

## EXCERPT



### *The Gospel of Peace in a Violent World* *Christian Nonviolence for Communal Flourishing*

August 16, 2022 | \$40, 432 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0128-8

*"Peacemaking is not as simple as it sounds. Marlena and Shawn Graves's convicting new volume reveals how our lives are entangled in all kinds of everyday violence. Thankfully, it doesn't leave us there. This book will not only open eyes but also spark imaginations, helping us to discern how a peaceable world—one more faithful to the gospel—might come to be."*

Heath W. Carter, Princeton Theological Seminary

## Who Is My Neighbor?

As an undergrad, I was a history major and a secondary education major. My goal was to be a high school history teacher. At one point, I remember sitting in a 1:00 p.m. American history class at my Christian college and being completely horrified, reeling from the devastation of what I had learned about the history and culture of white supremacy mixed with Christianity. The professor was lecturing on the Trail of Tears, a result of Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830.

The United States' insatiable lust for Native American lands motivated them to force the Cherokee nation, at gunpoint, to abandon their homes and lands. Soldiers knowingly marched the Cherokee through cholera-infested territory, places like Vicksburg, Mississippi, in order to wipe them out. Soon, I learned that the United States repeatedly reneged on treaties with Native Americans when the treaties no longer served US purposes. The United States violently pushed and shoved them out of their homes, massacred them out of their land. No matter the cost of human lives, they drove the Cherokee and others west of the Mississippi because they wanted the gold discovered on their lands in Georgia and natural resources in Kentucky, Tennessee, and other areas of the South. Many white settlers stole, killed, and destroyed to satisfy their greed. They pestered the government to get rid of the Indigenous so they could squat and wickedly claim Native American lands as their own.

The land on which my family and I live in northwest Ohio, in a suburb of Toledo along the Maumee River, is Native land. Of course, all of Ohio was. "Maumee" is an English derivation referring to the Miami tribe. Just a few miles from my house is the Fallen Timbers monument where General Anthony Wayne, dubbed "Mad Anthony Wayne," defeated a confederation of Native American tribes supported and protected by the British. It was the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. I travel up and down the Anthony Wayne Trail, which cuts through Maumee, a suburb of Toledo, and Toledo proper, to drop off my youngest daughter, Isabella, at Grandma's house three days a week, and then I proceed north on Anthony Wayne Trail to arrive at my job at the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) in historic south Toledo.

In 1795, after the Battle of Fallen Timbers, most of Ohio was handed over to the United States. Not satisfied, the European Americans wanted to expand westward. Yet there was one problem: the Indigenous peoples were in their way. It would be one thing if all this land and resource grabbing was done through equitable, good-faith negotiations with the relevant Native American nations. But, alas, most of it was not. Massacres occurred at the hands of those who claimed to follow Christ. The word for these massacres is *genocide*. At least that is what we would call it if we observed it happening in any other place in the world.

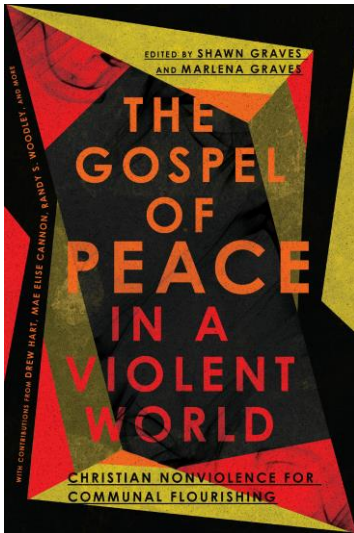
I'll give an example: the Sand Creek Massacre. In the course of seven hours, US army colonel John Chivington, born in Lebanon, Ohio, in 1821 and ordained in the United Methodist church, led seven hundred men from the Colorado militia in the genocidal massacre of the peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho. Estimates of the number murdered range from seventy to five hundred Natives. Two-thirds of the dead were women and children. The six-year-old girl who first ran out waving a white flag when the troops arrived was immediately shot and killed. The rest (infants, children, women, men) were scalped and mutilated, including genital mutilation and genitalia cut off. Fetuses were ripped from the womb. Representatives and scouts who went to investigate afterward, such as Robert Ben, testify that almost all were scalped.



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At one point, Teddy Roosevelt had this to say about the Sand Creek Massacre: it was "as righteous and beneficial a deed as ever took place on the frontier." "Righteous" and "beneficial" are not words I'd use. I'd call the Sand Creek Massacre genocidal, warring, rapacious, greedy, inhumane, violent, and evil—to name just a few. In a series about how the United States has treated Native Americans, including those at Sand Creek, those at PBS ask, "Who is the Savage?" Indeed, I wonder, Just who is the savage?

