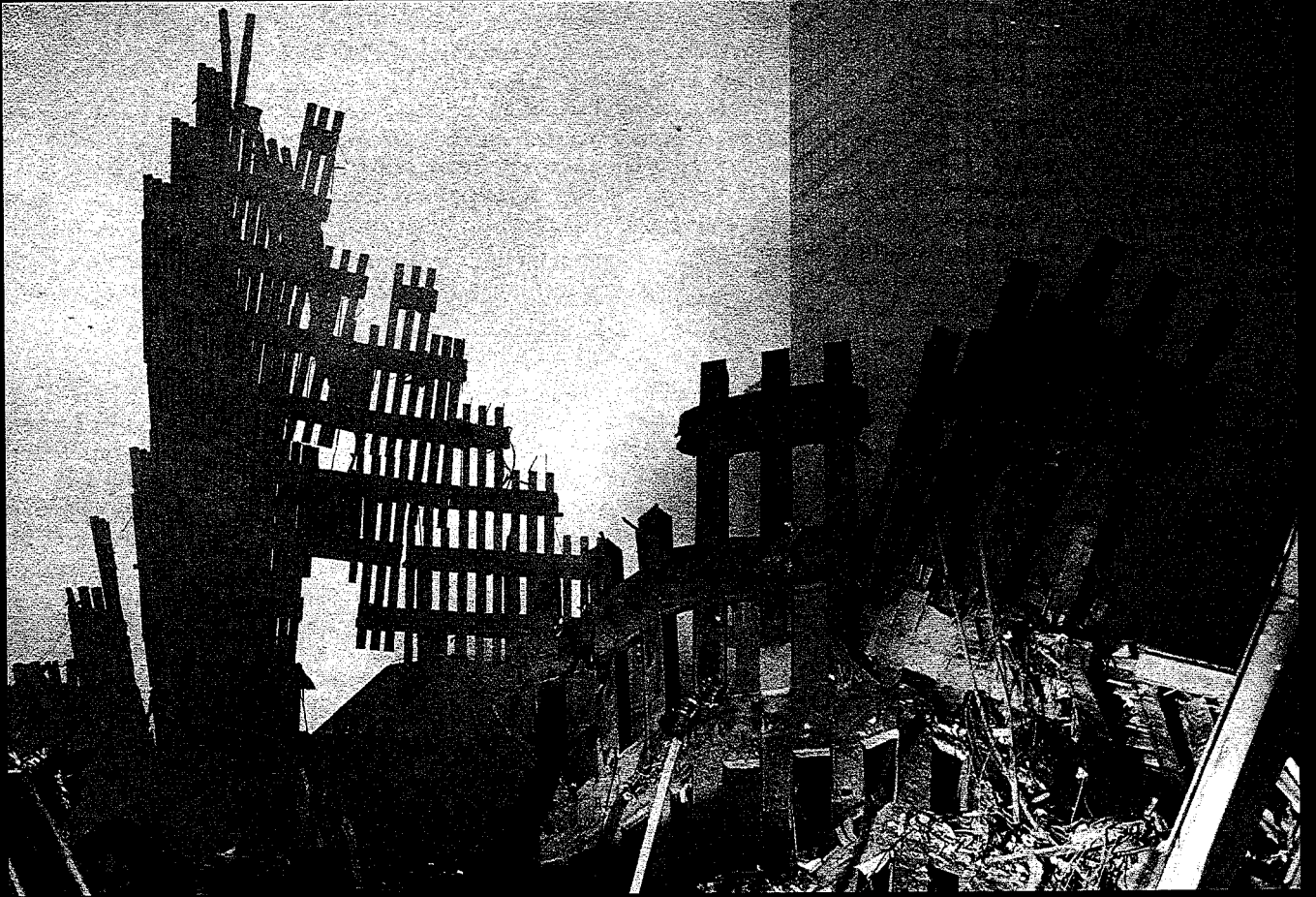


Fall 2001
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FAITH & FREEDOM

REFORMING THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL WITNESS



9-11 Responses Expose Cracks in Churches, *page 4*

The New York Times and The Washington Post reported that
America's Episcopal and Lutheran churches
are among the most damaged in the world.
Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson, who was in New York
at the time of the attacks, says that the damage to the
churches is a sign of a deeper crisis.

Plus From the President, Church News, International Briefs, and Letters.

FAITH & FREEDOM, Vol. 20, No. 4



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Phone: 202-969-8430

Fax: 202-969-8429

Web: www.ird-renew.org

Email: mail@ird-renew.org

The IRD is a non-profit organization committed to reforming the Church's social and political witness and to building and strengthening democracy and religious liberty, at home and abroad. IRD committees work for reform in the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The IRD also sponsors the Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society.

Contributions to the work of the IRD are critically needed. Your gifts are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

Diane L. Knippers
President

Alan F. H. Wisdom
Vice President & Editor

Steve R. Rempé
Associate Editor

Mark D. Tooley
Director of United Methodist Action

Faith J.H. McDonnell
Director of Religious Liberty Programs

Erik Nelson
Research Associate

Jerald H. Walz
Director of Operation & Development

Anne Green
Newsletter Design

LETTERS

Often, we here at IRD receive letters questioning why we feel it is necessary to remain within the mainline church denominations fighting for reform. Some Faith and Freedom readers have concluded that their denominations are beyond help, and some have left their denominations for churches that they believe have a more scriptural foundation. The following is an example of such a letter, along with IRD president Diane Knippers' response. — ED

DEAR DIANE,

I KNOW OF YOUR EARNEST COMMITMENT TO REVERSE THE DEGRADATION FROM within the Episcopal Church, and I believe that it cannot be accomplished from within. There is simply too much corruption at the top. The institution holds all the tactical "high ground."

I have recently become aware that the three largest "right thinking" parishes in northern Virginia seem committed to do as you propose. But their stands may be more related to property title than to more noble bases.

Diane, I believe our beloved Episcopal Church is a sick woman—sick with an insidious and contagious illness that will infect all who hang on to her long enough.

Captain John M. Gore (USN Ret.)

McLean, VA

DEAR CAPT. GORE,

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR THOUGHTFUL LETTER. FROM A HUMAN POINT OF view, I agree with much of what you say. If it were a matter of our efforts alone, the Episcopal Church indeed seems a hopeless case. We need not just reform—we need revival. Such a revival is not primarily the fruit of human efforts, but the action of a sovereign God.

I believe God can and will act. I believe our God puts flesh on dry bones. I believe that our God buys back His people when they stray from Him, as Hosea did his prostitute wife. Specifically, I believe God seeks the reform of the Episcopal Church, and that He will accomplish it in His time.

Until then, I see our task is to witness to the church—to pray and work for its reform. The reformation of the church is as much a ministry or calling as evangelism, missions, or pursuing justice. I have the deepest confidence that I am called to witness to and work for the wholeness of the Gospel being embraced by the Episcopal Church.

I do understand your position and its logic. But what if everyone who held to biblical faith left the Episcopal Church? Wouldn't there still be an influential and wealthy institution bearing the name of Christ, but doing and saying things that woefully contradicted His teaching? And doesn't every Christian, including Baptists, Catholics, Orthodox, and even ex-Episcopalians, still bear a responsibility to counteract those who debase the Gospel and abuse its witness? An important role of the IRD is to offer public counterarguments to what many of our church leaders say and do in the name of Christ. I am bold to invite Christians both within and without the "oldline" denominations to help us in that task.

Please be assured of my prayers, and please do continue to pray for us.

Sincerely,

Diane Knippers

President, Institute on Religion and Democracy

IRD welcomes letters to the editor. If you have a comment or question about one of the articles appearing in Faith and Freedom, please address your letter to Faith and Freedom, Institute on Religion and Democracy, 1110 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 1180, Washington, DC 20005. Letters may be edited for size and clarity.

