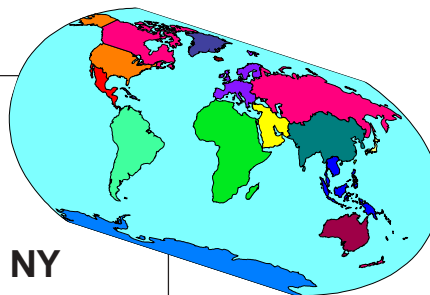


## **“Reformed and reforming” means challenging the idols**

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Global Mission and Justice  
September 9 - 11, 2005, Stony Point, NY  
See page 28 for details!**



## The President's Corner

# A new perspective from the other side of the globe

by Ken Smith

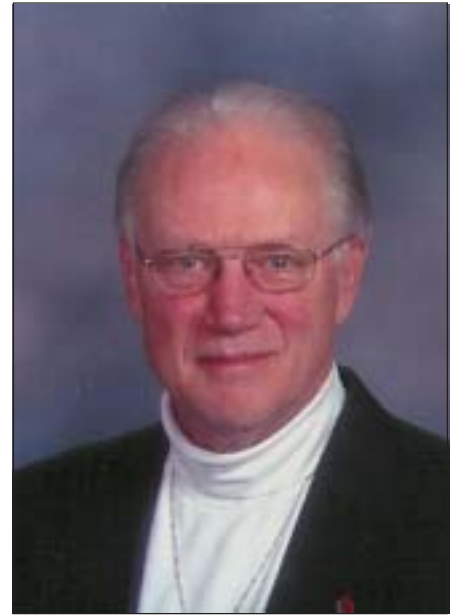
Having recently returned from a three week Elderhostel in New Zealand, I'm not inclined to write a long column but thought a few reflections on being in another culture might be interesting. First of all, travel to the other half of the globe clearly identifies one as a person of privilege; something to keep in mind as I make my observations.

New Zealand was the last major land mass on the globe to be settled by human beings. In fact, there were not even any mammals in New Zealand, except for a couple of species of bats, until human beings from Polynesia arrived about 1000 AD, with permanent settlement beginning about 1200. Permanent European settlement began in the early 1800s. Now those of European descent make up about 70% of the population. One could argue that there are no indigenous peoples in New Zealand, only waves of immigrants. This question is not academic as New Zealand works to preserve Maori culture — Maori being the name that New Zealanders of Polynesian descent have adopted for themselves. Many New Zealanders of European descent feel that the efforts to preserve Maori culture have gone too far. Sound familiar?

New Zealand has only national and local government; there is no state or provincial government — something that I found it difficult to get my mind around, after being indoctrinated with "states' rights." The national government is clearly in charge, dealing with "local" issues like education and with the authority to adjust municipal boundaries. Without states, there is only a

House of Representatives, made up of 120 members. Approximately half of these members are elected from districts with the other half coming from political party lists. These list candidates balance the party preferences of the electorate, which votes separately for the party and their representative. Any political party with 5% of the vote or an elected seat in the House of Representatives is guaranteed proportional representation.

A couple other tidbits about New Zealand government history: Women gained the right to vote in 1892; New Zealand was the first country where this happened. Most voting in the House of Representatives is by party, the party leader casting the party's vote on the issue as a block. However, there are also so-called conscience votes on which representatives vote their own conscience. One such conscience vote was on whether to grant legal recognition to civil unions between non-married couples, including same sex couples. This passed approximately 65-55. 



Ken Smith

### Are you on our Witherspoon members e-list?

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Please send your current e-mail address to [douging2@aol.com](mailto:douging2@aol.com)

And add a note saying you want to be included on the Witherspoon Members e-list. Don't get left out!

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The Editor's Spot

## Today's Big Issue: Me or We?

by Doug King

Okay, that's not good grammar. But does "I or We" sound as pleasantly poetical as my mixing of cases? And one of the privileges of editing this rag is that I get to decide which rules are enforced and which are broken, when and by whom. And now it's my turn!

Looking through this issue of *Network News*, I'm struck by a basic thread running through many of the essays, and through the news that lies behind them. Whether we consider the U.S. occupation of Iraq (shaky though it may be), or our government's threats to the well-being of other nations, or the countless ways in which the "corporatocracy" (see p. 26) is controlling more and more of life (and even the water – see p. 27) around the world for the single-minded pursuit of profit and power, our society's idolatry of the individual and of wealth seems to gain power by the day.

The current debate over Social Security shines an even harsher light on the tension between self and community, as people are urged with all the force of the White House to put self-interest about the common weal – the well-being of *all* the people.

It's high time for Christians of a liberal persuasion to raise their voices and name our corporate condition for what it is: Idolatry. The worship of self over God; loyalty to Nation over Humanity; seeking profit over justice – that's what our tradition calls idolatry.

Most of the people who have contributed to this issue have (providentially?) joined in calling our problem what it is: idolatry. A central tenet of our Reformed heritage is precisely the call to resist the blandishments of the idols of our time, and to press in every way to

break down those lifeless statues and free our people for the fullness of life that God intends. And in this new age of globalization, "our people" include the people of the whole world.

Our president calls for freedom (as he defines it) and promises to impose it on anyone who stands in his way. But the God of the Hebrew people didn't work that way to set *them* free. God didn't drive them out of Egypt, but opened the way for them to leave. To be sure, that process of opening the way was pretty hard on the Egyptians, and Moses' folks were not too eager to grasp the gift of freedom.

Whatever else that event of liberation teaches us, it reminds us that the world is messy. That doesn't justify the messiness that we create for ourselves, but remembering the lesson may protect us from thinking that if we just had enough power, we could do things really right.

While this is a time for prophetic denunciations, let's remember too some of the good news of this dark season: The New Zealand House of Representatives (they somehow manage with a one-house legislature – but then, their country isn't as big as ours!) has voted by about 65 to 55 to grant legal recognition to civil unions between non-married couples, including same sex couples. (See page 2.)

And the Presbytery of Milwaukee voted last week by 104 to 20 to approve Eily Marlow for ordination, in full awareness that she is lesbian. There's more about this good news on page 15.

Continued on page 24

### "Let Justice roll down"

#### The Witherspoon Society mission

We are a network of concerned Presbyterians responding to God's call to let justice roll down, and to work for healing in a wounded world.

Our mission is:

- To listen and learn from those who have been silenced as we seek solidarity with them;
- To nurture the prophetic voice of the church;
- To equip Presbyterians for faithful participation in the church and world;
- To challenge unjust relationships of power;
- To advocate for peace, justice, the integrity of creation, and the full inclusion of all God's people in church and society.

We seek to revitalize the church's proclamation and action, informed by the whole gospel, and living into the promise of God's reign.

Revised by action of the Witherspoon Society Executive Committee,  
October 1, 2004

# CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN AN AGE OF TERROR

Peter C. Hodgson

## Part I: A Theological Critique of the War on Terror

This essay is also on the Web at [http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/theology\\_of\\_war\\_on\\_terror.htm](http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/theology_of_war_on_terror.htm)

Part II of this essay, "Theological Virtues in an Age of Terror," will be published in the next issue of Network News; it is now on our web site at [http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/theol\\_of\\_war\\_on\\_terror\\_2.htm](http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/theol_of_war_on_terror_2.htm)

### The New Millennium: Not What We Expected

The new millennium began with high expectations. The Cold War had ended, the United States was the world's only remaining superpower, and Americans were experiencing an unprecedented boom of prosperity fueled by new technologies and rising stock values. The chief worry, as I recall, in the winter of 1999-2000 was the Y2K computer problem, which never materialized. Danger signs were on the horizon but mostly ignored. My own agenda for the first years of the new millennium focused on challenges posed by ecological and cosmological awareness, the struggle for justice, and cultural and religious pluralism. The problem of terrorism was not on my radar screen.

All that changed dramatically on September 11, 2001. Before we knew it, the Cold War had been replaced by a Holy War – not only a holy war directed against us by Osama bin Laden and his Islamic jihad, but also, as it turns out, a holy war in response. It is called the war on terror. Despite President Bush's insistence that the U.S. is not waging war on Islam, there are indications to the contrary. One of his relatives is quoted as saying that the President sees the war on terror "as a religious war." "He doesn't have a politically correct view of this war. His view of it is that they are trying to kill the Christians. And we the Christians will strike back with more force and more ferocity than they will ever know."

Many excellent books and articles have been published since 9/11 on terrorism, the war on terror, and the cultural conflict between the Arabic and Western worlds by political analysts and advisers, sociologists, psychologists, and historians. Not much has been heard from theologians. The religious voice that has been heard has come from conservatives and evangelicals in support of the war policies. The mainstream academic and church theologians have been mostly silent. A prophetic public theology such as that represented by Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr and Paul Tillich during and after the Second World War, or by Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement, is not to be found today. It is for this reason that I decided to speak out.

### The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror

The first thing to note is that "violent ideas and images are not the monopoly of any single religion. Virtually every major religious tradition – Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist –

has served as a resource for violent actors." Mark Juergensmeyer wrote these words in a book called *Terror in the Mind of God*, and he goes on to remark that acts of religious terrorism are "symbolic statements aimed at providing a sense of empowerment to desperate communities."

These are words worth pondering as we reflect on Islam, which is the religion that provides legitimation for the terrorism that is mostly threatening us today. Bernard Lewis, a distinguished Mideast scholar, recently published *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. Modern and postmodern Islam is certainly in a state of crisis for a complex set of cultural, historical, and religious reasons. Lewis remarks that Islam as such is not an enemy of the West, but a growing number of Muslims are hostile and dangerous, and have come to see the United States as an irreconcilable enemy of Islam. They have taken up the idea, which is found not only in the Qur'an but also in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament (and elsewhere in antiquity), that God has enemies and needs human help to identify and dispose of them. This is the idea that lies behind the doctrine of holy war or jihad. Strictly, "jihad" means "struggle" – not only the struggle to do God's will but also to spread Islam and defend it from attack. Although jihad is not supposed to include aggressive warfare, it has come to mean just that for many Muslims. But restrictions apply that are rather similar to the just war theory of Western politics. Lewis remarks that "at no point do the basic texts of Islam enjoin terrorism and murder. At no point . . . do they even consider the random slaughter of uninvolved bystanders."

The problem is that the idea of holy war can slip over rather easily into a legitimation of unholy terror on the part of Muslim extremists and fundamentalists. Unfortunately fundamentalism has carried the day with the collapse of efforts to reform Islam politically, socially, and intellectually in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Obviously most Muslims are not terrorists, but they lack the resources or the will to refute the terrorist distortions of Islamic theology and law. The West bears significant responsibility for this situation, as Rashid Khalidi points out in his recently published *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*. Western imperialism in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries brought a humiliating end to the great medieval and early modern Islamic civilization that challenged Europe until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Despite determined resistance, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century almost the entire Muslim

world had been incorporated into the four European empires of Britain, France, Russia, and the Netherlands. With the collapse of these empires, the Middle East was left in a condition of poverty and tyranny. Devastating statistics show how far the Muslim countries have slipped behind not only the West but the Asian rim socioeconomically. With the failure of political reform and earlier democratic experiments, the Arab world has (with the exception of Turkey) been dominated by corrupt tyrannies. A high birth rate has produced a growing population of unemployed, uneducated, and frustrated young men and women – desperate communities seeking empowerment.

### The American Empire: The Only Remaining Superpower

After the European powers abandoned their colonies and the Soviet empire collapsed, the United States became the dominant power in the world, “the only remaining superpower.” In the 1990s the New American Century Foundation called for a Pax Americana, a global economic and military empire modeled on Roman and British imperialism that would focus on the Middle East. The ideology of empire is fairly simple, says theologian John Cobb: “It expresses the desire to add to one’s wealth and to dominate over others. . . . The ideology assumes that if one’s group is able to assert its will over others, then it is superior to them and has the right to exploit them.” In other words, might makes right. History shows that empires go through stages of innocence, consolidation, over-extension, and collapse. Ultimately they all collapse.

The United States until recently has been in the stage of innocence and consolidation. Reinhold Niebuhr in his now-classic book, *The Irony of American History*, published in 1952 at the height of the Cold War, pointed out that the American delusion of innocence, the belief that we are pursuing noble and divinely-sanctioned purposes, has blinded us to the temptations of power. Absolute power has been treated not as absolute corruption or even temptation but as blessing. Messianic idealism sabotages the development of political wisdom. Such idealism suffuses the language of President Bush, even as a more cynical use of power undergirds his actions. In a prophetic passage, Niebuhr warned that our belief in the possibility of mastering the forces of history “could tempt us to lose patience with the tortuous course of history. . . . We might be tempted to bring the whole of modern history to a tragic conclusion by one final and mighty effort to overcome its frustrations. The political term for such an effort is ‘preventive war.’ It is not an immediate temptation; but it could become so in the next decade or two. A democracy can not of course, engage in an explicit preventive war.”

### The Doctrine of Preemption: Imperial Arrogance

But we have. The doctrine of preemption, used to justify the invasion of Iraq, is preventive war. With it we have crossed a

fateful Rubicon and moved into the stage of imperial over-extension and arrogance. We have assumed that a superpower does not need approval or support from the community of nations for its actions: we decide what is right because our knowledge and our might make it so. A senior CIA official describes it as “imperial hubris.” Such hubris justifies the use of deception for its legitimation: Iraq had no connection with terrorist attacks on the U.S. and no weapons of mass destruction; the fall-back rationale, that we are liberating an oppressed people, has been undercut by the brutality and consequences of war. The real reason for the invasion was principally to demonstrate American power and command of world events, and Iraq was chosen as a target because it was relatively weak and defenseless (as compared with Iran or North Korea). Another reason was purely political: Karl Rove told Republicans in Congress that war with Iraq “will be good for us politically,” and Bush’s campaign was certainly based on that premise. Control of the world’s second largest oil reserves, the promotion of market capitalism, and the establishment of a permanent military presence in the region also played a role.

We must ask, What gives the United States a unilateral right to impose a system of government on another nation? It is a presumptuous illusion to suppose that democracy can be imposed by force, and that the world can be remade in the image of America. A century of experience shows the enormous difficulty of creating democracy in the Middle East. It can be accomplished only in gradual stages and by drawing upon resources within the

Islamic/Arabic heritage, which means that it will have a different character than the American version. The conditions of possibility for democracy must be nurtured: education, economic stability, political leadership, religious support.

