Minefield Prophets: The Methods and Effectiveness of Clergy Peacebuilders in Northern Ireland

Trelawney J. Grenfell-Muir

This paper examines the capabilities, constraints, and impact of clergy peacebuilders in Northern Ireland. Through contact hypothesis, indirect contact ripple effects, and the synergistic effect of peacebuilding activities and influences, clergy peacebuilders increased "ripeness" in the pre-agreement phase, improved negotiations and agreements, and strengthened positive peace and stability in the implementation and post-agreement periods. Even relatively localized efforts wherein clergy promoted tolerance, forgiveness, inclusivity, and love of enemies spread forbearance and built a context conducive to the acceptance of the agreement. Clergy peacebuilders possess referent, legitimate, and expert power, and access to society, which impacts the peace process.

Keywords: Northern Ireland, clergy, peace, conflict, power, diplomacy, soft power, Troubles

Introduction

Clergy peacebuilding can appear insignificant compared to military and political entities. Authors such as Frank Wright discuss Northern Ireland entirely in terms of international power brokers and armies.[1] For many years, diplomats and scholars resisted the idea that grassroots and mid-level peacebuilding efforts could make valuable contributions.[2] William Davidson and Joseph Montville began to change this attitude with their analysis of "Track Two diplomacy,"[3] which observes that mid-level and grassroots actors can complement official diplomacy. Montville expanded the concept to include any efforts to improve perceptions of the out-group, support conciliation, and cooperate to enhance the attractiveness and economic benefits of conflict resolution.[4] After decades of study, practitioners continue to refine how to optimize Track Two contributions through careful coordination with Track One.[5]

---

[1] Frank Wright, *Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987).

[2] Paul Stem and Daniel Druckman, *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2000); Louise Diamond and John McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace*, 3rd ed. (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1996); Ronald Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution,* 1st ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

[3] William Davidson and Joseph Montville, "Foreign Policy According to Freud," *Foreign Policy* 45 (Winter 1981): 145–57.

[4] Joseph Montville, "The Arrow and the Olive Branch: A Case for Track Two Diplomacy," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships*, ed. Vamik D. Volkan, Demetrios A. Julius, and Joseph V. Montville (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1991), 161–75.

[5] Ronald Fisher, "Coordination between Track Two and Track One Diplomacy in Successful Cases of Prenegotiation," *International Negotiation* 11, no.1 (2006): 65–89; Harold Saunders, "Prenegotiation and Circum-Negotiation: Arenas of the Multilevel Peace Process," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, ed. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), 483–95; Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999).

This paper, based on a much more detailed dissertation by the present author,[6] examines the methods, influence, and effectiveness of clergy peacebuilders in Northern Ireland during the violent conflict known as "The Troubles," through the signing of the peace agreement and the first decade post-agreement. Twenty-one clergy committed to ameliorating the conflict were interviewed once regarding their theological motivations, activism efforts, constraints, and perceived effectiveness. This study, the first conducted among a range of activist clergy in Northern Ireland, finds that overall, clergy peacebuilding activities influence individuals, structures, and communities in a variety of ways that decrease hostility and improve peace.

Overview of the Conflict

"They threatened to burn down the church if we didn't stop our ecumenical prayer meetings.". . . "We rode out into the middle of where the riots were starting to see if we could calm them down.". . . "We were told a gunman planned to target our church services.". . . "I found a petrol bomb in my backyard, a clear warning to stop my work.". . . "I had to check under my car for bombs every day.". . . These harrowing statements come from clergy in Northern Ireland, who risked their lives when they attempted to ameliorate the violence that wracked the region for decades and continues to destabilize the society.

The Troubles, three decades of intense violence in Northern Ireland, lasted from approximately 1968 until the peace accord in 1998. Analysts typically divide the peace process into three phases.[7] Phase one (mid-1980s–1994) involved gradual movement from war to politics and the eventual 1994 ceasefire. Phase two (1994–1998) consisted of political negotiations to pass the power-sharing agreement, Good Friday Agreement/GFA. Phase three (1998–present) involves the ongoing implementation and stabilization of the GFA and its Northern Ireland Executive (NIE), and attempts to move beyond intercommunal hostility to improved cooperation and relations.

The implementation phase has experienced repeated challenges, in which recalcitrant politicians, extreme paramilitary factions, and intercommunal hostility derail progress. Segregation also hinders economic development.[8]

Joseph Liechty and Cynthia Clegg offer a useful definition of the widely used descriptor "sectarianism":

> Sectarianism is a complex of problems—including dividing, demonizing, and dominating—which typically arise from malignant intersections of religion and politics and which are characteristic of the kind of religiously-shaped ethno-national conflict experienced in Northern Ireland. . . . attitudes, actions, beliefs, and structures . . . hardening the boundaries between groups, overlooking others,

---

[6] Trelawney Grenfell-Muir, "The Door that Doesn't Close: The Methods and Effectiveness of Clergy Peacebuilders in Northern Ireland," PhD Diss., Boston University, 2014.

[7] Martin Mansergh, "The Background to the Irish Peace Process," in *A Farewell to Arms: Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, ed. Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke, and Fiona Stephen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 24–40, 40.

[8] David Cameron, *Address to Northern Ireland Assembly*, June 9, 2011, available at
 https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/address-to-northern-ireland-assembly.

belittling, dehumanizing, or demonizing others, justifying or collaborating in the

domination of others, physically or verbally intimidating or attacking others.[9]

Belfast "Peace Wall," 2007. The "peace wall" is located on the right side of the photo; it is a solid barrier topped by tall chain-link fencing. While many of these segregation walls have been removed, 109 remain, and further removals have stalled due to political and intercommunal conflicts.[10] Photo by Trelawney Grenfell-Muir.

Aside from the study of obviously influential activities such as secret wartime negotiations, analysis of the conflict lacks in-depth scrutiny of decades of clergy efforts. This study examines the range of clergy peacebuilding activities, what makes their contributions unique, how their work pertains to current theories about conflict and peace, and the extent to which their efforts have influenced the peace process. Understanding how to maximize clergy effectiveness can improve coordination among related disciplines and enhance cooperation among religious, civil, state, and international actors.

---

[9] Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict, and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2001), 37, 102–03.
[10]	https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/changing-attitudes-over-belfast-peace-walls-threatened-by-stormont-deadlock-36935976.html.

Considerable religious and political diversity exists within the two divided communities.[11] The Catholic/Nationalist/Republican community generally consists of people who prefer reunification with the Republic of Ireland and associate with the Catholic Church. The Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community generally includes people who prefer to remain within the United Kingdom and associate with various Protestant churches. Roughly speaking, Nationalists and Unionists are often considered more moderate than Republicans and Loyalists, and less supportive of violent tactics. All labels generalize, neglect nuances, and obscure deep analysis. However, labels provide a schema that serves as a heuristic necessary to start the conversation. With these limitations in mind, and cognizant of the problematic and disputed nature of the role of religion in the conflict in Northern Ireland, this study generally refers to one community as Catholic and the other as Protestant. These labels reflect the understanding that while not a primary causal factor, religion nonetheless structures the divide between the two communities to a large degree.