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover photo by Chris Hondros/Getty Images. Page 5 (bin Laden) by Getty Images. Page 5 (Broyles) courtesy Presbyterian Layman. Page 6 courtesy Mike Barwell/Episcopal News Service. Page 14 Edy Purnomo/Getty Images. Page 15 courtesy United Methodist Communications. All used with permission.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

IRD WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF

By Diane L. Knippers



The IRD marked its 20th anniversary year with several significant board changes and an expansion of our staff. In October 2001, five distinguished Christian leaders agreed to join the IRD Board of Directors. In a press release, IRD board chairman Thomas Oden said: "The election of these outstanding church leaders signals a new chapter for the

IRD. They represent a new generation of leadership that is prepared to uphold the central tenets of our faith in dynamic ways, and against a multitude of emerging challenges from within our churches, our culture, and around the world." Here are the new directors:

- **Roberta Green Ahmanson**, an Episcopal laywoman, is the chairman of Pattee Enterprises and a trustee of the Fullhart-Carnegie Trust, two projects aimed at telling the story of the immigrant experience in the Midwest. A former religion reporter for two southern California newspapers, Mrs. Ahmanson works with her husband, Howard, in his private philanthropy, Fieldstead and Company. Her primary interests are the visual arts, journalism, and religious freedom worldwide.
- **J. Budziszewski**, an Episcopal layman, is a nationally known scholar of Natural Law. He holds joint appointments in the departments of Government and Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin. He has authored six books, including *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man*; *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law*, and *How to Stay Christian in College: An Interactive Guide to Keeping the Faith*. He has been frequently published in numerous journals, including *First Things* and the *American Journal of Jurisprudence*.
- **Robert P. George**, a Roman Catholic layman, is the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University and director of Princeton's James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions. He is a former presidential appointee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a judicial fellow at the U.S. Supreme Court. Dr. George is a prolific writer and his articles have appeared in numerous law journals as well as

The Wall Street Journal and *National Review*. Dr. Gerge has authored or edited 11 books on natural law and was recently appointed to the president's Council on Bioethics.

- **Edmund W. Robb III**, a United Methodist, is the pastor of the Woodlands United Methodist Church, near Houston. With a membership of over 6,000, it is one of that denomination's fastest growing churches. Dr. Robb is executive director of A Foundation for Theological Education (AFTE), which has provided \$1.7 million in fellowship grants to theologically orthodox United Methodist doctoral students.
- **Terry Schlossberg**, a Presbyterian laywoman, is executive director of Presbyterians Pro-Life. She is a past president of the National Pro-Life Religious Council and is an elder at the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. She co-authored *Not My Own: Abortion and the Marks of the Church*, which was named by *Christianity Today* as one of the 25 best books of 1995.

Together, these Christian leaders represent the very best among orthodox Christians who are working to renew our culture and our churches. They are activists, writers, teachers, and organizers. They address the issues of our day with wit, sound research, tremendous intellect, and the ability to convey their beliefs effectively to mainstream audiences. Their addition to our board is a huge boost to the cause of reform and accountability in our churches and in our country.

The IRD is also expanding our staff this winter. Erik Nelson is the new research associate for our Episcopal Action program. Filling Erik's position as assistant to Mark Tooley and the UM Action program is Christopher Regner, who began in early January. Meghan Furlong also began to work as an administrative assistant in early January. She will free Faith McDonnell for full-time work on religious liberty and other special projects.

We are grateful to God—and to the faithful supporters He gives us—for enabling the IRD to continue to grow and to expand our influence. If you haven't registered for e-mail alerts on the IRD website, www.ird-renew.org, please consider doing so today. f

Alan Wisdom's article on church responses to September 11 (page 4) is adapted from IRD's *Straight Answers to Moral Questions in National Crisis*. This 28-page publication is available for \$5.00 per copy (quantity rates are available). Call 202-969-8430 to order.

9-11 RESPONSES EXPOSE CRACKS IN CHURCHES

By Alan F.H. Wisdom

The terrorist attacks of September 11 have tested the moral foundations of our nation and our churches. In various ways, the nation has displayed great strength. The slogan "United We Stand" has proved largely true. Americans have grieved together, across the usual lines of race, religion, and politics.

Most Americans have shown moral maturity. They have not panicked. They have not been consumed with bloodlust. They have not indiscriminately scapegoated Arabs or Muslims.

Americans are united in a sober, patient pursuit of justice. Polls have shown a steady 90 percent majority in agreement: The al Qaeda terrorists are evildoers. They and their sponsors must be stopped by a judicious application of force. President Bush and the U.S. military enjoy broad bipartisan support as they attempt to do so.

There has been a reaffirmation of moral values transcending individual self-fulfillment. Firefighters, police, and soldiers have been honored for their self-sacrifice. People are expressing a love of country that had seemed submerged for several decades.

On the Sundays after September 11, large crowds packed the churches. Many visitors came desperate to hear a word of hope and comfort. So how did the U.S. churches respond to this challenge? Sadly, they did not stand united. The messages were mixed.

Almost all church leaders extended sympathy to the bereaved and traumatized. Many local pastors preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ with renewed vigor. But others sounded more like the pop psychologists of the secular media, rambling on about how we need to help people through the stages of grief.

Only a few statements from Evangelical sources recognized September 11 as an opening for Christian evangelism. The **Southern Baptist Convention** (SBC) website featured a statement from SBC President James Merritt that concluded: "Our SBC family has been reminded again that the only hope for this world is the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that many would turn to the truth of the gospel and that believers everywhere would sense a new urgency to bring people to a saving knowledge of God's Son."

Southern Baptist leaders were also notable for their unreserved support for the war on terrorism. Richard Land, head of the denomination's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, argued on September 21 that "I believe that at this point the response of the president

and the Congress meets all the criteria for a just war." Land explained: "This is a defensive war. We've been attacked, and our citizens have been slaughtered, and they will continue to die in the hundreds if not thousands unless we attack these terrorists and remove their safe havens and places of refuge."

But many other church officials stood apart from the moral consensus. Especially within the oldline Protestant denominations, some refused to call al Qaeda and its ideology "evil." Some blamed America for the terrorist attacks inflicted upon it. Some denied that the U.S. government had standing to act against the terrorists.

At best these kinds of statements were confused. They showed the effects of decades-long neglect of traditional Christian teachings on sin, justice, the duties of government, and the appropriate uses of military force. At worst some church statements deliberately undermined national leaders striving to fulfill their God-given duty to defend the American people.

Thus September 11 revealed again the cracks in the theological and moral foundations of our churches. Rebuilding those foundations must now involve a search for better answers to the moral questions that have been raised since that terrible day.

CAN WE TALK ABOUT EVIL?

Many church leaders seemed reluctant to use the term "evil" to describe the terrorists, their actions, and their ideology.

For example, the General Assembly of the **National Council of Churches** adopted a statement entitled "Out of the Ashes and Tragedy of September 11, 2001." The statement spoke of "the tragic events of September 11"—as if they were an accident comparable to a shipwreck. Words like "atrocious," "mass murder," and "evil" did not appear in the NCC statement.

The NCC Assembly lamented the "escalation of violence" since September 11, implicitly placing the terrorist attacks and the U.S. response on the same moral level. The council urged that the causes of such violence be "better understood and addressed collectively." The only particular cause cited was the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The statement said nothing about the radical Islamist terrorists who carried out the September 11 attacks.

The most specific concern expressed by the NCC was about subsequent events inside the United States—how "some people of Middle Eastern and Central



Presbyterian official Vernon Broyles said terrorist acts "represent a determination to redress their grievances [against America] through the calculated action of a guerrilla force."

and Southern Asian background ... have been threatened, attacked, and killed, and some of their places of worship bombed or burned as a result of bigotry and hatred." The council called "for an early end to the bombing campaign [in Afghanistan] and for all parties to collaborate with the international community to discern non-violent means" of achieving justice.

Perhaps the reticence in speaking of the terrorists and their evil intentions derives from the conviction that Christian peacemakers must never "demonize" their enemies. But peacemaking is not advanced by refusing to name or notice the enemies that mean us ill. The Christian "ministry of reconciliation" does not consist in pretending that the enemies do not

exist; it consists in making the direct appeal for all to "be reconciled to God" by the sacrifice that Christ offered for the real trespasses committed by all (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

Our Lord Jesus named and confronted his enemies, sometimes using strikingly harsh language. He and his apostles understood that "we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness" (Ephesians 4:12). Thus today, when we see false ideologies inspiring and justifying terrible crimes against humanity, the Church must not hesitate to name those ideologies as evil. This kind of Christian realism is not contradictory to a compassionate outreach to those who have been deceived and misused by evil ideologies.