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In addition, of course, is the folly of invading an Arabic state by force of arms, which recalls to the minds of Muslims the Crusades and the European colonization. Richard Clarke in his now-famous book, *Against All Enemies*, writes: “Nothing America could have done would have provided al Qaeda . . . a better recruitment device than our unprovoked invasion of an oil-rich Arab country. Nothing else could have . . . so closed Muslim eyes and ears to our . . . calls for reform in their region. It was as if Usama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt, were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting, ‘invade Iraq, you must invade Iraq.’” Clarke also points to the diversion of military resources from the real war on terror, and the squandering of financial resources that could be put to better use in a peace initiative toward the Arabic world.

I am not suggesting that we should not defend ourselves against terrorist attacks. The defense includes tracking and dismantling terrorist cells by force of arms. Such a defense does not, in my view, require a doctrine of preemption, and it is better, for reasons I will indicate, not to call it a “war” on terror. Even if one does characterize it as “preemptive war,” it is crucial to recognize, as

Michael Ignatieff does (in a recent book on political ethics in an age of terror), that such a war is “a lesser evil.” It is an evil because it entails the use of violence, but it is a lesser evil because it is designed to prevent a greater evil, bloody terrorist attacks on civilian targets. “Pre-emptive war can be justified only when the danger that must be pre-empted is imminent, when peaceful means of averting the danger have been tried and have failed and when democratic institutions ratify the decision to do so.” The Iraq war, he says, failed to meet all three of these tests. Ignatieff’s principal point is that without ethical rules and constraints the constant temptation of a war on terror is to descend to the logic of terror itself – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, taking the vengeance of the Lord into our own hands. A terrorist’s best hope of success is to taunt us until we “let slip the dogs of war.” Our goal must be to preserve the identity of democratic society and prevent it from becoming what terrorists believe it to be.

To this end we need not only a defensive military strategy but an offensive political strategy. Clarke sets forth an alternative scenario to the invasion of Iraq. In addition to eliminating our vulnerabilities to terrorism at home, we should “have launched a concerted effort globally to counter the ideology of al Qaeda and the larger Islamic terrorist movement with a partnership to promote the real Islam, to win support for common American and Islamic values, and to shape an alternative to the popular fundamentalist approach.” We should have been active in key countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan to strengthen open governments, encourage their reform, and make it possible for them to go after the roots of terrorism in social and economic grievances and fundamentalist indoctrination. Enormous economic resources would be needed to do these things, but they are not available because they were devoted to Iraq. Suppose we had taken the \$300 to \$500 billion that this war is likely to cost, and suppose that Europe and Asia could add another \$500 billion: such resources might begin to make a difference in righting the age-old injustices suffered by the Arabic world. If we could empower desperate communities, they would no longer turn to terror.

Itzhak Rabin, the martyred Prime Minister of Israel, once said to former Secretary of Defense William Perry that the remarkable thing about the United States was its restraint in the exercise of its great power. In restraint lies true strength. But no more. The dogs of war have been unleashed.

### **Theological Critique of the War on Terror: No Other Gods**

I come now to the more explicitly theological part of my argument, namely a theological critique of the war on terror. For Jews and Christians, the critique is grounded in the first and second commandments: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is

on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exodus 20:2-4). A similar injunction is found in one of the five pillars of Islam: “There is no God but the God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”

Unfortunately, these statements are subject to a dangerous misinterpretation. Interpreted ideologically, they can be used to justify intolerance and aggression against infidels. Our God is the only God, and we are God’s true messengers and agents; our God has enemies, and we are justified in striking them down. The same book of Exodus that gives the commandments puts these words on the lips of God: “I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes. . . . I will send my terror in front of you, and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come” (Exodus 23:22, 27). Terror seems to reside in the mind of God, and it becomes a tool against the enemies of Israel. A similar ideology

appears in Islam, and it is not surprising that today there are terrorists who claim to know the mind of God, to know that God wills the violent destruction of fellow human beings. Their delusion is very empowering, and

extremely dangerous. Interpreted critically, however, the Hebrew commandments and the Muslim profession of faith mean that God alone is God, that no human doctrine or action can claim divine legitimation, that nothing in heaven above or on earth below is to be made into an idol. They mean that we are liberated from slavery to earthly lords and are required to think critically and prophetically, wary of all human presumption, our own and that of others. What distinguishes the critical from the ideological interpretation? The intrinsic pluralism of the India-born religions is perhaps better equipped to guard against idolatry than the monotheism of the Israel-born religions. The latter religions need some sort of internal critical principle to protect against the first and most destructive form of sin, which is idolatry. Idolatry takes mundane and finite things, even if mighty and powerful, and worships them as divine and infinite.

Paul Tillich calls the critical principle the “Protestant principle,” even though it transcends Protestantism and is present in all the great religions of humankind. This principle, he writes, “contains the divine and human *protest* against any absolute claim made for a relative reality, even if this claim is made by a Protestant church. . . . It is the guardian against the attempts of the finite and conditioned to usurp the place of the unconditional in thinking and acting. It is the prophetic judgment against religious pride, ecclesiastical arrogance, and secular self-sufficiency and their destructive consequences.”

The critical principle is also the prophetic principle, and indeed *prophecy* is one of the ways that the Israelite tradition guards against the ideological interpretation of the first commandment. The Hebrew prophets chastise the pretensions of Israel and the arrogance of its kings; prophecy plays an important but lesser role in Islam and Christianity. *Mysticism* is another instrument of criticism, and it too is found in all the Abrahamic religions but outside the mainstream: the Jewish Cabbala, Islamic Sufism, and

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War, it seems to me, is a form of idolatry, a false god, a divine destroyer.

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the Christian mystics. A third defense appears in the form of *gospel*, which seems to be unique to Christianity--the gospel proclaimed and lived by Jesus, whose cross, Tillich suggests, is the religious symbol that cancels all religious symbols, negates all idolatrous claims.

John Cobb points to the de-centering effect of the teaching of Jesus as it appears in the form of parables, beatitudes, and prayer. His radicalization of the commandments and his pronouncement of woes relativizes all human pretensions of virtue and brings about a reversal of values. Cobb highlights the anti-imperial elements of Jesus' proclamation of the *basileia* of God, which is the central theme of his ministry. The Greek word *basileia* is generally translated as "kingdom," but this is not a good translation because Jesus is talking about God's grace and compassion, not God's sovereign control. Cobb suggests that a better translation is "commonwealth," meaning a realm that is organized for the common good. Jesus depicts a community in which there are no ranks and privileges, where the logic of grace prevails over that of ordinary consequences, where the needs of others take priority over personal desires, where God's will is done and God's purposes fulfilled in the form of healing, release from servitude and debt, sharing of wealth, forgiveness of sin, care of neighbor, love of enemies. God does not do these things through human puppets; rather it is up to us to assume responsibility, to act in accord with the *basileia* vision, to challenge oppressive rulers, to work for the creation of a better society, one that is not in the service of wealth and global domination. Despite all the odds against it, Jesus' gospel of the commonwealth of God keeps breaking through, says Cobb; it is the deep ground for envisioning a just society, for resisting idolatry, for challenging empires and their wars. This is the way God acts in history – not by controlling what happens or designating enemies, but by luring humans through a vision of better possibilities.

War, it seems to me, is a form of idolatry, a false god, a divine destroyer. It can so easily become a totalizing rhetoric or practice that absorbs and justifies all actions, puts everything in its service, uses and abuses human beings, tears down in an instant what was built up through generations. Proponents of the war on terror want us to think that we are at war in order to foster patriotism, maintain secrecy, suppress opposition, and legitimize any actions deemed "necessary." Terrorists for their part claim to be involved in a great cosmic conflict between good and evil that justifies horrible atrocities. Cheap war-talk obscures the fact that its costs are always enormous and that war is justified only in extreme circumstances when all else has failed. Antoine Audouard, a French novelist, compares the experience of the French in Indochina with that of the Americans in Iraq. "Can the echoes of the valley of Dien Bien Phu be heard in the streets of Falluja, at the prison of Abu Ghraib? Forty years ago, French friends of America tried to warn Washington about the pitfalls of Vietnam. The French themselves repeated their mistakes in Algeria. In Iraq every day even the best of intentions are cruelly put to test by the miseries and sorrows of war. As the promoters of a modern, 'clean' war would have it, torture, humiliation, rapes, the killing of innocents, useless destruction are now avoidable. But to

go to war is to go to the bottom of the pit: what if those tragedies are not 'collateral damage' but war itself, the essence of war?"

The war has itself become a kind of terror, terror waged against terror, terror breeding more terror. It is the worst kind of war – a war of occupation against an insurgency. Both continue despite the transfer of sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government. Al Qaeda is stronger now than before the invasion, having gained support and recruits as a result of it. The insurgency has widened and deepened and will continue as long as American troops are present, as might have been anticipated from familiarity with the history of Arabic resistance to Western occupation. I foresee no good outcome to the present morass.

This essay was first presented as the Armstrong Lectures at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, Michigan, October 21-22, 2004. The author is an emeritus professor of theology in the Divinity School of Vanderbilt University, and a member of The Witherspoon Society.

**Part II – "Theological Virtues in an Age of Terror" – will be published in our Spring 2005 issue.**

## A Prayer at the Empty Tomb

*Holy Silence, Abba God:  
Convert us, and make us part  
of what brings wholeness to the world.  
Bathe us in the compassion of Christ,  
and move us,  
with him,  
to hold the broken.  
Stir us to do justice,  
so we,  
with him,  
will stand with the oppressed.  
Fill us with wisdom,  
so we,  
with him,  
may walk the valley of unknowing.  
And through it all,  
give us faith  
to accept our own acceptance.  
By your transforming Spirit,  
whom we see in Jesus,  
so let it be.*

WBL 2004

From the Rev. Bill LeMosy, an interim ministry specialist living in Pleasant Hill, Iowa

## Staying Faithful in the New World Dys-Order

by Gene TeSelle, Witherspoon Issues Analyst

My title was suggested by Doug King, for which I thank him. A good editor is priceless (see below about the difference between price and value).

In January of 2005 we heard the inaugural address of George W. Bush. It impressed many pundits because of its far-reaching aims, quite surprising for a president who at the beginning of his first term forswore all attempts at “nation-building” in other regions of the world. His program was changed, it appears, by 9/11/01, his Afghanistan invasion, and his decision to “exterminate evil” in Iraq. But of course we also know that there were already those in the administration (the neo-conservatives around Paul Wolfowitz) who had always wanted a more aggressive foreign policy and now found their opportunity.

### Wilsonians — But What Kind?

Most of us in the U.S. are inclined to be “Wilsonians.” That’s a term used by political scientists for the desire to spread our North American institutions of representative democracy, the Bill of Rights, and, yes, a polity that is secular and has no “religious test” for candidates seeking public office.

Woodrow Wilson was only the most vocal — and in many ways the least successful — in a long line of advocates, reaching from the era of Manifest Destiny, to the sense of “American exceptionalism” (in 1898 we, unlike the Europeans, were not seeking to found an empire), to Cold War competition with the Soviets for the hearts and minds of people throughout the world, to a post-Gorbachev sense of responsibility as the world’s one remaining superpower.

Richard John Neuhaus said in 1985, “On balance and considering the alternatives, the influence of the United States is a force for good in the world.” He

may be, “on balance,” right. The U.S. has often been a model of civil rights and due process, a source of food and economic aid, a rescuer when there was natural disaster or war. But it’s the other side of that balance that worries me.

Simply to name examples like those I have listed above is to recall the problems intrinsic to Manifest Destiny and Wilsonianism. U.S. political ideals have usually been promoted at the point of a gun or through economic pressures, and policy makers have generally been unwilling to extend to others the rights that we claim for ourselves. The excuse, as George Kennan pointed out, has always been “contingent necessity” — that if we do not impose a solution, other powers will. But that always involves duplicity, as Kennan himself said in his notorious 1948 memo (Policy Planning Study 23), where he concluded, “We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction.”

Now in 2005 we find that the inaugural address is surrounded by a penumbra of troubling signs:

- going easy on allies that are far from exemplifying what the world mission of the U.S. is trying to achieve;
- new talk about the “Salvadoran Option,” including assassination, death squads, and massacres, to bring order to Iraq and other countries;
- new evidence of dirty tricks and alliances with dictators, most notably in Chile, but also in other countries;
- new legal directives that exempt Pentagon operatives from the usual rules of warfare and even from the restrictions placed on the CIA; and
- increasing use of foreign governments and private mercenaries to carry out tasks that seem incompatible with the professed ideals of the U.S. government.

### What Freedoms?

What is it that is being promoted around the world? The manifest program is to broaden rights and freedoms and to bring the benefits of representative democracy. But it is worth looking at some previous ventures in political and economic “liberalization.”

In Latin America, the mid-nineteenth century was a time of transition. The Liberal parties represented the interests of the new commercial classes, which were forging new ties with Britain and the U.S. They had every reason to champion civil rights, including religious freedom, since they would weaken the hold of traditional institutions.

Following in the wake of these freedoms, and probably their basic motivation, was freedom for commercial transactions. This included free trade with other countries, of course. But even more consequential was a new approach to property, especially agricultural property. Now it came to be owned “in fee simple,” and it could be sold or “alienated” without regard to the traditional privileges of the laborers who lived on it. When land is made a function of the marketplace, the changes are to the sole benefit of those who have the most commercial, financial, and legal bargaining power.

In Africa it was similar. The Berlin Conference of 1885 that divided the continent among the European powers guaranteed religious freedom and the free movement of missionaries. But it also guaranteed the free movement of engineering firms seeking ways to exploit the continent’s resources.

The rest of the world has learned to be skeptical, then, about Europeans and Americans bearing the gifts of freedom, for the end result is likely to be a loss of control over their own commerce, land, and resources.

Well, that brings us to the “new world order” that is being championed by those with economic and financial power.

## Free Trade Treaties

Soon after he became general secretary of the World Trade Organization, Renato Ruggiero said,

We are no longer writing the rules of interaction among separate national economies. We are writing the constitution of a single global economy.

Perhaps he was speaking more frankly, and certainly more blatantly, than most champions of free trade. But he was speaking honestly, characterizing what has actually happened under NAFTA and then, on a global scale, under the World Trade Organization. We should recall that these were changes promoted by the Democratic Party led by Clinton and Gore. But the new Republican ad-

ministration is seeking their expansion with even greater enthusiasm.

