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FAITH & FREEDOM

REFORMING THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL WITNESS

DISCERNMENT NEEDED: What Mainstream Christians
Know and Don't Know about Possible War with Iraq, *page 4*



U.S. CHURCH STATEMENTS ON IRAQ, *page 6*

IRD'S RESPONSE TO "INVITATION TO A JOURNEY" FROM CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TOGETHER, *page 8*

MAKING THEMSELVES IRRELEVANT: NCC AND WCC PONDER SEPTEMBER 11, *page 14*

Plus From the President, Church News, International Briefs, Religious Freedom, IRD Diary, and Letters

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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 Church Alliance for a New Sudan.

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

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LETTERS

THANK YOU FOR THE SUMMER 2002 ISSUE OF *FAITH AND FREEDOM*. I FOUND TWO OF THE ARTICLES PARTICULARLY HELPFUL.

The first was Diane Knippers' article "Islam and Democracy." In answer to the question "is Islam a peaceful religion?" my answer is both "yes" and "no." Of course, if asked the same question about Christianity, one would also have to answer "yes" and "no." If you are speaking about the founder, the answer is "yes." If speaking about his followers, the answer too often has been "no."

The other article was "Making the Arguments for Biblical Sexuality" by the same author. I have read most of the books recommended in the article. Dean Hamer [*Living With our Genes: Why They Matter More Than You Think*] claims to have discovered a gene that at least in part determines homosexual preference. However, in light of a) the complex methods he uses; b) his recognition that factors of heredity and environment are nearly always working together; and c) his speculation about other genes which may control other aspects of human behavior, I take his findings with a grain of salt and insist that it is still an open question whether any sexual preference is genetically determined.

Richard Cohen [*Coming Out Straight: Understanding and Healing Homosexuality*] makes a strong case for the position that homosexual preference is learned by identifying his own preference and why he holds it. He is particularly persuasive because he can claim he has helped many others "come out straight." He makes the important point that rather than vilifying gays and lesbians, Christians should try compassionately to help them. Thomas Schmidt [*Straight & Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*] is convincing in arguing that the apostle Paul meant exactly what he said—homosexual practice is sinful.

The Rev. Fred Owen
Tumwater, WA

I JUST FINISHED READING *STRAIGHT ANSWERS TO MORAL CONFUSION IN NATIONAL CRISIS*, was impressed by the clear, accurate statements it made on the war on terrorism. As a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I wish Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson had given a more accurate depiction of just war.

I attend a pacifist school, and find many students and faculty are willing to accept pacifist teaching without accepting the consequences. I sincerely hope more Christians will come to understand the meaning of both pacifism and just war.

A. J. Nolte
via e-mail

THE PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN IS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES. WHEN THE MODERN STATE OF Israel was established, there were about 400,000 of us. Now, it is down to 60,000. At this rate, in a few years there will be none of us left....

Why do American Christians stand by while their leaders advocate the expulsion of fellow Christians? Could it be that they do not know that the Holy Land has been a home to Christians since, well, since Christ?

...What we seek is support—material, moral, political, and spiritual. As Palestinians we grieve for what we have lost—and few people have lost more than us. But grief can be assuaged by the fellowship of friends.

Abe Atta
via e-mail

PHOTO CREDITS

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE IRD TEAM

By Diane L. Knippers



One of the major reasons that the IRD is strategically effective is our staff. Their abilities and commitments reflect the IRD's vision of church renewal, from the local to the national level, touching our minds, our families, our neighbors, and the world.

Chris Regner is a research assistant with our United Methodist Action committee. On staff since January 2002, he is a graduate of the University of Michigan (Film Studies). Chris coaches a local high school hockey team. He and his wife, Beth, attend an Episcopal church.

Meghan Furlong, the IRD's administrative assistant, also began in January 2002. A graduate of the University of Virginia (History), Meghan is a long-time member of Truro Episcopal Church. She is active in Truro's newcomers and young adult ministries.

Erik Nelson, our research associate for Episcopal Action, began at the IRD in June 2001. Erik has a B.A. in Political Studies from Gordon College and a Masters in Political Theory from Catholic University, where he is currently pursuing a PhD. Erik and his wife, Amy, are involved in a young married couples group at Truro Church.

Steve Rempe, on the IRD staff since 1999, is associate editor of *Faith and Freedom* and our webmaster. Steve completed his undergraduate work at Miami University in Ohio and then earned a Masters in Public Policy from Regent University. He is a member of St. John's Lutheran Church, where he recently taught an adult Sunday school class.

Jerald Walz is our director of operations and development and has been with the IRD since 1997. Jerald graduated from Asbury College and is pursuing a Masters in Government at Johns Hopkins. At Smithville United Methodist Church, he is the evangelism chairperson, a member of the church council and building fund, coordinator of the men's fellowship, and even occasionally the preacher. Jerald also leads the DC branch of RE:GENERATION Forum, an ecumenical ministry for emerging church leaders.

Mark Tooley, executive director of the IRD's UM Action committee, has been on staff since 1994. Mark took his B.A. in Government from Georgetown University, after which he worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. Mark is a member of Pender United Methodist Church, where he serves as Church and Society chairman. He is also on the board of directors of Good News,




IRD staff. Front row: Meghan Furlong, Faith McDonnell, Diane Knippers, Steve Rempe, Mark Tooley. Back: Chris Regner, Alan Wisdom, Erik Nelson, Jerald Walz.

an evangelical renewal group in the UM Church.

Faith McDonnell is the director of the IRD's Religious Liberty Program and has worked at IRD since 1993. Faith has two degrees in English, a B.A. from Eastern Nazarene College and an M.A. from the University of Maryland. A member of the Church of the Apostles (Episcopal), she is active on the missions commission and a newly-formed church reform commission. Faith is on the boards of the Jubilee Campaign, USA, and the Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom. She and her husband, Francis, have a seven-year-old daughter, Fiona.

Alan Wisdom, IRD's vice president and director of our Presbyterian A.C.A. program, joined our staff in 1985. He has a B.A. from Rice University (History, English, and Spanish) and another from the University of Maryland (Education). Alan and his wife, Esther, are members of Georgetown Presbyterian Church — where he is an elder and teaches adult and toddler Sunday school classes. He is secretary of the global mission committee of National Capital Presbytery. Alan works part-time, allowing three days each week at home with children Esther Lynne (5) and Daniel (2).

The IRD is also blessed with faithful volunteers. Right now, **June Leeuwrik** and **Joyce Neville** give us a real boost in many administrative tasks. **Donna Ballard** devoted several weeks last fall coordinating our Sudan prayer vigil.

I recently celebrated by 20th anniversary on the IRD staff. My undergraduate degree is from Asbury College (History) and my Masters in Sociology of Religion is from the University of Tennessee. With my husband Ed, I'm a member of Truro Church, where I serve on the vestry and as a delegate to diocesan council. I am a member of the Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations, an officer of the National Association of Evangelicals, a board member of *Five Talents*, and an advisory editor for *Christianity Today* magazine. I also serve on the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance. 