MUST WE ALWAYS BLAME AMERICA?

While reluctant to speak of the terrorists, some church leaders were quick to point a finger at the U.S. government and society. They asserted a direct moral equivalence between America and its assailants, accusing the United States itself of "terrorism." They asked "understanding" for the terrorists' presumed grievances against U.S. policies.

For example, a senior staffer with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wrote an article on "War, 'Terrorism' and the Search for Peace." The Rev. Vernon Broyles dismissed "terrorism" as simply a pejorative word used by Americans to condemn the actions of their enemies.

"While it may seem politically helpful to call them [the September 11 attackers] 'barbaric' in their acts against the 'civilized' world," Broyles commented, "it is appropriate to ask why the incineration of several thousand people in the attack on the World Trade

Center was a 'barbaric act of terrorism,' while the incineration of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are seen as a 'necessary act of war by a civilized nation.'"

Broyles suggested that "the 'terrorism' we have seen against the United States" sprang from the fact that "we have ignored many people suffering injustice at the hands of those we support." When the victims "have reacted violently," the Presbyterian staffer said, "we have simply condemned their behavior as random acts of 'terrorism,' rather than understanding that most of those acts represent a determination to redress their grievances through the calculated actions of a guerrilla force that sees itself engaged in a 'war' with us and our minions."

The United States is far from being a perfect embodiment of the democratic ideal—much less the kingdom of God. There is room in our democratic society for debate over Hiroshima and Nagasaki and all the difficult U.S. policy choices. But it serves neither the Church nor society well when our ecclesiastical "prophets" link their grievances to those of the anti-American terrorists.

The IRD still affirms, in the words of its founding statement, that this flawed nation "is the primary bearer of the democratic possibility in the world today." On balance and considering the alternatives, U.S. Christians do well to identify themselves with America and against its enemies.

We can certainly agree that at a moment of crisis such as this—when so many stare death and evil in the face—it is appropriate to take a moral inventory of ourselves as individuals and as a nation and to repent as appropriate. But we must repent for righteousness' sake—not out of any illusion that our repentance will shield us from terrorism.

continued on page six

In a videotape, Osama bin Laden boasted that "this event made people think, which benefited Islam greatly." Most church statements said nothing about bin Laden or his version of Islam.



continued from page five

As long as the United States remains uniquely wealthy and powerful—and as long as its civil and political and economic freedoms stand as a challenge to all forms of despotism—our country will have mortal enemies in various parts of the world. No conceivable change of U.S. policy would have sufficed to dissuade the terrorists of September 11.

DOES THE U.S. HAVE THE RIGHT TO RESPOND?

In a September 21 pastoral letter to U.S. churches, **World Council of Churches** General Secretary Konrad Raiser warned against “the prospect of the United States striking out again with its uncontested military might.” He blasted the U.S. for having “repeatedly ignored its international obligations and declared its intention to ignore the rest of the world in pursuit of its own perceived self-interests.” Raiser expressed the hope for a new U.S. policy of strict multilateralism and non-violence: “It [the U.S.] could respond in kind [to the worldwide sympathy] and with humility by reversing its course now and rejoining the global community in a common pursuit of justice for all. It could set aside its reliance on military might at whatever cost and invest in efforts to find non-violent solutions to conflicts generated by poverty, mistrust, greed and intolerance.”

In a subsequent letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, the WCC executive declared: “This is not a time for the building of coalitions of states that accede to or agree to participate in further acts of retaliation or aggression.” Raiser claimed that “the most effective international coalition to overcome the threat of terrorism is the United Nations itself, and it is, as you [Annan] put it, ‘the natural forum’ that ‘alone can give global legitimacy’ to this effort.”

But statements like the WCC’s overlooked a plain fact: The attacks of September 11 were directed against American citizens on uncontested American soil. They presented a classic instance of a situation in which a government has not only the right, but also the duty, to defend its citizens against a great evil. The mainstream of the Church Universal has always taught that government is instituted of God and that one of its principal purposes is to restrain evildoers and protect law-abiding citizens.

This teaching is well-grounded in scriptures such as Romans 13, which enjoins believers to “be subject to the governing authorities,” who are “God’s servant for your good.” The passage also warns wrongdoers to “be afraid, for he [the ruler] does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer.”

The United States has a legitimate democratic government, established with the consent of the people within a constitutional framework of laws. The U.S.

government does not need the permission of the United Nations to protect its own citizens against terrorism.

DOES THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION RULE OUT A MILITARY RESPONSE?

“Our President has vowed to hunt down and punish those who are responsible for these depraved and wicked acts,” wrote Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold on September 11. “Many are speaking of revenge. Never has it been clearer to me than in this moment that people of faith, in virtue of the Gospel and the mission of the Church, are called to be about peace and the transformation of the human heart, beginning with our own. I am not immune to emotions of rage and revenge, but I know that acting on them only perpetuates the very violence I pray will be dissipated and overcome.”

On September 26 the U.S. Episcopal bishops released a statement urging, “Let us therefore wage reconciliation”—as opposed, presumably, to war. “We are called to self-examination and repentance: the willingness to change direction, to open our hearts and give room to God’s compassion as it seeks to bind up, to heal, and to make all things new and whole.” The bishops saw other evils more terrible than terrorism: “The affluence of nations such as our own stands in stark contrast to other parts of the world wracked by crushing poverty which causes the death of 6,000 children in a single morning.”

The Scriptures indeed make clear that God’s will for humanity is that all should live at peace with one another. But they also portray the historical reality: that peace is constantly threatened by evil persons and groups employing violence to impose their will. In a number of instances, the Bible sanctions the use of force to repel or subdue the evildoers.



Episcopal Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold rejected President Bush’s vow to punish the terrorists. He said any U.S. retribution would “only perpetuate the very violence I pray will be dissipated.”

The tradition of Christian teaching on "just war" demands that the resort to force be justified, and that the use of force be measured. The criteria for authorizing force include: that the war be fought for a just cause and with a right intention, that it be a last resort, that there be a reasonable hope of success, and that the good to be achieved in success outweigh the damage done in prosecuting the war. Once undertaken, war should be conducted with discrimination between combatants and non-combatants and proportionality between the military means employed and the political results desired.

Some U.S. church leaders did reaffirm the just war tradition as applicable after September 11. The U.S. Roman Catholic bishops issued a pastoral message on November 14 that declared: "The war-like acts of September 11 were appalling attacks on our nation, our citizens and citizens of many other countries."

The bishops continued: "Our nation, in collaboration with other nations and organizations, has a moral right and a grave obligation to defend the common good against mass terrorism. The common good is threatened when innocent people are targeted by terrorists. Therefore, we support efforts of our nation and the international community to seek out and hold accountable, in accord with national and international law, those individuals, groups and governments which are responsible."

WHAT KIND OF 'JUSTICE' MAY WE SEEK?

A September statement from the **United Methodist** Board of Global Ministries proclaimed: "As followers of the one who calls us to be peacemakers, we seek to break the cycle of violence and the chains of fear that now bind so many of our hearts and minds. We question those who call for rapid and massive retaliatory strikes, the mobilizing of military reserves and increased funds for war, and ask, are these the things that make for peace?"

On October 13 the denomination's Board of Church and Society declared: "We claim the teachings of the Prince of Peace who instructs us to love and pray for our enemies and refrain from responding to violence with violence. As we join people around the world in our resolve to bring terrorists to justice, we understand that war is not an appropriate means of responding to criminal acts against humanity."

On a webcast discussion among United Methodist staffers, Board of Global Ministries official Harmon Wray rejected any idea of punishment for the terrorists. Instead Wray favored a "restorative justice" that would allow "victims and survivors and family members" to tell their assailant "to his face that it was not right, and make it very clear what he did to them and how they feel about it."