Interviewed Clergy

This study investigates why anti-sectarian clergy exhibit different levels of activism and efficacy, in order to gain insight into how to increase clergy impact. Clergy generally exhibit more progressive views and activism than the general population;[12] however, few people possesses the risk tolerance necessary for controversial activism.[13] To investigate the variance in activism among pro-peace clergy, the study includes a range of clergy from three denominations (Methodist, Church of Ireland, and Roman Catholic), arranged roughly from least to most activist. Despite the variation in their levels of activity, these clergy all profess a theology of inclusivity and an ideological commitment to ecumenism and harmony: they view Catholics and Protestants as legitimately Christian, and they believe clergy and churches should help society move beyond sectarianism to peace.

The study also includes one Presbyterian minister, one minister with an ecumenical traveling monastic order, and one evangelical leader from the parachurch organization ECONI (Evangelical Contribution On Northern Ireland, now the Centre for Contemporary Christianity). No noticeable theological differences emerged along the three denominational lines. The traveling monk and the ECONI leader illustrate some of the similarities and differences between the large institutional churches and the two parachurch organizations mentioned above.

The following table lists the clergy whose interviews constitute the bulk of the data. Where available, the table indicates how sectarian a clergyperson's family background was and whether s/he lived outside of Northern Ireland. Interviewees were asked their frequency and types of peacebuilding efforts. Their answers provided general impressions rather than numerical precision.

---

[11] F. Boal, Margaret Keane, and David Livingstone, *Them and Us?: Attitudinal Variation among Churchgoers in Belfast* (Belfast: Queen's University of Belfast, 1997).

[12] Philip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (New York: Free Press, 1964), 206–61; Charles Glock, Benjamin Ringer, and Earl Babbie, *To Comfort and to Challenge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Harold Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 112, 149, 175; Jeffrey Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969), 224–33.

[13] Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003).

The clergy interviews produced qualitative data, which provided detailed portrayals of interviewees' perceptions, feelings, beliefs, behaviors, and activities.[14]

The following intensity range of activism designates a description of their behaviors, not their effectiveness. Activities that target the individual level seek change in the beliefs and behaviors of individuals. Activities that target the communal level seek change in the culture of congregations, denominational mores, neighborhoods, towns, groups, or surrounding areas. Activities that target the structural level seek change in negotiations, laws, systems, denominational polities, or other economic, political, or cultural structures within society. Interviewees in the same level of activism differ in specifics. For example, some clergy engage in more frequent activism but target mainly their own congregations through sermons or Bible studies, while other clergy discuss sectarian topics less often but organize cross-community activities or engage in long-term embedded work.

- Very Low: Individual parishioner conversations, supports existing programs, occasional/gentle sermon messages, uses denominational resources, avoids controversial messages, programs, or activities; attempts to change individuals
- Low: Increased quantity/intensity of the above; leads small group studies, models good relationships with out-group, engages controversial topics occasionally; attempts to change individuals, communities
- Moderate: Regularly/routinely engages in the above; long-term embedded work with out-group, or regular support for/participation in (not leader of) cross-community programs; attempts to change individuals, congregations, communities, structures
- High: Engages continuously in the above; regularly leads out-group exposure activities, dismantles sectarian beliefs, structures, or behaviors, and takes controversial steps despite opposition; attempts to change individuals, communities, structures
- Very High: Engages continuously in the above; public efforts to effect political or structural change, secret mediations, or high-level negotiations; attempts to change individuals, communities, structures

Pseudonym	Church/ Organization	Activism Intensity	From/ Family	Lived Away	Position	Gender
Henry	Methodist	Low	England	Yes	Local Clergy	M
Mark	Methodist	Low	Scotland Catholic	Yes	Local Clergy	M
James	Methodist	Low	NI anti-Catholic	Republic, England	Local Clergy	M
Rachel	Methodist	Moderate	NI anti-Catholic	N/A	Local Clergy	F
Stan	Methodist	High	Republic	No	Local Clergy	M

---

14 Robert Bogdan and Sari Knobb Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education* (Toronto: Pearson Education, Inc. 2007); N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, ed., *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005); Daniel Druckman, *Doing Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005).

Peter	Methodist	High	NI anti-Catholic	UK	Local Clergy	M
Jean	Methodist	High	NI anti-Catholic	No	Local Clergy	F
Simon	Methodist	Very High	NI pro-reconciling	Republic, USA	Local Clergy Senior Leader	M
William	Ch of Ireland	Very Low	England	Yes	Local Clergy	M
Gary	Ch of Ireland	High	Republic pro-reconciling	Caribbean	Local Clergy	M
Frank	Ch of Ireland	High	Republic	Canada	Local Clergy Senior Leader	M
Carl	Ch of Ireland	High	NI anti-Catholic	No	Local Clergy	M
Michael	Ch of Ireland Corrymeela	Very High	Republic	England	Local Clergy Parachurch	M
Joseph	Ch of Ireland	Very High	NI anti-Catholic	Republic, England, Africa	Local Clergy Educator	M
Luke	Ch of Ireland	Very High	NI moderate	Republic, England	Local Clergy Senior Leader	M
Matthew	R Catholic	Moderate	NI moderate	S America USA	Redemptorist	M
Ted	R Catholic	High	England Protestant	Yes	Jesuit, Local Clergy	M
Philip	R Catholic	Very High	Republic	N/A	Redemptorist	M
Ben	Presbyterian	Very High	NI moderate	Republic England	Local Clergy	M
Jason	Heart of St Patrick	Very High	NI moderate?	Republic	Ecumenical Traveling Order	M
Richard	ECONI	Very High	NI anti-Catholic	England Indian subcontinent	Parachurch	M

Table 1: Interviewees

These peacebuilding clergy come from a variety of backgrounds and espouse diverse beliefs. Some of them grew up in progressive families or countries where Catholics and Protestants live together in peace; others were raised in strongly sectarian homes and churches. Most interviewees had lived abroad and agree that seeing Catholics and Protestants coexist harmoniously helped them overcome their sectarian perspectives. Moreover, they often had met out-group members who displayed inspiring faith convictions and challenged their prejudices. Some interviewees became peacebuilders in response to reconciling messages from other clergy.