DISCERNMENT NEEDED:

What Mainstream Christians Know and Don't Know about Possible War with Iraq

By Alan F.H. Wisdom

The continuing conflict between the Iraqi government and the international community is complicated in every sense. But one would not sense this complexity in reading many of the recent statements emanating from the left-leaning oldline U.S. Protestant leaders (see p. 6). They seem quite certain that there can be no justification for any military action against Iraq, under any conceivable circumstances.

Of course, this unconditional "no" to any war would be the instant response of a Christian pacifist. But oldline U.S. denominations are not supposed to be pacifist in their doctrines. On the contrary, mainstream Christian teachings recognize that governments have a divine vocation that is distinct from the vocation of Jesus and his Church. The magistrate's vocation, according to Jesus' apostles, is to "bear the sword" to protect the law-abiding and "execute his [God's] wrath on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:1-7, I Peter 2:13-17). Starting from such passages, the Christian tradition has developed a set of criteria for discerning when it is appropriate to use the sword in a "just war."

Unfortunately, the recent statements from top oldline church officials rarely display the rich nuances of the just war tradition. The IRD has criticized those statements because:

- Many focus far more on personal political opinions than on biblical and confessional teachings, conveying those opinions with an insistence that should be reserved for the authoritative teachings.
- Many spout pacifist-sounding slogans—"War solves nothing"—without clarifying that the denominations are not pacifist, and without expressing the true pacifists' willingness to accept the consequences of their refusal to resist evil.
- Many ignore or minimize the threat posed by the Iraqi government.
- Many blame the United States, more than Saddam Hussein, for the sufferings of the Iraqi people.
- Many attribute the basest of motives to the United States and its president, accusing them of acting principally out of greed, pride, bloodlust, and the desire for hegemony.
- Many exalt the United Nations as the lodestar of international morality, ignoring the manifest limitations and defects of that organization.
- Many speak as if they had precise knowledge of the likely course of a war with Iraq, repeating the

same kinds of grim prophecies that turned out to be false in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

- Many offer no realistic alternative policies by which the threat from Iraq could be restrained.
- Few show any evidence of having consulted the views of church members.

Nevertheless, in criticizing the anti-war church statements, the IRD does not wish to take the opposite position. We would not ask our churches to endorse any particular plans for war against Iraq. What they owe their members, in our view, is something more than the usual partisan advocacy. Our churches need to teach their members how to make their own moral discernments, drawing guidance from the principles of the Christian just war tradition.

The first task of moral discernment is to learn the difference between those things that we know and those that we do not know. For the purpose of promoting such discernment, the IRD offers the following two sets of propositions.

WHAT MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANS KNOW—AND THEIR LEADERS SHOULD UNDERSTAND

1. The U.S. government has a divinely-ordained duty to defend its citizens, by armed force if necessary. It does not require the permission of the United Nations to do so. It may be prudent and helpful to obtain supportive UN resolutions, but they are not morally or legally necessary. The UN Charter itself recognizes the prior right of national self-defense.

2. When U.S. allies are threatened with aggression, the United States and its allies have a right to take measures for their collective self-defense. They do not require the permission of the United Nations.

3. A preemptive war may be legitimate in some circumstances, under the principles of the just war tradition. If it is known that a grave act of aggression is imminent, the potential victims of the attack should not have to wait for the attack to begin before they take measures to defend themselves.

4. Nevertheless, we must be very careful about how far we extend the just war tradition to cover preemptive wars. If it is extended too far, virtually any attack against a potential adversary could be justified. So we must insist that the threatened aggression must be imminent and grave and clearly established.

5. The current government of Iraq is a serious threat to peace in the Middle East and possibly beyond. It has a history of aggression. It has links to international terrorism. It has demonstrated the intention to develop weapons of mass destruction and the willingness to use them.

6. Saddam Hussein is a tyrant in the classic sense of the term, a man who has usurped power and used it to oppress his own people. His power has no legitimacy under either democratic theory or Christian morality. The presumption of "sovereign immunity" against foreign intervention should not be used to shield such a tyrant from all accountability for his gross violations of international order and human rights.

7. War should not be undertaken solely or principally to replace a government that the United States

8. Iraqi aggression and oppression should not be blamed upon the United States or the West. Saddam Hussein is fully responsible for the actions of his regime.

9. A state of war already exists between Iraq and the international coalition that reversed its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The Persian Gulf War was suspended with a truce that imposed certain conditions upon Saddam Hussein's government. Saddam has systematically violated those conditions, and thus the truce has been broken. Iraqi forces regularly fire upon coalition planes that are attempting to enforce UN resolutions regarding Iraq.

10. Any decision to take further military action against Iraq should not be attributed to an alleged U.S. desire to achieve universal domination, purely economic reasons (ensuring access to oil), or the personal pique of the U.S. president. These factors may figure at some level; however, the stated reasons for U.S. concerns about Iraq are more than sufficient as an explanation for why our government and other governments are considering military action.

WHAT MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANS DO NOT KNOW—AND THEIR LEADERS SHOULD NOT PRESUME TO KNOW BETTER

A. How many weapons of mass destruction does Iraq currently possess, and in what form? To what extent are they "deliverable" to targets in the Middle East or on U.S. soil?

B. How quickly will Iraq be able to develop new weapons of mass destruction?

C. How likely is Iraq to use such weapons against the United States and its allies? How imminent is their use?

D. Have all alternatives short of war been effectively exhausted? Are UN weapons inspections enough to "keep Saddam in his box"?

E. To what extent is it prudent for the United States and its allies to agree voluntarily to take only those actions against Iraq that have been explicitly authorized by UN resolutions?

F. How many allies does the United States need to launch a war against Iraq that is successful militarily as well as politically?

G. What is the likelihood of success of any particular military strategy against Iraq? How many casualties would there be? What would be the reaction in the rest of the Middle East?

H. What kind of order might replace the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq? To what extent would the new order be conducive to a greater measure of peace in the world and justice within Iraq?

I. To what degree should citizens in a democracy rely upon the judgments of public officials who have access to intelligence information that cannot be divulged?



Iraqi women march in honor of Saddam Hussein's birthday.

regards as unfriendly. For a war to be just, it must be waged against a government that has shown itself to be an aggressor acting in violation of international norms. But when we do face an aggressor regime, and it appears that the regime is absolutely committed to its aggressive intentions, then the only way to block those intentions permanently may be to replace the regime. This is essentially the conclusion that was reached by the Allied governments in World War II when they set the "unconditional surrender" of the German and Japanese regimes as their war aim. Thus "regime change" may be a legitimate secondary goal in a war.