Carlos Pacheco Alizaga suggests (*CE-PAD Report*, March-April 2004) that these free trade treaties are

- *not free*, since they are the result of corporate pressure and result in increased subservience to corporations;
- *not about trade alone*, since they affect all aspects of life, including investment rules, public services, government purchases, intellectual property, even policy formation and conflict resolution; and
- *not treaties*, since they are negotiated under conditions of inequality in power and wealth (and we should add that even we in the U.S. are being taken for a ride, since these are

really “agreements,” needing only a majority vote in Congress rather than the constitutionally mandated two-thirds, and a craven Congress repeatedly agrees to “fast-track” them, allowing no amendments).

What have been the results?

*1. Direct impacts of commerce.* In the case of Mexico, we have seen how the products of agribusiness, subsidized in various ways by the U.S. government, can be bought more cheaply than domestic products, driving small Mexican farmers out of their own markets and leaving consumers dependent on foreign supplies. In the U.S., we have seen how the export of jobs to Mexico, then to Southeast Asia, then to China has steadily reduced wages — to one eighth in Mexico, one twelfth in India, and much less than that in China — making it not only profitable but economically necessary for corporations to close factories in the U.S.

All of this has been sold as the fruition and final validation of the principle of “comparative advantage,” enunciated by Ricardo around 1830 through what is now regarded as oracular inspiration. From that point of view we can understand the statement by Frank Mankiw, the Bush administration’s chief economist, that the outsourcing of jobs is good for the U.S. economy. Good perhaps for corporate earnings, apparently good for those who are looking for lower prices at Wal-Mart, but not good for the U.S. economy in the long run or even the short run. Or the infamous memo by Lawrence Summers in 1991, when he was chief economist at the World Bank, before he became president of Harvard, that “the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that.”

*2. Abdication of sovereignty and self-determination.* More broadly, the World Trade Organization gives a hunting license to transnational corporations seeking to attack labor standards, environmental safeguards, and even a nation’s control over its own economy. It is now possible for corporations to sue

## Pax Americana

On January 20 we were gathering for the meeting of a presbytery committee when one of the ministers came in and commented that, listening to the president’s inaugural address on the car radio, he could not help reflecting on what it means to say that “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Well, let’s reflect on it.

There are those who find no serious tension between Christian faith and American politics. They have precedent in antiquity, when a number of Christian writers, starting with Luke, thought it providential that Christ was born under Caesar Augustus. The Roman Empire did have a genius for governing with an effective mix of force and persuasion, custom and innovation. The unity it brought to the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Western Europe enabled Christianity to spread quickly. And with Constantine (or more precisely Theodosius at the end of the fourth century, who ended religious toleration) the empire became Christian.

Some in our own day express similar gratitude for the *de facto* U.S. empire. For five decades, the *New York Times* magazine section has carried an article by some European at least once a year saying, in effect, “Three cheers for the American empire.”

But let’s look more closely at the Roman empire at the beginning of the Christian era. Palestine was occupied territory, governed in part by a Roman procurator, in part by client kings of the Herod family. Roman authority became most visible in tax collectors and in the violent suppression of rebellions. The empire did bring order, and grateful subjects even called it good news, an *euangelion*. But the Christian movement caught on as an alternative kind of good news, with an alternative kind of “Lord.” Use of the title “Savior” in the New Testament increased as the century moved on, probably as an alternative to the imperial cult and its grateful celebration of “deliverance” by Rome. And the persecutions demonstrate that the empire, even when it could find no convincing grounds, assumed that to be a Christian was self-evident proof of being a public enemy, to the extent of permitting apostates to go scot free, as though they had done nothing else that was punishable. All of that is part of the picture, too.

local, state, and national governments over any supposed restraint on trade, and these cases are heard not in open court but by secretive tribunals of the world trade establishment.

Starting early in the Clinton-Gore administration there has been a massive transfer of sovereignty from state and federal governments to freebooting corporations. The irony is that conservatives who condemn the United Nations, resist any treaties that might reduce our freedom of action, and steadfastly oppose anything that might permit U.S. military personnel to be tried in international courts, have acquiesced in huge changes in the legal framework because they seem compatible with the mantra of “free trade.”

3. *The ideology of privatization.* It has been a principle of political theory since antiquity that a major function of government is to protect the common good and safeguard the citizens’ participation in it. In the modern world we are aware that this includes not only a peaceful and well-functioning society but education, health care, clean water, and a safe environment, and government has increasingly tried to provide these, or at least to ensure them through a regulatory framework.

The new mood, by contrast, is to commodify everything — education, health care, even water. If you cannot afford to buy it at market rates, you will not get it; it’s that simple. The commodification of water has reached disaster proportions in several Latin American countries. But even in the water-rich U.S., major corporations led by Coca-Cola are steadily depleting aquifers and removing “fossil water” that has been there for thousands of years so that we can have cheaper bottled water and soft drinks.

With such a mentality it is not surprising, then, that the “commons” itself is being raided — national forests, national parks, wildlife areas, even the atmosphere, where you can buy or sell “pollution credits.”

Ours has become a society in which we “know the price of everything and the

value of nothing” (Oscar Wilde). Those who respect the difference between price and value are forced to engage in what is called the “commodification debate,” trying to find the boundaries between what is priceable and what is priceless.

Policies in the U.S. contrasts sharply with those in the European Union. The E.U. is bad enough on the world trade scene, cooperating with the U.S. in putting the rest of the world at a disadvantage. But in dealing with its own people the E.U. insists upon shared labor and social standards to improve the situation in poorer countries. It even gives targeted aid to make it happen.

The issue is not whether trade will increase. It is whether it will be fair trade. And that can happen only if there are internationally recognized rights for labor to organize, standards of occupational safety and health, and environmental regulations that put all corporations, in all territorial jurisdictions, on the same playing field, require them to play by the same rules, and punish them when they do not.

The prescription is clear. But carrying it out will not be easy. We are now seeing on the world level the kind of competition that was carried on by the states in their “industrial recruitment” endeavors. Corporations would threaten to settle elsewhere unless they received tax-free industrial development bonds, tax relief, public subsidies, and of course a “disciplined labor force” that would not be unionized and would adhere to the work ethic. Now there is the same kind of bargaining among the hundred-some nations in the world, whose elites are always ready to strike a deal with foot-loose corporations, gaining considerable “comparative advantage” within their own countries as a reward for giving the corporations a world-scale comparative advantage.

To put a spoke in the wheels of this version of globalization, we must consider a range of tactics. Some are political, ranging all the way from insisting that politicians disclose their contributors to demanding full debate about laws

that have economic consequences. But finally it is a matter of economic direct action by all of us — direct links with Third World producers, consumer boycotts, shareholder resolutions, socially responsible investing, opposition to Wal-Mart takeovers of the local economy — with plenty of publicity at every stage. It has worked thus far, although in small ways. It needs to be encouraged and strengthened.



### Contest announced for faith-based organizations in 10 states

The “Partners in Transformation” awards program, launched November 1, is seeking to identify effective models of faith-based collaboration in ten states. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) and congregations that are operating an effective social service program with demonstrable, positive results and doing so in collaboration with some organization(s) *outside* the faith community (e.g., schools, government agency, police, secular nonprofits) are eligible to apply.

The contest, sponsored by FASTEN (Faith & Service Technical Education Network) and the Points of Light Foundation, will award state winners \$5000 each for their effective program and publicize that program in a briefing report to be disseminated to hundreds of private charitable foundations. FBOs working in Alaska, Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Texas that have annual operating budgets under \$5 million are eligible to apply.

Visit [www.FASTENnetwork.org](http://www.FASTENnetwork.org) for details and a contest application. While on the Web site, check out the hundreds of free resources FASTEN has available for churches and faith-based nonprofits engaged in community ministry: “how to” tool kits, program manuals, fundraising information, and more. **Contest applications are due by April 1, 2005.**

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## On the Inaugural Address and the Sermon on the Mount

### A call to follow ... and a time to withdraw

January 23, 2005  
 North Anderson Community Church, Presbyterian, Anderson, SC  
 The Rev. Jake Young

**Texts: 1 Cor. 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23**

On the Sunday after the President's Inaugural Address the Rev. Jake Young considered the values proclaimed by the President, along with those proclaimed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. He finds some tensions between them.

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**W**ell, we've lived through another momentous week in America. Many important things took place this week if you paid even the slightest attention to the news. Near the top of my list was the startling revelation by Dr. James Dobson - a leading proponent of myopic "moral values" in America - that Sponge Bob Squarepants is a homosexual! I thought, "Now that's quite an achievement for a cartoon character!"

Upon further examination, it turns out that Dobson was not protesting Mr. Squarepants' sexual identity, but his promotion of tolerance of all people. Apparently, the adorably obnoxious square sponge stars in a video, along with Barney the six-foot purple dinosaur and other characters familiar to children, teaching the value of basic respect for everyone you meet. Apparently this is not a "moral value" favored by Dobson because he and other conservative evangelicals were protesting the video distributed by the "We Are Family Foundation."

The press contacted the attorney for the Foundation for comment. Of Dobson and the other critics he said, "They need medication."

Dobson made his comments at a black-tie affair in Washington on the eve of the second inauguration of George W. Bush. In his speech the next day, President Bush outlined an ambitious, albeit very generalized, agenda for the United States. The headline in the paper declared, "Bush vows to Liberate!" and "Bush vows to End Tyranny." There was no hint that the President or his speech writers recognized the irony of these claims - claims made by the leader of a government that has consistently curtailed the freedoms of others, including their own people, in the name of fighting terror.

In different circumstances, I might approach this topic from a church pulpit with fear and trembling. After all, don't we observe a separation of church and state in this country? But this is a President who openly professes to being a born-again Christian and invokes the name of God with some regularity in relation to his role as President. It is our role then, as Christians - and indeed as citizens of a democracy - to scrutinize closely our leader's words and, more importantly, his actions.

Mr. Bush did not invoke the name of Jesus Christ on Thursday, but he did invoke Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as containing the truths upon which our nation is based. Therefore, being good Christian disciples, let's look at what Jesus said there.

Now, the Sermon on the Mount was no brief undertaking. But there are a few points Jesus makes we may want to highlight for the President as we all embark upon these next four years. The sermon begins with the blessings, or the beatitudes. Among these we read, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Call it what you want, but our country's foreign policy the last four years has not focused on peacemaking.

In his address, Mr. Bush said "There is no justice without freedom." That sure sounds nice, but I'm not sure what it means. It is really rather tautological. [Couldn't we have heard "There is no freedom without justice" and find it equally meaningless?] But alas, can we get a glimpse of Jesus' justice in the Sermon on the Mount? Yes. Jesus says, "You have heard it said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. [Evildoer, now where have I heard that recently?] But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you." Now there's a good basis for forgiving third world debt and supporting more fully the UN's efforts! Again, Mr. Bush was short on specific policies in the speech, but I don't think he had this in mind.

The President mentioned "freedom" and "liberty" and "democracy" repeatedly, contrasting these words with words like "tyranny" and "oppression." But never a single case was mentioned to illustrate exactly what these words really mean.

He said, "America will not impose our own style of government on the unwilling." If those insurgents in Iraq are not unwilling, I don't know who is!

Mr. Bush said, "Today, America speaks anew to the peoples of

the world. All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you." Does this President really intend to stand with that lone man before a tank in Tiananmen Square the next time the people of China resist their government?

He said, "America will not pretend that jailed dissidents prefer their chains, or that women welcome humiliation and servitude, or that any human being aspires to live at the mercy of bullies." This from the man who incarcerated record numbers of criminals in Texas, jailed war captives at Guantanamo with open disregard for the Geneva Conventions, vowed to do everything within his power to see a woman's choice over her own body be denied, and invented the doctrine of pre-emptive war to attack Iraq – a bully policy if there ever was one.

Given this administration's track record, all of this flowery rhetoric, with no specifics, must be veiling something. All these vague promises to work for freedom throughout the world are the prelude to some new initiative. For example, when the President says, "Democratic reformers facing repression, prison or exile can know: America sees you for who you are: the future leaders of your free country," I think he means it. But what "it" does he mean? When I hear that, at first I think, "Praise God! We're finally going to help the Dalai Lama return to Tibet as the rightful ruler of that country!" Or maybe we are going to work with Aung San Suu Kyi to see a new beginning in the troubled country of Burma! But I don't think so. I think there is a less honorable strategy afoot. Some have speculated that the administration plans on pre-emptively attacking Iran next. But when I hear words like "reformers in exile" and "leaders of governments with long habits of control" and look at the utterly inconsistent policies of this administration's approach to non-democratic countries, I start thinking, "Cuba."

I hope I'm wrong about our leader's intentions to attack Iran or Cuba. But this administration has perfected the Machiavellian political strategy of "tell 'em what they want to hear and then do whatever you want." And with the convenient doctrine of pre-emptive war in place, "do whatever you want" takes on a whole new meaning in the world of modern geo-politics. Am I being cynical? No, I'm using history to assess the likelihood of someone's next move. But, whether cynical or not, I have ventured into the area of speculation, and that is sure quicksand for any preacher.

So, let's move away from speculating what the administration's plans may or may not be and return to what our actions should be. We have looked at the Sermon on the Mount already, but you may remember that our texts for today did not actually include that text from Matthew. Our Gospel text was the passage immediately preceding the Sermon on the Mount. In it we heard about Jesus calling his disciples. We noted that Jesus came to them, they did not come to him. And Jesus sees Simon and Andrew, James and John. They did not first see him. And finally, Jesus is the one who calls them, they do not presume to stand there with their fishing nets in hand and say, "Hey, Jesus, how

about if I put this down and come follow you?"

Well, God is calling us today as well. We are being called to serve the Kingdom of Heaven. We are being called to be disciples of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. As disciples, we take our ethical cues from Christ. We are familiar with some of Christ's ethical teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. But we should also observe Christ's actions because actions really do speak louder than words. In our passage for today, Jesus undertakes a subtle action. It is easily overlooked because, in many ways, it is an inaction, or a passive action. Did you notice it? It came right at the beginning of the text when Jesus hears that John the Baptist has been arrested.

Now, how would you act if the person who baptized you was arrested. I personally, self-interestedly hope you would come running to that person's rescue with a high-priced lawyer. But that's not what Jesus does. Matthew says, quite simply, he "withdrew." That's not very remarkable, is it? In fact, it is completely underwhelming. Jesus withdrew. But why?

Jesus did not withdraw from that context out of cowardice. Jesus did not frighten easily. Mel Gibson has more than made that point. Nor did Jesus withdraw as a simple self-preservation strategy. No, his choosing to withdraw is an indication of the substantively different character of the Kingdom of God from any kingdom we have ever known. Matthew constantly informs us that Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom. And as King, he embodies a vision of this new type of Kingdom – this Kingdom – that is based not on violence and forcing one's will on another, but on non-violence and non-retaliation.