While interviewees disagree about certain doctrines, they apply their diverse convictions to support peacebuilding. Some hold strongly evangelical or charismatic convictions, while others follow a progressive or academic approach to their faith, the latter informed by scholarship and intellectually focused. Clergy expressed a wide range of views about Manichaeism, pacifism, atonement, pluralism, homosexuality, Christology, supernaturalism, and even ecumenism. However, interviewees agree on the importance of inclusivity, unity, loyalty to God over worldly loyalties, and living one's faith. This combination of diversity and thematic similarity reveals how dissimilar theological doctrines can inspire a similar peacebuilding philosophy.

Violent Upbringing

All of the interviewees experienced sectarian violence in ways that shaped, and were shaped by, their theology and ministerial approach.[15] Local clergy grew up as children living in a war zone. Clergy who dared to challenge injustices or engage in cross-community efforts—and even some who "kept their heads down"—sometimes feared for their lives. All Northern Ireland clergy hear terrible stories of trauma from their parishioners. While some clergy experienced violence more directly or dramatically than others, the violence that permeates their context forced all of them to wrestle with the unique challenges of ministering to a traumatized society.

Johan Galtung divides violence into three categories: cultural (symbols, language, representation); structural (exploitation, discrimination); and direct (coercive force, physical violence).[16] Clergy experienced or witnessed each type of violence, firsthand and/or through their families, parishioners, and colleagues.

Interviewees who grew up in Northern Ireland described how violence shaped their childhoods. Jason recalls a "very vivid" memory from age eight, of waking in the middle of the night to see his father and brother dressed in black, carrying a large stick and his grandfather's truncheon from the 1916 rising. He describes life in 1974 Belfast, when the city shut down every night, and neighborhood vigilantes gathered to protect their streets from murder gangs, barricades, and intimidation. He remembers two incidents from when he was four or five years old, when murder gangs gunned down his aunt and a friendly Catholic shopkeeper who gave him sweets. Similarly, Luke describes going away to school and coming home for holidays—he never knew whether buses would be running, bombs would be going off, which streets were open, or what buildings would have been reduced to rubble.

---

[15] See Section V, "Violent Backlash," *infra*, for descriptions of how the conflict shaped clergy theology and ministry.

[16] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage, 1996).

Simon experienced a formative early moment when he witnessed an act of violence against Nationalists:

> I remember coming home one night and hearing a huge disturbance in center of town. I went into the center of Newry to peep around the corner, and I saw them using a water cannon, hosing people from Margaret Square, in the center of Newry. That was a wake-up moment as a young fella growing up here. I thought, "I don't fully understand what this is all about, but all I know is that there is degrading, it's inhuman, it's a violation of something, and certainly whatever it's trying to solve, I see it as pouring fuel on a fire rather than trying to drench the passion." That I think was the beginning of my understanding of division and bitterness, and I remember people saying, "That will stop it all now, that'll teach them—these Nationalists and Republicans." I remember thinking "I don't know an awful lot about what is going on in our world; but to me, that is the beginning of something rather than the ending of something. Something's not going to go away."

Violent Backlash

Many clergy experienced violent retaliation for their peacebuilding. Simon invited a Catholic school to participate in his church Christmas carol service:

> The word had got out, and both the school and church got threats from loyalist rogues and rascals, but we went ahead with it. We had police lurking in the shadows, totally unseen, because we thought, "This is just talk. They're not really going to do it." Nor did they, but they drove up and down with a loudspeaker . . . shouted and played loyalist songs we didn't hear inside. That congregation said, "This is the right thing. We must do this; we must not allow ourselves to be intimidated. Of course we will be welcoming to this Catholic school."

Simon also experienced death threats. He discovered a petrol bomb in his yard and removed his family from their home, but he remained to continue his peacebuilding work. Luke and Frank also received death threats; like Simon, they pressed on with peacebuilding efforts. When William started a monthly prayer group for members of his church and the local Catholic parish he received "subtle threats to burn the church. A fuel line of a car was cut one night, fuel spilled around the place, fire brigades called at all times of the night." In response, he drastically reduced the visibility and publicity of his prayer group. Threats of violence force clergy to grapple with what price they are willing to pay to live their convictions and how to respond to communal pressure. Some clergy continue their activism apace, but after several failed intercommunity programs, William felt the most he could manage was quietly to keep his monthly prayer group going over the years despite severe community pressure.

Some clergy enter harm's way to pacify volatile situations. Joseph and a Presbyterian minister sought brewing riots every night:

> We were conspicuous in that we were wearing clergy collars, and we'd go wander over self-consciously to a group of people, and say, "Hi." They'd say, "Who are you, are you a Catholic?" And I'd say, "No, I'm church of Ireland, he's Presbyterian." And we'd just talk to them, we'd say, "What are you doing?" And they'd say, "Oh, they're gonna attack us!" And we'd say "Och, come on, what are you doing?" After about 20 minutes of this, we'd wander across the no man's land to the other side, and the same thing. And then by that stage, they'd all just all drifted off. We were never in the middle of stone throwing or anything like that; it all just died away, or the rain would come on, or something on television, and they'd all go away.

Joseph felt that by giving the protesters something on which to focus their energy—a pair of "odd people" on a "funny wee bike" talking to them—they diffused tension.

Ben chose to attend riots surrounding a dispute next to his church, though he feared for his safety:

> If I kept my head down, then by definition the Protestant churches had nothing to say to this horrendous exhibition of public evil, and whatever credibility you might have thought you had would just go out the window. . . . On other hand if you surface, you're the Protestant clergyman whose side was doing the aggravation.

Ben walked a tightrope; he condemned the Protestant protests but did not reject his community:

> I stood as an observer. I would stand on my own like this, with my arms folded, very, very, very deliberate my body language saying I am watching this. My arms are folded: I don't have anything in my hands to throw. One particular piece on the evening local news—I was at one level quite horrified, and at another level hugely grateful to God—the piece started with a close-up of me [standing] like that. Then it panned back, a long telephoto shot, panned back to show a riot. I remember talking to the reporter afterwards about it. He said that was their contribution to protecting me. I wore the same jacket every day, I always wore my dog collar, and I stood in the same place, with the same pose. I wanted to make it clear to my side that I was on their side of the fence, but not participating in the riot, and the other side saw that too. . . . I was in no way contributing to the violence. Every morning I would go over to the Nationalist side where the press were and be seen talking to Nationalist politicians, [the local priest], the police—I was quite happy for most of that to be recorded on TV. The Lord protected me. The Providence of God gave me a strong public platform of being able to walk that line between being disowned or contaminated.

Ben's actions gained him tremendous respect. He earned credibility and trust from which to launch many forms of reconciliation work, including work with hard-line paramilitary Loyalists.