EXCERPTED STATEMENTS: U.S. CHURCHES ON IRAQ

U.S. ECUMENICAL

We, leaders of American churches and church-related organizations, are alarmed by recent statements by yourself [President Bush] and others in the Administration about pre-emptive military action against Iraq for the expressed purpose of toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein. Understanding that Mr. Hussein poses a threat to his neighbors and to his own people, we nevertheless believe it is wrong, as well as detrimental to U.S. interests, to take such action.

"We oppose on moral grounds the United States taking further military action against Iraq now. The Iraqi people have already suffered enough through more than two decades of war and severe economic sanctions. Military action against the government of Saddam Hussein and its aftermath could result in a large number of civilians being killed or wounded, as well as increasing the suffering of multitudes of innocent people.

"It is detrimental to U.S. interests to take unilateral military action when there continues to be strong multilateral support for a new weapons inspection regime and when most governments in Europe and the Middle East resist supporting military action. It is important for the U.S. to cooperate with international efforts to control Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, if possible, through a regional weapons-of-mass-destruction control initiative....

Letter to President Bush from NCC General Secretary Robert Edgar and top officials of Roman Catholic religious orders and oldline Protestant denominations including the United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and United Church of Christ. September 12, 2002

We therefore urge our governments, especially President Bush and Prime Minister Blair, to pursue alternative means to disarm Iraq of its most destructive weapons. Diplomatic cooperation with the United Nations in renewing rigorously effective and thoroughly comprehensive weapons inspections, linked

to the gradual lifting of sanctions, could achieve the disarmament of Iraq without the risks and costs of military attack.

"We do not believe that preemptive war with Iraq: is a last resort, could effectively guard against massive civilian casualties, would be waged with adequate international authority, and could predictably create a result proportionate to the cost.... An attack on Iraq could set a precedent for preemptive war, further destabilize the Middle East, and fuel more terrorism. We, therefore, do not believe that war with Iraq can be justified under the principle of a 'just war,' but would be illegal, unwise, and immoral...."

"Disarm Iraq Without War," a statement from U.S. and British church leaders, including the NCC's Edgar and the heads of several NCC member denominations.

October 2002

For us as religious leaders, the real axis of evil is the pandemic of poverty, the degradation of the planet Earth and the proliferation of weapons. The issue for the American people is terrorism. You don't attack terrorism with bombs; you attack it with international policing. We would not have gotten the sniper here in Washington by bombing the Capitol."

Robert Edgar of NCC, quoted in The New York Times. October 26, 2002

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Bush administration has declared its intent to launch a war against Iraq, ignoring the advice of its allies, many members of Congress, key experts, and millions of U.S. citizens. With unprecedented disregard for democratic ideals and with an astonishing lack of evidence justifying such a pre-emptive attack, the President has all but given the order to fire.

"I ask United Methodists to oppose this reckless measure and urge the President to immediately pursue other means to resolve the threat posed by Iraq.... Our Church categorically opposes interventions by more powerful nations

against weaker ones. We recognize the first moral duty of all nations is to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among nations.

"United Methodists have a particular duty to speak out against an unprovoked attack. President Bush and Vice-President Cheney are members of our denomination. Our silence now could be interpreted as tacit approval of war. Christ came to break old cycles of revenge and violence. Too often, we have said we worship and follow Jesus but have failed to change our ways. Jesus proved on the cross the failure of state-sponsored revenge. It is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and the Prince of Peace, would support this proposed attack...."

Statement by General Secretary Jim Winkler of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society.

August 30, 2002

U.S. ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS

We have no illusions about the behavior or intentions of the Iraqi government. The Iraqi leadership must cease its internal repression, end its threats to its neighbors, stop any support for terrorism, abandon its efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, and destroy all such existing weapons. We welcome the fact that the United States has worked to gain new action by the UN Security Council to ensure that Iraq meets its obligation to disarm. We join others in urging Iraq to comply fully with this latest Security Council resolution....

"People of good will may differ on how to apply just war norms in particular cases, especially when events are moving rapidly and the facts are not altogether clear. Based on the facts that are known to us, we continue to find it difficult to justify the resort to war against Iraq, lacking clear and adequate evidence of an imminent attack of a grave nature. With the Holy See and bishops from the Middle East and around the world, we fear that resort to war, under present circumstances and in light of current public information, would not meet the strict

conditions in Catholic teaching for overriding the strong presumption against the use of military force...."

November 13, 2002

EPISCOPAL CHURCH U.S.A.

"The problem of Iraq admits no easy solution. However, through diplomatic and multilateral initiatives, we can both serve our common interests and seek to contain the national security threats posed by Saddam Hussein's rule of Iraq. Our great nation now has the opportunity to express leadership in the world by forging a foreign policy that seeks to reconcile and heal the world's divisions...."

"The House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church has called the Church to the costly work of waging not war but reconciliation. This means addressing the root causes of the anger toward the West and the United States in particular, and building new understandings between Jews, Muslims, and Christians—all of us the children of Abraham. The Church's governing board, the Executive Council, also voted in June to 'oppose unilateral military action against Iraq,' citing its October 2001 resolution 'to promote the eradication of terrorism through justice and reconciliation abroad.'..."

Statement by Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold. September 6, 2002

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

"As a child of war and a follower of Jesus Christ, I oppose war with Iraq.... I recognize that President Saddam Hussein poses a threat to other nations and to the people of Iraq. But I do not believe that war is the answer. Waging war to remove President Hussein would be wrong, and would prove detrimental to the interests of the United States...."

"At this point in history, we need to solve international problems through political, diplomatic and economic means, not through military force. We need to be leaders in building a better society in the world. Unfortunately, our current words and our actions are demoralizing to the world that the gun is our solution...."

"Reveries of a motherless child," by PCUSA Moderator Fahed Abu-Akel.

October 2002

EVANGELICAL

In just war theory only defensive war is defensible; and if military force is used against Saddam Hussein it will be because he has attacked his neighbors, used weapons of mass destruction against his own people, and harbored terrorists from the Al Qaeda terrorist network that attacked our nation so viciously and violently on September 11, 2001...."

"The world has been waiting for more than a decade for the Iraqi regime to fulfill its agreement to destroy all of its weapons of mass destruction, to cease producing them or the long-range missiles to deliver them in the future, and to allow thorough and rigorous inspections to verify their compliance. They have not, and will not, do so and any further delay

in forcing the regime's compliance would be reckless irresponsibility in the face of grave and growing danger...."

Letter to President Bush from Richard Land of Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Chuck Colson of Prison Fellowship, Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ, and two other evangelical leaders. October 3, 2002

"Most evangelicals regard Saddam Hussein's regime—by aiding and harboring terrorists—as having already attacked the United States and support the President's congressional resolution authorizing military action. Iraq's previous disregard for resolutions passed by the United Nations are seen as 'good faith efforts' for peace that have failed. At some point we expect that both the United States and our allies will exhaust 'all other means' for resolving this conflict peacefully."