How could this ordained Methodist—who would claim to follow Christ—justify such outrageously immoral behavior? How could Teddy Roosevelt, who would later become our twenty-sixth president, say Sand Creek was one of the most "righteous and beneficial" deeds that ever took place on our frontier? Is it only "righteous" and "beneficial" when such atrocities are committed against the marginalized in our society? People of color? What if the same thing happened to Teddy Roosevelt's own family and his own town? Would he have said the same thing? Surely not. Interestingly enough, as Jesus talks about in his parable, we will go to great lengths to rationalize and justify the planks in our eyes, which allow us to be willfully blind to our own sins, while we claw out the specks, the little faux pas, in other people's or other nations' eyes.

I'll give another example from history.

Need I say anything about the slave trade in the Americas? How Bible-reading, church-attending folk enslaved Africans and used the Bible to justify their crimes against humanity, their brutality, because they had convinced themselves Africans weren't really humans or, at least, were inferior to Europeans? Back when the government was first debating the bill that would eventually become the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude, John Rutledge of South Carolina argued, "Religion and humanity have nothing to do with the questions." In other words, as an article from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law highlights, Rutledge was arguing that slavery was merely about property rights and that religion and humanity should be left out of the discussion. Certain people—in other words, slaves—were less than human. They were property and should be treated as such. In modern parlance, it was, "For goodness sake, leave the discussion of religion and human rights out of the discussion." Today, do we convince ourselves that people are less than human? In practice, we do. We treat them as less than human. With Native Americans, with African Americans, and with others, we have a history of "targeting entire groups as suspect," as T. A. Frail says.

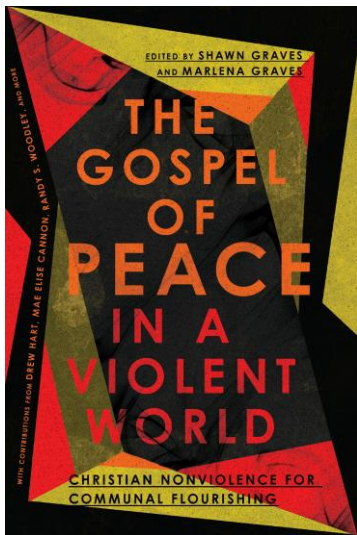
—Adapted from chapter twenty, "Immigration and the Church: Who Is My Neighbor?" by Marlena Graves



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The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of peace. Gathering contributions from theologians, pastors, and practitioners, Shawn Graves and Marlena Graves cast a vision of Christian nonviolence in today's world, not only responding to the realities of war but also offering a deeper understanding of peace—a holistic *shalom*.

## **A Conversation on Christian Nonviolence**

**Sarah Azaransky** earned her PhD from the University of Virginia and is associate professor of social ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She is author of *The Dream is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith* and *This Worldwide Struggle: Religion and the International Roots of the Civil Rights Movement* and editor of *Religion and Politics in America's Borderlands*. Azaransky was the coauthor of the successful application for Pauli Murray's childhood home in Durham, North Carolina, to be named a National Historic Landmark.

**Gregory A. Boyd** earned his PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary and his MDiv from Yale Divinity School. He is senior pastor at Woodland Hills Church in Maplewood, Minnesota, serves as president of Reknew Ministries ([reknew.org](http://reknew.org)), and is an adjunct professor at Northern Seminary.

**Mae Elise Cannon** earned her PhD in history from the University of California, Davis, and a DMin in spiritual formation from Northern Theological Seminary. She is an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Covenant Church and the executive director of Churches for Middle East Peace. She is the author of several books, including the award-winning *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World* and the recent *Beyond Hashtag Activism: Comprehensive Justice in a Complicated Age*. Among other things, she has served as the senior director of advocacy and outreach for World Vision–US and as a consultant to Compassion International for child advocacy issues in the Middle East.

**Jacob Alan Cook** earned his PhD from Fuller Theological Seminary and is a postdoctoral fellow at Wake Forest University School of Divinity. He is the author of *Worldview Theory, Whiteness, and the Future of Evangelical Faith*. During his doctoral studies, Jake served as the associate director of Fuller's Just Peacemaking Initiative, and he has published chapters on Christian identity, peacemaking, and ecological theology.

**Elizabeth Gerhardt** earned her ThD from Boston University and is professor of theology and social ethics at Northeastern Seminary in Rochester, New York. Gerhardt teaches in the areas of historical theology and social ethics. Academic writing and research interests include gender reconciliation, Bonhoeffer studies, and the intersection of spirituality, a theology of the cross, and social justice. Gerhardt is the author of *The Cross and Gendercide: A Theological Response to Global Violence Against Women and Girls*.

