

THE CAIRO LECTURE-2008
Peacekeeping: Christ's Mandate and the Real World*
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We are today in the 2008th year of the Christian era. That era ushered in a new address to mankind's oldest dream: peace. Peace is what the gospel of Jesus is all about; being peacemakers distinguishes us as recipients of that good news. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus told that crowd gathered around Him on the mountain, "for they are the children of God." It is not casually that Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, refers to God as "the Lord of peace;" that the Common Book of Prayer offers the supplication, "O, God who art the author of peace and lover of concord;" or, that Milton would pen, "That He our deadly forfeit should release; And with His Father work for us a perpetual peace."¹

The Christian mandate for peace seems clear, but making peace these many centuries later has not been easy. We are as men who cry "Peace, Peace, when there is no peace," who proclaim, "Peace and security; then sudden destruction comes upon them." You only need to read Jesus description of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24 to understand that this same Prince of Peace had a realistic and comprehensive grasp of mankind's struggle for power in this world and horrors of war, chaos and human inhumanity that accompanied it.²

In August 1992, I was the first US Observer at the Arusha political negotiations designed to bring the insurgent Rwandese Patriotic Force into peace and common polity with the then government of Rwanda. By January, 1994, I had been named and confirmed as US Ambassador to Rwanda. When I presented my credentials to President Juvenal Habyarimana, he wished me success with my mission. "My mission," I told the President, "is to help Rwanda toward peace," in short, to help institutionalize the Arusha peace process. Three months later, on April 6, the President's plane was shot down on its approach to Kigali airport. The Arusha peace process went down in that crash, as opposing armies broke out of their cantonments and vengeful forces launched a genocidal killing of some 800,000 innocent children, women and men in 100 days. Throughout this horrific slaughter, the United States and other international entities sought to broker a ceasefire, stop the killing and restore peace. But only the victory of insurgent forces in July brought order out of chaos.

Obviously, I failed in my mission as peacemaker in Rwanda; clearly the international community, the United States at its head, failed to stop genocide and restore civil rule in Rwanda. Why did we fail; was our vision too limited; were our approaches not well founded? I would like in this time together to review some peacemaking strategies principles in the context of the Rwandan experience and to see wherein they were lacking. We will then look at the

Christian vocation of peace and reconciliation and see if there is, even in hindsight, wisdom for confronting the brutal realities of this world.

Let it burn! There are those who claim that peace is unnatural, that war is inevitable and that, in the natural order of things, "God is day and night, war and peace, surfeit and hunger ... all things are born through strife." (Heraclitus) Or, in a more modern rendition, "Man is being towards death." (Heidegger) Political analysts like Luttwak argue that war is inevitable and that we best let local wars burn themselves out.³ Scholars like Huntington project an inevitable war between civilizations, the "West against the rest."⁴ Historians like Victor Davis Hanson, Donald Kagan and Robert Kaplan join in suggesting that the ancients had it right in their embrace of war.⁵

In Rwanda, the purport of such argumentation was to suggest that Hutu and Tutsi were savage tribes who had fought each other for years. War between them was purportedly inevitable--why not just let them have it out. For one thing, Tutsi and Hutu were not perpetually hostile groups but rather lived in a fairly stable social and economic symbiosis for several centuries. Granted, there had been battles between royal armies from the center against overlords at the periphery, but that was as much against Tutsi as Hutu chiefs. There is no historic referent for the mass passions and exclusive identities that fueled Rwanda's civil war and genocide. Moreover, giving way to a culture of conflict is neither a solution nor a Christian strategy. While it is true that Christ prophesied that there would be wars and rumors of wars, this is a descriptive not a normative statement; war is not in the Divine order of things. In God's plan, as we are given to understand it, creative order triumphs over chaos, light over darkness, and peace over conflict. As Milton phrased it, "Aghast the Devil stood and felt how awful goodness is."⁶

Warring for justice. Alternatively, there are those who assert that, in this less than perfect world, we can put things to right through just wars. Wars can be just, says St. Thomas, if they have a sufficient cause and their goal is peace--the restoration of right relationships. These criteria are clearer if war is declared by competent authority against an invading external authority, "*contra extraneos et hostes*." Further ethical qualifications include: engaging violence only as a last resort and with a reasonable hope for success, claiming no monopoly of justice and planning no actions incommensurate with the good to be achieved.