National Association of Evangelicals, "Washington Insight." October 2002

President Bush:

JESUS CHANGED YOUR HEART. NOW LET HIM CHANGE YOUR MIND.

The NCC sponsored this full-page advertisement in the New York Times last December 4.

PRESIDENT BUSH, We beseech you to turn back from the brink of war on Iraq. Your war would violate the teachings of Jesus Christ. It would violate the tenets, prayers and entreaties of your own United Methodist Church bishops. It would ignore the pleas of hundreds of Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders. You've proclaimed the crucial role of your faith in your life, and you've said that people of faith are often "our nation's voice of conscience." Listen to our voices now.



Religious leaders from every faith urge President Bush to stop the rush to war on Iraq.

This is not a just war. We acknowledge that Saddam Hussein is a cruel tyrant, but a war on the country he rules is not a just war. It will be an unprovoked, pre-emptive attack on a nation which is

not threatening the United States. It will violate the United Nations Charter and set a dangerous precedent for the future. It will bring

death and destruction to Baghdad, a huge city filled with innocent civilians. It will take the lives of too many of our own sons and daughters. And its huge cost will be gouged out of the already unmet needs of the poor, the underfed and the under-educated in our own country.

"It is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and the Prince of Peace, would support this proposed attack."

Those are the words of the General Secretary of the United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society. Your church leaders have sought private hearings with you to express their passionate objections; they've been denied. All of us who signed this statement share their convictions. A strong faith-based revolt against war on Iraq is coming together in the first weeks of December. If Jesus Christ truly "changed your heart" as you have said, let Him change your mind.

Form with fields for Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone, Email, and a checkbox for 'I agree to be kept on mailing list...'. Includes a 'Thank you!' message and a 'TruismAgency.com' logo.

IT DEPENDS WHERE WE'RE GOING

A Response to the "Invitation to a Journey" from Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A.

By Diane Knippers and Thomas Oden

On April 6, 2002, an invitation was issued in the name of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT) to join an "expanded Christian conversation in our nation." It soon became apparent to us that many evangelicals are not yet willing to accept this "Invitation to a Journey." Following conversations with CCT leaders, we have accepted their suggestion to put our concerns in writing.

From across the spectrums of theology and denominations, Christian leaders are exploring new initiatives in ecumenism. There is a dawning realization that, after over 50 years, the conciliar movement (notably the World Council of Churches and, in the United States, the National Council of Churches) still represents only a minority of Christians. Neither of these institutions has attracted nor will attract substantial Roman Catholic or evangelical membership.

Current leaders of the NCC and WCC want to "expand the ecumenical table." Others, such as theologian Thomas Oden, are calling for a "new ecumenism." The language difference is telling. Leaders of the 20th century ecumenical movement don't begin to realize the radical reshaping of ecumenical institutions and patterns that is necessary. Critics of the conciliar movement argue that genuine progress in Christian unity will require discarding the "old table" and allowing the Holy Spirit to build something very different.

LESSONS DRAWN FROM THE FAILURES OF THE OLD ECUMENICAL TABLE

A necessary step in recognizing new models for Christian unity is an honest appraisal of the mistakes of the last 50-plus years. CCT must acknowledge these errors and draw lessons from them.

1. CHRISTIAN UNITY IS GOD'S GIFT. Perhaps the most basic error is acquiescing to a human impulse to construct ecumenical institutions rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal the unity of the Church. It isn't proper, or even possible, to judge the motives of all those involved in the conciliar movements. Clearly, many felt God's strong call in their lives. Nevertheless, one is left with the impression that too many forgot that Christian unity is God's gift of grace, made manifest in, but not created by, common institutions and activities.

2. TRUTH AND UNITY ARE INTEGRALLY RELATED. Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life." It is our mutual participation in Jesus Christ that produces unity. It is the witness of the whole church through time that protects our understanding of this Truth. A perceived evangelical failing has been a willingness to sacrifice unity for truth. A perceived liberal Protestant failing has been a willingness to sacrifice truth for unity. CCT must signal its commitment to unity in truth.

3. AN INITIAL MODEST AGENDA IS ESSENTIAL. Perhaps another basic flaw of the past 50 years has been excessive ambition. There was an enthusiasm for constructing large organizations and moving toward merging denominations into larger mega-denominations. Such mergers, however, did not produce growth, but more typically the diminution of the constituencies of the former bodies. *CCT will need to communicate clearly that the organizers have no "hidden agenda" to build a United Church of the U.S.A.*

4. OLD HIERARCHICAL MODELS MUST BE RETHOUGHT. In much 20th century ecumenism, top church bureaucrats talked with one another and assumed that the people would follow. But today's emerging forms of ecumenism are often more bottom-up. *CCT must be open to more participatory methods of meeting and communication.*

5. ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE FREED FROM THE CONTROL OF LIBERAL PROTESTANTISM. The stranglehold that the ideological and theological left has on the leadership of the historic Protestant churches has been a virus that infected the conciliar movement. The NCC and WCC have been undermined by denominations that send "representatives" who simply don't represent the broad mainstream of their own churches, nor official church teaching.

Let one illustration suffice. Several years ago, we watched the NCC board voting on the inclusion of the predominantly homosexual Metropolitan Community Churches. The entire United Methodist delegation voted in the minority—to accept the MCC. There wasn't a single UM delegate to the NCC who actually embraced his own denomination's teaching on homosexuality! Such fraudulent representation is



The apostles who established the Church found unity only in their relationship with Jesus. Could Christian unity in the 21st century be based upon anything else?

not only a disservice to United Methodism, but it also debases the ecumenical enterprise.

CCT must insist on genuine theological and ethical representation from participating bodies. The denominations must be told to send mainstream voices espousing the key theological and ethical teachings of those denominations. The ecumenical movement has already insisted on certain kinds of diversity from member churches, especially regarding gender, clerical status, and race. It can do the same regarding theology.

6. THE OLD CONCILIAR BODIES MUST GIVE WAY.

Because of the huge questions and concerns that the evangelical community has about the NCC, the NCC must be very low-profile in CCT. Assurances should be given that the NCC does not fund the CCT nor control it in any way. Symbolically, it would be most helpful for top NCC leadership to withdraw from any significant involvement in the CCT.

7. EVANGELICALS AND CATHOLICS MUST HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP.

The CCT aspires to represent the widest possible breadth of American Christendom. The Christian family in the U.S. might broadly be divided into one-third evangelical and Pentecostal, one-third Roman Catholic, and one-third members of the NCC. In stunning contrast, the April 6 CCT signers reflected NCC-related individuals at twice this level, and evangelicals/Pentecostals and Roman Catholics at half this level. CCT will have to make extraordinary efforts to attract broader involvement.