Even clergy who avoided controversy sometimes found their lives threatened, such as James:

> There was a notorious gunman going about, and he shot up one of the churches, a Pentecostal church—went in with automatic weapons and spread the congregation . . . . And the police came to me sometime after that and said, "Look, this guy has stolen a car a couple of nights, and we feel he's going to do another church. And we feel it's either yours . . . or the local Presbyterian church . . . ." And I had members of the security forces in my congregations. I know for a fact some of them would sit with a revolver beside them in the congregation, covering it obviously with something because they were aware that it was a church where someone [might get] shot. I had to make a decision: we either cancel the service, or we went with it. So we went with the service. But something I'd never seen: we had an armed guard presence outside, which did not sit very comfortably with me. . . . and I for some time looked under my own car when I would have meetings there because you just don't know. Now that context of fear, to talk about some of the things that we might feel we ought to talk about—it was just the wrong context. You had to work in a totally different way. I haven't talked about those things—you're probably the only person I've told, outside of my wife and maybe one or two people. . . . You just live with that . . . we had outside our home, I've seen it: suddenly a helicopter would land across the field, and you'd have somebody sitting outside with a huge M25 machine gun sitting out there that he had set up.

Many clergy say this "context of fear" shapes their ministry. While all clergy interacted with people who have been victims or perpetrators of violence (whether paramilitary or state), they responded differently. Matthew, who helped many Catholics escape from IRA violence, formed particularly vehement anti-Republican sentiments:

> We would listen to the anguish and pain and sorrows, the desperation of many people . . . young men were given 24 hours by the IRA to get out of the country, or they'd be kneecapped or worse. It was their form of social control. It horrified me, because in one sense it kicked me out of my lethargy and my comfort zone . . . it made me angry. There were different groupings, trying to get a place of refuge, a safe place—all caused by this reign of terror by the IRA . . . . The father of a family obliged to drive a truck with a bomb in it up to a police station, and if he didn't do that, his wife and children would be killed back at home . . . I was speaking to these IRA, ex-IRA Republican prisoners, who benefitted from the freedom agreements that came through . . . saying, "Listen, the IRA can call for as many inquiries as they want for the crimes committed by the Loyalists on our Catholic community, but until I see some inquiry about what the IRA are doing to bring to the surface the crimes committed by themselves . . . . No one is going to tell me that those involved in putting that man into the truck and forcing—suicide bombing! Forced suicide bombing. No one is going to tell me the IRA are keen on healing memories." So they said, "That's in the past." I said, "Where does Jesus Christ come in the middle of this?" For the Republicans, Jesus Christ doesn't come in at all. They're Catholic by ethos, Christian by ethos, but the fifth commandment is not number one.

In contrast, Ted expressed compassion for IRA members despite his firm condemnation of their violence. He worked closely with IRA members to help them turn from violence and crime.

While I interviewed Ted, a phone call about one of his reformed IRA prisoner friends interrupted us. After he hung up, Ted wept repeatedly as he described the way his friend had been recently set up by the mother of his children, and dissident IRA members beat him almost to death:

> [The mother of his children] said to me—she was stunned—she couldn't believe it. He let them beat him up; he didn't respond or react. It really is an absolute miracle he survived. I'm told it was only because police happened to be near close at hand, and they worked on him for an hour. They didn't think he'd make it; the paramedics didn't think he'd make it. They got him to the hospital, and he discharged himself on Sunday. Have you ever seen the film passion of the Christ? I don't recommend it; I wouldn't see it again. But when Jesus is all beaten up, one eye closed, congealed blood—Anthony looked exactly like the Christ. All he could say was, "I don't want anyone to be punished." As I said in the [Easter] sermon, that's exactly like Christ: he took all the beating, and he didn't want anyone to be punished.

Ted separates acts from souls: he condemns violence but refuses to reject the people who perpetrate it. He embraces them with love, compassion, and an invitation to redemption.

Philip's approach is even gentler:

> I could identify with Sinn Fein as committed to the transformation of society to make society just and fair. . . . I could never really identify with the arms presence, though I've never really condemned them. . . . Condemnation really doesn't solve anything, really is what alienates . . . pastorally, if you condemn people, you sever your relationship with them more than likely. The only hope for transformation is to stay in relationship with people.

Philip and Ted try to preserve relationships with people trapped in what they see as an "unnatural state" of war and show them an escape to peace.

Traumatized Parishioners

The violence clergy discuss most comes from their parishioners, from comforting their traumatized communities. Some parishioners still live beside neighbors who in the past "tried to blow them up," James explains:

> People would take you to spots, and there was a mark on the wall outside the back of the church where one of the member's sons was shot dead, outside the back of the church. 'Cause you know, that mother still had that guy's suit hanging in the wardrobe several years after that guy was shot. And the pain that woman went through, and the father . . . And down the street there was a businessman with two sons. . . . one awful day the two sons were sitting in the business. One of the sons was going out that morning to pick up his wife from hospital, who had had her second baby. The first son, his wife was pregnant with her first . . . Two guys walked into the office and shot them both dead. Just like that, for no other reason than they were Protestant business people in that area. . . . Now, that's the context of pain

and so on that people suffered in that area; that's why it was called the "murder triangle."

Clergy try to invite traumatized parishioners into a peace process that brings healing, rather than alienating or further traumatizing them.

Influence

After examining existing theories, [17] I have developed a new taxonomy of clergy peacebuilder roles based on observations of how theology shapes clergy motivations. Clergy peacebuilders operate via three (sometimes overlapping) roles: *pastoral*, *prophetic*, and *bridge building*. *Pastoral* work operates at the individual level, to help people overcome their fears so they can accept the changes necessary for peace. *Prophetic* work operates at the individual and structural levels, where clergy model and promote their vision of "JustPeace"—a term coined by Dr. John Paul Lederach, Professor of International Peacebuilding at the University of Notre Dame and concurrently Distinguished Scholar at Eastern Mennonite University. Construction of a more equitable society gives content to positive peace and can prevent future conflict. At the communal level, *bridge building* crosses the sectarian divide to break down hostility, prejudice, and distrust. Increased harmony allows peace to stabilize, as patterns of enmity give way to expanding circles of goodwill. Every stage of the conflict requires each of these activities. For example, before the GFA, clergy arranged secret negotiations between politicians and paramilitaries. Nowadays, clergy arrange negotiations about contested parade routes.

Pastoral

Because pastoral work builds trust, many clergy consider it the foundation for all other peacebuilding. If parishioners trust that clergy will not betray or abandon them, clergy gain leverage to expand their peacebuilding efforts. It takes a significant investment of time and effort to build trust with individuals, and clergy often cannot reach everyone. Nonetheless, many clergy visit all families in their parish, as well as anyone of either community who experiences sectarian violence. To reduce perceived threat and increase trust, pastors employ theological messages, such as divine love, and psychological tools, such as nonjudgmental empathy.

