricisia Lokot has spent most of her life working with children in northern Uganda, many of them victims of the savage thirty-year war between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army. She has often negotiated with rebel leaders and run into child soldiers. She has helped many of these youngsters return to the community. "The child soldiers say, 'Sister, take me home with you, please take me,'" she reports. "Leaving them there you feel heartbroken and you cannot even sleep at night.... They, the victims, cannot al-

ways speak for themselves so I need to [advocate for] them, to meet and console them, and to say one day, 'The Lord will spare us.' To give them hope."

Sr. Mary is one of many powerful examples encountered in *Peacebuilding*. That term itself does not come as readily to mind as "peacemaking," for UN circles only started using it in the early 1990s. But the term and the concept are now a "growth industry," according to Maryann Cusimano Love, one of the contributors to this collection. She lists many institutions and initiatives that now use the term, including the U.S. government and a number of nongovernmental organizations. R. Scott Appleby, a co-editor of the collection, explains that "peacebuilding" is a more comprehensive approach to violent conflict, one that embraces the stages of conflict res-

olution, peacekeeping, and postwar social reconstruction. "Peacebuilders strive to address all phases of these protracted conflicts, within which prevalence, violence, and postviolence periods are difficult to differentiate." According to Appleby, peacebuilding engages all sectors of society and all relevant actors.

Peacebuilding is the fruit of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN), an affiliation of scholars, practitioners, and institutions. Most of the seventeen contributors to the book were participants in one or more of the CPN's annual conferences from 2004 to 2007, which the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies also helped organize. The conferences were held at the University of Notre Dame, the institutional home of both the Kroc Institute and CPN, and in the Philippines, Burundi, and Colombia. Local peacebuilders participated in the conferences. This method of partnering grassroots activists with an organization strongly committed to peacebuilding gives the book several attractive qualities. It is concrete, pastoral, conceptually challenging, and provides many practical suggestions.

One of the book's touchstones is the activism and scholarship of John Paul Lederach, a Mennonite who is based at the Kroc Institute. (*Peacebuilding* is an ecumenical and interreligious enterprise, one that includes a longstanding collaboration between Catholics and Mennonites.) Lederach examines peacebuilding along two axes. He says that the most effective initiatives are ones that address both a vertical dimension (the ability to connect the highest levels of negotiation with grassroots communities) and a horizontal one (the willingness to move across the various divides created by conflict). The Catholic Church is particularly well suited as a peacebuilding institution, he says, because as a global church it has an extensive horizontal presence, owing to its geographical scope and its history of working on multiple sides in conflicts. In addition, the church often coordinates its efforts vertically, from the top levels of the Vatican, through middle levels of bishops and peacebuilding

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organizations, to the grassroots level—women and men religious, laypeople, parishes, and local activist groups. Because it can work both “vertically” and “horizontally,” the church is often one of the most important institutions involved in facilitating peace in specific conflicts.

Many of those who contributed articles to the volume refer to Lederach’s paradigm, emphasizing the grassroots level where peacebuilding is most critical, and to a wide array of conflict areas where efforts at peacebuilding are happening. Thomas Michel describes how the Catholic Church worked to maintain generally positive Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia during the social conflicts of the late 1990s. Todd Whitmore details his extensive fieldwork in Uganda. Peter-John Pearson examines the Catholic role in the truth-and-reconciliation process in South Africa. A chapter on Catholic Relief Services provides an excellent overview of its work in several countries. Conflicts in the Philippines, Colombia, Burundi, Sri Lanka, and Rwanda are examined. That so many examples of Catholic peacebuilding can be offered underscores the book’s claim that peacebuilding is a “growing edge” of Catholic social thought.

The church’s attempt to be present in so many places can create its own pastoral and ethical dilemmas: how to minister to people on both sides of a bloody conflict, how to reconcile with human-rights abusers, and so on. But as Robert Schreiter writes, the rituals, sacraments, and spirituality of Catholicism offer valuable resources for sustaining communities in these challenging situations. Schreiter draws out the peace-related symbolism of liturgical acts, while other contributors develop the theological, biblical, and ethical resources that undergird the project. Lisa Cahill explores the doctrine of evil. The killing of people and the rupture of communities are nothing less than pervasive social sins that reflect the brokenness of the human condition. Yet God’s grace and Christ’s atonement are more powerful realities than sin itself.

Whitmore writes that peacebuilding is both challenging and changing Catholic social teaching. For example, the traditional just-war theory is evolving. Catholic ethicists are beginning to develop criteria for reestablishing justice *after* a conflict, and have emphasized common cause with pacifists in finding alternatives to war. It is not clear how best to express this emphasis. The term “just peace” has been adopted by some Protestant denominations, and “just peacemaking” has been suggested by an academic team of just-war thinkers and pacifists. In fact, both are mentioned in the book and are essentially the same as “peacebuilding.” The merit of the latter term is that it emphasizes the active, ongoing work of building solidarity, and the conditions needed for social harmony before, during, and after a conflict. The term is positive and easily understood. It is now being promoted by international agencies, activist groups, the Catholic Church, and the U.S. State Department—a sign of increasing agreement and cooperation among the institutions that are in the best position to make a difference.

Their task couldn’t be more urgent. The authors demonstrate that the Catholic Church has been an essential participant in the effort, and that Catholic theology, ethics, and spirituality provide powerful resources. While not a practical manual, this volume is nonetheless a reliable guidebook, one that offers concrete examples, insights, and practices. Nigerian Archbishop John O. Onaiyekan writes in the foreword that reading *Peacebuilding* gave him a chance to step back and reflect on the challenges facing the church, and to examine his own work in building peace. “After reading this book,” he concludes, “one can have no doubt that peacebuilding is the normal work of the church of Jesus Christ.” Other readers are likely to agree. ■

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LETTERS (continued from page 4)

nutrition. The *ductus arteriosus*, which short-circuits pulmonary circulation during gestation, closes and the right side of the infant’s heart begins to circulate blood through the lungs. Prior to this, the mother and child are integrated as a unique whole for the duration of the pregnancy. Thinking of the mother and fetus atomistically creates problems for the ethical analysis of certain situations, such as a mother with pulmonary hypertension who cannot sustain a pregnancy to term. To say the problem resides in the mother’s lungs and not her uterus ignores the integration of the placental and pulmonary circulation in the pregnant state. Ending the pregnancy under these circumstances neither causes nor intends any ill, but makes the best of a bad situation.

PATRICK DALY, MD
Gardiner, Maine

PROCESS THEOLOGY

John Garvey’s “Something More” (October 21) is a faith-filled commentary on authentic religious belief—and confidence in a “more abundant life” after death. But for our times, the more pressing question is not so much the fear of death as the process of dying. Medical science and other factors have doubled our life span in a century, but—ironically—have also extended the process of dying with prospects of extended agony, insecurity, and dependence.

Cancer treatment, for example: in the past, death from cancer could take place within a few weeks. Today, chemotherapy, radiation, and other treatments, while sometimes offering hope of a cure, in many cases mean prolonged suffering for the patient and family over several years. Is mere prolongation of the dying process really worth so much pain and money?

We’re grateful for the acceptance and expansion of palliative care and hospice. But as believers, we should also be faith-filled witnesses to the priority of eternal life and alter the old adage to read: “Live—and be willing to let go!”

(REV.) JOHN KOELSCH
Jerome, Idaho