These criteria become blurry indeed in cases of insurrection and internal repression.⁷ In Rwanda we had an established government fighting an insurgent force which, in 1990, originated outside the country but claimed a legitimate place within it. The government argued the justice of self-defense; the insurgent force, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), argued the justice of fighting against a tyrannical regime. Once engaged in conflict, both sides used tactics they believed necessary to their objectives; both harassed, detained and killed noncombatants, thus violating the cardinal principle of discrimination that is to guide conduct within a just war.

When President Habyarimana's plane was shot down in April, 1994, a self-appointed government of Hutu extremists launched a genocide which turned the "in bello" criterion of proportionality on its head: using the most reprehensible, morally repugnant of tactics (the brutal elimination of one's compatriots) for the most limited of objectives (holding onto a power that was never legitimately theirs). In Rwanda, the pursuit of power for avowedly just purposes

occasioned war; the claim of just defense during that war opened the door to genocide. Warring for justice put Rwandans on a slippery slope to an earthly hell.

Negotiate the difference. Some peacemakers claim that war may be stopped and peace arranged by bargaining to accommodate competing interests or to discover shared values. Whether negotiating about the size of the pieces or the quality of the pie, “the bargaining approach has tended to dominate in most international negotiations.”⁸ John Burton argues that, rather than bargaining over “who gets what,” negotiations need to seek an integrative solution which meets individual ontological needs for identity and security on all sides.⁹ Within the nation-state system, negotiations, whether focused on scarcity or common values, assume that “players at the table” can represent the interests and values of their constituents and can covenant in token of their peoples’ consent.

The Arusha peace talks between the then Rwandan government and RPF brought negotiating teams together in the hope that they would find common ground for accommodating their respective interests. As an official “Observer” at the negotiations, the United States encouraged confidence-building measures and suggested power sharing arrangements. Non-governmental facilitators organized meetings among Presidents of the region, attempting to broker understanding that would provide a context for accommodation and buttress peace.¹⁰ Negotiating tactics, however, whether appeals to common values, accommodation of specific interests or ad hoc security arrangements, did not adequately deal with group ambitions in the conflict. Moreover, the negotiators, especially on the Rwandan government side, did not fully represent the political realities back home. Peacemaking, to be effective, must also confront collective forces and social structures in human society.

Change the structures. There are those who emphasize peacemaking as a collective experience. These are of two kinds: those who see the problems in social systems as they reflect power or scarcity and those who see conflict rooted in cultural contests over perceptions and beliefs. Many theorists and practitioners of conflict management believe that if one can get the social systems straight, then peace will result. Luis Padilla, in a study on Guatemala, argued that, “conflicts among individuals are not of prime concern in peace research.”¹¹ For Padilla the problem is structural, emblematic of a liberation theology that sees social structures as sinful, but capable of being redeemed through revolution and restructuring.

Others, like Kevin Avruch, would argue that conflicts are deeply enmeshed in culture perceptions about structures. Lasting peace initiatives must grapple with the cultural contexts, seeking actor-centered understanding (emic approach) and discovering trans-cultural domains and styles (etic approach). A cultural address should give peacemakers a handle on social complexity, a frame for discussing social context and a sensitivity to the attitudes of actors. Shared cultural perceptions or a new commitment to a common cultural project is an essential building bloc of lasting peace.¹²

The Arusha peace negotiations looked at social and political systems, recognizing structural incompatibilities in territory, military capability, legitimizing principles, and economic advancement (to use Wallensteen’s schema).¹³ Observers urged structural reform in government and promoted the new institutions in civil society, like human rights organizations.