Matthew's choice of this word, withdraw, is not accidental. He uses it on nine other occasions in the Gospel to describe the actions of Jesus and others who are embodying God's will, a will for Peace on Earth and good will for all . . . creation.

As we contemplate what our role as disciples is to be, we may want to keep this word in mind: withdraw. To withdraw is sometimes the precisely right action to undertake. There is never a good reason to maintain a poor position. That is nothing more than a sign that pridefulness is at play, rather than wisdom. Rather than speculate on what Mr. Bush might do next in the name of our country, we may want to think about how we will call for the withdrawal of our young women and men from Iraq. We may want to say as loudly as we can, "ENOUGH!" to this misadventure that has lost more than 1,300 Americans and untold thousands of Iraqis. We may want to recognize that withdrawal IS a legitimate exit strategy . . . a legitimate *Christian* exit strategy – especially when there is no other exit strategy currently in place.

There are no weapons of mass destruction. They weren't sent across the border to Iran. Our presence is no longer productive for peace in Iraq. Our troops have been there too long and are spread too thin. We have forgotten that we are also at war in Afghanistan. Where is Osama Bin Laden? Let's re-focus our efforts. Let's remember that one nation pursuing nation-building

is not nation-building, but empire-building. This is neo-colonialism! Let's invite the UN to take the lead in Iraq and pray they have a shred of willingness to do so. In short, we must withdraw . . . like Jesus would.

This was George W. Bush's second inaugural address. It was the first war-time inauguration in more than 30 years. But we've had war-time second inaugural addresses in even more harrowing circumstances. On March 4, 1865, a war-weary, wrinkled, thinner-than-ever Abraham Lincoln said the following:

The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Let us remember who we are and whose we are. Let us remember what our mothers and fathers, and their mothers and fathers, went through so that we could sit here comfortably today. And let us pray with all sincerity that our acts of supreme arrogance and extreme ignorance are forgiven us.

*Let us pray:*

Almighty God, forgive our nation for violently attacking others pre-emptively, selfishly taking from the poor and giving to the rich, and senselessly berating a cartoon character for innocently preaching your message of tolerance and acceptance to children.

Amen.

## From Your Membership Coordinator: Let's get together!

Groups of progressive Presbyterians have recently invited me to meet with them in Pittsburgh Presbytery and in Upper Ohio Valley Presbytery. At both gatherings, I heard comments confirming a hunch expressed by our Editor in the Fall issue. Doug wrote, "My sense is that right now many progressive people are looking for connections with people who share their concern, and who don't think they're crazy."

In both presbyteries, people talked about feeling isolated, feeling like the lone progressive voice among a cacophony of conservatives. They expressed a desire to gather on a regular basis for food, fellowship and strategizing. They also talked about feeling a need to think theologically and to discuss and reflect more deeply than most presbyteries allow time for.

One Presbyterian lamented the possibility that people who are not conservative have left the church because they had not heard a progressive voice and therefore wrongly assumed every Presbyterian was a conservative. Their questioning suggests that offering a progressive voice as an alternative to conservative views might actually be a form of evangelism and a recipe for church growth.

Other participants expressed concern that conservative-initiated arguments about sex and ordination, as well as a narrow interpretation of Reformed orthodoxy, had eclipsed the social gospel and the church's social justice ministry and mission. Their concern implies that there is a practical as well as a theological connection between being a progressive Presbyterian and doing the work Jesus calls us to engage in.

Neither Upper Ohio Valley nor Pittsburgh presbytery offers concentrations of members of the Witherspoon Society. Both presbyteries are generally conservative. Yet that does not mean a progressive word should not be spoken and heard. A few progressive Presbyterians in these presbyteries demonstrate the importance of like minded Presbyterians gathering together in order to make connections, to share their concerns, and to remind themselves that they are not crazy.

All of us on the Witherspoon Society Board are eager to offer our prayers, our support, and our assistance wherever and whenever progressive Presbyterians seek to gather.

Please let us hear from you! We'll help you find other Witherspooners in your area. Let's stand together, talk together, work together for peace and justice in our church and our world!

John Harris  
First Presbyterian Church  
77 Boggess Street  
Buckhannon, WV 26201  
(304)473-1929  
JOHN.HARRIS1@ecunet.org

## Rights violated yet hope persisting: Palestinians speak of their experiences in occupied Palestine

### Conference on American Churches and the Palestinian meets in Austin, Texas

by Rev. David Oliver-Holder, pastor of the Kettle Moraine United Presbyterian Church in Hartland, Wisconsin, and a Witherspoon member

AUSTIN, TEXAS – Naim Ateek was an eleven-year-old Palestinian Christian boy on May 12, 1948. That was the day Jewish Zionist troops, the Haganah, occupied his town of Beisan, 20 miles south of the Sea of Galilee. Two weeks later, on May 26, Naim's father and other leading men in the town were told that they had only hours to either evacuate the town or be killed. The family lost everything, their home, their land and their livelihood.

Today, he is known as the Rev. Naim Ateek. He serves as the Canon of St. George's Cathedral (Anglican) in Jerusalem, and is the founder and director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center. Rev. Ateek delivered a plenary address at a conference held February 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> on the campus of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. The conference, on the theme "To Loose the Chains of Injustice – Isaiah 58:6: American Churches and the Palestinians," was presented by Friends of Sabeel – North America, the Roman Catholic peacemaking group Pax Christi USA, and the Austin-based Interfaith Community for Palestinian Rights. The event attracted more than 220 people from all over the United States, who were inspired by Rev. Ateek's proclamation on Friday evening.

Far from harboring any hate toward the Jewish Zionists who violated his and his family's human rights, Rev. Ateek seeks only justice. "We are not against Jews," he said. "We are against the wrongs of the State of Israel."

### Rights Violations

The systematic violation of Palestinian human rights by the Haganah and the State of Israel sounded as one refrain

throughout the two days of the conference. Rev. Ateek's town of Beisan was only one of dozens that were "cleansed." Beisan added 6,000 refugees to the United Nations estimate of more than 770,000 total refugees created in 1948. While the State of Israel has just approved \$870 million for Israeli settlers in Gaza, to compensate them for evacuating their settlements (which were illegal in the first place), Palestinians understand that they will likely never be compensated for the confiscation of their homes and lands, confiscations which have violated international law since they began in 1948.

The State of Israel continues to violate the property rights of Palestinians, as well as flout international law, through the demolition of Palestinian homes. Early Friday afternoon, during the first panel discussion, the fact that most Americans seem to assume that all Palestinians are terrorists was discussed. Asked about the three things Americans most need to know, Rev. Wendy Mathewson, Associate Pastor of Northminster Presbyterian Church, in Evanston, Illinois, who formerly worked in the Middle East Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA), answered, "Americans need to unlearn that all Palestinians are terrorists."

Stav Adivi made a power point presentation during lunch on Saturday. Adivi, an officer in the Israeli Defense Forces, and a member of the Israeli Committee Against House demolitions, exposed another widespread American assumption, namely, that the Palestinian homes that are demolished belong to suicide bombers, their families, or to those who harbor them. "Ninety-five percent of the homes that are demolished," Adivi said, "belong to Palestinians who have no

connection to terrorism." Many of these families are guilty only of having built their homes without an Israeli permit to build. "But what are they to do?" Adivi asked. "Israel does not give building permits to Palestinians."

Still another way in which the rights of Palestinians are systematically violated is through the structures of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. David Robinson, national coordinator of Pax Christi USA and executive editor of *The Catholic Peace Voice*, stressed Friday afternoon that Americans need to understand that Palestinians live occupied lives. "We have no idea," he charged, "how every aspect of their lives is controlled by the reality of the occupation."

Asked why it is so important that Americans become aware of the violation of Palestinian human rights, Robinson compared the conflict in Palestine to the conflict in Darfur, Sudan. "As bad as Darfur is," Robinson said Friday afternoon, "American policy did not drive that situation. In Palestine, our foreign policy is driving events there." Rev. Matthewson agreed with Robinson, adding that the Palestinian experience of American mission has changed. "Where we used to send missionaries," she said, "now the Palestinians experience weapons, weapons with 'Made in the U.S.A' on the labels."

Workshops on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning covered issues such as the nascent divestment campaign, manifest most recently in the selective divestment action taken at last summer's General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Those attending the conference from other denominations were quick to praise the Presbyterians for leading the way in pursuing divestment. Other workshops explored the connections between Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Washington, the history of the Palestinian conflict, myths of the Middle East conflict, the silence of the American churches with respect to conflict, and the manner in which the U.S. media reports the conflict.

Ann Hafften, the coordinator for Middle

East Networking for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, offered a workshop on alternative travel to the Holy Land. She noted that the Ministry of Tourism of the State of Israel is a cabinet-level ministry of the Israeli government. During his plenary presentation, Rev. Dr. Donald Wagner, the director of the Center for Middle East Studies at North Park University in Chicago, repeated this fact, and added that this “says something about the importance the State of Israel places on controlling the way tourists experience the Holy Land.” Hafften lamented that “so many American Christians travel to the Holy Land, the birth-place of the Church, and never meet any of the local Christians.” Rev. Matthewson said that one thing American Christians need to do is “go and see.” American should see the Holy Land, but by way of the local Palestinian Christians who operate their own tourism businesses.

### Persistent Hope

Still, hope remains that a lasting peace can be realized and that the occupation will end. Asked on Friday afternoon how he maintains his hope, Rev. Richard Toll, chair of the Friends of Sabeel North America and rector of St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in Milwaukee, Oregon, pointed to the Palestinians who are committed to staying in Palestine. “They give me a sense of hope.”

David Robinson spoke of all of the friendships and connections he has made with those suffering under the occupation. “We find hope in the relationships.” That kind of hope imbued the conference. You could hear it in the different languages being spoken – Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish and English. You could see it in the arts and craft items for sale in one of the classrooms. You could smell it and taste it in the excellent taboulé, hummus and baklava served with Friday’s banquet dinner. You could feel it in the emotion and laughter shared at Friday’s banquet. Near the end of an impromptu flute performance of a Palestinian song, the sizable contingent of Palestinians, who now live in Houston, began to sing in Arabic. They were overjoyed by the large show of support

offered by the conference.

Hope shone in the testimony of Craig and Cindy Corrie, who spoke Friday evening of their daughter Rachel’s courageous work as a part of the International Solidarity Movement. On March 16, 2003, an Israeli Defense Forces D-9 Caterpillar bulldozer crushed Rachel in the Gaza city of Rafah as she tried to stop it from destroying the home of a Palestinian doctor and his family. Cindy Corrie said that for them to find peace following Rachel’s death, “it was necessary for us to come to this land and walk where Rachel walked, and see what she saw.” They did, and they now embody Rachel’s conviction about the occupation that “this has to stop.”

Hope was even found in the most unlikely of places. Rev. Ateek, during his address on Friday evening, quoted two passages from President Bush’s Second Inaugural speech. President Bush said, “In the long run, there is no justice without freedom, and there can be no human rights without human liberty ... All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for liberty, we will stand with you.” Rev. Ateek paused and smiled, knowing that Bush likely did not have the Palestinians in mind when he said those words. He looked out over the room and said, “Those words sound good to me,” and he projected the hope of the prophet Isaiah who wrote that if the Word is sent out, it will not return void.

David Robinson said he kept returning to the words of Vaclav Havel. Havel wrote, “Hope isn’t optimism. Real hope is that sense that you are working toward what is right, regardless of what may come from it.” It is this hope which sustains Palestinian resistance to Zionist ideology, an ideology which Rev. Ateek said, “refuses to see the Palestinians as partners in the land.”



### Presbytery of Milwaukee approves Eily Marlow for ordination

By a convincing (and perhaps surprising) vote of 104 to 20, the Presbytery of Milwaukee acted on February 22<sup>nd</sup> to approve Elizabeth (Eily) Marlow for ordination. Eily has long been active in the Presbyterian Church, through the National Network of Presbyterian College Women and various other programs. She is currently serving in the chaplaincy at Presbyterian-related Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. The presbytery action was notable as a strong endorsement of a woman who has been very open and honest in affirming her orientation as a lesbian.

Interim Executive Presbyter Anne Fisher commented that she was very pleased with the tone and demeanor shown during the discussion of the action. She added that members showed a real respect for one another, and a willingness to listen seriously to differing views on a controversial question.

The Rev. David Oliver-Holder commented that Eily’s statement of faith was “outstanding.” He added that after a couple very busy weeks, “yesterday, as I was reading her statement of faith in preparation for the meeting, I was amazed to find, by the second paragraph, how calm I had suddenly become. Peace in the presence of Truth. I also respond well to good theology, and hers is very good.”

For more, go to [http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/marlow\\_approved.htm](http://witherspoonsociety.org/2005/marlow_approved.htm)

## The Moderator's musings

We asked Moderator Rick Ufford-Chase to share with us some of his reflections part-way through his first year as Moderator of the General Assembly of the PC(USA). He offers some real challenges for the church – and for us. *And* some hope!

Friends,

Life as moderator has been an amazing gift from God. As I write these words, I am returning home from a twelve-day college tour during which I have visited twelve Presbyterian related colleges in North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. So far during my travels, I have spent time at six of our seminaries. At each campus, I've sought out opportunities to meet, hear from, and challenge the students about the nature of leadership for the church in our time.

Many students I've met are excited and enthusiastic about their faith, and they wonder whether the PC(USA) is interested in their leadership and the gifts they offer to the denomination. I find myself assuring them that in fact we do want to receive those gifts, and hoping that what I'm saying is true.

There is as much theological diversity among our students as there is across the rest of the church. I've met with students on some campuses where there is great suspicion about the denomination, and some insist that both the denomination and I are apostate. In those conversations, as you might expect, we rarely move off the topics of inerrancy of scripture and theological purity. These students tend to use language that separates them from "the church" or "those people in Louisville." I spend a lot of time in those situations talking about our polity and encouraging folks to become more involved in shaping our denomination. Many of them have had experiences that have made them feel marginalized and unwelcome.

More common has been my experience of students who hunger for a theology that is reformed, invested in

the world, and proclaiming the Good News in a way that is bold and unashamed. These students question why the Presbyterian Church seems to have abandoned them and why there is no serious interest in supporting them to form genuine, challenging Christian community. Among these students, there tends to be a frustration with the endless debates on ordination (their experience of folks who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender has been positive and they don't understand what all the fuss is about) and with the notion that there is only one way to understand or to experience God. Ironically, they also wonder whether there is any room for them in our denomination.

