"Who Has Believed What We Have Heard?" A Response to Denny Weaver's *The Nonviolent Atonement*[1]

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I

I believe it was the fall of 1967 when the life of my family began to revolve around Nat's Tavern. My mother had re-married in January of that same year. By late spring my stepfather, John, was regularly coming home drunk, being verbally abusive, and throwing things at the walls. Joining him at his favorite tavern was my mother's strategy to place some parameters around his excessive drinking and abusive behavior. Her strategy was only partly successful. Holes in the walls – as well as anxieties, fear, and pain – continued largely to define our home life. My mother had married another man much like her first husband, my father.

A little more than ten years later I would become a child protective services social worker. This job was incredibly difficult and, for me, emotionally draining. It was also painfully educational. Being inserted into the lives of people I would never have interacted with otherwise opened windows onto lives of woundedness, brokenness, and great destruction. It not only taught me much, it initiated a journey whereon I would always want to discourage such abusive behaviors. But of course "discourage" is too soft a word. I want to see such behaviors stopped altogether, and I want healing for the wounded lives that give rise to such violence. I certainly never want the Christian message used to underwrite or prolong violence of any kind.

At least as I read Denny Weaver's book, his passions are similarly given to ending such abusive behaviors or, put positively, to encouraging lives given to concrete acts of loving and caring. Moreover, unlike some of the allies Weaver has made through his book – but like me – he wants to attach a passion *for* justice and love and *against* abuse to a commitment to nonviolence. Like Weaver, I do not want us to imagine that we can divorce theology from ethics. Since he and I agree on these fundamental points, why

do I find his book largely unsatisfying or even troubling?

First, let me list a set of issues that imply questions I would pose to Weaver. (1) I suggest that some of his views reflect a deficient understanding of the Trinity. I would add that such a critique need not reference some ecumenical "agreement" regarding what the Trinity means metaphysically, such as the views reflected in the Nicene Creed. Rather, what is required is a sufficient realization that the Father and Son are not at odds with each other (as is stated in many ways in the Scriptures in relation to the death of Jesus). The death of Jesus happens *because* of the love of the Father *and* the Son (in a sinful world).[2] (2) Weaver does not appear to take sin and evil seriously enough.[3] Otherwise, why would he not see that precisely because of the pervasive reality of sin in the world Jesus' death was "necessary"?[4] (3) Aligning himself with certain views strongly critical of the adulation of those who concretely embody love and thus sometimes suffer horribly has apparently led Weaver to embrace a theology that makes martyrdom unintelligible or even wrong, as well as in general cutting the nerve of a call to costly and sacrificial discipleship.[5] (4) On a formal level, Weaver doesn't engage many of the most relevant biblical texts related to atonement (or more broadly, salvation as made effective through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection).[6] Moreover, he doesn't engage many of the most salient biblical scholars and theologians who would challenge his views, including importantly those who are pacifist or whose views of the atonement comport with pacifism.[7] These are some of the particulars I would name.

However, I've come to believe that one thing that has gone wrong with much critical reflection on the atonement is a larger concern. As Walter Brueggemann puts it, too often the gospel "is a truth that has been flattened, trivialized, and rendered inane." He continues: "While my propensities are to value more greatly ideologies of the left, any ideology – by which I mean closed, managed, useful truth – destroys the power and claim of the gospel."[8]

Repeatedly when I read through Weaver's book I have a sense that the gospel and other supportive theological tenets are affirmed by Weaver if they are "useful truths," i.e., useful for the peace and justice to which he is clearly committed. I was reminded of this when I was recently lecturing on one of my heroes in the faith, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was determined not

to let the Gospel simply become a "useful truth" even for his most passionate commitments. Clifford Green's recent essay wonderfully captures this in regard to Bonhoeffer:

> Bonhoeffer's Christian peace ethic is intrinsic to his whole theology. It cannot be separated from his Christology, his understanding of discipleship and the Sermon on the Mount, his way of reading the Bible, and his understanding of the gospel and of the church. It belongs to the heart of this faith. Accordingly, it cannot be reduced to a principle. It is not a discrete option on a menu of ethical "positions." It is not a separate interchangeable part that can be removed from his theology and replaced by something else called, perhaps 'realism' or even "responsibility."… [It also] cannot be reduced to the thin principle of nonviolence; rather it is defined by his thick commitment of faith in Christ with its manifold theological and ethical implications. The richness and boldness of that witness remains a critical challenge of Bonhoeffer's legacy to the church today in a deeply troubling time.[9]

The issues related to Bonhoeffer's pacifism are complex, as anyone who has tackled them knows.[10] Likewise, with the atonement, matters become quite complicated because there are so many inter-connected theological issues. A number of scholars more steeped in the literature around the atonement than I have already offered important critiques of Weaver's work.[11] I won't try to repeat what they have done. Instead, I will attempt to offer an alternative way of reflecting on these issues.

