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**Mennonites,  
Catholics,  
and the  
Peace of Christ**



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## about this issue

Because the Catholic Peace Fellowship has its headquarters in Northern Indiana, we have been graced to live close to, and work closely with, many Mennonite friends. Some of us have been working with Mennonites for quite some time, since the early eighties when the Christian peace movement in this country was focused on resisting the arms race by witnessing to Jesus. The same was true during the First Gulf War, when Mennonites from around the country and in Europe took the lead in supporting military conscientious objectors. Since the attacks of September 11, Mennonites have made it their business to get in the way of war, particularly in their work in sending out Christian Peacemaking to Palestine, Iraq, wherever peace can be made. More recently, and closer to home, we have enjoyed the presence of Mennonites in animating the activities of peacemaking here in "Michiana," as our region is called. And we in the Catholic Peace Fellowship have been the beneficiary of a close Mennonite friend, Biff Weidman, who rents out our space for a song. In ways temporal and spiritual, we are blessed with the Mennonites whose life and work we are privileged to share.

In this issue, we have focused on the fruitful relationship between Catholics and Mennonites that has been patiently cultivated over the past thirty or so years. Needless to say, the name John Howard Yoder appears many times in the following pages, as does the name Stanley Hauerwas, who has done so much to disseminate Yoder's theology to those beyond the Mennonite world. Margaret Pfeil and Biff Weidman offer a reflection on the first ten years of Catholic-Mennonite dialogue undertaken under the auspices of Bridgefolk. Alan Kreider offers a reflection on the peace witness of the early church, while Michael Heintz an analysis of Augustine's thought that highlights its continuity with the early church, and its discontinuity with those who try to recruit him to justify modern warfare. We have tried both to celebrate and to probe the common ground between Catholics and Mennonites, knowing that it has already been forged by our common Lord and Savior: Jesus Christ.—Michael J. Baxter





# The Radical Reformation and Radical Catholicism

In another political context, it might be taken as a sign of the apocalypse: liberal peace activists praising a war president, pro-life marchers celebrating a pro-abortion politician. Yet in our nation's public square, such occurrences are no surprise, a sign of the incoherence of partisan politics in the United States today. The second example cited above occurred in January 2010 at the March for Life, days after Republican Scott Brown had won a Senate seat in Massachusetts. Speakers hailed the start of a Republican resurgence. The problem: Brown is a staunch supporter of abortion.

And on the so-called Left? In fall 2008, with the presidential election in full tilt, people committed to peace campaigned mightily (expending enormous time, energy, and money) to put Barack Obama in office, assuming he would put the United States on a course of peacemaking. This assumption has been steadily whittled down by a series of depressing events: dubious appointments, ambiguous policies on torture and Guantanamo Bay, mixed messages regarding Iraq, a Nobel Peace Prize speech in defense of war, and a decision for more troops in Afghanistan.

How long will the posturing of political parties continue to dupe us, especially us people of faith? The danger of placing too much hope in worldly politics is not that we will despair of politicians' foibles, but that we will get used to them, learn to tolerate them.

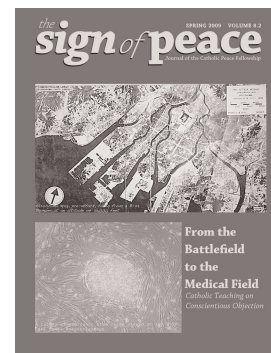
Is there any alternative to the morally incoherent version of politics that prevails in the United States today? There is, and a clue as to what it would look like is provided by the Amish, the Mennonites, and other heirs to the Anabaptist tradition. These brothers and sisters of ours stretch our limited imaginations of what it means to be political. Instead of *having* a social ethic, they *are* a social ethic, they *embody* a social ethic, and in doing so, they show us how to witness to the Kingdom of God in the midst of the *imperium* we call "our nation," the United States of America. They help us imagine possibilities of common life and work that are both political and personalist. It is no surprise, then, that many in the peace movement look to the traditional peace churches for counter recruitment materials, for GI counseling, and a level of commitment to peace that signifies their identity not primarily as citizens but as resident aliens in a country that pledges allegiance to a flag before God. Perhaps they can remind us Catholics in the United States, those whose lives are not yet fully absorbed into the national ethos, of how to begin resisting it, and provide an alternative to it.