True "restorative justice" is much more. It is the divine justice that redeems sinners from the ways of death and grants them eternal life in Christ. But in the Bible and the Christian tradition, this is not the only form of justice. Sometimes persons and relationships cannot or will not be restored to what God intended. Then there is a place for "retributive justice," exercised by both God and God's human instruments.


This latter form of justice invokes the recurring biblical principle that persons should, on the whole, "reap what they sow." Sometimes the reaping occurs by God's providence operating without any conscious human participation. Sometimes it involves a human agent that acts to reward the good and punish the evil. This is one of the functions of government, according to the Scriptures. So it would not be unjust if U.S. forces were able to bring down upon the al Qaeda terrorists some measure of the violence that they inflicted upon U.S. citizens.

CAN WE CRITICIZE ISLAM?

Church officials were early proponents of what soon became the standard line in media and political circles: The attacks had nothing to do with Islam. They were merely the acts of a few misguided individuals who did not represent the religion or any significant number of its adherents. Islam is "a religion of peace." There is not, nor should there be, any conflict between the Muslim nations and the western liberal democracies.

But it serves neither peace nor justice to pretend that there are no tensions between the western liberal democracies and large parts of the Muslim world. Of the 57 member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, only three measure up to the standard of "free" employed by the human rights group Freedom House. Most Muslim regimes are outright dictatorships, and many persecute Christians and other religious minorities.

It is an open question whether Islam can be reconciled with liberal democracy and the West. Some Muslim scholars argue in the affirmative. But significant numbers of Muslims see America as "the Great Satan" that must be vanquished. The Koran and Muslim traditions provide material to support both the friendlier and the more hostile attitude. It is yet undecided which interpretation will prove to be more "representative" of Islam.

The Church must remain faithful to its calling: to proclaim the Gospel to all without exception, and to raise its voice on behalf of the persecuted. In so doing, the Church cannot avoid at least implicit criticism of Islam and Muslim societies. But that criticism must be grounded in love for our Muslim neighbors. Our prayer is that God would set them free from the forces, both spiritual and political, that have produced so much misery in the modern Muslim world. 

THE NEW ECUMENISM AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO SOCIETY

By Thomas C. Oden

Chairman of the IRD Board of Directors, Thomas Oden is the Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology and Ethics at the Theological and Graduate School of Drew University and the general editor of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. This article is taken from Dr. Oden's lecture at the October 1, 2001, observance of IRD's 20th anniversary. The complete lecture and responses (page 11) are available on the IRD website (www.ird-renew.org).

There are two ecumenisms. The ... *old ecumenism* is decisively identified with the Geneva and the 475 Riverside establishments—the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the National Council of Churches (NCC). This is the old ecumenical movement everybody has known for fifty years. But few are aware of a *new ecumenism* which is embryonic, yet sufficiently developed to recognize some of its characteristics. These two do not differ absolutely, but represent distinguishable tendencies, and have quite different manifestations (see chart on page 9).

... The new ecumenism is not headquartered in any particular bureaucracy or establishment but is as diffuse as is the uniting work of the Holy Spirit. What is happening? God is awakening in grass roots Christianity a ground swell of longing for classic ecumenical teaching in all communions. There are innumerable lay embodiments of this unity. Some are calling it an *alternative ecumenical movement*. My own view is that it is not alternative, but the original and real *oecumene*.

What I am calling the old ecumenism begins in 1948 with the launching of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, in the same year the United Nations was created. It is modern ecumenism. In its early years it was in sound continuity with international missionary societies which were well grounded in classical Christian teaching.....

I attended as a youth observer the second WCC assembly at Evanston in 1954, and the Geneva Conference in 1966, as well as the Harare Assembly in 1998. I have personally beheld the old ecumenism in its earlier, middle, and later phases, and can attest that a radical turn occurred by the mid-sixties toward revolutionary rhetoric, social engineering, and regulatory politics. The engine of utopianism was revved up in 1966 and persists today in the Geneva bureaucracy....

What are evidences of the new ecumenism?

The Holy Spirit is creating forms of unity in the church far beyond our poor attempts. The promise of the Spirit is to guide the church into all truth. The Spirit enables accurate memory of the apostolic testimony. The Spirit is even today reliably reminding the faithful of the good news of the kingdom. The Spirit is at work to transcend ecumenical bureaucracies, provide a critique of blatantly politicized ecumenism, and restore confidence in classic ecumenical teachings. This uniting work of the Holy Spirit is taking form on a breathtaking world scale, yet manifested primarily in quiet and inconspicuous ways in local churches, parachurch ministries, food relief, Bible studies, and grass roots missions. It is not just a matter of pragmatic cooperation, but of a living embodiment of the body of Christ.

...Think of the new ecumenism as structurally analogous to the world-wide information web: It is dispersed, decisions are made mainly through local initiatives, and there is minimal need for centrist integrative control. The old ecumenism may be more like defensive proprietary hardware.... The old wants to keep control. In the new ecumenism there is no desire to control the work of Holy Spirit, but only to reflect it and celebrate it, not capture and can it institutionally.

The terminal illness of old ecumenism has been the entrenched habit of

believing that the embodiment of the body of Christ depends largely upon human ingenuity, rhetoric, and cleverness. It remains fixated on negotiation and management gathered around "causes" of political action. It imagines that this unity will be accomplished by getting institutions and groups together to agree with each other, even at the lowest common denominator, especially in supposed political acts that give the appearance of great prophetic courage....

... God the Spirit is not sentimentally attached to a proto-Marxist vision of social change at a time when Marxism is collapsing. The new ecumenism has already survived the collapse of Marxism, and is grateful to God for bringing this to pass. The new ecumenism is already widely dispersed among Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox believers, not as an organizational expression of institutional union, but a movement of the Spirit. The old ecumenism was largely a liberal Protestant artifact, with Orthodoxy always as a frustrated minority partner.

The new ecumenism is above all committed to ancient classic ecumenical teaching. That means that it has a high doctrine of scripture, and a long term view of cumulative historical consensus, a Chalcedonian Christology, and a classic ecumenical view of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It adheres to a consensual doctrine of the atonement and the resurrection, and the return of the Lord. These are fixed boundary stones in the ancient ecumenical tradition which we are commanded not to move. In the old ecumenism of the hot-house God-box in New York, these doctrines became gradually submerged and almost forgotten amid provocative rhetoric of radical social transformation. The old ecumenism became intensely embarrassed by allegedly sexist language about God the Father and God the Son. It appealed constantly to Marxist social location analysis and psychoanalytic theories of religion. It

looked desperately for alternative humanistic explanations of the mystery of the incarnation and resurrection and holy trinity.

The old ecumenism has suffered the shock of wave after wave of ideological excesses. It has become habituated to viewing current public policy issues mostly through the eyes of liberation theologies, feminist theologies, sexual liberal advocacy, and run-amuck egalitarianism. All of these patterns are focused on one central commitment: the mesmerized fixation on accommodating to modernity....

The embryonic new ecumenism pulled through the sixties with a growing commitment to the defense of free societies, an incremental view of social change, plausible arguments warranting a free market, and equity judgments shaped by classic Christian moral reasoning.... In the new ecumenism, Christian unity is based on Christian truth, not deliberative compromise.

The 50 years of the old ecumenism date from Amsterdam to Harare (1948-1998). What begins with Amsterdam's ideal vision ends with Zimbabwe's pathetic *Padare* (Shona for "talking it out"), where a broad platform of absolute toleration is provided for anyone to speak of any faith feeling or chic take on history and baptize it as authentically ecumenical. What happened to the old ecumenism at Harare 1998 was a final shift from Christian truth to interfaith, world-religions dialogue. The frame of reference was changed from the apostolic deposit of faith to a group-think (*Padare*) conversational search—not for truth but for self-expression. From there it became increasingly tempted toward neo-pagan, shamanist, and animist primitivism as supposed alternatives for ecumenical rejuvenation.

What constitutes the present crisis of the two ecumenisms?

It is a crisis of legitimacy. The very notion of *oecumene* implies a claim to wholeness, an appeal to classic catholicity. The old (modern) ecumenism presumes that it has a proprietary right to shape with its modern ideology every potential modern expression of the unity of the church. Meanwhile the very modernity to which it is seeking to adapt the church is dying.