I resonate with the words of N. T. Wright: "Perhaps, after all, atonement is at its deepest level something that *happens*, so that to reduce it to a proposition to which one can give mental assent is a mistake at a deep level."[12] Thomas Long similarly suggests that in relation to atonement "the poetry of proclamation is to be preferred over the hydraulics of explanation."[13] Eugene Peterson highlights our need for poetry:

> *Poetry* is language used with personal intensity. It is not, as so many suppose, decorative speech. Poets tell us what our eyes, blurred with too much gawking, and our ears, dulled with

> too much chatter, miss around and within us. Poets use words to drag us into the depth of reality itself.… Far from being cosmetic language, it is intestinal. It is root language. Poetry doesn't so much tell us something we never knew as bring us into recognition of what is latent, forgotten, overlooked, or suppressed.[14]

I am not a poet, but the writer of Isaiah 52 and 53 was. Thus I am framing my reflections around this poem used by Christians since the time of the New Testament as a way of naming what happens through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.[15] N. T. Wright's commentary on the book of Romans prompted me to interact with this poetry through particular narratives. In his comments on Rom. 3:21-26, one of the few passages in the NT that actually uses the word translated "atonement," Wright mentions that part of the backdrop for Paul's use of language there is the Maccabean martyr tradition, a tradition that renders more vivid some of the imagery in this passage.[16] Likewise, I am convinced that seeing contemporary martyrs as at least analogies for the work of Christ may be necessary for many in our day if they are ever to make sense of something as "offensive" and profound as the atonement.[17] Hence my reflections on the redemptive work of contemporary martyr stories framed by the poetry of Isaiah 52 and 53.

II

Beginning, then, with Isa. 52:13: "See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." That God is profoundly involved, redemptively, in the sufferings of this servant is, as much as anything, what causes offence to many today in relation to the atonement. Some of the language that follows this verse is difficult, even painful. Thus we dare not lose sight of these opening words. Yahweh is speaking. Despite appearances, "the servant" referred to here will "prosper," will flourish; the servant will be "high and lifted up" or "highly exalted." Such language is certainly reminiscent of NT reflections on Jesus (e.g., Phil. 2:6-11). If we forget that opening affirmation we will misunderstand much of what follows in this evocative passage. The affirmation clearly signals that the poem is not going to glorify suffering but rather the suffering servant, which is entirely

different.

Speaking of this One who will be lifted very high, the poet continues. Isa. 52:14-15: "Just as there were many who were astonished at him – so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals – so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate." Seeing what we've not been told! Contemplating what we've never heard! We distort the power of this rich poetic language when literalism is employed to drain it of its ability to astonish, to startle nations, to render kings and rulers mute, to defy comprehension. Instead we must allow this language to remind us that a crucified Messiah is the center of our faith. We know full well, with Paul, that "the message about the cross is foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). But we must also remember that "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor. 1:25).

Weaver has pointed to this by beginning the description of his own position through the use of the book of Revelation. But then, it seems to me, he has virtually stripped it of the radical nature of its offense: the centrality of a slaughtered Lamb. In the mid-1970s I read *The Crucified God* by Jürgen Moltmann, I heard a dramatic sermon regarding the offensiveness of the crucifixion by Malcolm Boyd, and I read *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* by G. B. Caird.[18] My reading of Revelation would never be the same. I knew that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" had acted through Jesus in a way that forever transforms our lives and our understanding of God's actions in the world and God's claims upon our lives.