We are not recommending a "withdrawal" from political life, a charge that is often unfairly levied against the Mennonites. Rather, we are saying that Catholics, and all Christians, should engage in political life in a way that embodies the life of Jesus. Granted, a lot of bad politics is being practiced these days in the name of "Jesus." But the problem here, as John Howard Yoder often noted, is not too much Jesus, but not enough Jesus. And granted, no religious community is perfect, Mennonites included. But Catholics have a lot to learn from Mennonites about how not to confuse the politics of Christian discipleship with the politics of the Empire. The exemplary witness of the Anabaptist tradition and the historic peace churches, their story and their theology, can challenge us to rethink what political engagement looks like. And this rethinking can help us become a community of disciples that embodies a life and witness that provides a much-needed alternative to the politicking of our times. With the inspiration and help of the Radical Reformation, we can to embody a form of life that is new, or that is so old that it looks like new: a genuinely Radical Catholicism.

—THE EDITORS



# Letters in Response to “From the Battlefield to the Medical Field”



Dear Editors:

Congratulations on your issue drawing connections among the issues of war, abortion and conscientious objection.

As someone who worked for Cardinal Bernardin for six years when he was chair of the US bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, I can say with some confidence that this is the kind of consistent and stereotype-shattering reflection on moral issues that he yearned to see. The theme of a consistent ethic of life was never intended to downplay any issue involving attacks on innocent human life, but to encourage Catholics working on some life issues to appreciate and help those who work on others. Our demand that human life be revered at every stage and in every circumstance calls on people at all points of the political spectrum to question the blind spots in any political party or faction in which they may find themselves.

My thanks to the editors for reminding us again that our respect for God's gift of life calls us beyond political factions and boundaries to a richer and more complete vision.

Richard M. Doerflinger  
Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities  
US Conference of Catholic Bishops

Dear Editors of *The Sign of Peace*,

I think you have the best Catholic (Christian) publication ever! The articles are always well-researched, gentle, positive, helpful—and for me appreciated. Thanks much!!

An old friend,  
Steve Handen, Colorado Springs, CO

Dear Editors,

I just wanted to let you know that I think your spring 2009 issue is absolutely wonderful. I wish every peace organization would advocate such a consistent witness to the sanctity of human life.

Sincerely,  
Jerry C. Stanaway, Lombard, IL

Dear Editors,

The Spring 2009 issue on the Gospel of Life and Peace was excellent. I cannot wait

to share these articles with my friends on left and right, conservative and liberal, and the few who, like us, believe in the Gospel of life and peace in everyday life.

The message of this Gospel is at the heart of what we are trying to do in demilitarizing our schools, especially our Catholic education centers. . .

There is so much violence on all levels of our society (violence at schools, war, abortion, street violence, TV, video games) that we have become insensitive to it or "just do not want to know about it."

Thank you for taking a consistent position since the beginning of CPF till today.

Peace from the northern country,  
Bob Graf, Milwaukee, WI

Dear Editors,

Thank you for your latest issue of *The Sign of Peace*. To look at the medical community's involvement in the destruction of human beings and the redefining of life's value is extremely significant, especially now. Although I have friends who monitor the healthcare profession and work doggedly on this issue, I remain ignorant of the details. So I was grateful for your examples of people who are refusing to participate in killing the most vulnerable among us.

I also share your dis-ease with our peace friends who do not consider aborted children to be victims of violence, or at least, victims worthy of our advocacy. I think many in the peace camp acknowledge abortion is a violent act but consider it to be a "lesser evil." Your recent issue challenges this thoughtlessness. I especially appreciated your inclusion of the "1974 CPF Statement on Abortion" for I thought it clearly articulated, in language understood by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, why we oppose killing.

Many traditional pro-life groups do communicate an "all of one piece" reverence for life. That said, I think the reluctance among peace people, especially Catholic peace people, to make common cause with the "pro-life" movement stems from the perception that the movement is

not thoroughly pro-life.

