
Editorial

A Cry for Peace: A Murid-Anabaptist Response to Religiously Motivated Violence

Paris, November 25, 2023

In November 2023, the first-ever (as far as the participants were aware) formal gathering of Christians and Murids took place in the small French town of Taverny outside of Paris. For the two groups, both rooted in peacemaking traditions, this meeting was primarily about learning to know one another.

Hosted at the Islamic Center of Taverny,¹ the meeting drew together Murid and Anabaptist thought leaders and practitioners to present and discuss the historical narratives of the two communities, their practices of nonviolence, and a shared vision for the common good. Participants included men and women, students and professors, pastors and imams, coming together from France, England, Switzerland, Senegal, and the United States.

As Christian bodies entered “Muslim space,” those of us present engaged issues of territoriality and hospitality physically as well as intellectually as we ate food together and interacted with one another. This kind of cross-connection is so very rare; there is a real physical territoriality to “Muslim spaces” and “Christian spaces,” creating barriers that are only rarely breached. And, just as there are physical territories and barriers, there are also intellectual ones.

Dr. Cheikh Babou in his opening comments vividly expressed the shared longing of those who gathered in Taverny. Babou said:

I believe, as Jonathan and others have imagined, that a space exists where men of good will . . . whatever their faith, whatever their region, whatever their language, can still speak to each other. Because they share something that transcends the darkest side of their humanity—a fundamental need for peace. Without peace, humanity itself could no longer exist. It is a great pleasure to participate in this experience, in this “cry.” Yes, in fact, it is a “cry.” And we want the world to hear this cry.

This issue of *Anabaptist Witness* includes presentations made at the Murid-Anabaptist meeting and reflections on the experience. Unfortunately, it is impossible to capture the many rich discussions and spirit of friendship and goodwill experienced by all present. And yet, the authors of this collection of

1 Funding for the event came from the Islamic Center of Taverny, the Paris Mennonite Center, and a generous grant from the William and Mary Greve Foundation.



STANDING, LEFT TO RIGHT: Moustapha Diop Koki, Moussa Dime, Romain Ehrismann, Toni Krabill, Mourtala Mboup, Mamadou Diop, Jacqueline Hoover, Andres Prins, Soulaymane Diouf, Mbaye Diagne, Daouda Kandji, Cheikh Soufi

SEATED, LEFT TO RIGHT: Jean-Claude Girondin, Matthew J. Krabill, Jonathan Bornman, Cheikh Anta Babou, Abdullah Fahmi, Mame Gora Diop

articles succeed in sharing the sense of goodness and hope that every participant felt even as they entered the challenging questions of multi-faith engagement.

In the opening essay, Jonathan Bornman places friendship at the center, as the organizing principle for the meeting, and then goes on to make a Christian theological argument that, just as Jesus needed “the others,” Christians and Muslims need each other.

Next, Jacqueline Hoover digs into Anabaptist history from the sixteenth century and Mennonite-Irani engagement in the twenty-first century to offer a few cautions about dialogue.

Mourtala Mboup then investigates the secrets of monotheistic peace traditions and points toward “the theology of the Spirit for the Anabaptists, and Sufism for the Muridiyya.”

Cheikh Anta Babou brings into conversation Tariq Ramadan's proposal of *dar al-shahada* for Muslims living as minorities in the West and Elhadji Salim Suware's West African pacifist tradition. He sees these two perspectives as compatible with "Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba's ecumenism [which] reflects Sufi universalism."

In the final article of this issue, Matthew J. Krabill highlights the life and work of Lamin Sanneh and the Suwarian pacifist tradition, using this as a springboard to describe current and ongoing work of The Sanneh Institute to document pacifist traditions and influences in West Africa today.

A collection of book reviews closes out the issue.

From a global perspective, Murids and Anabaptists are all but invisible, yet it is from the margins that change happens. Anabaptists and Murids have shared values of nonviolence, trust in God, and forgiving enemies. Throughout their respective histories, both have tended to be inward looking, focused on sustaining their religious life and practice. And yet, both have made significant positive impacts outwardly wherever they've settled. May this issue of *Anabaptist Witness* help bring to light some of these relatively unknown and hidden contributions to the common good, offering models for others to consider.

Guest editors:

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Elhadji Djibril Diagne
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