Prophetic

Peacebuilders understand that societies need to change unjust structures and institutions in order to achieve sustainable peace. They work at the structural level to influence systems and community norms. Cultural, structural, and direct violence contribute to sectarianism. Prophetic work challenges this broad range of sectarian violence, from personal prejudice to discriminatory

---

[17] Paul Wehr and John Paul Lederach, "Mediating Conflict in Central America," *Journal of Peace Research* 28, no. 1 (1991): 90–91; Cynthia Sampson, "Religion and Peacebuilding," in *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, ed. William Hartman and Lewis Rasmussen (Washington, DC: United States Institutes of Peace, 1997), 273–316.

laws, via a wide range of activities: clergy model a nonsectarian reality, speak or write about sectarian issues, advocate politically, endorse the peace process, and denounce violence.

In Christian traditions, prophets lead people from *what is* to *what should be* by painting a vision of God's purpose for the world and urging people to strive for that vision. Prophets model courage in the face of threat, reassurance in the face of uncertainty, and hope in the face of despair. Clergy choose prophetic resources within their religion to support and inform their work, which ranges from quiet visibility to overt advocacy.

For example, Richard organized the first public Protestant meetings with Sinn Fein:

> We bear the scars that paved the way for the DUP to do what they did. And most of those scars ironically were caused by Ian Paisley and the DUP, who attacked us . . . for holding public meetings with Sinn Fein. We were the first Protestant group of any description, liberal or evangelical, to publicly invite Sinn Fein to address a public meeting. Lots of people had been doing it privately; but we held a public meeting . . . About 3–400 people turned up . . . a lot of anger in the room, yet we managed to hold the line. Sinn Fein were welcomed, treated with respect, etc. . . . Paisley calls a press conference the afternoon before that meeting, condemned us for betraying our faith, coming out for being separate, shouldn't do this, blah, blah—yet here he is 12 years later . . . it was normalized. We had Christian Citizenship Forums, which . . . created a model for local congregations to pick up. So coming up to elections, congregations would hold forums in their churches where they would invite local candidates. More often than not, they invited Sinn Fein candidates as well as Unionist candidates. Or even for Protestants to invite SDLP candidates into a church hall was a big thing. So we made it normal . . . In that extraordinary ordinariness, things and patterns are normalized, risks taken, little steps . . . . The church managed at various times to create a sense of space and permission for politicians to do certain steps.

Like Richard, other peacebuilding clergy normalized intergroup harmony and challenged the violent status quo through prophetic actions.

Bridge Building

In many bridge-building activities, clergy expose members of their in-group to members of the "other" community, or out-group. The well-established *contact hypothesis* of out-group exposure[18] holds that structured cross-community experiences, such as ecumenical clergy support groups and joint activities for laity, reduce prejudice and increase tolerance. These orchestrated exposures to the out-group help people respect the validity of out-group faith commitments as they de-emphasize boundaries and promote common interests.

---

[18] Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5 (2006): 751–83.

I propose that clergy possess a unique ability to maximize the potential of the contact method because church settings preserve the prominence of Catholic and Protestant identities while enhancing commonalities. [19] High-identity salience allows people to broaden the more positive feelings they gain toward individual out-group members to a general increased tolerance toward the wider out-group. Clergy also provide opportunities for forgiveness to take place, which helps move individuals and communities toward reconciliation. [20]

In addition, clergy engage in embedded work within communities and perform local and high-level political mediation. Claire Mitchell argues that most Protestant clergy mediators represent Unionist interests to politicians, in exchange for trying to persuade parishioners to support political change. [21] However, my interviewees exhort their parishioners to support change regardless of politicians' agendas; they work for the interests of peace rather than to gain power. Peacebuilder clergy explain Protestant or Unionist perspectives to help the process go smoothly, not to curry favors.

Ben organized a negotiation to discuss nearby highly contested parades:

> I'm part of the Protestant/Unionist delegation, in the sense that's where my seat comes from, but everyone acknowledges that I am not there to argue an Orange/Protestant view. I have said to the Republican side, "Frankly, I don't care if the Orangemen never walk down this road! I'm not one bit interested in them walking down this road, but I am here." I'm involved in these discussions, which are extremely difficult, because of their impact on community relationships. That's why I'm there. So if I can contribute in terms of oiling the wheels of communication and understanding to help that dialogue process get somewhere, that inevitably has benefit for both communities.

Other bridge-building efforts similarly try to improve cross-community understanding and relationships.

Cycles of Violence and Peace

Galtung notes that the virtuous spiral of peace can counter the vicious spiral of violence. Galtung observes that the process of peace flows from cultural peace through structural peace to direct peace. These forms of peace reinforce each other synergistically and bring about positive peace. [22] Clergy peacebuilders disrupt the cycle of violence and enable some of its energy to flow to the cycle of peace. Even the least activist clergy peacebuilders contribute to cultural peace via

---

[19] David Wilder, "Social Categorization: Implications for Creation and Reduction of Intergroup Bias," in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1986), 291–335; Ronald Fisher, *The Social Psychology of Intergroup and International Conflict Resolution* (New York: Springer, 1990), 54–55; Miles Hewstone et al., "Stepping Stones to Reconciliation in Northern Ireland: Intergroup Contact, Forgiveness, and Trust," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Reconciliation*, ed. Arie Nadlier, Thomas Malloy, and Jeffrey Fisher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 199–226, 206.

[20] Tania Tam et al., "Postconflict Reconciliation: Intergroup Forgiveness and Implicit Biases in Northern Ireland," *Journal of Social Issues* 64, no. 2 (2008): 310.

[21] Claire Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (New York: Ashgate, 2006), 52.

[22] Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means,* 32, 200.

individual conversations and messages of inclusivity, out-group tolerance, and reconciliation. Clergy also pave the way for successors to start where they left off and take stronger peacebuilding steps
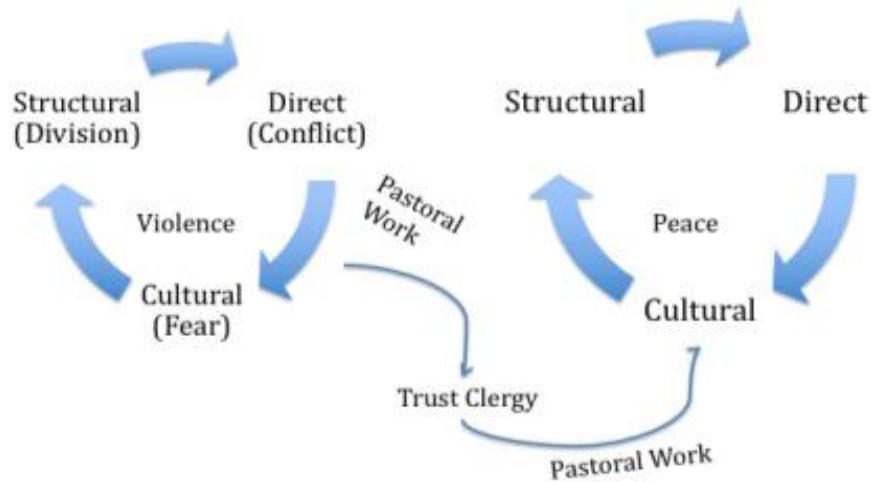