Power, exercised in Rwanda for 30 years under single party regimes, was to be shared not only among internal political groups but also with returning exiles. Structures of the new power sharing were outlined in detail. The Arusha Accords ended up being both a charter for systemic change and a blueprint of how structures were to be modified.

While focused on structural change, neither facilitators nor actors in the negotiations seemed particularly sensitive to cultural contexts. The observers assumed the goal of a democratic culture enveloping an open society. We may have missed is how different were the meanings given to this goal by the holders of authority on the one hand and the exiles from power on the other. Moreover, in the process of long negotiations, new cultural contexts were being created. There developed a new compatibility in political worldview and ethos among those negotiating. But leadership not at the negotiating table felt isolated from the process, developing a complex of “otherness” that prefigured a later recourse to genocide.

Problematics in contemporary modes. Proposals for systemic reform did not work in Rwanda. Cultural understandings, such as they were, did not chart a map to peace. Haggling over governmental positions or establishing common ground in the rule of law did not forestall societal disintegration. The Arusha Accords, earnestly and carefully negotiated over a year, collapsed in a brief six months. In Rwanda, each of the contemporary modes of peacemaking was deficient in some way. What were the dynamics on which the peacemaking effort did not have adequate purchase?

We were perhaps too sanguine about African societies’ vaunted capacity to endure. Social cohesion in Rwanda proved vulnerable and fragile. The pressures of population growth, pluralistic politics, a deteriorating economy and competition for power stretched Rwanda's "coefficient of elasticity" to its breaking point. In this context, pushing forward a peace agreement that required major structural change and redistribution of political and economic power brought not peace but civil war and genocide.

We misconstrued relations of force in a seemingly powerless country. Given the purported commitment to a negotiated peace and limited armaments of the contending sides, the UN Security Council conceived a peacekeeping force of minimal size and mandate. For a while, that force successfully separated the two armies and effectively moved toward their cantonment and eventual integration. Agreement on the installation of a broad-based transitional government and a politically-balanced national assembly proved a more elusive goal. When President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down, extremist partisans quickly proved that the UN force had neither the mandate nor the materiel to counter determined opposition to the Arusha process. Posturing about power in an arena of potential conflict brought tragic consequences.¹⁴

We too easily glossed over the roots of conflict, which, in the Rwandan case, were fear and loathing--fear that the “other,” once empowered, would be a perpetual oppressor and the loathing that comes from devaluing the one’s neighbor. Hutu and Tutsi were caught in a vicious playing out of superiority and inferiority feelings toward each other, an emotional recreation of self-images generated by diminution and demonization of the other side. Bolstered by a peacekeeping force, surrounded by diplomatic efforts to promote peace, leadership on both sides entertained their prejudices and envisioned an order which they would eventually dominate.¹⁵

Thus, we also underestimated the will to power. Unwillingness to compromise blocked the installation of the transitional institutions and left Rwanda without governmental authority when the President was killed. In the subsequent hostilities, the determination to hold on to power at all costs, even the slaughter of innocents, unleashed the horror of genocide. Evil, as Melville defined it, "all that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things, all truth with malice in it ...all the subtle demonisms of life and thought..."¹⁶ was at hand in Rwanda. The international effort focused on a negotiated settlement; some Rwandans were hell bent on holding on to power.

Back to Christ's mandate. In the face of these difficulties and unattractive outcomes, one is tempted to pull back and take the realist perspective, "Let wars burn out." But God commands us to live at peace with all men; to promote justice in caring for the fatherless, the hungry and the prisoners; to forgive our offending brothers and pray for our enemies. (Romans 12: 18; Matthew 5: 44 & 25: 31-46) This call to peace, justice and forgiveness, nonetheless, leaves us with certain dilemmas.