8. COMMON FAITH AND A GENUINE SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND MUST PRECEDE COMMON ACTION.

One of the most successful areas of conciliar ecumenism has been in the theological discussions of faith and order. Some of the most divisive have been attempts at common social and political witness. It is duplicitous and destructive to pretend common views that don't exist. Already, there are signs that CCT may be (perhaps even unconsciously) driven by a social and political agenda. The April 6 invitation highlights, among other items, "speaking to society with a common voice." NCC leaders have been widely quoted in the media as suggesting common work on behalf of the poor as the focus for CCT. We'll quickly grant that concern for the poor

is without question something that the vast majority of U.S. Christians have in common. What Christians do not share are theological and ideological assumptions on how best to address the problem of poverty. Evangelicals must see an acknowledgement that such common action, if even possible, will most likely be quite different from the NCC's political advocacy over the last 40 years.

9. THE NEW ECUMENISM MUST REFLECT THE INCREASINGLY NON-WESTERN ORIENTATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

The old international conciliar movement was predominantly Western. During the last few decades, these historic centers of Christendom, especially Europe and North America, have become increasingly secularized. At the same time, much of the Orthodox world has just broken out of decades of captivity and is demanding more influence in ecumenical matters. Perhaps most significantly, the epicenter of the Church has moved South to the developing world. The new ecumenism must reflect this enormous change. One priority for CCT must be to reach out to the growing semi-independent ethnic churches.

WHAT IS THE SPIRIT SAYING TO THE CHURCHES?

One way to discern a way forward in Christian unity is to look at the places where the Holy Spirit is already creating unity. Diane Knippers was privileged to attend a June 2002 meeting of an international effort parallel to CCT—a proposed Global Christian Forum. It became clear during that meeting that unity is often born in persecution. Places where Christians were in the minority (India or Egypt) appeared ahead of the rest of us. A Coptic bishop bluntly remarked: "World-wide persecution is a breakthrough for Christian unity. When I hear about theological differences, I am not sympathetic. But when I hear about persecution—Presbyterian or evangelical or whatever—I am sympathetic."

If this observation is true, what does that say to the Church in the United States? Perhaps we are simply too comfortable to be unified. Perhaps we will not enjoy a larger measure of unity until we face persecution. Perhaps we might find greater unity in service to the suffering church. Perhaps we must continue to look for other ways in which the Holy Spirit is revealing the unity that is God's gift.

CHURCH NEWS

THE NEXT FRONTIER IN SEXUAL 'LIBERATION'?

The story from the official Unitarian news service heralded a new sexual minority "emerging from the closet, hoping to take their place beside the divorced, the intentionally single, gays and lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people as fully accepted people." Unitarian Universalists for Polyamory Awareness (UUPA) has been formed to advocate "the philosophy and practice of loving or relating intimately to more than one other person at a time with honesty and integrity."

The article described a well-attended UUPA workshop at the June 2002 Unitarian General Assembly. The polyamorists did not want to be called "swingers," although they saw nothing wrong with the practice. "Swinging is a time-honored style of nonmonogamy which emphasizes extramarital sex for primarily recreational and social purposes," a UUPA publication explains. "Some polyamorists do enjoy such activities, but most of us seem to focus on having enduring, intimate, romantic and passionate relationships with our multiple partners. Quite often we think of our collections of lovers as families...."

The polyamorists decried the "prejudice and oppression" of those who labeled them as "adulterers," the news service said. But they were confident that their denomination (and eventually others) would extend "the same kind of affirmation and acceptance that Unitarian Universalism has granted to many others who sought liberation from the strictures of the societal ideal of one man marrying one woman until death do them part, forsaking all others."

NCC FINANCIAL REPORTS CONTRADICT HAPPY TALK

Speaking to the National Council of Churches General Assembly in November 2002, NCC General Secretary Robert Edgar proclaimed: "Today, the financial cloud that hung over the council has been cleared away. Our

audited financials for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2002, report a small operating surplus, an increase in overall assets of \$99,000, and a balance sheet that is without reportable conditions."

But a closer look at the NCC's audit undercut the general secretary's happy talk. The NCC's financial lifeline, contributions from member denominations, is still faltering—down from \$2.9 million in 2001 to \$2.4 million in 2002. Edgar's claimed surplus appeared to be based upon a comparison of total assets. But the NCC's net assets showed a decline of almost \$800,000 from 2001 to 2002. This continued the trend of 2001, when the council ran a deficit of over \$2 million.

Chronic deficits during the 1990s reduced the NCC's reserves from \$24 million in 1994 to \$3 million in 1999. Now those reserves stand at a little over

\$1.5 million. Unrestricted net assets are barely over \$500,000. The council's payroll has fallen from 102 employees to 36 over the past two years.

The auditors at Ernst & Young expressed concern that "the council is dependent upon two member communions [out of 36] to provide approximately 58 percent of the support from member communions." Those two big benefactors are the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Methodist Church.

EVANGELICAL, CATHOLIC FATHERS MORE INVOLVED WITH CHILDREN

A recent study published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* concluded that "evangelical Protestant and Catholic fathers are, on average, more involved with their children than fathers who have no religious affiliation." The author, University of Virginia sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox, found that the evangelicals and Catholics also surpassed their oldline Protestant counterparts in hands-on parenting. And among the oldline fathers, the more conservative ones exceeded the more liberal ones.

Wilcox measured parental involvement by surveying a sample of 1,000 fathers on how much time they spent in one-on-one activities with their children, how often they had dinner with the whole family, and how many hours they volunteered for group activities involving their children.

Wilcox noted that his results contradict the stereotype of conservative Christian men as stern authoritarians who dismiss childrearing as "women's work." Instead the results fit with other studies suggesting that conservative Protestants, in particular, "place a great deal of emphasis on men's roles as husbands and fathers." Wilcox explained to columnist Terry Mattingly: "I think what we are seeing is evidence that there are lots of evangelical and Catholic fathers who are truly changing their lives to try to spend more time with their children. The evidence is that they are doing this because they believe God wants them to." f



A new study shows that each year the average evangelical father has dinner with his children 27 times more often than the average unchurched father.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

COLOMBIAN CHURCHES
IN CROSSFIRE

Colombia's churches are caught in the crossfire as that nation's multi-sided civil war intensifies. A report from Ricardo Esquivia, head of the Human Rights and Peace Commission of the Evangelical Council of Colombian Churches, lists 26 Protestant leaders killed in recent years.

For example, Pastor Aristos Porras Arango was assassinated last May 5 while teaching a Sunday school class in the village of Villa Madeira in Cordoba province. He was gunned down by presumed members of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), a paramilitary group fighting against the country's two Marxist guerrilla movements.

The next day, Pastor Fredy Antonio Urieta was murdered in the town of Las Piedras in Sucre province. Presumed militants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the larger of the Marxist groups, shot Urieta as he was leading a prayer vigil.

Esquivia explained the motivation: "They [the paramilitaries and guerrillas] consider them [pastors] to be enemies because someone has accused them of something, an informant mentioned their name, someone from 'the other side' changed alliances and says they are aligned with 'the other side.'"