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The Difference Between the *Old* and the *New* Ecumenism

distrustful of ancient ecumenism
deliberately grounded in ancient ecumenism

accommodates modernity uncritically
critical of failed modern ideas

oriented mainly to Enlightenment assumptions, and the Reformation's left wing

oriented mainly to classic Christianity, conciliar and patristic teaching

revolutionary pretenses
organic view of historical change

preoccupied with rapid social change
keenly aware of the recalcitrance of sin

ideologically drawn to the heirs of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche
sees many tragic consequences of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche

chronically activist
patient amid historical turbulence

bureaucratic
suspicious of top-heavy administration

left-leaning state planning strategies
defense of a free and democratic society

utopian
realistic

seeks negotiated inter-institutional unity
seeks unity based on classic Christian truth

declining
emerging

hierarchical business organization analogy
web-networking analogy

loss of nerve, financially vexed
confident, resourceful

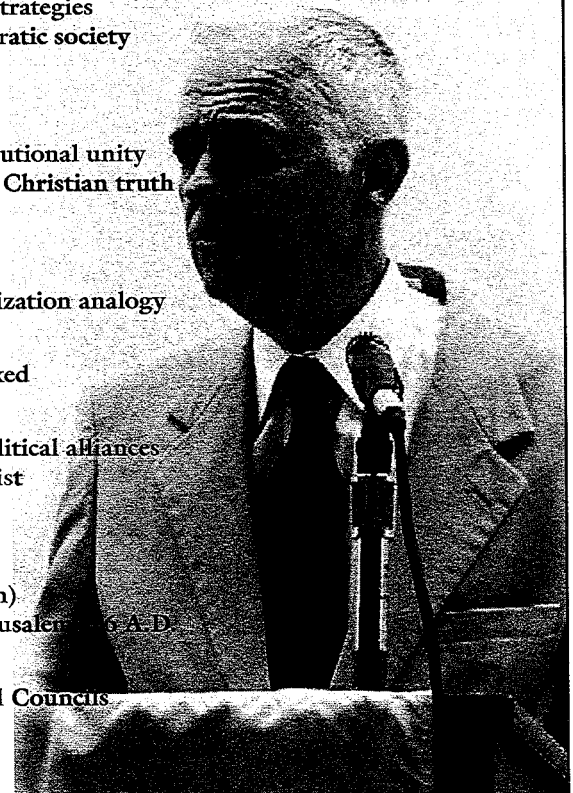
unity sought in shifting political alliances
unity already found in Christ

politics-driven
Spirit-led

begins in 1948 (Amsterdam)
begins in the council of Jerusalem 325 A.D.

apogee in 1966 (Geneva)
apogee in seven Ecumenical Councils

dying by 1998 (Harare)
still much alive



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The old ecumenism assumes it owns the term ecumenical. But this now must be tested. Is the WCC the sole legitimate heir of the office of bringing unity to the body of Christ? This obviously circumvents North American Evangelicals in the mainline, Roman Catholics, and most Orthodox. The old NCC ecumenism is making a claim of truth and universality, yet that claim is corrupted by a radical relativism. This is precisely the false presumption that has required the Holy Spirit to raise up a new ecumenism.

The old ecumenism wholeheartedly accepts the canons of modern consciousness as a permanent feature of every conceivable future. The new ecumenism is not intimidated by modernity, and does not permit modern assumptions to stand as absolute judge of apostolic truth. Modernity has miserably failed to create viable, stable, humane conditions for living. Apostolic truth has now become the critic of modernity, not the other way around, in the voices of the new ecumenism.

The crisis comes down to the question of whether God in time will bless one or the other, the modern institutional form or the classic ecumenical form. There is increasing evidence that God is now blessing the renewal of classic Christian ecumenism, re-grounded in the ancient consensual tradition and patristic exegesis.

What does it mean today to confess with integrity "Credo in unam Ecclesiam" [I believe in one church]?

We cannot rightly confess the unity of the church without re-grounding that unity in the apostolic teaching that was hammered out on the anvil of martyrdom and defined by the early conciliar process, when heresies were rejected and the ancient orthodox consensus defined. This one church is constituted by all who repent and believe, whose lives are shaped by their participation in the living Christ, all who live in this real but imperfect communion. To be the one church, it must be apostolic, refracting the holiness of God in our lives in the world. It reaches out to all cultures, all classes, all languages. We behold this one church most fully alive when we see believers ready to put their lives on the line for its truth.

It is only now that we can clearly see

how damaging the old ecumenism has been to the very cause of Christian unity. We now know how deeply *the old ecumenism has fostered the disunity of the church*. Arguably nothing has been more divisive in contemporary Christianity than the social witness of the modern ecumenists who have forgotten the ancient ecumenical consensus. They have been most divisive just at those points at which they have offended against ancient ecumenical boundaries: in permissive sexuality, power politics, and deadly dreams. Meanwhile the new ecumenism stands in between the times of having grasped a vision of the unity of the body of Christ, yet not able to actualize it or manifest it institutionally within its own emergent networks and memories of confession.

We must continue to hone an accurate and truth-telling form of advocacy journalism. Why? Because each mainline bureaucracy has a kept, wholly owned publishing operation, with slanted reportage designed to prop up the wayward infrastructure. They all maintain vast closed shop publication resources that remain largely in the hands of the tired apologists for the old elitist ecumenism. In order to break through this defensive gridlock, there must be a continuing effort at accurate investigative journalism to challenge just those points of the old ecumenism that are inconsistent with classic Christian teaching. We pray for grace to reclaim the ecumenical ministry for the church catholic and from all who have diminished that unity which is grounded in apostolic truth.

... the Holy Spirit has been teaching Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical Christians that they are closer to each other than to modern liberal accommodative assumptions. The Holy Spirit is at work to elicit and create an apostolic unity that has not yet been manifested fully but is in the process of being created. What configuration promises to emerge out of the old alphabet soup of WCC, NAE, NCC, ACR, and NCCB? The old ecumenism is already overly burdened with institutionalism. My own view: The Holy Spirit will show us the way in God's own time....

The new ecumenism hasn't clearly decided whether or how it might engender or manifest new post-WCC expres-

sions of the unity of the body of Christ, or whether to not focus at all on any institutional manifestation of organic unity. It may decide not to seek any structure at all at this time, but allow the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit to shape whatever structures are required. This debate is only beginning. Among the journals giving voice to substantive debates on the new ecumenism are *First Things*, *Pro Ecclesia*, *Touchstone*, and *Faith & Freedom*.

What is the Holy Spirit doing in our time to bring greater unity to Christian social witness?

Indeed there is much that we do not know of what the Holy Spirit is doing on our behalf, although we can and do know something. This work is happening all about us, yet often without our recognition. Here are some evidences and preliminary clues:

- a. There are growing evangelical and confessing movements within all mainline denominations, calling their churches back to classical Christianity as the source of renewal and unity....
- b. The Holy Spirit is giving encouragement to the martyrs and confessors of many different ecclesial memories, under appalling conditions of state persecution.
- c. The Holy Spirit is hedging and undercutting the false teachings of narcissistic hedonism, autonomous individualism, and oppressive totalitarianism in our time.
- d. The Holy Spirit is engendering liturgical renewal in all the branches of the vine.
- e. The Holy Spirit is mending conflicts that have stood for over a thousand years, like those that have prevailed between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches.

Action focus

It is time to call the mainline denominations that are subsidizing the prolonged malingering of the National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches to withdraw their financial support altogether, and seek a new ecumenism grounded in classical ecumenical teaching.

RESPONDING TO THE NEW ECUMENISM

JOHN BUSBY

National Commander of the Salvation Army

For the evangelical, the reestablishment of the firm foundation of a biblical mandate for unity found in a "high doctrine of scripture"—a strong emphasis on revelation—is of prime importance. This, along with other "fixed boundary stones," as found in ancient classic ecumenical teaching, is warmly received within the broader evangelical church tradition....