To begin, what kind of peace are we looking for? Is it an "absence of war," or, as Spinoza claimed, "a union or agreement of minds."¹⁷ Is peace coincident with the "tranquility of order...things equal and unequal in a pattern which assigns to each its proper position,"¹⁸ as Augustine believed. Or, is peace, as Jefferson thought, linked to liberty and hence with "equal and exact justice to all men."¹⁹ In Rwanda, the Habyarimana regime provided a stable, structured order for nearly twenty years, but it did so by enforcing social divisions within Rwanda and excluding significant Rwandan populations from the national territory. Institutional justice was intended to serve the power elite, not the disenfranchised.

So is ordered peace a trade-off for justice or is justice an essential ingredient of lasting peace? That depends on what kind of justice we seek. To take but one analytical scheme, we might go to Aristotle and see justice contextually according to type: distributive, reciprocal or corrective. One could argue that the Rwandan crisis in its inception broke out over distributive issues of land, jobs, and educational opportunities.²⁰ Hobbes sees reciprocity as the core of justice, a mutuality in which the several elements of society perceive themselves adequately represented in the leadership and secure in their contractual relations with authority.²¹ The Arusha peace negotiations envisioned the Arusha Accords as establishing such reciprocal justice.

Corrective justice can be, in modern parlance, either "retributive" or "restorative." Retributive justice evokes the Rwandan determination, especially after the genocide, that the culture of impunity be forever abolished; violent offenders had to be punished. But retributive justice makes the judicial process a victor's tool. What about restorative justice? If genocide is, in the terms of the 1948 Genocide Convention, "acts committed with the intent to destroy...a group,"²² what are the boundaries of the victim/group? Under a program of restorative justice, what would be restored and to whom: to individuals who lost their loved ones, or to groups: government or private agencies representing victims?

In a situation of tenuous peace and uncertain justice, what room is there for forgiveness, a word that encompasses two vital social energies: truth and mercy. Forgiveness entails both admitting the truth and accepting proffered mercy. Organized truth telling tied to the possibility of

amnesty has become somewhat of a tool of choice in national reconciliation efforts, whether in South Africa, Guatemala, Columbia or, most recently, in Sierra Leone.²³ But, can extending mercy through amnesty really hurry reconciliation of a severed society or heal wounds of genocide? At Arusha, Rwandan interlocutors were resistant to suggestions of sub-judicial processes like truth commissions or amnesties. Amnesty brings impunity in the back door; premature pardons may exacerbate rather than heal social memories. After the genocide, the problem of how to accommodate the requirement of justice with the necessity of social healing through forgiveness remains a vexing question. Confession has been incorporated into the resurrected *gacaca* traditional courts but forgiveness is still dispensed conditionally.

Do we, as followers of Christ, have something to offer in confronting these very real dilemmas? We do have a perspective on man and the conflict he engenders within human society that supersedes all fashions in conflict resolution. We may, by intellectual preference, view conflict in the international arena as realists, contractualists, structuralists, just war theorists or even pacifists. But ultimately we are to “regard no one from a worldly point of view.”(II Corinthians: 5: 16) Thus, we are not surprised by evil and its effect on human psychology and social structure. We understand in Christ’s teaching on the Mount the effect of disparagement in setting us against our brother and on the road to hell. From the same teaching, we acknowledge the limitations of religious practice in bringing about peace. Before you go to the altar, first be reconciled to your brother. (Matthew 5: 21-24)

We should understand the corrosive effect of personal ambition and the will to power: “the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life,” recognizing that not as life force but as entropic, the corruption that wastes us and our society. On the other hand, we recognize in God’s grace to this world, the gifts of social order, the responsibility of stewardship, and the aim of “living peaceably with all men” as the appropriate sphere of governance. Our prayers for those in authority bind us in spiritual vision to the tasks they confront. (I Timothy 2:1-2; I Peter 2: 17)

Then too, Christians have a great tradition and vocabulary for dealing with disputes and conflicts. In his peacemaking workshops, John Paul Lederach appropriates the tropes of peace, mercy and justice (Psalm 85) as categories for analysis and dialogue. Richard Niebuhr saw the cross as an analog for human suffering engendered by conflict. Volkan and Montville show the psychic release from hatred that comes with rituals of repentance and forgiveness among enemies, even of various faiths.²⁴ It is most natural that there should be, in the Christian tradition, a long history of community building and peacemaking that has evolved its own language and techniques. After all, we say we follow the Prince of Peace.