Colombia's dominant Roman Catholic Church has also suffered losses in the conflict between the government, the AUC, the FARC, and the Army of National Liberation (ELN). The Archbishop of Cali, Isaias Duarte Cancino, was assassinated last March.

CONGO MEDICAL MISSION
COMPOUND SACKED

A major Christian medical compound in the northeast corner of the Democratic Republic of Congo lies in ruins after inter-tribal massacres that have killed thousands. The incident was reported last September by Ecumenical News International on the basis of



Mourners for the assassinated Archbishop of Cali, Isaias Duarte Cancino.

eyewitness accounts from refugees who escaped the medical compound in Nyankunde. The party of 700 doctors, nurses, and patients crossed 100 miles of savannah and dense forest to reach the town of Oicha, losing not one person on the way.

The refugees said that 2,000 people remained in Nyankunde, where "nothing at all is left" of the compound where at least eight mission agencies worked. The chaplain at the Evangelical Medical Center, Salomon Isereve, was reported tortured and burned alive. Henri Basimake, AIDS coordinator for the Anglican province of Congo, was shot.

WCC RETRENCHES

Faced with a predicted deficit of \$4.3 million, the World Council of Churches is slashing its 2003 budget from \$32 million to \$27 million. The cuts, announced last November, will reduce the council's staff from 165 to 141 full-time posts. The WCC Central Committee approved contingency plans

to borrow money against the WCC building in Geneva.


At the Central Committee meeting last August, a top financial official described the council as being in a "financially unsustainable position." A \$3.9 million deficit in 2001 had exhausted the WCC's general reserves. Contributions had been dropping for several years, from \$34 million in 1999 to a projected \$28 million in 2003.

WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser lamented that the "social and justice ministries of the ecumenical movement have lost their appeal for the young," according to a WCC press release. The press release also cited Raiser's regret that "conservative elements within member churches have always shunned the movement." The general secretary, who will retire in 2003, called for the creation of "a new ecumenical configuration."

PAKISTANI CHRISTIANS TARGETED

On Christmas Day 2002, assailants threw a hand grenade into a church service in the village of Chianwali near Lahore. Three girls—aged 6, 10, and 15—were killed, and 16 other worshippers were injured. This attack was the latest in a terrorist rampage that has left Pakistani Christians feeling vulnerable.

In October, armed men burst into the offices of a Christian charity in Karachi, gagged and bound the workers, and shot eight of them in the head. On August 9, three men lobbed hand grenades at worshippers leaving a chapel service at the Presbyterian hospital in Taxila, killing four nurses. Four days earlier, six Pakistanis died when masked gunmen opened fire at a Christian school in Murree.

Few arrests have been made in these cases. Victor Azariah, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Pakistan, explained the source of the hatred: "Christians are seen by them [radical Islamist groups] as agents of Western nations and so they are targeting us." 

FROM THE PEWS

A STONE THROWN FAR

By Deborah Fikes

I was initially hesitant to get involved with this topic of persecution. It was really my husband, Stan, who had a burden for the persecuted church. He received various newsletters and would write letters to U.S. congressmen and leaders in other countries on behalf of the persecuted in places like Sudan. I remember seeing these newsletters and avoiding reading them because the accounts of suffering greatly disturbed me.

I think this is a common response from Christians in the United States. We feel helpless to do anything significant to help these persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. So we just avoid the issue, which is exactly what our enemy wants us to do. Our lack of response not only wounds the Body of Christ, but we also deprive ourselves of a tremendous blessing by not getting involved with our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.

As I learned more about the persecuted church, I realized that God calls us to be faithful. Just as David was faithful to take action when he encountered Goliath, we are to take action with the resources we have been given and trust God to do the miraculous. I recall that when I first started being open to my own involvement with the persecuted church, I would see myself as a little "stone" in the slingshot of David and asked God to empower me and "throw me far and wide."

I was already involved with a group called BASIC Ministries that was organized by some individuals in Midland, Texas, to facilitate local ministries. (BASIC is an acronym for "Brothers and Sisters in Christ.") I suggested that they host a speaker from Voice of the Martyrs, and this is how I became aware of the crisis in Sudan. Through a series of events, I approached our community's ministerial alliance and asked them to help us plan a community-wide obser-

vance of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. BASIC Ministries International evolved as a result of my volunteering to help coordinate the Day of Prayer.

As I started making myself available to God in this area, I realized that instead of being saddened about the stories of persecution, I began being filled with joy to see how spiritually rich the persecuted church is. I saw how the blood of the martyrs really is the seed of the church, as is evident in the tremendous spiritual growth in those areas that suffer the greatest persecution.

This realization has helped me see

... I realized that instead of being saddened about the stories of persecution, I began being filled with joy to see how spiritually rich the persecuted church is.

how much spiritual poverty and lack of unity there is in the Body of Christ in the United States and how much we can ben-



efit from uniting and standing with our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ who do not have the time or energy to waste on divisive, peripheral issues. I find myself wondering what changes we would see in the Body of Christ here in the West if overnight we lost our religious freedoms. I believe that much of our time and financial resources would become more focused on what Jesus would have us doing with our precious time here on earth before He returns for us.

Interest from our Midland Day of Prayer event and our advocacy group Midland Alliance for a New Sudan (MANS) has continued. We were partnered with a huge Christian concert, "Rock the Desert," in August to build a model Sudanese village at the concert site. The village helped us tell stories of some of the "lost boys" of Sudan whom we brought to the concert to put a "face" on this persecution.

BASIC Ministries International and MANS have also begun a partnership with Bishop Elias Taban and his evangelistic team in southern Sudan, taking the eternal hope of the Gospel to the Sudanese who have suffered horribly. We have established Slingshot Ministries to provide opportunities for Christian schools and home schooling families to participate in creative projects to help the persecuted church.

Working with Faith McDonnell and IRD's Church Alliance for a New Sudan has been a tremendous blessing to me and the community of Midland. f

Deborah Fikes, a member of First Baptist Church of Midland, TX, is Director of BASIC Ministries International. The BASIC website is at www.basicministries.info.

Deborah Fikes (middle) with Faith McDonnell of IRD (left) as President Bush signs the Sudan Peace Act.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

THE ROAD TO BALI: TERRORISM GROWS IN INDONESIA

By Faith J.H. McDonnell

Roy Pontoh was just fifteen years old when his life was ripped from him in a terrorist attack in Indonesia. But Roy was not among those killed in the bombing of Bali's nightclub district in October 2002. He was martyred in January 1999, when a mob of Islamic extremists turned a joyful Bible camp on the island of Ambon into a scene of slaughter. When the Indonesian teenager refused to renounce his faith in Jesus Christ, one of his attackers sliced open his abdomen with a sword.