The unity [of the early Church] was produced by something from the outside that bound the members together, that being conformity to the purpose of God in Jesus Christ. A unity that is an alien gift of God—a force from the outside reflecting both God's nature and governance "on earth as it is in Heaven." Unity will not be achieved only by cooperating one with another. This affirms Dr. Oden's emphasis that "God the Holy Spirit is creating unity in the church far beyond our poor attempts."

...Sadly, on reflection, American fundamentalism and evangelicalism was partly responsible for such disunity [in the 20th century]. American fundamentalism was

often openly anti-Catholic and evangelicalism itself is certainly divided on the relationship of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Evangelicals have too often feared sitting down with those of different theological views, particularly when the term "membership" comes into use.

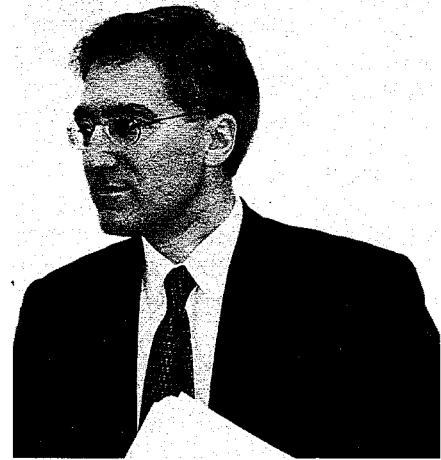
...We might ask if there is any place for an evangelical witness within the NCC and WCC. After all, Dr. Oden has stated that the old and new ecumenisms do not differ absolutely. Very often we are surprised by the work of the Holy Spirit and, perhaps, should recognize the Holy Spirit at work in both forms of ecumenism (the old and the new) and that the Holy Spirit is calling us to be agents of bringing together that witness in a universal manner. This would certainly seem to be the desired result behind the renewing and confessing movements in mainline denominations.

...Whatever structure emerges for the new ecumenism, it must not be self-perpetuating bureaucracy. The real unity of the church is not patterned after an ideological movement, but after the unity of Jesus Christ and God the Father—"that they may be one even as we are one" (John 17:22).

ROBERT P. GEORGE

Professor of Jurisprudence and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions, Princeton University

He [Dr. Oden] dates the "old" ecumenism of the NCC and the WCC to 1948; the "new" ecumenism to the Council of Jerusalem in 46 A.D. And of course, he is absolutely right. The "new" ecumenism is actually very old—rooted in something that, precisely because it is *true*, is ever new. Indeed, it is what makes the *renewal* of the Christian church possible in every generation. The "old" ecumenism, though historically relatively new—indeed much more recent than the "new" ecumenism—is old precisely because it is *dated* (and, indeed, as



Dr. Oden not-too-gently puts it) *dying*; dated (and *dying*) because *discredited*; discredited because *false*.

...Dr. Oden says, rightly, that "the promise of the Spirit is to guide the church into all truth." All right, do we trust the Holy Spirit or do we not? If we do, as Dr. Oden so plainly does, then we must stop fretting, humbly get out of His way, and simply and joyfully pray and work together with our fellow Christians wherever we are called—in soup kitchens and crisis pregnancy centers; in classrooms and boardrooms; in the defense of human life and the struggle for religious freedom both in our own country and abroad. It is in these common efforts in godly causes that the Holy Spirit is already far advanced in the work of Christian unity....

... I suppose that I am expected to say something critical from a Catholic perspective of the work of a Methodist theologian. I'm afraid that I must disappoint this expectation. It is not that I consider the theological issues that continue to divide Catholics and Protestants to be unimportant. I long to share in a common eucharistic meal with my Protestant friends, yet I know that this must await a more perfect communion of faith. But

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 this longing itself is a manifestation of the work of the Spirit towards its object. Indeed, when I think in terms of "them" and "us," I...cannot imagine "us" not including Dr. Oden or Diane Knippers, or James Nuechterlein, or Gilbert Meilaender, or Charles Colson, or Bill Bright, or James Dobson or countless other Protestant believers whose fidelity to the ancient creeds and moral principles of Christian faith has been proven on the battlefields of the culture war....

DESPINA D. PRASSAS

Ph.D. candidate in Historical Theology, Catholic University of America; WCC Central Committee member, representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

When I think of ecumenism as it has taken place in the past, I visualize a group of people, armed with hammers, nails, and planks of wood, attempting to build a wooden altar. All of these people are well-meaning and serious about their work. They genuinely desire to build an altar around which everyone can stand. However, this altar is never finished because each time it is about to be completed it is necessary to add another person to the group. The altar then becomes too small and is no longer able to accommodate everyone. There is the continual need to add planks of wood at the end,



extending the altar so far that people at the opposite ends cannot see each other, much less remember why they are building the altar. The focus is on the technical details of building the altar rather than why the altar needed to be built in the first place.

Then I visualize another altar. This altar is made of gold, encrusted with precious jewels. Those who come forward to gather around the altar are awe-struck, stopping in their tracks, overwhelmed by its beauty. It is clearly not made by human hands. Those who come to gather around this altar realize they are approaching holy ground, and they must take off their shoes....[I]n order to walk onto the ground where the altar is located, one must take off one's shoes, and all must do this together. No one can be left behind.

In the second image, God has created the altar. How are we to approach this altar that God has built, the altar of ecumenical dialogue? I would like to offer three ways of approaching this altar, namely, with holiness, with humility and with a sense of servanthood....

PHILIP W. TURNER

former Dean of Berkeley Divinity School, Yale


I believe that it is in relation to this social witness that the depth and force of the new ecumenism will be tested and its future forged. Prof. Oden mentions a number of areas in which he believes this witness must take place.... I suspect, however, he would not object if I were to append to this list another—one comprised of what I like to call the A's, B/C's, D's, E's and F's of ecumenical relations. I speak of abortion, birth control, divorce, euthanasia and (forgive this antique notion) fornication.... It is my contention that these issues constitute the place we must begin if we are to forge a new ecumenism that serves at one and the same time to unify Christians and make their social witness credible as a *Christian* witness.

I say this because I have come to believe that a single issue lies beneath each letter of this moral alphabet, and that this issue comprises the point at which Christians are called to make a *contrary* rather



than a *conforming* social witness. I have in mind the ubiquitous assumption that gives coherence to what we mistakenly view as a pluralistic moral universe, namely, autonomous individualism....

Were there time on this occasion to point out the full significance of what happened when we began to identify ourselves as "persons," "selves," and "individuals" defined by the possession of freedom and reason rather than as beings created in the image of God and ordered to common life with God and one another, I believe I could make the dire moral circumstances of our society plain. I can only say on this occasion that this shift in moral self-identity stands behind our readiness to abort new human life or end dying life by our own decision. It is this shift that turns marriage into a private contract entered into for personal reasons and divorce into a way toward personal fulfillment. It is this shift also that renders procreation a choice made on the basis of its contribution to the flourishing of those who might decide, for various reasons, to have a child in whatever manner lies open to them.

... We often separate the notion of holiness from that of unity, but we do so at our peril. Apart from a common life stamped by the image of our Lord's life we will not find our way to unity of belief and practice in respect to these matters and, as a consequence, when time comes to make a social witness, our words will fall empty to the ground. 

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

BISHOP BULLEN DOLLI— A HERO OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE NEW SUDAN

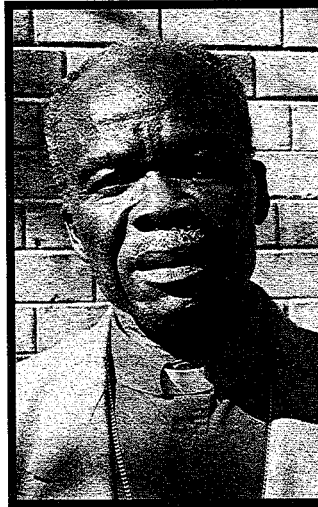
By Faith J.H. McDonnell

On October 1, 2001, a Sudanese church leader joined the company of heroes of the persecuted church who have received the IRD's Religious Freedom Award. The award was given to the Rt. Reverend Bullen Dolli, Bishop of Lui in the Episcopal Church of Sudan, at the IRD's 20th anniversary celebration. In past years IRD presented this award mostly to Christians suffering under communism. While the situation of those past recipients has generally improved in the post-Cold War era, many Christians in the Islamic world still lack religious freedom. Bishop Dolli represents the tens of millions who struggle under extreme Islamist regimes.