The book of Revelation communicates this, as Weaver suggests, through a dramatic reversal of images. The Christians who first heard this book were likely suffering precisely for their faith. They wanted to be assured that their God was in control. John the revelator offers them assurance throughout the book, centrally defined in chapters four and five. In these two chapters, the scrolls are opened and the seals broken – history is unfolded – through the power of the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, or so the elder announces. But as the revelator looks, he does not see the expected Lion; instead he sees a Lamb. Note the descriptions of this Lamb: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, [because] you were

slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9b). Thousands upon thousands sing: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5.11b). Kings shall indeed "shut their mouths" because of this slaughtered one, the servant who was "marred" "beyond human semblance." The entire book of Revelation reminds us in dramatic ways of the offence of the cross. Precisely because he has been slaughtered and because he has suffered, the Lamb is worthy, and as he leads us teaches us to know what it means to "walk in the ways of the Lord."

Isaiah next asks two challenging questions. Isa. 53:1: "Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" I'm a middle-class, educated white male, a citizen of the U.S., the most powerful country in the world, and I'm a Christian theologian. I'm also from a relatively uneducated, non-Christian family from a small, poor, racist county in southern Illinois; some would refer to my extended family as poor white trash. Anyone who knew me at age sixteen would have said I needed redemption. Did my mother have to suffer and did Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesus Christ "have to die" in order to redeem me? I want to suggest that the answer is yes. I say this because I have now heard and seen the strength of the LORD – and I have believed. (More on this below.)

Continuing with Isa. 53:2-3: "For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account." These pithy two verses are hardly sufficient to account for Jesus' public life and ministry. However, they do signal that there is a life lived between the birth and death of this servant, and call us to review the Gospel accounts of his life and ministry. I agree with Weaver (and N.T. Wright and Joe Jones, among others) that we can never adequately understand what the Scriptures say about atonement without a sufficient grasp of the story of Jesus as conveyed through the Gospel narratives.

Yet we must resist the temptation to remake the Jesus of these narratives over into our own ideal. As Charlotte Allen provocatively puts

it, we should not imagine that Jesus is "actually a nondenominational [21st-century] therapy-group facilitator whose specialty is 'enabling [people] to become themselves,' and whose message is: '… Keep down the urge to dominate, to score, to triumph, to fight, and exalt the urge to conciliate, to understand, to value.'"[19] No, he is a Savior precisely because he suffered and is acquainted with infirmity. Wounded and oppressed people identify with him, or, shall I say, they believe he identifies with them because he too was despised and rejected.

My wife lived and ministered in South Central Los Angeles for 18 years. She reminds me often that whatever abuses, rejection, violence, and injustices her friends suffered (even those condoned by the church or Christianity), they knew their suffering was understood and shared by Jesus Christ. Because he carried and bore all suffering on their behalf, they could entrust their griefs to him, cast their cares on him, and exchange their heavy burdens for the yoke that is easy and the burden that is light. She can't define exactly how this happened. She tries but words and concepts can't capture the liberation, release, lightness, and joy of the girls and women who encountered the suffering Servant. My wife's friends loved the next verses.

Isa. 53:4-6: "Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.[20] But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." How are we to understand these words indicating that the Servant served as a substitute, as One who carried, bore, was wounded, struck, bruised in order to make others whole? And why do the NT writers refer to this passage time and again?

I believe the film *To End All Wars* offers an extraordinary portrayal of the truth of these three verses from Isaiah.[21] It is based on a true story of the imprisonment of mostly Scottish soldiers in a Japanese internment camp during World War II. The brutality is horrible to watch. Understandably some of the prisoners decide to escape. Major Campbell, not a particularly admirable character, is the ringleader of the escapees. The escape is planned

for the same night as the "graduation" ceremony for the "jungle university," a primitive learning system designed by some of the educated captives as a way of carving out space for retaining their humanity. Almost everyone is in attendance at the graduation, with the exception of a few guards. The escapees manage to kill only two of the guards. All the escapees are caught. All except one are summarily executed – one, quick, fatal bullet. However, it appears that Sergeant Ito, the guard in charge of the prisoners, wants to make an example of Major Campbell. His death is to come more slowly; he must suffer a more lengthy humiliation. Only then will he be decapitated.

As the terror escalates, Dusty, a prisoner who has been unusually and consistently wise, kind, and generous (even giving up his meager rations to save another prisoner's life), steps forward and speaks privately to Sergeant Ito. It soon becomes clear that Dusty has volunteered to give his life in exchange for the Major. Such an offer is most striking because Campbell had disdain for Dusty.