Murders such as Roy's have been repeated thousands of times across eastern Indonesia since 1998, and they continue to take place today. In August the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance reported that a band of Muslim militiamen in black ninja uniforms, traveling in speedboats, attacked the coastal village of Matak in Central Sulawesi. Seven people were shot. The Pentecostal and Presbyterian churches and 27 homes were burned to the ground.

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, had once been a model of tolerance, where Muslims and Christians lived together in peace. But religious extremists took advantage of the downfall of the Suharto military dictatorship to attempt to Islamicize by force the Christian regions of Indonesia.

Between 1999 and 2001 sectarian violence, largely attributable to the 15,000 member Java-based militia *Laskar Jihad*, claimed the lives of at least 9,000 Christians and Muslims in Maluku and left 500,000 people as refugees. This terrorist group is led by Jaffar Umar Thalib, who fought alongside Osama bin Laden against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Its tactics include forced conversions to Islam under threat of torture or death. Male "converts" are then forced to undergo circumcision in many instances. Christians that resist this pressure are forced to relocate en masse.

In June 2000, the village of Duma was targeted by *Laskar Jihad* because it

Jaffar Umar Thalib, head of the Laskar Jihad militia, was released in January after being acquitted of charges of inciting violence against Indonesian Christians.



was regarded as the birthplace of Protestantism on the island of Halmahera. Ian Freestone, the Australian director of International Friends of Compassion, reported that "as their houses were being burned to the ground, the villagers gathered for protection in the local church. The men of the village sought to defend their wives and children from the inevitable." Freestone said that 194 people were massacred, while others were kidnapped and forced to become Muslims. "Nothing was left standing. Even the graves of the first Christian missionaries were dug up and their remains thrown into the lake."

Local police and even the Indonesian military have been unable or unwilling to stop the advance of *Laskar Jihad*. In October 2001 the region of Central Sulawesi was attacked. Over 21 villages were destroyed by 7000 *Laskar Jihad* militiamen with foreign-supplied machine guns, rocket launchers, bombs, and even bulldozers.

Writing in the *New York Post*, Paul Marshall, author of *Their Blood Cries Out*, observed that *Laskar Jihad's* attacks have not been an object of U.S. attention. As long as the atrocities affected only Indonesian Christians and not westerners, no connection was perceived

to the global war against terrorism. Ian Freestone protested: "For the last three years, media outlets and many governments around the world have dismissed Indonesia's issues as 'domestic.' There was a complete failing to see our international responsibility whilst all the time massacres were continuing to take place." But the terrorism in Indonesia finally reached the attention of the world with the bombing in Bali. Grieving Australians who lost nearly 100 countrymen declared that October 12, 2002, was their September 11.

Perhaps this attack in Bali will signal a turning point. Perhaps the Indonesian government and its allies will start to take firm, concerted actions against the Islamist terrorists. A few days after the attack, *Laskar Jihad* announced that it was disbanding. On October 18, Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri instituted emergency retroactive measures against religious militants.

It remains to be seen what effect these declarations in Jakarta will have in stemming the violence on other islands. Whatever else happens, it is certain that the Indonesian Christians who have been left homeless and traumatized need the help and prayers of the worldwide community, particularly their fellow Christians. **f**

MAKING THEMSELVES IRRELEVANT NCC and WCC Ponder September 11

By Steve Remppe

Among all the meetings that occurred last August 5-6 in Washington, DC, the gathering of ecumenical leaders to examine international implications of the September 11 bombings might well have been the single most irrelevant. The conference featured 40 church leaders from around the world who represented virtually no one, espousing ideas and opinions with which few would agree.

The conference title, "Beyond September 11: Implications for U.S. Churches and the World," offered the possibility that vital issues would be debated. A quick glance at the list of participants, however, dashed any hope of meaningful dialogue. The conference—co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCC), and Church World Service (CWS)—aspired to "provide a space for [U.S.] churches to discern together what the events following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. mean for the United States and the world.

Yet the two largest denominations in the United States, the Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention (combined membership over 75 million), were not represented. By comparison, the peace churches were amply represented, with seven participants from Mennonite, Quaker, or Brethren constituencies. These churches, with a combined membership around 500,000, constituted a full quarter of the U.S. church delegation.

Having such a large contingent of pacifists would not necessarily preclude meaningful dialogue. But this possibility was eliminated when the program organizers chose the rest of the conference attendees from the usual cast of characters that attend WCC and NCC affairs—oldline church officials from the leftmost fringes of their respective theological traditions. Almost all the international

guests were liberation theology types that never missed an opportunity to blame America. Each had his or her own axe to grind against U.S. policy—be it the American embargo against Cuba, the U.S. military presence in Puerto Rico and the Philippines, or the perceived U.S. bias against the Palestinians.

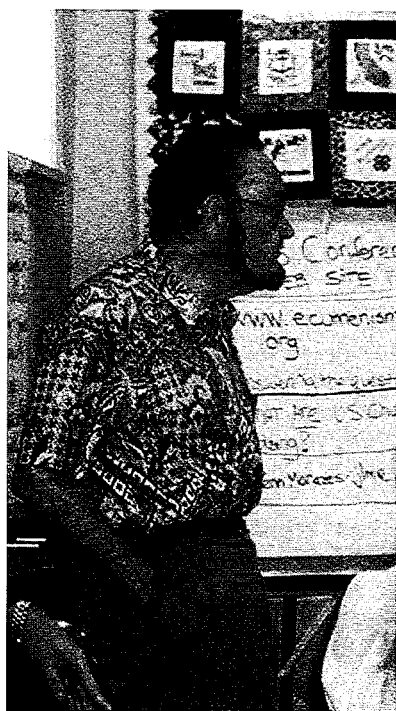
It should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the WCC and NCC that this gathering would devolve into a rant against President Bush and his administration. What was surprising was the earnestness with which these people felt they represented American Christianity. Despite a warning from Greek Orthodox representative Anne Glynn-Mackoul that presuming to speak for all Christians in the United States would be "arrogant," the assembly plunged ahead, seeking to make a "prophetic" statement.

The resulting manifesto declared: "Peaceful relations among nations and peoples are achieved through multilateral decision-making, not by the unilateral economic and military actions of one country. The current US-led 'war on terrorism' undermines these principles and threatens genuine peace and justice." The WCC/NCC conferees insisted categorically, "Security does not come from military actions." If these statements sound as if they were written by pacifists, there are solid grounds for that suspicion.

"I HEAR HITLER"

The common theme running through the two-day session was a universal contempt for U.S. foreign policy in general, and President Bush in particular. One leader after another accused the United States of acting "unilaterally" in the war on terrorism. John Langmore from the International Labor Organization opined that America "had become the principal subverter of international order." Mary Lord of the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) suggested that the United States needed to repent of its desire to become "a new Rome." And Chris Hobgood of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) alleged that profits were driving the American response to September 11, if not the actual events that occurred on that day.