IRD's Religious Liberty Program has emphasized Sudan, where a vibrant church continues to grow in spite of government-sponsored terrorism, starvation, slavery, and genocidal war. It was for us a great honor to recognize a hero of the Sudanese Church. Bishop Dolli is a leader who speaks with courage and forthrightness while manifesting tremendous grace and forgiveness in the face of terrible personal suffering.

In a ceremony held in the Hart Senate Office Building, the U.S. State Department Undersecretary for Global Affairs, Dr. Paula Dobriansky, presented the award to Bishop Dolli. The Rev. Walter Fauntroy, a Sudan activist and former D.C. delegate to Congress, offered a moving invocation. In his response, Bishop Dolli first honored U.S. victims of terror with a moment of silence, before speaking of his own people who experience terrorism daily. "Your grief is our grief," he said to the gathering of IRD friends and associates.

The bishop then offered a poignant overview of his peoples' suffering. He spoke of destruction: cattle slaughtered and crops burned; rivers poisoned and churches bulldozed; marketplaces, schools, hospitals, and an historic cathedral bombed. He spoke of deprivation: generations without education, thousands without employment, oil and land stolen from under the people's very feet. The bishop spoke of death: the living death of gang rapes, slavery, racism, and forced conversion to Islam; the senseless death of preventable diseases and war casualties;



the deliberate, cruel death of torture, anti-personnel bombs, ethnic cleansing, and starvation. He spoke of his own brother: accused of collaborating with the enemy; wrenched from his house; dragged behind a jeep; his ravaged, lifeless body then set on fire. Finally, incredibly, he spoke of forgiveness: of the confession of the man who had betrayed his brother, and his own offering of the mercy that Christ can give.

Bishop Dolli shared his message across the United States in a month-long visit sponsored by IRD's Church Alliance for a New Sudan (CANS). In addition to pastoral visits with southern Sudanese living in the DC area, he spoke at churches in northern Virginia and at the Salvation Army

national headquarters. He was the keynote speaker at a conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He spent several days at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, spoke at venues sponsored by the Sudan activists of St. James Episcopal Church and St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church in New York City, and gave the chapel sermon and dean's hour presentation at the Yale Divinity School.

Flying west, the bishop had the opportunity for fellowship and ministry with Christ Episcopal Church and the related Sudanese community in Overland Park, Kansas. He was also invited by U.S. Senator Sam Brownback to speak at a Sudan rally in Lenexa, Kansas. In all this time, the bishop referred only lightly to the very real danger he incurred in speaking out. "The NIF (National Islamic Front government of Sudan) calls me 'the rebel bishop,'" he said.

In Washington, DC, Bishop Dolli shared with U.S. policymakers his long years of experience under radical Islam. He met with key leaders at the State Department and National Security Council and with the Sudan special envoy, former Senator John Danforth. He was interviewed on several radio shows and by nationally-known journalists. Bishop Dolli took every opportunity both to be an advocate for his suffering people and to be a witness to God's faithfulness. Those who met him will never forget this Sudanese saint. **f**

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

TERROR ATTACKS ON U.S. FUEL
RELIGIOUS RIOTS IN NIGERIA

While alarms were properly raised about reprisals against U.S. Muslims after September 11, far more violence was actually experienced overseas by Christian minorities in Muslim areas. New religious violence erupted between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria on September 12. The riots began in the northern city of Jos after numerous Muslims began celebrating the terrorist attack on the United States, dancing in the streets and shouting “*Allahu Akbar* [God is great]!” Hundreds of Muslim youths attacked two churches in the Shagari Quarters district. The Holy Trinity Catholic Church was razed and the priest’s residence burned. The death toll was reported as over 500.

An uneasy peace that followed was temporary. New riots broke out nearly one month later, killing 200. The October riot in the northern city of Kano began after Friday prayers, when Muslims flooded the streets to mount a protest against U.S. bombing in Afghanistan.

Since Olusegun Obasanjo, a Christian, won the nation’s presidency in a democratic election in 1999, over 5,000 Nigerians, mostly Christian, have been killed in conflicts with Muslim extremists. The precipitating issue in many cases has been the attempt to impose Islamic law in northern Nigeria, which has a Muslim majority but significant Christian minorities. Nearly one-third of the country’s 36 states have now declared their intention to enforce *shari’a*. The news of September 11 further inflamed this already volatile situation.

INDONESIAN CHRISTIANS
UNDER ATTACK BY ISLAMIC
EXTREMIST GROUP

Violence continues to threaten the safety of Christians in Indonesia. Fides, a Catholic missionary news agency, reports that more than 50,000 Christians have fled the island of Sulawesi due to the attacks of Laskar Jihad, a Muslim paramilitary force. The group’s methods include massacres to drive Christians out of areas where they had formerly coexisted with Muslims. Numerous witnesses tell of Christians forced to convert to Islam and endure crude circumcisions at the hands of militia members.

Laskar Jihad is strongly suspected of having ties to the al Qaeda terrorist organization. It is believed responsible for thousands of deaths in the Molucca Islands in similar conflicts since 1999. Religious violence on Sulawesi claimed at least 1,000 lives in 1999 and 2000.

PAKISTANI CHRISTIANS
DEMAND JUSTICE
IN CHURCH KILLINGS

By the end of 2001, two months after a church massacre in Pakistan, the government appeared no closer to finding those responsible for the murders. “Government officials just keep saying they are working on it, yet no one has been arrested as far as we know,” Victor Azariah, general secretary of the National Council

of Churches in Pakistan, told Ecumenical News International. “We think they know who did it.”

The attack occurred Sunday, October 28, as masked gunmen burst into a worship service in Bahawalpur in Pakistan’s Punjab province. It is suspected that the target of the attack was the local Catholic priest, who is a U.S. citizen. Instead the assailants killed 15 members of the Protestant congregation that shares the building with the Catholics. Azariah said he had reason to believe that the gunmen were members of a radical group known as “Soldiers of Islam” seeking to avenge U.S. military strikes in neighboring Afghanistan.

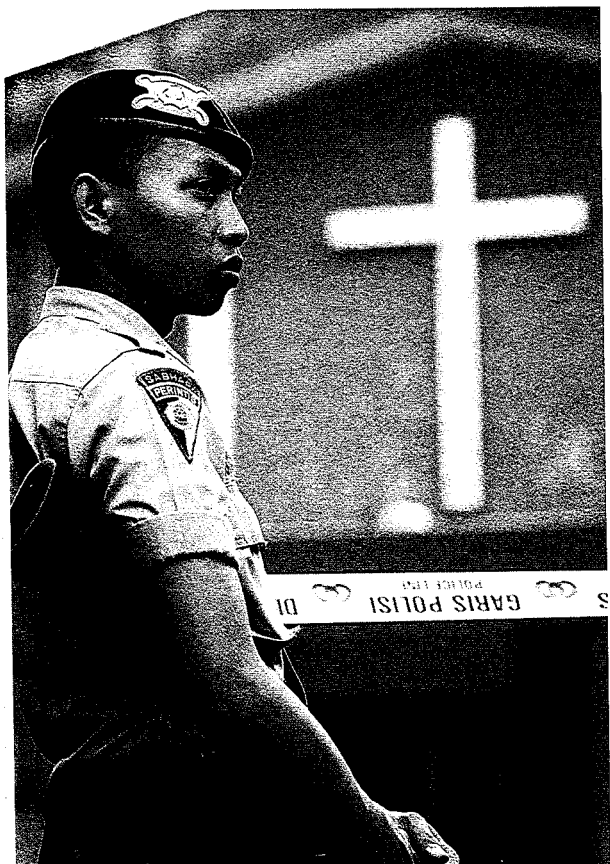
Other Pakistani churches have received threats, and many have deployed armed guards for the protection of worshippers. Church leaders are asking for a more thorough judicial inquiry into the October 28 massacre. They fear that the government, itself leery of Muslim extremists, is dragging its feet in the investigation.