What these students share is a desire to live their faith in the world, and a conviction that their elders don't seem to demonstrate a similar desire nor do they feel the church is particularly interested in challenging the status quo.

Those debates and complaints sound familiar to me, because this is largely the same debate I hear as I travel in churches. I have two conclusions I'm beginning to hold about our church as a whole.

The first is that everyone thinks the rest of the church is "just like me." Therefore, the church's refusal to come down solidly on the side of their theology mystifies them. Many of our college campuses and our churches have become havens for like-minded people. Whether we tend to come at the world as a "stalwart conservative" or as a "progressive liberal" we tend to surround ourselves

with others who experience their faith as we do. Even in communities where there is a diversity of opinion, we tend not to cross those theological boundaries. One result is that we are genuinely perplexed when the General Assembly does not solidly support our theological convictions.

Second, I hear way too much whining and see way too little ac-

tion. From across the theological spectrum, I hear a lot of complaining about "the priorities of the denomination." The general question can be summed up, "what has the church done for me lately?" I hear it among college students who perceive (legitimately) a lack of interest from the broader church. I hear it from seminarians frustrated that their sense of call isn't fully embraced by the denomination. I hear it from Presbyterians who are alienated from the broader church. The more appropriate question is "how can I step up and offer the kind of leadership that God has called me to in the church and the world?"

I am increasingly convinced that we must think in terms of nurturing the movement of the Holy Spirit across the denomination. The messy creativ-



Rick Ufford-Chase

ity of movement building often appears to threaten our institutions. Institutions are about control and protection, while movement building appears to be radical – something akin to the earliest disciples being accused of being drunk with new wine in the moment of the Pentecost. This is a time to renew our churches by experimenting with new ways to worship. This is a time to support one another as we give up our privilege and move into the world to take the Good News of Jesus into communities of suffering and marginalization. This is a time to cross boundaries that have divided us into traditional camps of liberal and conservative so that we might recover the kind of spirit that held the earliest disciples together even when they were seriously divided over how to build the church.

There is no doubt in my mind that God is involved in doing a new thing in our denomination right now. It's not going to look like the church we knew and loved fifty years ago, though many across the theological spectrum continue to act as if returning to the church they loved then is both possible and desirable. The conversation I'm having with seminarians and college students is this. Are you prepared to question everything in your life, to live a new way, and to provide a new kind of leadership that is so renewing the church won't have any other choice but to follow you into a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ and into the world? There's a lot of enthusiasm out there for that kind of church!

**Rick**

**Rick adds ...**

***There is work we need Presbyterians to be doing:***

1. **No More Deaths:** Get involved with a new faith-based movement on the border and across the country to support undocumented migrants in all our communities. There is a consultation April 14 to 16 in Tucson, and there are many opportunities to get involved this summer. Check out [www.synodsw.org](http://www.synodsw.org) to register for the conference, [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org) to learn more about the movement, and [www.ghost ranch.org](http://www.ghost ranch.org) and [www.borderlinks.org](http://www.borderlinks.org) to check out the border trip in October that will be co-sponsored by the Ranch and BorderLinks.
2. **Colombia Accompaniment Program:** We are looking for Presbyterian volunteers (Spanish speakers and non-Spanish speakers) to do a brief training and then go to Colombia for a month of accompaniment work in our sister church's important human rights projects. Contact Charles Spring at [bunch@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:bunch@stanfordalumni.org) or check out [www.pcusa.org/onedoor](http://www.pcusa.org/onedoor) to learn more.
3. **The Taco Bell boycott** is going strong. If you haven't already been involved in this work, please contact the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and offer to help. This movement on behalf of migrant workers who pick tomatoes in Florida is extremely important and it will be successful. Don't miss the opportunity to be involved. Everyone is invited to Immokalee with me for a day of worship and education, and support for the workers on April 10. Go to [www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org) for more info. on the boycott, and to <http://www.vpcnaples.org/PDF%20Forms/pcusamoderatorsdayimmokalee.pdf> for more information about the April 10<sup>th</sup> event.
4. Finally, if you get a moment, check out this new website put together by some of the leaders of the **Presbyterian Youth Connection**. It's at [www.pcusamovement.org](http://www.pcusamovement.org).

Plan on joining in  
for our 2005  
Ghost Ranch Seminar!

July 25-31

**PATHS TO A JUST  
AND PEACEFUL  
WORLD**

details on  
page 29

## COMING TO A PRESBYTERY NEAR YOU: DIALOGUE AND DEBATE

by Gene TeSelle

Presbyteries and congregations have been asked by the Theological Task Force to engage in their own discussions about the issues of biblical authority, Christology, ordination standards, and power.

### How Can Dialogue Get Started?

In the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee there have been a number of discussions about how to do it. Some emphasize the need to know and respect each other better, probably in small covenant groups. We know that there are often good relationships among people with conflicting views, and the hope is expressed that both civility and mutual understanding will increase.

Others, skeptical whether this will involve many Presbyterians other than those already engaged in dialogue, see the need for more robust discussions. Here are some of their suggestions.

- A panel could represent, or even dramatize in a scripted way, the various orientations in the church in order to indicate the range of approaches already legitimated by the General Assembly (e.g., in its statements on the interpretation of Scripture).
- There could be a living exercise in biblical interpretation, specifically on the theme of same-sex relations.
- Each committee of presbytery could be asked to reflect on ways it might facilitate dialogue (e.g., a peacemaking approach to the sexuality debate, or resources from Christian Education on discussing the issues with youth).

As discussion went on, the participants saw that the Committee on Ministry and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry have unique responsibilities under the Constitution. They may find themselves dealing with

inquirers, candidates, and ministers who think they may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. The question is how to do this in a sensitive way.

One suggestion that emerged from the discussion is to form a group of experienced counselors who could deal with such issues with full confidentiality, offering a “safe space” with a “firewall” that protects inquirers, candidates, or ministers from being outed and prosecuted.

### Polity Issues Once More: How Shall We Approach Them?

Whatever the Theological Task Force finally says in its report (which will be coming out late in 2005), we can be sure that issues of polity will be raised. We need to overcome the inclination to say that polity is too nitpicking, suitable only for a few experts. Once again our presbyteries are likely to be voting on changes to the Book of Order.

Aside from the specific issue of GLBT ordination, some broader polity issues have been raised, and they have what might be called “philosophical” overtones:

- The progressive wing, although it might like a total change from G-6, would probably be happy with some kind of “local option” on the ordination question, allowing some governing bodies to ordain and others not to.
- The conservative wing keeps reminding us of the Kenyon decision of 1975 in the UPCUSA, which denied ordination to a man who said he could not participate in the ordination of a woman. They regard this as a violation of freedom of conscience, which is just how progressives see the denial of ordination to GLBT members.

Many of our controversies come from the statement in the Radical Principles

of Church Order that “a majority shall govern” (G-1.0400). On closely divided issues, or those where strong convictions are held, this seems to favor both a “tyranny of the majority” and indifference to conscience. To be sure, it allows people to follow conscience; but if they disagree with the majority they must take their conscience elsewhere.

This is a rather contemptuous and irresponsible approach to disagreement. But it is in our constitution. If “power” is one of the issues of concern to the Theological Task Force, we should note that the Book of Order gives an open invitation to engage in power struggles in the church. We will have to find ways to move toward a more open-textured church, while retaining the many safeguards that Presbyterians expect from the Book of Order.

### What Can We Learn From Other Churches?

The recent controversy in the Episcopal Church displays both a danger — schism, alliance with Asian and African bishops, and eventually a lawsuit claiming that the rebels are the authentic Episcopal Church — and a possible answer. The majority of the bishops have offered to priests and congregations the possibility of “alternative pastoral oversight.” With the permission of the territorial bishop, they could place themselves under another bishop. If this works out in the Episcopal Church, it might be adapted to the Presbyterian system.

The Lutheran Church has also become a case study in how to deal with the ordination question. A task force, after years of careful discussion, has suggested not a change in the ordination standards but an easing up in their enforcement, in effect letting governing bodies use discretion in making judgments about ordination. While no decisions have been made,

Continued on page 24

## An octogenarian views ‘a break of dawn’: reflections on changing times

John Sinclair puts the Covenant Network conference of November 2004 in a long perspective

As a person in his eighty-first year, it was my privilege to attend the conference of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians in Chicago, November 4-6, 2004. Several hundred Presbyterians considered in theological depth the role which lesbian and gay members can play in the life of our congregations.

These thoughts tell my own story and reflect on our denominations journey over the last eighty years as it faced changing times. We have tried faithfully to follow God’s guidance in these matters, which after all is said and done is the only “definitive guidance.”

Even though there was just a sprinkling of graying octogenarians at the conference, we found ourselves serving at times as “unofficial historians” in a denomination which has weathered change over the past eight decades. I believe that these changes have made us a richer and more faithful part of the Body of Christ.

I fully agree with William Sloan Coffin: “I believe in ethical elderhood. Longevity, far from a fiscal disaster, could represent the wealth of the nations if senior citizens ... would come together to become the advocates of compassion and the survival of the gentlest ...”<sup>1</sup>

### A glance back over recent years

I look back to my youth in the Presbyterian Church in the 1930s. I remember my minister father’s comments about “the Machen controversy,” which attempted to define “to the letter of the law” the specific doctrines which pastors and elders had to believe to become ordained. I was too young to understand all that was at stake, except I knew that my father had willingly moved from a more conservative denomination to become a Presbyterian because he wanted

to serve in “a broad denomination.”

I remember the woman elders in the congregation. I can not imagine a time when those gracious elderly saints would not be permitted to serve communion. The church “survived” what some thought was the usurping of male authority within the home, the church and the society.

I came to understand those issues better in the 1940s during my seminary years. Traditional doctrinal courses were well balanced with courses on Christian ethics, church history and polity. I am proud of the Presbyterian Church for having affirmed the historic principle of our polity that a judicatory has the right to determine the doctrines to be affirmed by each candidate for ordination “as guided by the Confessions of our church.” That movement saved Presbyterians from putting us all into one doctrinal straight jacket!

Some of you can recall the ordination of the first woman as pastor of Word and Sacrament, in the mid 1950s. It was my privilege to have known that pastor and I can witness to her gifts in ministry. Now behold the renewed strength of our ministry because we have opened wide the doors to the ordination of women clergy!

The years rolled by and I joined in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. I was energized in ministry in witnessing the tearing down of the walls of racial segregation within our beloved denomination. Those were years when I felt that the world was turning “right side up” rather than “upside down.” I felt that the church was becoming more relevant and honest – yes, even more Christ-like.

The church is challenged today to become fully inclusive by affirming the gifts of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-

gender persons in ordained ministry. Even though I have had some “growing up” to do in my later years, I now proudly belong to the Covenant Network of Presbyterians, an organization “committed to the full participation of lesbian and gay Presbyterians in the life and ordained leadership of the church.”

As Amy Miracle proclaimed in her sermon, the conference for her was “a life boat ... and a break of dawn.” Professor Stephanie Paulsell stated it was “like mowing a part of the grass that had never been mowed before.” Susan Andrews’ sermon title “Eros and Ethics” presented a healthy analysis of “The Gardens of Eros (Song of Songs) and Ethics (Genesis).” Jack Rogers led a workshop on “How I changed my mind about homosexuality,” and Douglas Nave spoke about “Hard wired? What science can and can’t tell us about sexuality.”

The conference theme “Made in the Image of God: Thinking theologically about sex” was formatted with a collage of reflection groups meeting between the major addresses. These groups provided opportunities for dialogue between young and old, gay and straight, parents and siblings of gay and lesbians – all within a spectrum of theological viewpoints. The video “Turning Point” was premiered and critiqued. The Calhoun family whose story is shared in the video was introduced and thanked for their courage in telling their personal stories. A film crew worked during the conference and will produce a four-part series “The Calling” for adult education in our congregations. The new publication *Far from Home: Tales of Presbyterian Exiles* relates the real life stories of lesbian and gay Presbyterians and their struggle for personal integrity and acceptance.

Not all our questions were answered. As Timothy Luke Johnson said, “We are dealing with a problem, but we are also trying to understand a great mystery. ... Let’s level the playing field, affirming that both gay and straight people need to live by the same rules. Don’t be too



concerned about what other Christians think of us, even though these are tough So what's new for us octogenarians in our churches and communities?

- Older Presbyterians hear a wake-up call: "Get on with the inclusive dimension of the Gospel now or never!" (You don't have many years left!)
- Be open to and challenged by the richness and breadth of our Reformed tradition.
- Listen more carefully to St. Paul's struggle in the urban churches of his day to be able to affirm today the same Gospel amid similar multi-cultural diversity.
- Above all, respond to the voices of our alienated brothers and sisters whom we should treasure for the gifts they can bring to ministry.

Paul Capetz writes: "The church is lagging behind the culture. It will have to change its position in retrospect and make apologies like those that were made for slavery."<sup>2</sup>

Miguel de Unamuno tells of awakening in a small inn high in the Pyrenees Mountains in northern Spain as a violent storm was raging. He asked the inn keeper if this was their usual weather. The answer was a casual comment: "This is the way that dawn comes in the Pyrenees!" Perhaps God needs to shake us awake once in a while to remind us that "the break of dawn" is not always peaceful and serene.

John H. Sinclair  
November, 2004

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Credo*, p. 165

<sup>2</sup> *Far from Home*, p.43

## Why Presbyteries Should Vote Against Proposed Constitutional Amendment 04-E.9.

by Lynne Reade

Proposed Constitutional Amendment 04-E.9. is one of a series of proposals for changes in our Rules of Discipline that grew out of the tragedy of sexual abuse of missionary children in the Congo.

The other proposals are reasonable, but 04-E.9. is seriously flawed. It has nothing to do with actual litigation in the Congo abuses. The proposed changes would allow Prosecuting Committees to appeal the results of any church disciplinary trials they do not like.

That means that an accused person would be placed in jeopardy a second time, even though a Presbytery Judicial Commission or a Session has decided that the accused was "Not Guilty." This is completely contrary to the concept of disciplinary justice in the United States – not only under the Fifth Amendment to the *Constitution of the United States* but also under our own Principles of Church Discipline.

The Fifth Amendment is not directly applicable in our church courts, but it is still instructive in consideration of basic rights of accused persons:

**"... nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; ..."**

Our own *Book of Order* says in the Preamble of the Principles of Church Discipline at D-1.0102:

**"... In all respects, members are to be accorded procedural safeguards and due process, and it is the intention of these rules so to provide. . ."**

Unlike civil cases, secular criminal cases and church disciplinary cases pit the full resources of a governing body against an individual who is charged with committing an offense. That is why there are constitutional protections for the accused such as presumption of innocence, a standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, prohibition against double jeopardy, and others.