Dusty is nailed to a cross. His death, a mockery of the Bible confiscated by the guards, is to serve as a warning to those who rebel against the system. Everyone knows that Dusty did nothing deserving of death; he died so that the Major, the true "rebel," the one filled with rage, could live. Dusty was not portrayed as any sort of superficial "saint," but his Christian faith was known both in word and deed. One could see a continuity between his life and this ultimate act of giving his life in place of Major Campbell. The narrator tells us that Dusty's death was extremely difficult for the prisoners, leading many nearly to despair. The narrator, however, was reminded of the words Dusty had read from the Gospel of John: "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12.24).[22] This fruit becomes evident in one of the last scenes. A truck full of seriously wounded Japanese soldiers arrives at the camp. They need assistance. Because these defeated soldiers represent shame, the Japanese guards, as well as the prisoners, are forbidden to help them. The prisoners refuse to obey the orders. At the risk of their own lives they give aid and comfort to the "enemy." One of the Japanese guards joins them in this kindness. Perhaps such a costly decision was an echo of Dusty's death. Perhaps, in a sense, Dusty was "wounded for *their* transgressions, crushed *for their* iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made *them* whole, and by his bruises *they were* healed."[23]

The prophet feels a need to amplify these shocking images still further. Isa. 53:7-12: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away…. For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain…. through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light…. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Did Martin Luther King, Jr. die for my sins?[24] Was this "the will of the LORD"? Was it necessary? It seems to me that King's "slow martyrdom" served as God's act of redemption for the evil and complex realities of American racism.[25] How can such a suggestion be anything other than a perverted affirmation, a perversion of justice? I contend that to understand what I'm going to propose is, at least analogously, to understand the heart of atonement theology.

I'm not sure exactly how many years after I became a Christian and a conscientious objector I read John Perkins's autobiography, *Let Justice Roll Down*.[26] I believe it was about the same time that I first read "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr. and a biography of King.[27] This reading transformed me. That Perkins was almost murdered by Mississippi police while I was a junior in high school stunned me. While in the Brandon, Mississippi jail, Perkins was almost "marred beyond human semblance." His son, Spencer, recalled how not long before this, his father had repeated and underscored the line "If somebody's got to die, then I'm ready" in a speech to a jail yard full of people after the unlawful arrest of fifteen children protesting the imprisonment of one of their neighbors.[28]

Both Perkins and King – and the African Americans they represented – were "oppressed" and "afflicted," horribly so, repeatedly. It was the intensity of the suffering, and their own willingness to absorb the violence inflicted on them and those they led, that magnified the righteousness of

their lives. And it also clarified the horribleness, the Evil, of the racism that had been assumed throughout my childhood. Having read their words and "stared into their faces" through the reading of their lives, it became clearer and clearer that of course King's death is, in the first instance, simply the culminating act of a pattern of racism – and must be named for the "perversion of justice" it is. However, it is more than that, other than that. For his death is also the culmination of a life given to embodying the love of Christ for neighbors – and more offensively, enemies – even when great cost is involved. This is what distinguishes martyrdom from simple murder and makes his death redemptive. His death can be seen as "necessary" only against the backdrop of the deep and pervasive sin of racism in this culture. Some of us may never have truly known the depth and breadth of racism without the extraordinary lives of King, Perkins, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer and countless others. King seems to have recognized this necessity. In his words, toward the end of his life:

> The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience, but where he stands in moments of challenge, moments of great crisis and controversy. And this is where I choose to cast my lot today. There may be others who want to go another way, but when I took up the cross I recognized its meaning. It is not something that you merely put your hands on. It is not something that you wear. The cross is something that you bear and ultimately that you die on.[29]

I repeat what I asked at the beginning of this section: Could Martin Luther King Jr.'s death possibly have been "the will of the LORD?" One can consider this possibility only if one has grasped the profound depth and breadth of the evil of racism within this country, and has admitted the hold that it has on very many of us. And if one realizes, with King, that embodied love – even of enemies – within this context will likely lead to death.

Perhaps I began to see the suffering and death of King in the light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; perhaps I knew it was all necessary for our salvation and because of that willed by God, because I know what it means to be in the grip of sin. In the fall of 1970 my life was turned around dramatically. I was not "breathing murder" as the Apostle Paul testified regarding his conversion but I did get drunk and stoned regularly. I

was more than willing to go thousands of miles across the world to kill the North Vietnamese, who had been declared my nation's enemies. I generally lived a reprobate life. Within a year of becoming a Christian I became a conscientious objector. Shortly thereafter I would become a staunch opponent of racism. This was almost unthinkable in my subculture in small-town southern Illinois. But I was confronted powerfully and gracefully by a loving, crucified LORD.

