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The meaning of peace: biblical studies

Ragnar C. Teigen

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The Meaning of Peace

Perry B. Yoder and Willard B. Swartly, editors

Translated by W. Sawatsky

Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992

298 pp.

In addition to a table of contents the opening pages of this volume have a Series Preface, Preface, Acknowledgements and a list of abbreviations. The book itself has seven chapters, Part I by as many authors exploring aspects of peace in the Old Testament, Perry B. Yoder, editor, and five chapters, Part II, the New Testament, Willard B. Swartly, editor. Yoder and Swartly have each written a chapter on the respective parts giving previews of highlights in the chapters that follow.

The volume can be summarized for the most part from two main perspectives: (1) discussions on the varied meanings of peace, *shalom* (OT), *eirene* (NT), as presented by the contributors in the Old and the New Testaments; (2) elucidation of dual concepts, peace in the eschaton and history, peace as result of state authority, Pax Romana (Peace of Rome) versus messianic peace (the Jesus Movement).

Variables in meaning are broadly identifiable under two designates, e.g., peace (*shalom*) as "health", "well being", and peace as "salvation", a "gift of God". Von Rad also views *shalom* as social, i.e., relationships in community. Here he is at odds with Westermann who finds *shalom* as a state, a basic part of human existence. Two aspects emerge: (1) *Shalom* as a condition or a relationship; (2) *Shalom* as a gift of God, or as a secular concept.

Shalom in a wider meaning: when David possessed Jerusalem Yahweh becomes the new deity, enthroned as God of Zion, the world mountain. *Shalom* became integral to Jerusalem but also to Yahweh's cosmic rule over nature and people. Thus *shalom* is local and cosmic all at the same time.

Kegler (ch. 5, I, pp. 69 ff.) discusses *shalom* within history itself, i.e., prophetic speech about present and future. Micah has no future for making peace. He predicts the end of Samaria and Jerusalem. Historic Isaiah also presents divine judgement in history but finds elements of hope in Israel's repentance (1:18-26), a condition leading to peace (cf. Isaiah 1:18-26; 40-55).

The debate over peace in history and the eschaton is elucidated in Wolff (ch. 5, I) and Pannenberg (ch. 6, I). Both Wolff and Pannenberg agree on the eschatological character of Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3. Wolff, however, allows for a greater role of the idyllic conditions of peace for these passages in present history. Pannenberg separates the future vision from our present era with its continued threat of war.

In the New Testament a dual conception of peace is described by Schottruff (ch. 9, II). Pax Romana with its enforced peace secured by legions

versus uprisings in the empire stands in contrast to the messianic peace of Jesus expecting the advent of the kingdom of God. This peace with its care of the poor had a non-violent element, resisting tyranny. Yet Pax Romana and Jesus Messianic peace were completely at odds!

Another duality is elaborated by H. Franke Molle in his chapter (11, II) on "Peace and the Sword" in the New Testament. "Sword" signifies depressions and tensions, economic, political, etc. Palestine under Rome was not a "healthy world". Molle's analysis of this theme in Luke is instructive. Luke is aware of the old Jesus Movement of peace anchored in the kingdom of God beyond this world (John 18:36), but also advocates sword realistically influenced by the A.D. 70 war.

A final chapter (12, II) by U. Luz talks of the biblical witness for church peace action. Whatever occurs must be rooted in God's will as given through Christ.

The book concludes with an abundant bibliography and many references from the Bible and later Christian writings. The chapters are translated from the German making available generous materials on the peace theme for English readers. The chapters demonstrate that discussions on peace are not final conclusions but must continue. The book is of value for seminaries, university religion departments, students and society groups dedicated to peace movements.

Ragar C. Teigen
Professor emeritus,
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

After Eden: Facing the Challenge of Gender Reconciliation

Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (Project Editor)
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993
651 pp. \$29.95 U.S.

This book is the product of the Gender Study team at the Calvin Centre for Christian Scholarship. The team was comprised of 12 persons (11 female, 1 male), five of whom were the writers of the book and in residency for the academic year, 1989-90. The preface states that, "Our histories included the experiences of rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, physical violence, discrimination in housing and waged work due to femaleness, singleness, or single-parent status, and the struggle of having to deal with problem pregnancies." Their histories also include the joy of reconciliation, of marriages and friendships, creativity and meaningful living.

The writing, from a Reformed Christian tradition, illustrates the effect of the biblical account of the Fall upon gender relations. The book seeks to