I have served on Permanent Judicial Commissions at all levels of our church and have served as Counsel in a number of Disciplinary Cases, including one time on a Prosecuting Committee in a case involving sexual misconduct where a lot went wrong. So I know first-hand that there are problems with our disciplinary system, but Proposed Amendment 04-E.9 is not the answer.

In the future, we may be able to work out a way for a Prosecuting Committee to challenge seriously incorrect rulings of a PJC *before* or *during* trial – something comparable to what is done in secular courts by way of writs. I would like to see that.

But let us not approve a Constitutional Amendment that says, "If after trial a Permanent Judicial Commission or Session decides that an accused person is Not Guilty, the governing body's Prosecuting Committee may just keep on prosecuting the same person in the same case." That is not just, and it does not fit with our Principles of Church Discipline.

**The author:** Ms. Lynne Reade is an attorney who has served on Permanent Judicial Commissions at all levels of our church as well as acting as Counsel in a number of disciplinary cases.

Theological musings

## What It Means To Be Reformed: Some Unsystematic Clues From The *Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

A regular column by Dr. Douglas F. Ottati,  
Professor of Theology, Union Seminary/PSCE

### So we're Reformed. Does it matter?

More than a few Presbyterians today are concerned that we know what it means to be Reformed. They believe that we should be better acquainted with the particular Christian sub-tradition that emerged during the Reformation in Switzerland with the work of Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, Heinrich Bullinger, and the rest. And, of course, part of the reason they are so concerned is that, in modern, mobile, church-switching America, relatively few Presbyterians seem especially well grounded in their particular heritage.

The perceived homogeneity and blandness of much mainstream Protestantism in America probably serves to heighten this concern. After all, if we are in touch with our distinctive Reformed heritage, then at least we won't be exactly like everyone else. There is also a related perception that many Protestants in America today are evangelical, Pentecostal, and Baptist, but relatively few appear to be especially Reformed. So, if we know our Reformed heritage, then perhaps we can offer an alternative and distinctive style of being Christian. Then again, the drive to know what it means to be Reformed is probably also symptomatic of modern life in secular and commercial societies that minimize the deeper and thicker aspects of our traditional, cultural, ethnic, and religious identities and therefore motivate many of us to search for our "roots." (You know something's up when there are firms willing to research your family crest even when your name is Ottati.)

In any case, the call for Presbyterians to become better acquainted with their Reformed heritage is not without its dangers. For one thing, it might be co-opted by a

traditionalism that too easily identifies the truth about God, the world, and ourselves with the thought forms and dogmatisms of an earlier day, and then also demands that we continue to repeat them. An even more serious danger is that it will lead to an unfortunate inversion. Instead of inviting devotion to the living deity to which the tradition points, the call to become better acquainted with our heritage might actually encourage (an idolatrous) loyalty to Reformed tradition itself because this tradition is thought to support other things that we desire, e.g., a secure and distinct identity on the American scene. Maybe this is why some Presbyterians find almost all talk of Reformed tradition and Reformed theology at best irrelevant and at worst deadening.

### Finding focus and flexibility

Still, it is not especially difficult to see how a call to become better acquainted with Reformed tradition can also have positive consequences. Specifically, I think, it may contribute both focus and flexibility to the living witness of the Presbyterian Church in our own time and place.

Although Christian faith claims to apprehend the universal God, our apprehensions of God evidently are not universal but historically particular. This is where focus comes in. Just because we cannot set out from everyplace, our faithful reflections about God, the world, and ourselves always set out from someplace. We need to make use of specific traditions and sub-traditions. When we recognize this, then we understand and appreciate the particularity of the historic ideas, symbols, practices, and assumptions that we use. Then, we value these particular resources because we recognize that they

have helped to shape our peculiar starting point and also to constitute our particular perspective or angle of vision on God, the world, and ourselves.

Increased knowledge of Reformed tradition also contributes flexibility. We cannot attend to this particular sub-tradition without also realizing that there are other Christian sub-traditions, e.g., Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, that sometimes say different things than our own, and from which we also may have much to learn. Again, we cannot become better acquainted with our longer tradition without realizing that the specific varieties of faith and practice now current in our own congregations and assemblies do not comprise the whole of Reformed Christianity. Knowledge of our tradition introduces us to additional ways of being Reformed. Indeed, if we do not artificially reduce the varieties inherent in our longer tradition, then an acquaintance with it will present significant alternatives to many of the ideas, symbols, practices, and assumptions that are currently influential. It will help to keep us from too easily identifying the truth about God, the world, and ourselves with the formulas and thought forms of our present day.

### The *Book of Confessions*

With these points in mind, let me ask you to pick up your copy of the *Book of Confessions*. There is considerably more to Reformed tradition than the documents collected in this book, and a short article cannot do justice to the main themes even of this particular collection. Nevertheless, even an unsystematic tour of the documents that make up this book can help us to become better acquainted with the longer and also quite dynamic theological heritage of Reformed Christianity.

Perhaps the first thing to notice about the *Book of Confessions* is that it is a *book of confessions* (plural). This indicates that *to be Reformed is to be engaged in a conversation with a diverse cloud of witnesses from different places and times*. Indeed, particularly as it remains open to further revisions and additions, the *Book of Confessions* suggests that *to be Reformed is to be engaged in a wide-ranging conversation with a variety of differ-*

ent voices from Nicea to A Brief Statement of Faith, from early church leaders to believers in our own time and beyond. This continuing conversation helps to put us in our place. We realize that ours is not the only circumstance in which Christians have attempted to live faithfully and reflect faithfully on what they believe. We acknowledge that we benefit from the struggles, statements, and reflections of those who have gone before, and we anticipate that still others will take up this same task in the future. In short, we obtain a sense for the dynamic history of the Christian movement in the world, and we are encouraged to recognize that, at all places and times, it is the responsibility of Christians to confess their faith in word and in deed.<sup>1</sup>

A second thing we may note about the *Book of Confessions* (still commenting on its title and its cover) is that it is a collection adopted by the Presbyterian Church (USA). In fact, it comprises Part I of our particular church's constitution. This also suggests something important about what it means to be Reformed. *To be Reformed means to participate within a particular church or denomination within the Reformed family of churches.* It means participating in the Church of Scotland or the Reformed Church of Hungary or the United Church of Christ or the Reformed Church in America or the Presbyterian Church in Korea. Today, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches includes something on the order of 195 churches in 100 countries, each intertwined with its own linguistic, cultural, and political contexts, each deciding on its own theological statements, liturgies, and polity. Reformed churches ask how they can be faithful in the new South Africa. In the Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, and Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, and Samoa, they face questions about appropriate hymns, dancing, and architecture, as they encourage more indigenous and open styles of worship. Others ponder the importance of an ecumenical Christian witness in the Middle East, while still others promote secular values in India. Reformed churches in Canada, Zambia, Australia, and elsewhere have joined with Methodists, claiming that historic differences with Methodists over election, grace, and agency

no longer constitute impediments to unity.

### Built-in diversity

In fact, when we compare it with some other Christian sub-traditions, the Reformed tradition seems rather far-flung, diverse, and loosely wound. It has not been as concentrated, either in its origins or its subsequent developments, as another great Protestant tradition, Lutheranism. There is no single Reformed church, and there is no single, centralized, and authoritative Reformed hierarchy to decide matters of doctrine and life, as there is for Roman Catholics. Instead, there is a plurality of Reformed churches that share family resemblances. There is a dynamic movement that historically has relied on conversations among representatives of different churches, as well as conversations among Reformed centers of learning, in order to articulate relatively common themes, stances, strategies, and beliefs.

The first documents we encounter in the *Book of Confessions* are the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed. These, of course, are not specifically Presbyterian or Reformed documents! They were written many hundreds of years before the Reformed movement and the Presbyterian Church were a gleam in anyone's eye. And their presence at the front of the *Book of Confessions* tells us something more of what it means to be Reformed. *To be Reformed is to be Christian, to participate in a wider and longer community of saints through the ages that is not limited to Reformed Christians.* Indeed, many of the most important things about Reformed Christianity are *not* distinctive at all, but items that we share with other Christians. Among these are the three articles of the Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth . . . and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord . . . And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life . . ."<sup>2</sup>

These three articles have been considered important, not just because they were approved by church councils and committees, but also because they have been thought to summarize important elements articulated in the Bible. And, this brings

us to a point made by the first official standard of Presbyterianism, The Scots Confession of 1560. Councils and their decrees (including all creeds, confessions, catechisms, declarations, and statements of faith) are human traditions, subject to error, and subordinate to the Word of God. Indeed, church polities and orders of worship are also subject to revision, and should not be "appointed for all ages, times, and places."<sup>3</sup> The Confession of 1967 makes a similar point. "Confessions are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. No one type of confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable."<sup>4</sup> *To be Reformed is to understand that good church teaching and theology point beyond themselves toward the Word of God attested in Scripture, to understand that all church teaching and theology is subordinate to the authority of Scripture, and to insist that all church teaching and theology is subject to reform and revision in the light of the Word of God.*<sup>5</sup>

### Rooted in thankfulness

A striking feature of the Heidelberg Catechism is that good works and the Ten Commandments, as well as the Lord's Prayer, are treated in the third section under the rubric of "Thankfulness." This also suggests something about being a Reformed Christian. *To be Reformed is to understand a life of faithfulness, prayer, and worship primarily as our response in thankfulness and gratitude to the gift of God's redeeming grace in Jesus Christ.* It follows, then, that the law is not something that we follow in order to gain credit. Good works are not things that we do in order to merit or deserve salvation. **Grace and salvation are free. This is why good works, morality, and ethics are ways of saying thanks.** Indeed, the law itself becomes our "joy and delight" as it helps to guide us in a good and abundant life of true communion with God in community with others.

To appreciate the importance of this point, consider that people often list very different motives for morality (or reasons for being moral). You may have heard it said that being moral makes us happier or bet-

ter. You may have heard it said that being moral makes us stronger, either individually or as a community. But this is not the message of Reformed Christianity. If you are trying to be moral and good in order to improve yourself or in order to gain credit with God and thus be saved and get to heaven, Reformed Christianity has a word for you. Stop. A truer motive for being moral is simply thankfulness for the gifts and blessings of God. Again, many people seem to think that the primary purpose of prayer is to ask for things that we want. But Reformed Christianity takes another tack. Worship and prayer (which Calvin regarded as ways of keeping in relation with God or in God's company) are not just ways to ask for things and to obtain favors. Like faithful living, they are ways of giving thanks and of praising God.

### Joining committees!?

Heinrich Bullinger's Second Helvetic Confession makes a number of points about the church and its ministry. Here, we learn that ministers are to preach the gospel, administer sacraments, gather together an assembly for worship, catechize or instruct. Commend the needs of the poor, visit the sick, and so on.<sup>6</sup> We also learn that it is most necessary that ecclesiastical meetings be held for public worship, to make collections for the poor, to pay the church's expenses, and to maintain good society.<sup>7</sup> All of this indicates something rather important. ***To be Reformed is to look after the church and its ministry, and to engage in certain regular and specific institutional tasks of the church.*** It is not just to meet in close-knit communities with good friends. It is not just to stay at home and pray and study the Bible in private. It is not just to watch a church service on TV or listen to one on the radio. ***It is also to participate in meetings and committees.*** It is also to discharge appointed tasks and functions.

### Living all of life (including public life) to the glory of God

The Westminster Confession of Faith, in a much-revised section on the civil government, says that God ordains officials to exercise their offices and powers (including the sword) for the public good.<sup>8</sup>

A discussion of civil government was a feature of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* from the first edition of 1536. The Theological Declaration of Barmen, which was written in response to Nazi interventions in church affairs, is also concerned with the appropriate roles and functions of both church and state.<sup>9</sup> Among the statements it makes is the following. "We reject the false doctrine that the State, over and above its special commission, should and could become the single totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well." The Confession of 1967 comments on then-current public and political challenges in American society as well as on the international scene, e.g., racism and discrimination, war and the arms race, poverty, and the appropriate ordering of sexual relationships between women and men.<sup>10</sup>

These features of these documents intimate something more of what it means to be Reformed. ***To be Reformed is to participate faithfully (both critically and constructively, both prophetically and realistically) in public life and institutions, to be faithful stewards of justice, civil government, and society.*** This distinguishes Reformed Christianity from some other Christian sub-traditions which maintain that one cannot be a faithful Christian and also undertake offices that wield coercive powers as well as sometimes violent means, e.g., a judge, a lawyer, a political leader, or a soldier.

One of the most well known theological affirmations of Presbyterianism comes from the first question and answer of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. "Q. 1. What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever." Or, as we may say today, "Q. 1. What is the chief end of the human being? A. The chief end of the human being is to glorify God, and enjoy God forever." The point here is fundamental. ***To be Reformed is to affirm that human life is appropriately oriented and directed toward God.*** In explanation, we might observe that human life is always devoted to something, and that our objects of devotion, e.g., the nation, the race, inevitably found postures and stances, e.g., nationalism, racism, that orient and shape our practical living. ***The claim, then, is that human***

***life is appropriately ordered when it is centered on God rather than on one or another limited and finite reality. Other things that we value, e.g., the nation, the race, education, family, need to be estimated and understood within the frame of this primary, orienting devotion. For, to center our devotion and our life on a limited or finite reality is actually to turn that reality into a false god or an idol, with predictably negative consequences.***

### A confession made in the present and informed by the past that looks to the future

Finally, we may observe that in the last document of the *Book of Confessions*, A Brief Statement of Faith, the three articles of the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed appear once again. Only now they are put in a different order, articulated in somewhat different terms, and developed with somewhat different emphases. Consider, for example, the attention that the Brief Statement gives to the life and ministry of Jesus. "Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe in the gospel."<sup>11</sup> Now turn back to the second article of the Apostles' Creed. Where is the consideration of Jesus' life and ministry here? It reduces to the comma that separates the phrase "born of the Virgin Mary" from "suffered under Pontius Pilate." So, the last document in the *Book of Confessions* clearly recalls the first two, but it also differs from them in quite significant ways.