Not long after becoming a follower of Jesus I realized that my mother in her role *as mother* was in some important ways also a model of the sacrificial love to which I was called. It would be years before I would have a fuller understanding of what this meant. I realized that my mother, sacrificing her own desires, had worked at two jobs during much of my childhood. Though she didn't show it, I'm sure that she suffered during those years in order to provide for me and my brother. Over the years I became very close to my mother. It is she, and not my father or stepfather, who taught me what it means to be a parent to my two children. It is she, at her best, who has even helped me to see what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, sacrificing for others out of love for God and them.

She certainly suffered, largely because of men.[30] I could never see that as anything but wrong, as sin – that must be denounced for what it is. She also suffered because of love for me and my brother in a world of sin where such embodied love required sacrifice.

Let me return to my opening list of concerns. As concerning the Trinity, it was God in Christ who is our Savior and he will be high and lifted up. Second, extreme sin and evil require an extreme response. Third, costly discipleship, daily sacrifice that includes the potential of martyrdom, is part of our defining narrative. And finally, enemy love is both thinkable and sometimes necessary in order for the liberation and salvation of the world. This is what I have believed, what I have heard, what has been revealed to me. The atonement happens, and it is wondrous to behold![31]

Notes

[1] J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). I have been reading Denny's writings on the atonement for just about as long as he has been writing them. I have also read several of his recent essays, including "Narrative *Christus Victor*:

The Answer to Anselmian Atonement Violence," in *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation*, ed. John Sanders (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 1-29. Moreover, I have carefully read through his book. However, because of the way I have decided to shape this paper and the limitations of time I have elected not to reference it heavily.

[2] This point is of course related to the charge of affirming "divine child abuse." There may be views out there that are subject to this critique. But there are many articulations of the atonement, with which Weaver seems unhappy, that do not fit this characterization.

[3] If I were to pursue this, I would utilize especially: Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000); and Mark E. Biddle, *Missing the Mark: Sin and Its Consequences in Biblical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005). I would engage these in conjunction with Alan Mann, *Atonement for a 'Sinless' Society* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2005).

[4] Part of what is required is naming what we mean by "necessary." I am not referring to some metaphysical necessity or God's need for punishment that must be satisfied. I hope the reader will see what I mean by the way I use this term later in this paper.

[5] I don't know any other way to interpret some of Weaver's affirmations in chapters five and six. This is not to say there are no genuine concerns contained there. But having said that, Sarah Coakley has well named my own concern: "'An undiscriminating adulation of 'vulnerability' might appear to condone, or even invite such evils…. But what I am suggesting is that there is another, and longer-term, danger to Christian feminism in the *repression* of all forms of 'vulnerability,' and in a concominant failure to confront issues of fragility, suffering or 'self-emptying' except in terms of victimology…. Only… by facing—and giving new expression to—the paradoxes of 'losing one's life in order to save it,' can feminists hope to construct a vision of the Christic 'self' that transcends the gender stereotypes we are seeking to up-end.'" (Quoted in Nicola Hoggard Creegan and Christine D. Pohl, *Living on the Boundaries: Evangelical Women, Feminism and the Theological Academy* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005], 138). I would also resonate with the section in this book from which the Coakley quotation is taken: "Selfishness, Sacrifice, Sin and Self."

[6] I was rather astounded at how little Denny deals with the range of the most relevant biblical texts and the scholarship on them. This deficiency is addressed by Christopher D. Marshall, "Atonement, Violence and the Will of God: A Sympathetic Response to J. Denny Weaver's *The Nonviolent Atonement*," *MQR* 77.1 (January 2003): 69-92.