Figure 1: Clergy Peacebuilding Disrupts Cycles of Violence

As clergy peacebuilders engage in pastoral work with their parishioners, they build a relationship of trust, which allows them to engage in more intensive activism. Prophetic work strengthens structures of truth, equity, and justice. Bridge-building work strengthens harmonious, cooperative in-group–out-group relations and contributes to reconciliation. Continued pastoral work bolsters support for ongoing peace efforts. Together, these three modes of work continually combine and reinforce each other to build and strengthen JustPeace/positive peace.
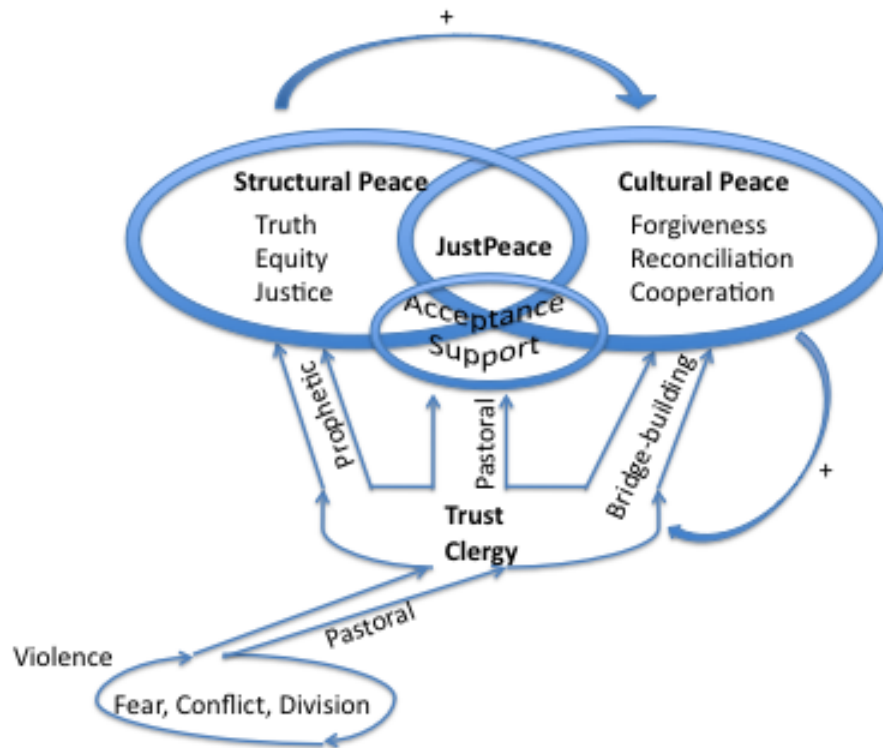
Figure 2: Clergy Peacebuilding Strengthens Cycles of Peace

Minefield

Communal context and denominational support affect clergy activism and effectiveness,[23] and clergy frequently tell me they cannot say what they truly think about sectarianism. They must constantly avoid pushing their congregations too fast, or they will sever relationships and alienate their communities: congregations will feel overwhelmed and dig in their heels.[24] I liken their experience to a "minefield," where if they make one misstep, they may find themselves embroiled in a firestorm of controversy. Mark said, "Minefield—that's a good word, actually: sometimes it blows up in my face."

Scope

Part of the tension between clergy and parishioners involves the accepted scope of clergy expertise. A social agent has "expert power" relative to how much knowledge and information a

---

[23] Launor Carter, "Some Research on Leadership in Small Groups," in *Groups, Leadership, and Men,* ed. Harold Guetzkow (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1951), 146–57, 153.

[24] Donna Hicks, "The Role of Identity Reconstruction in Promoting Reconciliation," in *Forgiveness & Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy & Conflict Transformation*, ed. Rodney Petersen and Raymond Helmick (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 129–49.

person attributes to the agent and how much the person trusts the agent to tell the truth.[25] Ministers and parishioners disagree about the proper range of clergy expert power when clergy see themselves as divinely called to build peace, while parishioners limit clergy expertise to their personal spiritual needs. The clergy–lay relationship includes both a professional and a highly personal dimension. Clergy enter congregations that have preexisting expectations; they expect clergy to conform.[26] If a social agent attempts to exert influence in an area outside the range of his or her perceived expertise, the agent's overall expert power (and ability to exert influence) will diminish.[27] Thus, if clergy try to engage in activism in congregations that prefer clergy to act only as spiritual chaplains, they risk losing their ability to exert any influence there. Most interviewees mentioned that some congregations resisted peacebuilding and activism much more than others. Resistant congregations must first be convinced that the scope of clergy duties and expertise includes activism and peacebuilding.

Leadership Style

Clergy peacebuilders often possess the opposite leadership style to that preferred in conflict zones. Intergroup conflict predisposes groups to favor aggressive leaders who represent in-group interests and exhibit competitive, hostile behavior.[28] Ronald Fisher notes, "Any transgression in the direction of perceived weakness will expose the leader as a traitor."[29] When clergy encourage reconciliation with the out-group, such bridge building puts clergy at risk of intense personal dislike, called "negative referent power." The stronger a social agent's negative referent power (in other words, the more the agent repels a person), the more that person will resist or reject anything the agent says.[30] Thus, when clergy engage in peacebuilding, they risk their ability to have any influence with their parishioners. Indeed, this phenomenon occurred in each of the cautionary tales in which clergy had to leave their churches after they deviated from group norms.

Outspoken Activists

While most peacebuilding clergy watch what they say, some clergy seem outspoken, less conflict avoidant, and more risk tolerant. These highly activist clergy set an ambitious pace with their congregations. They employ accepted theological resources to inspire groups and reinforce the scope of their expert power, use pastoral care and nonjudgmental empathy to gain the trust of individuals who disagree with them and neutralize potential troublemakers, and generally exhibit a confident leadership style.

Impact

---

[25] John French and Bertram Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in *Group Dynamics: Research and Theory*, ed. Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander (New York: Row, Peterson and Company, 1960), 607–23, 621.
[26] Quinley, *The Prophetic Clergy*, 167–68.
[27] French and Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," 621.
[28] Kenneth Thomas, "Conflict and Conflict Management," in *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, ed. Marvin Dunnette (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976), 889–936; Robert Blake and Jane Mouton, *Group Dynamics–Key to Decision Making* (Houston: Gulf Publishing Co., 1961); Muzafer Sherif, *In Common Predicament: Group Conflict and Co-Operation: Their Social Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).
[29] Fisher, *The Social Psychology of Intergroup and International Conflict Resolution*, 82–83.
[30] French and Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," 621.