This brings us to a final, summary point. ***To be Reformed is to participate in a wide-ranging and dynamic tradition of faithful confession and reflection, to learn from and to value past witnesses, but also to engage the present and look toward the future in obedience to the living God.*** As we have seen, the church is called to confess its faith in every age and circumstance, including our own. In responding to this call, it values and is informed by past tradition, but it does not merely repeat what others have said. It makes its

confessions in a manner that addresses present persons, present contexts, circumstances, challenges, and realities. It tries to articulate a treasure that remains ever ancient and ever new.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This point is made in the first line of The Confession of 1967, *Book of Confessions*, 9.01.

<sup>2</sup> The statements in quotations combine the language of the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds in BOC, 1.1-1.3, 2.1-3.

<sup>3</sup> BOC, 3.20.

<sup>4</sup> BOC, 9.03.

<sup>5</sup> Secondly, especially as we now consider it within our *Book of Confessions*, it also seems important to note that the Scots Confession of 1560 never functioned alone. Other documents were also used and approved, including Calvin's Geneva Catechism of 1545, the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563, and the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566. Indeed, John Knox's original *Book of Order* for the Church of Scotland did not include the Scots Confession, but the confession adopted by the English-speaking congregation at Geneva in 1556. And, the first Scottish *Book of Discipline* required communicants to be familiar not only with the Scots Confession but also with the Apostles' Creed. That is, the Scots Confession of 1560 was put to use in a manner that supported a rather wide-ranging conversation with Christians from other places and times, a conversation not unlike the one supported by our present *Book of Confessions*.

<sup>6</sup> BOC, 5.163.

<sup>7</sup> BOC, 5.211.

<sup>8</sup> BOC, 6.127-6.130. See also The Scots Confession (BOC, 3.24).

<sup>9</sup> BOC, 8.20-8.24.

<sup>10</sup> BOC, 9.43-9.47.

<sup>11</sup> BOC, 10.2.



Don't miss  
our 2005  
Ghost Ranch seminar!

Details are on  
page 29.

Continued from Editor's Spot, page 3

So now more than ever we face a challenge – to be *faithful* to God's call to stand against the idols of our time, and to be *hopeful* as our Palestinian sisters and brothers teach us (page 14).

We can be hopeful that through the troubles people endure, God can bring true liberation and justice. And we, the privileged, may share in their hope if we keep learning to share in their struggle.

Continued from "Dialogue," page 18

the Lutheran report gives further support to the "local option" approach. The report urges a willingness to trust one another as the basis for this shift. The problem is that this depends on the willingness of each side to trust the other – while the right has been quite clear that it is not prepared to do that.

### What Other Issues Might Affect the Debate?

We may be sure that there will be debates about the "ordination question." But we ought to receive early warning about two other issues that could change the dynamics of this and other debates.

- Courts in several states are calling into question the "trust" provision, deciding that the congregation that pays for the church ought to be able to keep it, especially if it has legal authority (as in California) to change trust agreements. John H. Adams has done a good job giving background and analysis in the *Layman*.

Some people will be glad to ease the way for dissident congregations to leave the PC(USA). But mostly we will hear, once again, the plea that we not "drive out" conservative congregations by making changes in ordination standards but continue to temporize.

- The New Wineskins Task Force has issued a plan for a more flexible, mission-oriented church for the new century. It has many characteristics of the "functional" church that progressives were promoting in the Sixties. But there are two dangerous features in the New Wineskins program. First, it seems to encourage giving "affinity groups" the powers of governing bodies. The result would be that these bodies would become much more homogeneous than they are now. Second, it wants to accept only those persons who subscribe to "defined theological and ethical boundaries," with an "unambiguous, biblically-derived statement of orthodox and reformed faith essentials."

The New Wineskins approach is quite paradoxical, then. It seeks greater spontaneity, but it also seeks greater uniformity. The combination of the two could lead to a repeat of what happened in the Southern Baptist Convention, when its congregational and non-creedal orientation was strangely transmogrified into acceptance of rigid, uniform dogma. Most Presbyterians can be expected to respond to the New Wineskins proposals with scepticism, for they have seen, over and over, how Presbyterian polity, by requiring deliberation in all the affected bodies, makes it much more difficult to make hasty decisions or erase diversity. But this is a debate that may be coming soon.

## The divestment issue in the PC(USA) - and how your voice can be heard

by Doug King

The Rev. Nile Harper spoke to an adult church school class recently about recent tensions that arose after the actions of last summer's General Assembly regarding Israel and Palestine.

Specifically, the Assembly called for the office on Mission Responsibility through Investments (MRTI) to initiate a process leading toward selective, phased divestment from companies doing business with Israel in ways that support the military occupation, the construction of the wall of separation, and the demolition of Palestinian homes. Dr. Harper has been involved in the discussions both because of his position as chair of the church's Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, and because he travelled last October with other members of the committee to visit Israel and Palestine, along with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. One bit of fallout from the Assembly's action has been attacks on the church's long-standing program of using its investments to seek greater justice and peace through the working of the market.

There is a nationwide campaign, promoted by several Jewish organizations and by some Presbyterians, to overturn the divestment proposal. There has also been concern because two members of the church's national staff, both of whom were on the visit to the Middle East, were summarily fired by the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council. Serious questions are being raised about the process by which this was done. It is not consistent with Presbyterian polity to dismiss staff members without due process and full review.

In the discussion someone asked "What can we do?" That is, how can we make our voices heard in protest both against the firing of the staff members, and in support of the church's program of divestment from companies that engage in behavior which undermines peace and justice?

Perhaps the best way to be heard is to communicate concerns to the four top officers of the Presbyterian Church, through letters or e-mail - both to question some of the actions that have been taken, and especially to support the program for responsible investments, which is called Mission Responsibility through Investments (or MRTI). If you want to let your voice be heard, here are the people who should hear from you:

For more information on this issue (both divestment and the staff dismissals) go to  
[http://witherspoonsociety.org/2004/  
comments\\_on\\_staff\\_firings.htm](http://witherspoonsociety.org/2004/comments_on_staff_firings.htm)

### You might write to the General Assembly Council through its chair:

The Rev. Nancy Kahaian, Chair, General Assembly Council  
121 West Ninth Street  
Michigan City, IN 46360-3503  
E-mail: [nkahaian@adsnet.com](mailto:nkahaian@adsnet.com)

The GAC will be receiving the report on the staff firings in March, and should hear from people who are concerned about the Executive Director's action.

### You might also contact any of these officers and staff members of the PC(USA):

The mailing address for all of these people is  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202

Mr. John J. Detterick, Executive Director General Assembly Council

E-mail: [jdetterick@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:jdetterick@ctr.pcusa.org)

Mr. Detterick was the person who dismissed the two staff members: Kathy Lueckert, his Deputy Executive Director, and Peter Sulyok, Coordinator of Social Witness Policy.

The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk

E-mail: [ckirkpat@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:ckirkpat@ctr.pcusa.org)

He has been deeply involved in the interfaith dialogues with Jewish leaders at the national level about the policies of the GA in relation to the Middle East, including the initiative for selective, phased divestment.

Rick Ufford-Chase, Moderator of the 216<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

E-mail: [ga\\_mod@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:ga_mod@ctr.pcusa.org)

As the top elected officer of the church, he has inevitably been drawn into the debates. He is director of the excellent BorderLinks program in Tucson, Arizona, and deeply committed to social justice and the peaceful resolution of conflict. As the top elected officer of the church, he has inevitably been drawn into the debates.

### Also:

The Rev. William Somplatsky-Jarman, Associate for Mission Responsibility through Investment

E-mail: [bsomplat@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:bsomplat@ctr.pcusa.org)

A few words of support and encouragement for his program, which has been effective in encouraging changes in corporate behavior on many fronts.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### Two recent books offer alarming views of growing US control of the world – and the heavy price we're all paying

by Jane Hanna

Sometimes being well informed about a lot of issues does not necessarily help understand what inner workings are shaping the events of our time. I have recently read several books that connected the dots for me, that have revealed veiled truths about the United States' role in the world. I recommend them as "must-reads" for making sense of current events.

***Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*** by John Perkins (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 2004) is an engrossing account of his participation in the hidden mechanics of U.S. imperial control of other countries. He shares his journey from a willing participant in devious policies to becoming a committed advocate for the rights of oppressed people and the integrity of the environment.

Perkins relates the collaboration between major corporations and our government (which he calls a corporatocracy) to manipulate and rob poor countries of their resources and limited wealth. It provides a very different picture from the one we hear from political and some religious pulpits. This will dash any notions you might have of a benevolent, moral U. S. trying to bring democracy to the rest of the world.

An economic hit man (EHM), as he describes his role, is a highly paid professional who clandestinely convinces poor countries to take out huge loans from the I.M.F., World Bank and other large U.S. banks for mammoth development projects, loans the EHM knows can never be fully repaid.

The money never leaves the U.S. It is funneled to the corporations receiving the construction contracts (Halliburton, Bechtel, G.E. and other huge corporations) and the wealthy, corrupt elite in

the target nations who accept the agreement for their own profit. The projects (ports, roads, industrial parks, dams, shopping centers) tend only to serve the rich and make them richer. The poor become poorer and are left to pay the never-ending interest on the debts at the expense of education, health care, food and agricultural subsidies.

Perkins describes how he was originally recruited by the National Security Agency, the nation's largest and little-known spy agency, and encouraged to join the Peace Corps where he served three years in Ecuador. It was a private consulting firm that then hired and trained him for his work as an EHM. He was told at the beginning that it was dirty business, that once he got into it, he could not get out.

This was just the beginning of an elaborate scheme that has funneled control of much of the world's resources and wealth to a powerful few.

Learning how this system operates clears up numerous puzzling questions about our various invasions from Panama to Iraq, U.S. military confrontations in Central America, and the overthrow of leaders in Iran, Chile, and Guatemala. Anyone valuing truth and the need to know must read this book.



Published shortly before 9/11, **Chalmers Johnson's *Blowback*** (Henry Holt and Company, NY, 2000) first revealed the costs and consequences of our nation's imperial overreach. This book was an early wake-up call to those concerned about U.S. extension of military power around the world and efforts to enforce a global economic system on its own terms. Pointing to the way misguided policies sow the seeds for disaster,

Johnson's warning of an eventual "pay-back" was realized in the 9/11 events.

**Johnson's most recent book, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*** (Henry Holt and Company, NY, 2004), describes the United States, reminiscent of ancient Rome, as struggling with the consequences of permanent global military overreach. This system, like the one Perkins describes, enriches the elite policy makers at the expense of everyone else. The strategies described by these authors and the names named reveal how and by whom they are connected.

Persuasively and powerfully, Chalmers Johnson has issued an alarm that the militarist empire of the United States threatens to destroy us as a democratic republic. The extensive power of those who control military/corporate/government decisions should be of ultimate concern to us all.

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## Covenant Network events announced

The Covenant Network has announced plans for a number of events this summer and fall, along with a national conference in November.

Southeast Regional Conference,  
Apr 1-2 in Davidson, NC.

"A Church for Our Time"  
at Ghost Ranch, June 26-July 3

"A Church for Our Time"  
at Montreat, Aug 7-12

Northwest Regional Conference  
in Seattle on Oct 15

2005 Covenant Conference  
in Memphis, Nov 3-5

For more information, go to the Covenant Network web site at  
[http://  
www.covenantnetwork.org/  
events.htm](http://www.covenantnetwork.org/events.htm)

Scroll down the page to find the event that interests you.

**A book review:****BLUE GOLD; The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water****By Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke**The New Press, New York, N.Y.  
2002, 278 pages

Reviewed by Alfred T. Davies, Cincinnati, Ohio

Fresh water is finite. But because water and sewer services are so available and inexpensive for us it is difficult to realize the realities about which this book speaks. So, listen: "Available fresh water amounts to less than one-half of one percent of all the water on earth. The rest is sea water." The hard news is this: "humanity is depleting, diverting, and polluting the planet's fresh water resources . . . that every species on earth . . . is in mortal danger." (page 5). The urgent, and new, question raised in this book is, does fresh water, now so scarce, belong to the earth – that is, to "the commons," as part of the public domain, or is it a commodity to be owned and sold for profit? What has brought this question to the forefront is the 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon of economic globalization which considers everything for sale.

The first part of the book describes "the Water Crisis" created by the exploding world population, increased per-capita consumption, water intensive industry including irrigation on a massive scale, pollution and over-exploitation of the river systems. The picture is bleak!

Enter the transnational corporations, several of which have targeted water as a commodity. Ten global water lords are described. Support for their ambitions is provided by powerful global organizations such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. The authors describe how water can be moved from water-abundant parts of the world to water-starved portions. Pipe lines, super-tankers, grand canals, huge water bags,

and what is already common - bottled water everywhere. If these huge enterprises were motivated out of humanitarian concerns to make the whole world a better place to live and more fair for all living things, we might rejoice. But, not so. The motive is profit.

In the third part of the book the authors outline ways citizens and communities can – and must – fight back. They present the ethical questions to consider, followed by ten principles, and finally offer ten steps to water security. Undergirding all of their argument is the principle that "water belongs to the earth and all its species."

This crisis, so little known today, is far more urgent than "the black gold" (oil) crisis because "blue gold" (water) is essential for survival. That may sound over-stated, but the story presented in this book makes a very compelling case. I recommend it.

**For more information and action on water rights issues:**

The Water Rights Project of the Polaris Institute (a Canadian organization) carries on critical research and analysis on the world's largest water corporations, their most influential lobby groups, and the for-profit water agenda and strategy they shape at a global level. The project has published *Inside the Bottle*, a book detailing how four large companies – Nestlé, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola and Danone – dominate the growing bottled water industry. They pay little or next to nothing for the water they take from rural springs or public water systems; turn "water" into "water" through elaborate treatment processes, to produce a product that is not necessarily safer than tap water; market it to an unsuspecting public as "pure, healthy, safe drinking water," and sell it at prices hundreds and even thousands of times more costly than ordinary tap water.

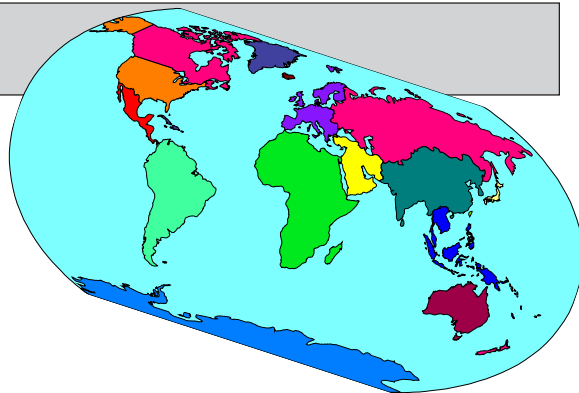
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If you find books mentioned here or elsewhere that you want to get for yourself, try going to the Witherspoon website, to <http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/books.htm>

From there you can search for what you want and order it – usually at a discount! – from Amazon.com. And Witherspoon will get a little percentage of the price of each book you order. So help yourself and help us all at the same time!