DUTCH CHURCHES TO BLESS
SAME-SEX PARTNERSHIPS

The largest Protestant body in the Netherlands has recently approved the blessing of same-sex unions. The Uniting Protestant Churches—which includes two Reformed denominations and the Lutherans—represents 2.7 million Dutch Christians. The action allows local church councils to authorize such blessings. This change in church by-laws met some stiff resistance from conservatives, but in the end the measure passed by 113 of 158 votes.

The chairperson of the conservative Reformed Alliance, an organization within the Netherlands Reformed Church, called it a black day in church history.

Several European nations, including Denmark, France, and Norway, have extended legal recognition to same-sex couples. The Netherlands is the only country to confer the status of marriage on same-sex partners. **f**



An Indonesian police officer stands guard in front of a Roman Catholic church in Jakarta. Islamic paramilitary groups are seeking to drive Christians out of areas with significant Muslim populations.

CHURCH NEWS

NCC DIGS A DEEPER HOLE

The November General Assembly of the National Council of Churches brought more bad news for the council. Financial reports revealed that the NCC had run a deficit of \$2.15 million for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2001. Expenditures exceeded revenues by almost 30 percent—proportionately, a far larger sea of red ink than the NCC had ever previously spilled.

After chronic earlier deficits had necessitated an emergency bailout of the council in 2000, the new NCC leadership promised a return to balanced budgets. But now the council stands closer to the brink than ever before.

The NCC was running a \$167,000 deficit for the period from July through October 2001. NCC General Secretary Robert Edgar pledged that the finances would be back in balance by the end of the year, but acknowledged that drastic measures would be required to achieve that result. He planned to cut the NCC staff to 38 by January 1, 2002—a severe drop from the 102 staffers of two years ago. Edgar also mentioned that the council is considering selling the copyrights to the Revised and New Revised Standard Versions of the Bible.

There were several signs that the NCC's deeper problems had not been solved. Despite efforts to broaden its base of financial support, the NCC is still dependent upon two denominations—the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—for 64 percent of its support from member communions. The council continues to operate with a very high overhead. Almost 45 percent of its spending in fiscal year 2000-2001 went to non-program (fundraising and management) expenses.

UNITED METHODISTS LAUNCH TELEVISION AD CAMPAIGN

The United Methodist Church, after 36 years of continuous membership losses, has undertaken an ambitious media campaign that includes advertisements on television, in newspapers, and on billboards. The campaign, which was granted

\$20 million by the 2000 General Conference, is entitled “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.”

The television campaign began on September 5. The ads directed viewers toward www.unitedmethodist.org, a new website, that would provide further information about the church's history, social activism, and diversity. What seemed to be lacking from both the ads and the website was any attempt to introduce the information-seeker to Jesus Christ. The only references to Jesus in the television ads occur in two foreign-language ads. The ads in English never mention the Savior who was the theme of John Wesley's preaching.

Also baffling is the website's dogged determination to be sure visitors understand that United Methodists disagree about a number of issues. One article states, “One of the things I love most about being a United Methodist is what it doesn't mean: It doesn't mean I have to believe everything everyone else believes.”

Although there certainly are many debates among United Methodists, they are supposed to share a common faith in the Bible, in Jesus Christ, and in the historic creeds of Christianity. Yet the ads and website may confuse some visitors

into thinking that the denomination is so “open” that it has no core beliefs.

HAS AMERICA'S FAITH CHANGED SINCE 9-11?

Two surveys disagreed about the impact of September 11 on American religious life. A November poll by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life showed 78 percent of respondents affirming that the influence of religion in American life is growing. That figure was more than double the 37 percent who made the same assertion eight months earlier.

By contrast, the Barna Research Group found little change in its measurements of religious belief and practice. The numbers of persons identifying themselves as Christians or professing any sort of strong religious commitment remained steady. “It appears that [church] attendance, which nationwide increased by perhaps 25 percent immediately after the attacks, is back at normal levels,” according to the Barna Group.

The only significant changes discovered in the Barna survey pointed toward a weakening of orthodox faith. In January 2000, 38 percent of American adults affirmed that “there are moral truths that are absolute”; by November 2001 only 22 percent held that view. Belief in an “all-powerful, all-knowing Creator” and in Satan as “a living being” had also declined.

Barna concluded: “After the attack, millions of nominally churchled or generally irreligious Americans were desperately seeking something that would restore stability and a sense of meaning to life. Fortunately, many of them turned to the church. Unfortunately, few of them experienced anything that was sufficiently life-changing to capture their attention and their allegiance.”

CLONING, STEM-CELL RESEARCH DIVIDES “PRO-CHOICE” GROUPS

Recent debates over cloning and fetal stem-cell research have fractured coalitions on both sides of the human life debate. Much remarked in the media

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A promotional poster for the new United Methodist public relations campaign.



The people of The United Methodist Church™

CHURCH NEWS (continued)

has been the division on the "pro-life" side, as some normally anti-abortion legislators have endorsed experiments with stem cells from aborted embryos in hopes of finding cures to diseases. But there have also been splits on the "pro-choice" side.

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) lobbied for federal funding for the controversial stem-cell research. "As people of faith, we are called to be partners with God in healing and in the alleviation of human pain and suffering," the coalition wrote to President Bush. It favored "careful regulation" and "the greatest responsibility" in the use of stem cells.

But not all of the coalition's members agreed. The United Methodist Board of Church and Society asked the President to extend the federal moratorium on human embryo destruction. "People are created in the image of God," the board declared. It warned that fetal stem-cell research turns human life into a "commodity to be manipulated, controlled, patented and sold." The Methodist agency has also opposed human cloning, whether for purposes of research or childbearing.

In taking these positions, the usually liberal board cited resolutions of the 2000 General Conference of the United Methodist Church. That conference spoke out against "procedures that intentionally generate 'waste' [human] embryos which will knowingly be destroyed." It also urged a "complete and total ban" on human cloning.

HOPEFUL SIGNS FOR PRESBYTERIANS

The end of the year brought encouraging news for Evangelicals in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). An attempt to abolish the denomination's sexual standards for ordained officers was being defeated soundly in the regional presbyteries. And the PCUSA General Assembly Council adopted a strong statement on the lordship of Christ, easing concerns that the denomination was going wobbly on that basic Christian teaching.

As this issue of *Faith & Freedom* went to press, the presbytery vote so far on "Amendment 01-A" was 33 yes versus 74 no. That amendment would delete from the PCUSA Book of Order the entire section calling church officers to a life of "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness." To take effect, the amendment would have to win approval of a majority of the 173 presbyteries.

The General Assembly Council statement on "Hope in Our Lord Jesus Christ" delivered a clear message on a contested doctrinal point. "Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, and all people everywhere are called to place their faith, hope, and love in him," the council declared.

Controversy had erupted after a keynote speaker at a July 2000 PCUSA peacemaking conference had suggested that other religions might be equivalent ways to God alongside Christ. The General Assembly Council so far has taken no

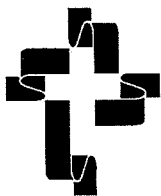
action to alter the peacemaking program that produced the conference.

CHURCH LEADERS LINE UP WITH DEMOCRATS ON STIMULUS PLAN

A group of mostly oldline church officials signed a letter to President Bush on October 18 outlining their preferences for an economic stimulus package. Options endorsed by the church leaders included increased funding for food stamps and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). They also recommended a two-step \$1.50 boost in the minimum wage.

The church leaders urged these steps as "a matter of fairness—a core American value." "For moral reasons," they said, "an economic stimulus package must address the situation of low-income people." This emphasis on increased federal spending for entitlement programs aligned the church officials much more closely with Democratic proposals. It put them at odds with Republicans who leaned toward tax cuts and feared that a minimum wage rise might trigger more job layoffs.

Signers of the letter included General Secretary Robert Edgar of the National Council of Churches, Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold of the Episcopal Church, Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and United Methodist Bishop Felton May. **f**



THE INSTITUTE
ON RELIGION & DEMOCRACY
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