[7] I could name writings that pre-date Denny's book and that he could have drawn from. Some very recent writings that pose alternatives to his approach are N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), ch. 3 (and other writings on his website); Joe R. Jones, *A Grammar of Christian Faith*, Vol. 2 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), ch. 8; Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); and Peter K. Stevenson and Stephen I. Wright, *Preaching the Atonement* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005). For looking afresh at Anselm, I especially suggest Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 194-221, and Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing*

of Your Minds (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 155-75.
[8] Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 1, 2.
[9] Clifford J. Green, "Pacifism and Tyrannicide: Bonhoeffer's Christian Peace Ethic," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18.3 (2005): 31-47, here 45, 47.
[10] See, e.g., Mark Thiessen Nation, "Discipleship in a World Full of Nazis: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Polyphonic Pacifism as Social Ethics," in *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Chris K. Huebner, Harry J. Huebner, and Mark Thiessen Nation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999; reprinted by Wipf & Stock, 2005), 249-77.
[11] In addition to Christopher Marshall, I would add John Sanders, ed., *Atonement and Violence: A Theological Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006); and the following reviews: Telford Work (*Theology Today,* Oct. 2002); Douglas Farrow (*International Journal of Systematic Theology,* Jan. 2004); Chris Huebner (*Modern Theology,* July 2004).
[12] Wright, *Evil*, 91.
[13] Thomas Long, "Bold in the Presence of God: Atonement in Hebrews," *Interpretation* 52.1 (Jan. 1998): 66.
[14] Eugene H. Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms As Tools for Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 11-12.
[15] My reading of Brueggemann on this passage brought me to consider it as a way to frame my reflections. See Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 141-50. To begin to wrestle with the rich Christian use of this passage, see: William H. Bellinger, Jr. and William R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origin* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, International, 1998); Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, eds., *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004); and N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 577ff.
[16] N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," in *The New Interpreters' Bible*, Vol. X, ed. Leander E. Keck, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 474ff.
[17] In utilizing martyr stories we need to keep the following reflections from Paul in mind: "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us," and "For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:7, 11-12; cf. Col. 1:24).
[18] Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). I don't know if Malcolm Boyd of *Are You Running with Me, Jesus?* fame ever published the sermon I heard.
[19] Charlotte Allen, *The Human Christ* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), 310. In the passage from which this quote is taken, she is criticizing A. N. Wilson's portrayal of Jesus.
[20] I suggest that "struck down by God" or later "it was the will of the LORD to crush him" is the poet's evocative way to say that God is profoundly, redemptively involved even in unspeakable suffering, transforming a cruel and horrible death – and it must never be seen otherwise – into martyrdom. Any interpretation must keep in mind God's esteem of this servant that is expressed clearly in both the opening and closing of this passage.

[21] *To End All Wars*, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment DVD, 2002. Directed by David L. Cunningham.
[22] A few minutes later the camera is on Major Campbell. "Amazing Grace" had been playing, on bagpipes, in the background. The narrator's voice says: "I never found out what Dusty said to Ito that day. But I knew I had witnessed the power of forgiveness."
[23] It was also instructive and important to watch this film with a Japanese couple who were students in our seminary.
[24] By naming "my sins" I simply mean to acknowledge and personalize my own complicity in this large, awful reality.
[25] The term "slow martyrdom" is drawn from Garry Wills, *Certain Trumpets* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), in his chapter 16 on Dorothy Day. Though of course King was martyred, his life was given as a serious, costly witness for many years before he died; thus his life was a "slow martyrdom."
[26] *Let Justice Roll Down* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1976).
[27] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 83-100. I don't remember what biography of King I first read; there are a number of good ones.
[28] Spencer Perkins, "How I Learned to Love White People," *Christianity Today* (September 13, 1993): 37. This article is largely a remarkable account of how the witness of his father – his father's embodiment of a costly love in the face of mean and sometimes violent white people – finally led Spencer to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ and to even to love white people.
[29] From a speech, "To Chart Our Course for the Future," given at a retreat for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, May 22, 1967, Penn Community Center, Frogmore, South Carolina. For the quote, see Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 343.
[30] Given the way I opened this paper, it should be mentioned that my mother did not model submission to violent men. Anyone who has known her would never imagine that this strong woman did that. When my father turned violent, and it was practical to do so, she left him. At least after two-and-a-half years, and when it was practical, she told my step-father to leave. By pointing to her "suffering" I am pointing to her self-sacrifice that made it possible for a single mother, making little more than $1,600 per year, to raise two sons. (And of course there are many more elements of her life that I could mention.)
[31] I thank my wife, Mary, for her help with this paper. Her substantial editorial suggestions as well as a few specific and helpful additions regarding content are much appreciated.

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