In this “Age of Genocide,” followers of Christ are called to care for the victims on all sides, whether they be hungry, destitute or in prison. We do this in Christ’s stead and for Christ’s sake. But these are not simply empty acts of service, a laudanum for the hopeless. We live and we act in view of the glorious hope of the return of Christ as Lord of all. And this great hope gives us small hopes that, in all our actions, lives will be changed and right relations restored.

Meanwhile, Christian believers are called to a commitment more profound than to mere modes for resolving conflict. We understand that God is reconciling the world to Himself though

Christ, and that in Christ, “the old has gone, the new has come!” And God “who reconciled us to Himself through Christ” has given us the ministry of reconciliation. It is an awesome gift and one not to be denied. Beyond the constraints of national interest, above the call for national benevolence and transcending the best we know of conflict management, “Christ’s love compels us.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-19)

End Notes

1. From Matthew 5: 9; II Thessalonians 3:16; “A Collect for Peace;” The Common Book of Prayer; John Milton, “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity.” The Works of John Milton, ed. Frank Allen Patterson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1931, Vol. I, p.1, l.6.
2. Jeremiah 8:11; I Thessalonians 5:3; Matthew 24:15-25.
3. Edward N. Luttwak, “Give War a Chance,” Foreign Affairs, July/August 1999, Vol.78 No.4, pp. 36-44.
4. Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilization; Remaking of World Order, New York: Touchstone Books, 1997.
5. Hanson sees “an inherent truth in battle;” urging us to insist that “our deadly manner of war serves rather than buries our civilization.” Victor Davis Hanson, Carnage and Culture, New York: Doubleday, 2001, p.7 and p.455; Kagan notes that “There are now barriers of conscience in the way of acquiring and maintaining power and using it to preserve the peace.” By implication, he would like to see such barriers discounted. Donald Kagan, On the Origins of War, New York: Doubleday, 1995, p. 571; Kaplan calls for “power politics in the service of patriotic virtue.” Robert D. Kaplan, Warrior Politics, New York: Random House, 2002, p. 154.
6. John Milton, Paradise Lost, The Works of John Milton, Vol. II, p.136, line 846.
7. For a good summation of just war criteria see Richard B. Miller, Interpretations of Conflict, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, pp. 12-15. Aquinas sees civil strife as a qualitatively different from war, requiring more stringent standards of presumption against violence. Miller, pp.58-62. For a defense of just war theory as an antidote to “the discourse of war and politics” see Jean Bethke Elshtain, Women and War, New York: Basic Books, 1987, especially Chapter 4, “The Attempt to Disarm Civic Virtue.”
8. P. Terrence Hopmann, “Bargaining and Problem Solving,” in, Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aal, eds., Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000, p. 455.
9. J.W. Burton, Conflict: Resolution and Provention, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990. Avruch examines Burton’s approach as a polar type of conflict resolution strategy in Kevin Avruch, Culture and Conflict Resolution, Washington, D. C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000, pp. 73, 87-97.
10. The author represented the United States in its “Observer” status during the initial 1992 negotiations of the Arusha Agreements. Ms. Joyce Leader, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Kigali was the representative during most of the 1993 negotiations. German statesman Rudolph Decker was the most active in “Track Two Diplomacy,” bringing the regional