And when you see books mentioned on our website, you'll usually find a link to order them directly.

# WitherspoonNews



The Witherspoon Society  
in cooperation with the Worldwide Ministries Division  
and Stony Point Center  
present

## Dancing with God: Global Mission on the Edge

September 9 – 11 (Friday through Sunday), 2005, at Stony Point Center

**How does our church's involvement in worldwide mission serve the cause of justice, and help bring peace to the world?**

Join this gathering of justice-oriented, mission-minded Presbyterians. Join with emerging church leaders, mission co-workers, young adult volunteers in mission, along with our global mission partners, for three days of learning, celebrating, renewing, visioning, and dancing with God and with each other.

We will **worship** together, **share our own experiences** in mission, hear **reports from the mission co-workers currently on global mission assignment**, and explore the **Biblical roots** for mission and its relationship to ministries of justice. Throughout the conference, there will be an ongoing "**oral history project**" as stories from areas of mission are told and recorded for future generations. Utilizing a modified "Open Space Technology" process, participants and leaders will together seek **discernment regarding mission challenges** confronting the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and begin to formulate responses that are both practical and prophetic. (*"Open Space Technology" is a self-initiated, self-administered workshop/seminar strategy. Any participants can initiate a workshop/seminar offering in a very fluid, open and creative process, rather than having to choose from pre-set workshop options, as in most other conferences. It is an ultimate democracy of ideas.*)

Confirmed key leadership at the time of the printing includes a video visit from our moderator, **Rick Ufford-Chase** followed by teleconferencing; **Marian McClure** of Worldwide Ministries Division as opening preacher; **Gary Cook** for history of Presbyterian mission; **Tony Aja** for Bible study on mission. Many more are just a half step away from clear confirmation. The Friday night mission celebration culminating in a **program of songs and dances from global mission fields** is not to be missed, as well as Witherspoon's *sine qua non* **Saturday night dance**.

COST (including registration, program, room and board)			
\$240 (if registered by June 1)	Commuters:		\$140
\$260 (if registered by August 1)			\$160
\$280 (after that)			\$180

Scholarships are available, with returning Young Adult Volunteers receiving first priority. This will be a unique event, so don't let the expense deter you. Together we'll find a way to get you there.

For more information, questions and suggestions for creating this conference, please contact

Rev. Trina Zelle, the Chair of the Design Team  
602-743-6976      zellerev@earthlink.net  
Rev. Charles Ryu, Program Director at Stony Point Center  
845-786-5674, ext. 111      cryu@stonypointcenter.org

**Register soon to save money!  
Just use the registration  
form on page 30!**

# WHAT'S A PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN TO DO? Get to ..

## Ghost Ranch Seminar — July 25-31 PATHS TO A JUST AND PEACEFUL WORLD

In partnership with The Witherspoon Society,  
Presbyterian Peace Fellowship and Presbyterians for Restoring Creation

It's time for serious discussion amongst those of us whose faith was formed by Presbyterian churches teaching quite different scriptural interpretations than those now being touted as "Christian values."

It has been said over and over, "9/11 changed everything." Unfortunately, the change has been to accelerate the very policies that have nurtured terrorist response. What should have happened was discernment and awakening to the unintended consequences that have arisen through decades of expanding U.S. economic and military global power. Instead, our nation's response has created the fuel for more intense anti-Americanism.

As citizens, as Christians, we have a responsibility to know what is being done in our name, with our money, with the lives and skills of our people, and the resources on which life depends. In the Presbyterian Church of my youth, we were taught that sins of omission are as serious as sins of commission. It was considered a sin of omission to refuse, resist or fail to know and understand what the leaders of our institutions enact domestically and around the world. I recall excuses heard from many German citizens at the end of WW II: "Don't blame us, we didn't know." They didn't speak up soon enough and became either too fearful to "know" or profited enough from government policies to overlook what they might have known. Both fear and bribery work well to keep people from asking too many questions or from engaging in protest activities.

The truth is the United States has become an economic empire, maintaining

control throughout the world with military installations that gird the planet. An objective study of U.S. history reveals an ever-growing trend toward world supremacy. There was a missed opportunity to demobilize at the end of the Cold War, but the U.S. unwisely committed to maintaining and strengthening its global empire.

The present administration intends to control space as well.

A sizeable segment of Christian America has been co-opted for these goals. This reality requires that progressive Christians study, learn, discuss, speak out about policies, practices, and decisions that harm others. With knowledge, people are equipped for moral engagement in political decision-making.

In some congregations it is difficult for people to find others willing to grapple with controversial subjects. **Ghost Ranch** is one place where people gather to do this. For the past six years, The Witherspoon Society and Presbyterian Peace Fellowship have coordinated seminars to provide opportunity for biblical study and reflection, discussion and discernment of peace and justice concerns. In the process of our week together, group and individual actions are planned that both energize and give support to efforts back in our communities.

The seminar for 2005, "Paths to a Just and Peaceful World," will begin July 25 when we will examine U.S. imperialism, looking at Colombia as an example of the impact of U.S. injection of its military and economic power around the world.

**Mark Lewis Taylor**, Professor of Theology and Culture at Princeton Theological Seminary, will present an understanding of the Gospel as having a counter-imperial vision of life, not only geopolitically but also in dimensions of gender and racial injustice and economic exploitation.

Dr. Taylor will also address an historical perspective on how the present Christian Right and ideas of protestant righteous empire influence the present resurgence of U.S. nationalism. He will expand upon our present imperial behavior by showing the links between Neocons, corporate powers and the Christian right. He suggests there may be hope in the very vulnerability of U.S. imperial ambitions, particularly related to U.S. hegemony in Latin America.

**Maria Arroyo de Kemmerle**, Latin America and Caribbean Coordinator for the PCUSA Worldwide Ministries Division, and **Anne Barstow**, who has made many trips to Latin America (three to Colombia), will provide a cogent picture of the relationship of the U.S. to our southern neighbors. The 2001 seminar with Alice Winters, PCUSA mission worker in Colombia, has continued to engage our organizations in an ongoing relationship to Colombian Presbyterians. What we have learned about U.S. policies and our subsequent connectedness and advocacy will be shared as examples of resistance, of peaceful alternatives.

**The point of these seminars is to educate ourselves, engage in biblically inspired discussion and planning for meaningful response.**

**PLANTO ATTEND:** Catalogs, including registration forms, are available at [www.ghost ranch.org](http://www.ghost ranch.org). Printed copies can be requested by calling 800-821-5145 or 877-804-4678.

From Jane Hanna  
E-mail: [mjhfos@aol.com](mailto:mjhfos@aol.com)

## REGISTRATION FORM

### Dancing with God: Global Mission on the Edge September 9-11, 2005

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_ (Email) \_\_\_\_\_

Church \_\_\_\_\_  
 Presbytery \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate Preference: \_\_\_\_\_

(Rooms accommodate two people. If you want to choose a roommate, please be sure each of you requests the other.)

**Special needs:**

Dietary needs: \_\_\_ Vegetarian \_\_\_ Vegan \_\_\_ Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Accommodations needs (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

My hopes for this conference are: \_\_\_\_\_

#### TRAVEL INFORMATION

**(Register today even if you don't have the following information. Just make a copy of this form and send it to Stony Point Center no later than August 19.)**

**General Arrival and Departure**

\_\_\_ Arriving on Fri. Sep. 9 morning and leaving Sun. Sep. 11 afternoon  
 \_\_\_ Arriving earlier than Sep. 9 and need overnight accommodation  
 Date and time of arrival \_\_\_\_\_ Extra nights of lodging \_\_\_  
 \_\_\_ Staying after the conference is over on Wed. Sept 11  
 Date and time of departure \_\_\_\_\_ Extra nights of lodging \_\_\_

**Stony Point Center can provide transportation from airports and train stations, if you arrive before 11:00 AM on Sept. 9, and depart after 3:30 PM on Sept. 11. Otherwise you may have to pay more.**

**Travelling by air**

**Arrival** Date \_\_\_\_\_ Airport \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Airline \_\_\_\_\_ Flight Number \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Reserve your flight so that you can arrive before 11:00 AM)*

**Departure** Date \_\_\_\_\_ Airport \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Airline \_\_\_\_\_ Flight Number \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Reserve your flight so that you depart after 3:30 PM; there will be a surcharge for airport rides for earlier flights on September 11)*

**Traveling by train**

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Station \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_ Station \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Traveling by bus.**

\_\_\_ **Driving.**

#### PAYMENT INFORMATION

*Registration, room and meals:*

\$240 by June 1  
 \$260 by August 1  
 \$280 after that

*Commuters:*

\$140 by June 1  
 \$160 by August 1  
 \$180 after that  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Extra nights of lodging  
 \$40 x \_\_\_\_\_ days = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Airport/Train Station pickup**

EWR, LGA, trains \$30 One-way, \$60 R/T  
 JFK \$40 One-way, \$80R/T  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My additional donation for the program:  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment Method**

\_\_\_ Check enclosed  
 (Payable to Stony Point Center)  
 \_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ MasterCard  
 Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail your payment with the completed registration form to:**

**Registrar  
 Stony Point Center  
 17 Crickettown Road  
 Stony Point, NY 10980  
 FAX: 845-786-5919**

# The Next Network News

This issue of *Network News*, as it has developed, focuses mostly on various discussions, mostly from our Reformed perspective, on America's use (or abuse) of its military and economic power around the world.

**Deadline for submissions is February 15, 2005**

**Please let us hear from you!**

*Network News* Editor  
 Doug King  
 1418 Clarendon Drive  
 Wayzata, MN 55391-2103  
 H-952-473-2711  
 FAX: 952-473-2716  
 E-mail: dougking2@aol.com

While those global adventures may distract us from pressings needs here in the U.S., we hope our next issue can give them the attention they need. And we'd like your help!

What are you seeing of needs and possibilities in American society today? Social Security and Medicare leap to mind. But how about education, medical care in general, environmental concerns, the quality of life ... and there's plenty more!

We hope you'll share your experiences, observations, knowledge and analysis!

## Is it time to renew your membership?

Check the date on your mailing label to know when your membership expires. You can send in your renewal a little early, and avoid our nagging letters!

Just use the return envelope in the center of this newsletter, or contact our Membership Coordinator:

John E. Harris  
 First Presbyterian Church  
 77 Boggess Street  
 Buckhannon, WV 26201  
 H - 304-473-1929

E-mail: JOHN.HARRIS1@ecunet.org

And if you're all paid up, consider a gift membership for someone who shares your commitment to peace and justice!

## Order extra copies!!

If you find the *News* helpful, others may find it so, too. Order as many as you can use!

- For 1 to 5 copies (of the same or different issues) .... \$2.00 each
- For 6 to 10 copies .... \$1.50 each
- For 11 or more copies .... \$1.25 each

We'll pay the postage unless you want express shipment. Use this form to order, or call Doug King at (952) 473-2711, fax (952) 473-2716.

**Please send me**

- \_\_\_\_\_ copies of this issue
- \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the Fall 2004 issue, after the election, and dealing with **Israel/Palestine and divestment** (*only a few left!*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the Summer 2004 issue, reporting on the 216<sup>th</sup> GA
- \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the Winter 2004 issue on the New American Empire
- \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the Winter, 2002 issue, with material from the Stony Point Conference on the Confession of 1967
- \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the special Fall '99 issue on **Working for Economic Justice**

(For other back issues, please call or send a note.)

**I would like to recruit new members, so please send:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ copies of the Witherspoon Society membership brochure, or
- \_\_\_\_\_ **one copy** of a master sheet so I can make my own copies.  
 (No charge for these!!)

**TOTAL: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

My check to "Witherspoon Society" is enclosed

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (in case of questions)

**Return this form to:**  
 Doug King, editor  
 1418 Clarendon Drive  
 Wayzata, MN 55391-2103

To receive regular e-mail notes of additions to the Witherspoon website, just send a note to



dougking2@aol.com

Please put "web updates" in the subject line.

## OFFICERS OF THE WITHERSPOON SOCIETY

### President

Kenneth R. Smith  
28770 Somerset Place  
Lathrop Village, MI 48076  
H - 248 - 569-1223  
E-mail: kennethsmith@ameritech.net

### Issues Analyst

Eugene TeSelle  
2007 Linden Avenue  
Nashville, TN 37212  
H - 615 - 297-2629  
E-mail: teselle@bellsouth.net

### Members at Large

Celeste Lasich  
1507 Westwood Dr  
Marshall, MN 56258  
H - 507 - 292-0221  
W - 507 - 532-9679  
E-mail: cmlasich@yahoo.com

### Vice President

Jake Young  
North Anderson Community Church,  
Presbyterian  
4200 Liberty Highway  
Anderson, SC 29621  
H - 864 - 231-8067  
W - 864 - 225-3575  
E-mail: jakeayoung@yahoo.com

### Membership Coordinator

John E. Harris  
First Presbyterian Church  
77 Boggess Street  
Buckhannon, WV 26201  
H - 304 - 473-1929  
E-mail: JOHN.HARRIS1@ecunet.org

Jennifer Stone  
154 Roberta Drive  
Memphis, TN 38112  
W - 662 - 425-6962  
H - 901 - 454-1852  
E-mail: STONEJemail@aol.com

### Treasurer

David Zuverink  
15860 Poppy Lane, Unit 5  
Los Gatos, CA 95030  
H - 408 - 395-0905  
E-mail: zuverink@verizon.net

### Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary

Doug King  
1418 Clarendon Drive  
Wayzata, MN 55391-2103  
H - 952 - 473-2711  
Fax - 952 - 473-2716  
E-mail: dougking2@aol.com

Vanessa Aja-Sigmon  
5539 S. Kimbark Ave., # 2 E  
Chicago, IL 60637  
H - 773 - 947-1317  
E-mail: vanessa@hotmail.com

### Secretary/Communicator

Trina Zelle  
169 W. LaVieve Lane  
Tempe, AZ 85284  
H - 480 - 458-0536  
W - 602 - 264-1221  
E-mail: zellerev@earthlink.net

Charles McLain  
932 E. 28th Street  
Oakland, CA 94610-4017  
W - 510 - 451-8636  
H - 510 - 261-4696  
E-mail: McPresby@aol.com

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