The most incendiary comments, however, came from Dale Brown of the Church of the Brethren. Brown, a pacifist, told the attendees that he belonged to the Bonhoeffer Society, a group dedicated to the life and teachings of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.



Brethren official Dale Brown said that George W. Bush "sounds like Hitler."

By itself, this was a curious statement. Bonhoeffer was an active participant in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler—not exactly the kind of activity one would expect a pacifist to approve.

But Brown went further. He declared his admiration for the Confessing Church movement in Germany—a group of German clergy (including Bonhoeffer) that opposed the Nazis—and expressed his hope that such a movement might be initiated now to stand against current U.S. foreign policy. He said that while the original Confessing Church identified itself with the suffering of the Jews, perhaps the new one should identify with the Palestinians now suffering at the hands of the Jews.

Brown then made explicit the analogy that he had previously implied: “Sometimes, when I hear Bush, he sounds like Hitler.”

Some members of the consultation attempted to distance themselves from Brown’s remarks. “I cannot equate George W. Bush with Hitler,” said Dr. Janice Love of the United Methodist Church. Love then added, “I have to try very hard not to allow thoughts like that into my head.”

BAYONETS IN AIRPORTS?

It would have been difficult for the international guests to be more anti-American than the Americans themselves. But they vented their share of grievances. Abla Nasir of the YWCA in Palestine faulted President Bush for drawing distinctions between “good” and “evil” forces in the world. This attitude, she charged, encouraged the Israeli government to launch a war against the Palestinian people while the Bush administration turned a blind eye. She attributed the suicide bombings of Israeli civilians to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s policies, without acknowledging any responsibility of the Palestinian Authority or other Palestinian groups.

The Rev. Eunice Santana, a Disciples of Christ minister in Puerto Rico, lamented a supposed increase in U.S. militarism. She complained about the military presence in civilian airports, warning that Americans were intimidated by the soldiers “armed with bayonets.” Not only did Santana fail to grasp the difference between a rifle and a bayonet, but she also did not seem to understand that the vast majority of Americans appreciate the increased security in airports.

Carmencita Karagdag, an emissary from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, expressed her concern that the United States was using the war on terrorism to expand its economic influence. She claimed

that the United States intended to turn the Philippines into a “laboratory for violence” and a “bulwark” for U.S. foreign policy. While acknowledging that Catholic Church leaders (who represent nearly 85 percent of the Filipino population) support the presence of American troops assisting the Filipino army against radical Muslim guerrillas, Karagdag asserted that the U.S. soldiers violated Philippine sovereignty.

TWO MENNONITES IN A BACK ROOM

When the time came to produce a statement from the conference, there was considerable debate. Participants roundly rejected the initial document submitted by a drafting committee as insufficiently “prophetic.” Barbara Gerlach of the United Church of Christ characterized it as a “laundry list” of issues without a clear focus. She also objected to the references to “God’s only Son” and “in Christ” as being too exclusive.

Even Mary Lord, who headed the drafting committee, agreed with the need for a more “prophetic” statement, saying that the “group had moved” since the draft had been completed. It was suggested that a couple of volunteers retire to a second room where they could draft a shorter, harder-hitting document. Two of the Mennonite representatives volunteered their services and left to begin reconstruction of the document. (They were later joined by two other conference participants).

Perhaps this development was only fitting. In a gathering claiming to speak on behalf of all U.S. Christians regarding the war on terrorism, the final statement was the product of a handful of pacifists sequestered in a back room. It would be hard to imagine a less representative voice for American Christians, or a clearer illustration of how remote the two church councils had become from their ostensible constituencies.

Canon Brian Grieves, director of Peace and Justice Ministries for the Episcopal Church, commented: “Sometimes prophetic witnesses are not heard. At the end of the day, a prophetic witness is needed.” Grieves was half right. It was doubtful that many Christians would know about, let alone agree with, this NCC/WCC manifesto. The necessity for the document, however, was highly questionable.

There were concerns among a few participants that the final statement would not be palatable to a wider audience. In response, Catherine Gordon of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) aptly summarized the entire conference by saying, “We cannot let our prophetic voice be silenced by tolerance.” **f**

In a gathering claiming to speak on behalf of all U.S. Christians regarding the war on terrorism, the final statement was the product of a handful of pacifists sequestered in a back room.

RECLAIMING REASON FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH

By Erik Nelson

As Christians addressing public policy issues, we often find ourselves inhibited from publicly touching upon the arguments that move us most powerfully. For example, our opposition to euthanasia may spring most profoundly from Scriptures and traditional Church teachings declaring that all life belongs ultimately to the God who gave it. Our culture, however, has a taboo against allowing such statements of faith to enter into public policy debates. So our arguments based in faith are often sidelined, and we are forced to argue pragmatically. For many Christians, this means that we argue poorly. But we need not be so handicapped.

This is the message that we drew from IRD staff discussions of the recent book by IRD board member Robert George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies*. The book takes a scholarly tour through the burning issues of the day—from abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and stem cell research to sex, marriage, and family life. Despite the fact that such issues are usually framed with orthodox Christians and Jews on one side and secular liberals on the other, George explains that the battles are not between the forces of “faith” and “reason.”

Unlike many who have taken up arms in the culture wars, George is perfectly capable of fighting not only on the theological front, but also on the “enemy” territory of science and reason. What becomes clear in George’s book is that the ground of science and reason is not nearly so hostile to religious believers as our culture would have us think. In fact, the situation is quite the opposite. Science and reason may provide new tactical advantages Christians have yet to comprehend.

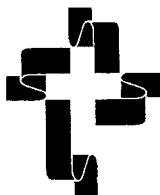
And this is where the book’s true usefulness is found. George’s treatments of particular issues in American public life are brilliant and thought-provoking. But at the heart of the book is a desire to reclaim the field of reason and science for people of faith. Far too often orthodox religious believers allow the arguments to be framed as “faith” vs. “reason,” thus conceding a monopoly upon rationality to their opponents. George counters that secular arguments for abortion, homosexuality, and stem cell research are not only weak on theological grounds, they are also inferior rationally.

Taking up the rational defense of our most cherished beliefs is not a task with which many Christians are comfortable.

These are skills that have atrophied from long years of disuse. But as George demonstrates, the intellectual resources of the Christian tradition are formidable. He maneuvers with skill through the more difficult moral questions our cultural and political institutions face, illuminating the deepest of moral convictions with the tools of reason.

For those of us who have taken up the call of public witness to our culture and politics, George’s book is a refreshing confidence-builder. He reminds us of the unity of truth—that though reason and faith are two different ways of knowing, that they are linked and even overlapping. George quotes the opening sentence from Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio*: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.” For too long we have been trying to fly with one wing. As Christians we have a deep philosophical tradition in addition to our faith. Through the act of engagement of issues of faith with reason, George gives us a glimpse of the heights to which we can soar when faith and reason are reunited.

It is time we rose to the challenge. f



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