(Language fuels the confusion. Here in Worcester, MA, we use the term "anti-abortion" rather than "pro-life" to refer to those working for an end to abortion.)

I am thinking of my friends Marie Dennis and Kathy Kelly. A mother of seven, Marie raised her children single-handedly after her Catholic husband became a no-show; she is now head of Maryknoll's Office of Global Concern. And Kathy cared for her depressive, dying father while working doggedly to oppose life-taking sanctions against Iraqi children. I think these two embody a "pro-life" worldview. Although I haven't asked them, I think they would say the bishops' "pro-life" teachings are incomplete (Kathy's not quite so diplomatic) or, at best, suspect. That's my opinion. A few random thoughts on why.

A hierarchical arrangement of the life issues is problematic for Christians. In her interview with *SoP*, Helen Alvaré of the USCCB argues that abortion is an issue set apart in the Church because it involves the taking of innocent life. I understand pastorally why the Church unequivocally condemns the taking of innocent or vulnerable life. And I agree with Ms. Alvaré that to legally sanction such action degrades a society. But the Gospels are not preoccupied with preserving "innocent life." There is this whole matter of enemy love. Ruling out the taking of enemy life forces us to consider exactly why life is sacred: (a) God created it, (b) God wants to redeem everyone, everyone. The latter truth means that to kill even the most heinous low-down, snake-in-the-grass criminal is problematic because you might impede his or her redemption. Also, you're damaging your own soul. Enemy love is central to the Gospel, the most thoroughly "pro-life" part of Jesus' teaching.

Even if we concede that the pacifist message is just too difficult and that the best the Church can do is to advocate for



protecting the innocent, the Church does not do this consistently. The bishops and their offices write often and specifically about the sin of preventing or taking the life of an unborn child. Every new abortifacient or potential abortifacient generates a statement from the hierarchy: no abortions, no RU 486, no morning after pill, no condoms, even if your husband is infected with AIDS. Most Catholics know that if a woman has an abortion and remains unrepentant, she risks ex-communication. But when it comes to weapons, strategies of war, actions that will undeniably threaten and kill the innocent, the hierarchy is maddeningly vague or silent. Yes, I know some very good statements have been written condemning certain weapon systems but not with the same vigor or consistency. Have you ever heard a bishop say that those who carpet bomb risk ex-communication or that water-boarding is a mortal sin?

Many Catholics tell me that war is not criticized with the same vigor because soldiers do not intend to kill women and children. But there have been too many wars in the past few decades, and too much information about the social and domestic consequences of armed conflict, for me to buy this argument. We all know that war means children and the preborn will inevitably get killed, and often in large numbers. During war, rape goes up, as does prostitution. (The connection between militarism and violence towards women is well-documented.) Family values go down. Miscarriages increase. Birth becomes more hazardous and the vulnerable, small children and the elderly, die, if not from bullets and bombs, then from the secondary effects of war—disease, lack of food, fuel, electricity, etc. The British medical journal *The Lancet* has done some interesting work computing deaths from secondary effects of war.

A few examples:

- During the siege of Sarajevo, many parents separated. One would take the children and try to get out of the city while the other stayed behind to hold onto to house or apartment. The siege lasted three years and affairs, even among the married, became a way of coping.
- During the Gulf War of 1991, the Pentagon deliberately bombed the Iraqi water purification system. Diarrhea, which is a common disease from contami-

nated water supply, is quickly fatal for babies and small children. How can this not be considered taking the life of the innocent?

- During a NATO air strike, a chemical factory in a Serbian city was bombed and contaminants released. Young couples living within the vicinity of the factory were advised not to conceive lest their children be deformed.

As Catholics, we have to ask ourselves what keeps the Church (hierarchy) from linking war to the "life" issues. Nationalism? Sexism? Ignorance about what actually happens in war? Genuine differences between the violence of war and the violence of abortion? Whatever the reasons, and I suspect all apply, the disconnect has created so much confusion. So much.