Several scholars hypothesize that grassroots involvement provides increased legitimacy for peace agreements compared with an exclusively top-down approach: broader ownership stabilizes peace.[31] Northern Ireland particularly needs grassroots peacebuilding because the conflict involves a significant identity component. Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis find that top-down peace efforts often cannot end violence in identity conflicts.[32] Cathy Gormley-Heenan notes that attitudinal change does not automatically follow structural improvements. Persistent sectarianism threatens the stability of peace: distrust has repeatedly collapsed the Northern Ireland Assembly (the legislative body of Northern Ireland).[33]

Requisite modesty aside, clergy express widely disparate views about their own significance. At one end of the spectrum, Gary claims that intensive prayer efforts achieved the entire peace process. In the middle, most clergy observe dramatic changes as a result of their peacebuilding efforts, especially with individuals, communities, and intergroup mediations. Others agree that clergy helped achieve the Good Friday Agreement, but they lament their limited ability to influence politics. Finally, Richard minimizes clergy peacebuilding as "mood music" in the realpolitik world of powerful international agendas.

The following table categorizes clergy self-reported impact.

Pseudonym	Activism level	Position	Impact on individuals	Impact on congregations	Impact on communities	Impact on politicians / paramilitaries	Impact on peace process
William	Very Low	Local Clergy		Yes			
Henry	Low	Local Clergy	Yes				

---

[31] Catherine Barnes, *Owning the Process: Mechanisms for Political Participation of the Public in Peacemaking* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2002); Celia McKeon, "Civil Society: Participating in Peace Processes," in *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, ed. Paul van Tongeren et al. (London: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 567–75; Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke, "The People's Peace? Peace Agreements, Civil Society, and Participatory Democracy," *International Political Science Review* 28, no. 3 (2007): 293–324; Carla Koppell, "Who Belongs at Darfur Talks?," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 22, 2007; Roberto Belloni, "Civil Society in War-to-Democracy Transitions," in *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*, ed. Anna Jarstad and Timothy Sisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 182–210; Anthony Wanis-St. John and Darren Kew, "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion," *International Negotiation* 13, no. 1 (2008): 11–36; Desirée Nilsson, "Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace," *International Interactions* 38, no. 2 (2012): 243–66.

[32] Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 779–801, 795.

[33] Cathy Gormley-Heenan, "Northern Ireland: Securing the Peace," in *Beyond Settlement: Making Peace Last after Civil Conflict*, ed. Vanessa Shields and Nicholas Baldwin (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), 224–36; Fen Hampson, *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996); Montville, "The Arrow and the Olive Branch"; Bruce Hemmer et al., "Putting the 'Up' in Bottom-up Peacebuilding: Broadening the Concept of Peace Negotiations," *International Negotiation* 11, no. 1 (2006): 129–62, 131.

Mark	Low	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes			
James	Low	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes			
Rachel	Moderate	Local Clergy	Yes		Yes		
Matthew	Moderate	Redemptorist	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Stan	High	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes			
Jean	High	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes			
Peter	High	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Ted	High	Local Clergy, Jesuit	Yes	Yes	Yes	No/Yes	
Carl	High	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Gary	High	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes
Frank	High	Local Clergy, Sr Leader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/No	Yes
Richard	Very High	Para-church	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Maybe/Maybe	Maybe
Joseph	Very High	Local Clergy, Educator	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Michael	Very High	Local Clergy, Para-church	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Simon	Very High	Local Clergy, Sr Leader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes

Luke	Very High	Local Clergy, Sr Leader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes
Philip	Very High	Redemp-torist	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes
Ben	Very High	Local Clergy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes
Jason	Very High	Ecu-menical Traveling Order	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes

Table 2: Self-Reported Perceived Effectiveness

A few patterns emerge. First, clergy perceive noticeable impact on individuals, congregations, and communities. In addition, clergy who engaged in civic efforts, such as media engagement, high-level mediation, or collaboration with politicians or other public servants, generally express satisfaction with their influence on the political peace process.

From these patterns, and from interviews, four theoretical outcomes appear: First, when clergy peacebuilding efforts transform individuals, such transformation causes ripple effects, which positively impact congregations and communities. Second, when individuals, congregations, and communities embrace reconciliation, they change cultural norms and exhibit constituent pressure. These processes build momentum and create an atmosphere in which political and social peace processes can take root and move forward, called "ripeness."[34] Third, when a political deficit forms from the breakdown of governmental operation and communication, clergy possess unique credibility and leverage to operate in this vacuum, both in their communities and as mediators with political entities.[35] Finally, I propose that the interplay among these factors—ripple effect, momentum, and leverage in the political vacuum—combined in a synergistic manner similar to Galtung's synergistic virtuous cycle of peace, and enhanced the overall movement of Northern Ireland from open conflict to cease-fire, from impasse to the Good Friday Agreement, and from deep sectarian instability to increasingly stable, positive peace.

State actors wield coercive and reward power, which are most limited in scope, depend heavily on the presence and strength of enforcing agents,[36] and often exacerbate violence.[37] In

---

[34] Sampson, "Religion and Peacebuilding," 275.

[35] Ibid.; John Morison, "Constitutionalism, Civil Society, and Democratic Renewal in Northern Ireland," in *A Farewell to Arms: Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, ed. Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke, and Fiona Stephen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 238–52, 244–45.

[36] French and Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," 614.

[37] Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1.

contrast, clergy use referent, expert, and legitimate power to influence communities and politicians. Such "soft power" lets clergy operate in a political vacuum, builds trust, improves the quality of negotiations and agreements (by including paramilitaries and enabling concessions),[38] ameliorates identity conflict, and enhances stability.[39] Ben and Richard, who work regularly with government officials, observe that clergy peacebuilders are best suited to influence their communities precisely because they reject coercive or reward power and thus maintain legitimacy as truly disinterested parties.[40] Finally, geopoliticians agree that peacebuilding requires multitrack efforts.[41]

In order to optimize peace efforts, secular peacebuilders should study and cooperate with clergy peacebuilders. Parish clergy efforts contribute distinct elements that can complement Track One, secular, and parachurch work. A better understanding of the power employed by religious actors and institutions will help clarify its potential and limitations. For example, analysts understandably assert that the denominations in Northern Ireland should have responded more quickly to the onset of the Troubles and changed the way they trained clergy, clearly defined the theological and ethical imperative for peace, and emphatically supported peacebuilding efforts. However, church leaders, seminary professors, and local clergy often have to overcome their own sectarianism, resistance to change, and a very understandable fear of social, professional, and physical punishment before they can lead others to do likewise. Moreover, churches and denominations must change slowly enough to preserve their legitimate power with their parishioners. Rapid change can cause the perception that a church is no longer the same known, trusted, historically situated, and communally embedded institution.