- Chiefs of State together unofficially. See, Joyce E. Leader, Rwanda's Struggle for Democracy and Peace, 1991-1994, Washington, D.C., The Fund for Peace, 2001.
11. Luis Alberto Padilla, "Conflict Resolution and its Application to the Guatemala's Socio-political Context", in, Kumar Rupesinghe, Internal Conflict and Governance, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 256.
 12. Avruch, pp. 57-72.
 13. See Peter Wallensteen, Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System, Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications, 2002.
 14. See Anthony F. Lang Jr., Agency and Ethics: the Politics of Military Intervention, Albany: The State University of New York Press, 2002, on how military intervenors posture on the political stage for the benefit of other actors, rather than in view of their avowed role as peacemaker amongst troubled peoples.
 15. See Christopher C. Taylor, Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
 16. Herman Melville, Moby Dick, 150th Anniversary Edition, New York: Penguin Books, 2001, p.200.
 17. Benedict de Spinoza, A Treatise on Religion and Politics, trans. A.G. Wernham, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958, p. 317. In another view: "Shalom is not merely the absence of hostility, not merely being in right relationships. Shalom at its highest is enjoyment in one's relationships." Nicholas Wolterstorff, Until Justice and Peace Embrace, Grand Rapids; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983, p. 69.
 18. Augustine, City of God, trans. Henry Bettenson, New York: Penguin Books, 1972, Bk.19, par.13.
 19. Jefferson, First Inaugural Address
 20. Aristotle, The Nichomachean Ethics, trans. J.A.K. Thompson, New York: Penguin Books, 1976, Book V, p.171 et seq. Aristotle contends that the contests within polities are not fundamentally over distribution of wealth but over rival conceptions of justice. The Politics, trans. Carnes Lord, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, Book 3, Chp. 9, p. 97 et seq. Hedley Bull clarifies Aristotle's classification with distinctions between general justice and particular justice; substantive justice and formal justice; arithmetic justice and proportional justice; or between reciprocal justice and distributive justice. Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, pp. 75-78. On land as a factor in 1959 revolution, see David P. Rawson, The Role of the United Nations in the Political Development of Ruanda-Urundi, 1947-1962, Ph.D dissertation, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1966.
 21. Thomas Hobbes, The Leviathan, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988, Chp. XV., p. 74 et seq. See also, R.E. Erwin, Virtues and Right, The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991, pp. 118-119. Rawls version of "justice as fairness," while dealing with distribution issues, is at base a variant of reciprocal justice: a life in society encompassing "all its members in their relations with one another." The 1992-93 Arusha peace negotiations between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front were, in effect, an effort to establish fair and accessible institutions that would bring Rwandans as individuals to value community together. John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, revised edition, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 233-234.

22. Article II, The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948.
23. John Paul Lederach, "Civil Society and Reconciliation," in, Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict, pp. 847-853. Lederach's work is portrayed as an alternative to Burton's approach in Avruch, pp. 97-98. Also see Joseph Montville, "Transnationalism and the Role of Track Two Diplomacy," in W. S. Thompson and K. M. Jensen, eds., Approaches to Peace; An Intellectual Map, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1991. Truth telling, in the Biblical tradition, is also the recounting of stories, "hagadah." See Fredrick Buechner, Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairy Tale, New York: Harper and Row, 1977. James Skillen sees justice--fitting treatment and due regard for God's creatures--being worked out in a "Covenant to Keep" historical drama. James Skillen, A Covenant to Keep: Meditations on the Biblical Theme of Justice, Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 2000. Wole Soyinka raises serious moral questions about the recourse to amnesty before accountability has been required. See Wole Soyinka, The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness, London: Oxford University Press. Chp. I, "Reparations, Truth and Reconciliation."
24. See Lederach, op. cit.; Richard Niebuhr, "War as Crucifixion," Christian Century 60, April 28, 1943, pp. 513-15; V. Volkan, J. Montville, and D. Julius, The Psychodynamics of Internal Relationships, Vol. 2, "Unofficial Diplomacy at Work," Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1991. Mark Amstutz deals with the issues of national cohesion following internal conflict through the perspective of repentance, reparation and forgiveness. Mark R. Amstutz, The Healing of Nations: the Promise and Limits of Political Forgiveness, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005.

* I am grateful to St. John the Baptist Church, Maadi, Egypt for the opportunity to reflect publicly on problems of peacekeeping I witnessed in 1992 as United States Observer at the Arusha Peace Negotiations and from 1993-1996 as United States Ambassador to Rwanda. The observations and conclusions herein are entirely my own.