**Marlena Graves** earned her MDiv from Northeastern Seminary in New York and is currently a PhD student in American culture studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. In addition to several other books, she is the author of *The Way Up Is Down: Finding Yourself by Forgetting Yourself*, which received *Christianity Today's* Award of Merit in Spiritual Formation, and the award-winning *A Beautiful Disaster: Finding Hope in the Midst of Brokenness*. She is an adjunct professor at Winebrenner Seminary and is also a member of Ink: A Creative Collective.

**Shawn Graves** earned his PhD in philosophy from the University of Rochester in New York and currently serves as associate professor of philosophy at the University of Findlay in Ohio. He has published research articles in journals such as *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion, Faith and Philosophy*, and *Sport, Ethics, and Philosophy*. He has also contributed chapters on Christianity and ethics to volumes published by Oxford University Press, Eerdmans, and Mercer University Press.

**Ted Grimsrud** earned his PhD in Christian ethics from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, and is currently senior professor of peace theology at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He began teaching there in 1996. Before that he pastored for ten years in various Mennonite congregations.

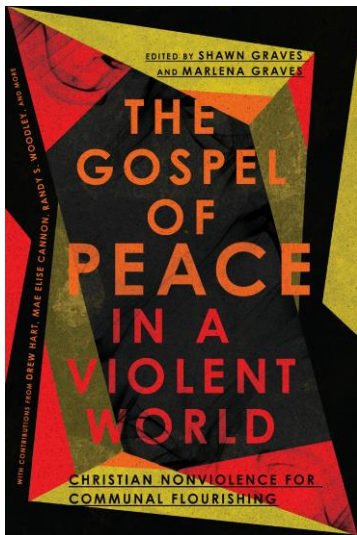


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**T. C. Ham** earned his PhD from Dallas Theological Seminary and is professor of biblical studies at Malone University. His concentration in biblical studies is in the Hebrew Bible with a special interest in the Wisdom literature, particularly the book of Job. Born in South Korea and raised in a multicultural home, Ham finds matters related to culture and language fascinating. His research interests in biblical and theological studies focus on cultural and linguistic features of the Bible.

**Lisa Sharon Harper** earned her master's degree in human rights from Columbia University and is the founder and president of Freedom Road, a groundbreaking consulting group that crafts experiences that bring common understanding and common commitments that lead to common action toward a more just world. Harper is a public theologian whose writing, speaking, activism, and training have sparked and fed the fires of re-formation in the church from Ferguson and Charlottesville to South Africa, Brazil, Australia, and Ireland. Her book *The Very Good Gospel* was named 2016 Book of the Year, and the *Huffington Post* identified Harper as one of fifty Women Religious Leaders to Celebrate on International Women's Day.

**Drew G. I. Hart** earned his PhD from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and is an assistant professor of theology at Messiah University. He has ten years of pastoral experience. He is director of Messiah University's Thriving Together: Congregations for Racial Justice program and cohost of *Inverse Podcast*. Hart is the author of *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* and *Who Will Be A Witness? Igniting Activism for God's Justice, Love, and Deliverance*. He was the recipient of bcmPEACE's 2017 Peacemaker Award and the 2019 W. E. B. Du Bois Award in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and was Elizabethtown College's 2019 Peace Fellow.

**Peter Goodwin Heltzel** earned his PhD from Boston University and is visiting researcher at Boston University School of Theology. Author of *Jesus and Justice: Evangelicals, Race, and American Politics*, Heltzel focuses his theological scholarship on equipping the church to dismantle institutional racism.

**Aaron James** earned his PhD in theology from the University of Dayton. He is an associate professor of philosophy at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, Illinois.

**Michael Jimenez** earned his PhD from Fuller Theological Seminary and teaches history at Vanguard University. He is the author of *Remembering Lived Lives: A Historiography from the Underside of Modernity* and *Karl Barth and the Study of the Religious Enlightenment: Encountering the Task of History*.

**Kathy Khang** is a writer, speaker, and yoga teacher based in the north suburbs of Chicago. She is the author of *Raise Your Voice: Why We Stay Silent and How to Speak Up* and *Psalms, with Guided Meditations*, volumes one and two, and has written for *Sojourners*, *Christians for Social Action*, and *Faith and Leadership*.