Secular groups frequently want to harness the potential of churches and their far-reaching networks for ethical projects such as conflict transformation, environmentalism, or social justice. However, unlike many peacebuilders, clergy have numerous, wide-ranging additional duties. Clergy are rarely trained in activism or conflict transformation, and they mainly function as executive director to an institution and spiritual advisor or psychotherapist to their parishioners. Even in a conflict zone, politicians ought not try to reduce religion to their chosen project. If church distills itself into a secular social justice project, it is no longer church, and it will lose the broad referent, legitimate, and expert power that enables it to influence people, structures, and communities.

---

[38] Stefan Wolff, "Context and Content: Sunningdale and Belfast Compared," in *Aspects of the Belfast Agreement*, ed. Rick Wilford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11–27, 12.

[39] Frederic Pearson, "Dimensions of Conflict Resolution in Ethnopolitical Disputes," *Journal of Peace Research* 38 (2001): 275–87, 279; Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*; George Downs and Stephen Stedman, "Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation," in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, ed. Stephen Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth Cousens (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 43–69; UN Presidential Statement on Peacebuilding, UN Security Council, 2001, https://www.un.org/press/en/2001/sc7014.doc.htm; Feargal Cochrane, "Two Cheers for the NGOs: Building Peace from Below in Northern Ireland," in *A Farewell to Arms: Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, ed. Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke, and Fiona Stephen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006): 253–67, 263; Montville, "The Arrow and the Olive Branch," 7.

[40] Douglas Johnston, "Review of the Findings," in *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ed. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 258–65, 261.

[41] Melissa W. Wright, "Gender and Geography: Knowledge and Activism across the Intimately Global," *Progress in Human Geography* 33, no. 3 (2008): 379–86; Victoria Rosner and Geraldine Pratt, "The Global and the Intimate," *WSQ* (Spring/Summer (2006): 13–24; Alison Mountz and Jennifer Hyndman, "Feminist Approaches to the Global Intimate," *WSQ* (Spring/Summer (2006): 446–63; Sara Koopman, "Alter-Geopolitics: Other Securities Are Happening," *Geoforum* 42, no. 3 (2011): 274–84.

An overemphasis on prophetic work, without the foundation of trust and referent power built by pastoral work, jeopardizes a clergyperson's legitimate power. On one hand, clergy engage in prophetic work to paint a compelling vision and inspire parishioners to embrace change. On the other hand, clergy also understand that parishioners must take steps at a pace they can manage, so they will not freeze. Parishioners look to their clergy to provide more than ethical guidance. They also seek spiritual enrichment, emotional replenishing, and comfort about the frightening parts of life. They come for healing and hope, and they often come exhausted and terrified. Intense pressure to get involved in a moral project will drive many people away. Talented clergy understand the need first to meet people where they are, and then to help them find courage to move forward.

In addition, heavy-handed attempts to direct religion can restrict the creative ability of clergy and their parishioners to envision, build, and strengthen holistic, positive peace from the bottom up. Track One actors, civil society organizations, and even denominational leaders may also tailor their goals to preserve certain inequities of the violent status quo. Clergy peacebuilding requires sufficient independence to preserve its underlying ethical commitments. The preservation of legitimate power requires this autonomy, such that clergy do not develop too cozy a relationship with the purveyors of coercive and reward power.

Track One actors can benefit from the in-depth perspectives of local clergy, who tend to have their finger on the pulse of communal sentiments. Analysts and Track One diplomats can strengthen clergy efficacy with theoretical and empirical information about the broader structures, implications, and objectives that surround and shape their congregational context and religious peacebuilding efforts. When scholars and Track One actors take clergy peacebuilding efforts more seriously, clergy will likely respond with increased commitment and attempt to incorporate scholarly and political information that will help them to develop and improve their own efficacy. A mutually respectful partnership has the potential to benefit all associates and enterprises.

Moreover, denominations and seminaries should augment clergy expert, referent, and legitimate peacebuilding power, and they should reduce the professional risk of activism. Seminaries can teach clergy the sources and mechanisms of their power and agency, and their unique ability to make a difference. They can train clergy in pastoral care of traumatized persons, change theory, and leadership strategies. Training can present a variety of personality and leadership styles to discuss how each one can effect change, and how all clergy, regardless of personality or background, and all types of work can contribute to peacebuilding. Educators can train clergy in communication techniques for controversial topics, interpersonal disputes, and community divisions. Seminaries can provide examples for students and clergy of how to paint a compelling vision for their parishioners. They can offer continuing education opportunities and workshops to keep clergy abreast of current scholarship regarding peacebuilding. Denominations can honor clergy and congregational efforts, especially difficult attempts to change, as well as reward successes. Denominations can also provide feedback mechanisms in order to listen to clergy perspectives and ideas. This feedback should particularly solicit opinions from working-class clergy, who sometimes perceive that the ecumenical movement sneers at and ignores their perspectives and lived realities due to academic elitism. In addition, denominations can explore the relationship between parishes and other forms of ministry, such as the Catholic Orders, to maximize their complementarity and efficacy.

Denominations can pair up more cautious clergy with bolder colleagues for mentoring and support. Clerical leaders and educators can list a variety of steps clergy and congregations can take to build holistic, positive peace, from the most simple and individual changes along to more radical and structural alterations, and encourage creative additions to the list.

In 1985, Czech political dissident Václav Havel asked, "Is it within the power of the 'dissidents'—as a category of subcitizen outside the power establishment—to have any influence at all on society and the social system? Can they actually change anything?"[42] This study applies Havel's query to local clergy in Northern Ireland and concludes that apparently powerless dissident clergy peacebuilders do indeed make an important difference. The optimization of their capacity to build peace requires further study. While analysts build helpful theories, these local field-workers carry on their daily struggle in the gritty trenches of peacefare. Increased support, training, and collaboration can help clergy peacebuilders apply their unique blend of power and access to the construction of positive peace. Clergy peacebuilders continually help their societies walk toward a peaceful future: their door does not close. Their knowledge should be shared.

Trelawney Grenfell-Muir is a freelance writer, speaker, and consultant on topics of peacebuilding, feminism, and religion, with a focus on strategies of power and symbolism for personal, communal, and intercommunal wellness. Grenfell-Muir holds a Ph.D. in Conflict Studies & Religion from the University Professors Program at Boston University; she developed her unique approach through decades of experience in scientific and field research; pastoral ministry; teaching children, youth, undergraduate, and graduate courses; counseling; and mediation.

---

[42] Václav Havel and John Keane, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), 23.