**Willi Hugo Perez Lemus** earned his PhD in sociology and political science from the University of Santa Monica, Spain, with a dissertation focused on Central American Mennonite responses to violence in their communities. He is the rector of Semilla, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary in Guatemala City, a position he has held for fifteen years. He previously worked as the director of Redpaz, a Central American interfaith peace network.

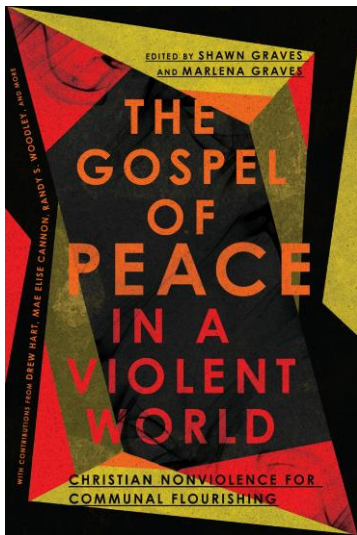
**Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld** earned his ThD from Harvard University Divinity School and is professor emeritus at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo (New Testament and Peace Studies [1983-2012]). He has served as hospital and prison chaplain as well as in several pastorates. He is presently chair of the Faith and Life Commission of the Mennonite World Conference. He is author of *Ephesians* (Believers Church Bible Commentary), *Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament*, and *Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament*.



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**Chibuzo Nimmo Petty** earned his MDiv in intercultural leadership from Bethany Theological Seminary and is a creative, organizer, and minister, living with family in Cleveland, Ohio, whose passion is the intersection of cultural competency and pastoral care. Petty's writing and editing can also be found in the Church of the Brethren's biannual academic journal *Brethren Life & Thought* and more regularly on its affiliate blog *DEVOTION*.

**Sheila Wise Rowe** is a graduate of Tufts University and Cambridge College and holds a master's degree in counseling psychology. For twenty-five years she's offered counseling and spiritual direction and taught counseling internationally. She is the director of The Rehoboth House and cofounder of the Cyrene Movement. She is a member of the Community Ethics Committee of Harvard Medical School. Her essays can be found in numerous blogs, newspapers, and journals, and she speaks at colleges, churches, organizations, and seminaries across the country. Her book *Healing Racial Trauma: The Road to Resilience* won the 2021 book award in Christian Living/Discipleship from *Christianity Today*.

**Eric A. Seibert** earned his PhD from Drew University and is professor of Old Testament at Messiah University. He is the author of a number of books and articles, including *Disarming the Church: Why Christians Must Forsake Violence to Follow Jesus and Change the World*. His most recent book is *Enjoying the Old Testament: A Creative Guide to Encountering Scripture*. Seibert served as president of the Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society from 2010 to 2011 and enjoys speaking about topics related to problematic portrayals of God in the Old Testament and the need to use the Bible responsibly, in ways that promote peace.

**Baldemar Velasquez** is the founder and president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). Velasquez is an internationally recognized leader in the farm worker and immigrants' rights movements. His commitment to justice and human dignity have led to recognition by many labor, government, academic, and progressive organizations, including a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship (Genius Grant), the National Hispanic Heritage Award bestowed by the National Council of La Raza, a Development of People Award by the Campaign for Human Development of the US Catholic Conference, and the Bannerman Fellowship. In addition, he received the Aguila Azteca Award by the government of Mexico, the highest award presented by the Mexican government to a noncitizen. In 2009 Baldemar was elected to the AFL-CIO executive council.

**Adrienne Wiebe** earned her PhD from the University of Alberta based on participatory action research in a Mayan community in Guatemala and is an applied anthropologist. For thirty years she has lived and worked in Latin America and Canada with Indigenous communities, migrants and refugees, and other marginalized populations. She has worked with Pueblo Partisans in Guatemala, Mennonite Central Committee in Mexico, Oxfam in global programs, and the Aboriginal Health Program in Alberta. She is currently the manager for international projects in Latin America for Change for Children, a Canadian-based NGO.

**Randy S. Woodley** earned his PhD from Asbury Theological Seminary and currently serves as distinguished professor of faith and culture at George Fox University and Portland Seminary. His work can be found in venues such as *Time* magazine, the *Huffington Post* and *Christianity Today*. Woodley is a legal descendent of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma. He cohosts the *Peacing It All Together* podcast with Bo Sanders. He and his wife are cosustainers of Eloheh Indigenous Center for Earth Justice/Eloheh Farm, a regenerative teaching center and farm in Yamhill, Oregon. His books include *Decolonizing Evangelicalism: An 11:59 p.m. Conversation*, *The Harmony Tree: A Story of Healing and Community*, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*, and *Living in Color: Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity*.



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