Consider these examples:

- My deeply devout pro-life friend, a mother of ten, is sending her third son off to join the military. He's going to join the Marines where training includes shouting, "Kill! Kill!" with gusto. Yes, she has seen *Soldiers of Conscience* but she does not believe her boys will kill. She believes soldiering is their vocation and nothing in her understanding of Catholicism has taught her otherwise.

- An ROTC student at Notre Dame discovers she is three-months pregnant during her senior year. Her boyfriend lobbies for an abortion. She is a serious Catholic, raised by parents who, in her words, often "marched for life," and she opts to carry the child to term, thank God. She initially considers arranging an adoption because the military does not allow single moms! My point here is that her struggle with her predicament is only centered on her pregnancy. No alarm bells go off in her Catholic conscience about military enlistment.

The Notre Dame controversy is yet another example of this confusion in its extreme. Some Catholics get in an uproar over the University's decision to honor Obama; others defend the decision. (I am not among them.) Meanwhile, that same university also wants to honor Mary Ann Glendon, a Catholic intellectual best known for her work protecting the rights of the unborn. Glendon, however, was also among those who drafted the bishops' November 2002 statement sanctioning use of force in Afghanistan. She served as

the US ambassador under the George W. Bush Administration. Ms. Glendon would not share the podium with Obama because of his pro-abortion policies but she apparently had no qualms representing an Administration that sanctioned torture and pursued a war the pope described as immoral. Given these details, it is hard not to interpret her "pro-life" perspective as partisan.

With regard to Obama and Notre Dame, more than fifty bishops publicly declared their opposition to the University's decision to grant him an honorary degree, yet these same bishops were stunningly silent when Boston College, a Jesuit institution, chose to do the same for former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, an apologist for the Iraq war, and more recently, for Bush's use of torture. BC honored Rice in May 2006. Later that summer, Rice famously referred to the Israeli bombing of Lebanon as "the birth pangs of a new Middle East." (Rice's birth metaphor should have outraged the USCCB's Pro-Life Office, but it went without comment.)

I don't want to suggest we get into criticizing individuals. My point is that the contradictions in their positions are symptomatic of an inadequate understanding and communication of Christ's message about the value of human life. Thank you for calling us to keep pondering this message and trying to practice it. I hope you continue.

Christ's peace,  
Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, Ss. Francis &  
Thérèse Catholic Worker, Worcester,  
MA

*We are very impressed and appreciative of everything that Claire has written. The connections she makes between war and the damage that it does to family life are profound and important—just the kind of connections Richard Doerflinger commends in his letter. We are grateful to people such as Claire for rescuing us from moral myopia and political cliché. May more voices like her's be raised in the Church.*—THE EDITORS

#### Correction

In the editorial "The Gospel of Life & Peace" from our last issue "From the Battlefield to the Medical Field" we mistakenly referred to Dr. James Kelly as "Fr. James Kelly." THE EDITORS regret this error.

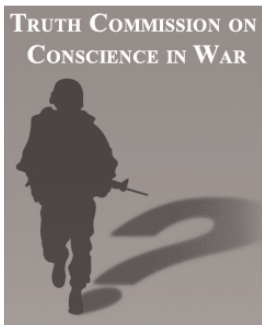


# Peace Briefs

## News Compiled by the CPF Staff

### Truth Commission on Conscience in War

On March 21, 2010, a hearing took place at Riverside Church in New York City. The hearing included



testimonies from veterans, soldiers, and COs such as Joshua Casteel and Logan Laituri and briefings from expert witnesses from across various fields, Chris Hedges and Jonathan Shay among others.

On March 22, commissioners received, deliberated and created strategies for a national interfaith con-

versation about just war, international law, and freedom of conscience for service members from any and all faith traditions. Tom Cornell and Michael Baxter represented the CPF.

Over the course of 2010 The Truth Commission on Conscience in War plans to engage faith communities and the public in conversations about freedom of conscience for members of the United States Armed Forces. The Truth Commission will issue a report on November 11, 2010 with a special focus on selective conscientious objection.

### Video Games and Military Recruitment

Video game company Activision sold 4.7 million copies of its *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* game in the first 24 hours of sales in North America and the United Kingdom. These opening day sales topped \$310 million, the highest-selling launch in entertainment history. By mid-January 2010 sales of the game exceeded \$1 billion.

*Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* is a staggeringly realistic "first-person shooter game" that revolves around commandos fighting terrorists threatening violence.

One level of the game allows players to slaughter innocent civilians in an airport.

A great competitor to the *Call of Duty* franchise is *America's Army*, a video game developed by the US military to aid in recruiting. For players to log onto this game, they must connect via the Army's recruitment website and provide information. Players also have the option of examining profiles of current soldiers and video testimonials of why they enlisted.

According to testimony given to Congress, the Army has found the use of video games more effective at recruiting than any other "method of contact." A 2008 study by two researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that "30 percent of all Americans age 16 to 24 had a more positive impression of the Army

because of the game and, even more amazingly, the game had more impact on recruits than all other forms of Army advertising combined."

### Goshen College to Play the National Anthem

Late last year, nationally syndicated radio talkshow host Mike Gallagher criticized Goshen College, a Mennonite school in northern Indiana, for its policy of not playing the *Star-Spangled Banner* before its sporting events. (Such events at Goshen traditionally began with a prayer.) After Gallagher's comments, Goshen College received hundreds of complaints from around the country (mostly from non-Mennonites). These events intensified an already on-going debate about the anthem at the college.

In January, Goshen College president Jim Brenneman announced that beginning in the spring the national anthem and a prayer will precede Goshen College sporting events. He also indicated that this decision will be reviewed by Goshen College's Board of Directors in June 2011.

The United States did not have a national anthem until 1931, and it was not until World War II that the anthem was played before sporting events became common as part of building support for the war effort.

Goshen College did not fly the US flag on campus until the height of the Vietnam War, when then-president J. Lawrence Burkholder made the decision to fly it alongside a United Nations flag.

Some other Mennonite colleges in this country fly the US flag and sing or play the national anthem. Some fly the flag, but do not play the anthem. Some continue to do neither, but their numbers are dwindling.

### "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation" says Benedict XVI

In his World Day of Peace 2010 message Pope Benedict proclaimed, "Respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because 'creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works', and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of mankind. Man's inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development—wars, international and regional conflicts, acts of terrorism, and violations of human rights. Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect—if not downright misuse—of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us. For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen 'that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying.'" ✠

# Peace is Patience

**The Sign of Peace (SOP): Professor Hauerwas, you have had a lot of contact with Mennonites and Catholics. You write with a deep appreciation of both traditions. What can Mennonites offer to Catholics in this day and age?**

Stanley Hauerwas (SH): The Mennonites are the ones who recovered Christological pacifism—a pacifism, that is, grounded in the present reality of Christ in the church. For Mennonites, and for their Anabaptist forebears, pacifism is not some ideal that you try to achieve in the future. It is a present reality, as present and real as transubstantiation is for Catholics, the reality of the peace of Christ.

Here it is crucial to remember that it may well be the case that Anabaptists were a Catholic reform movement more than a Protestant one. Their way of life was deeply shaped by monasticism; they wanted to bring the disciplines of the monastic way of life to the whole church. The Anabaptists taught us that “the counsels of perfection,” as Catholics called them, were to be followed not just by monks but by all Christians. The language they used was deeply shaped by monasticism: when you enter the monastery, you leave the world. Some of the leaders of the first Anabaptist communities had been monks. So in Anabaptist life, as in monastic life, the primary dualism is not “nature and grace,” as Catholics often put it, but “church and world.”

**SOP: This dualism between church and world figures prominently in your own work. In what way is your work shaped by the Anabaptist tradition?**

SH: When I say that the church does not *have* a social ethic but rather *is* a social ethic, this is an Anabaptist claim. Likewise, when I say that the first task of the church is not to make the world more just, but rather to make the world the world, this too is an Anabaptist claim. All Christian traditions posit a dualism of some sort. The Anabaptist tradition maintains that the fundamental dualism is the one between the church, which lives in the perfection of Christ, and the world, which does not. In the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists saw that Christian princes were not pacifist, but for them, this means that they were not living as faithful Christians, not living in the perfection of Christ.

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*Stanley Hauerwas is Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at the Divinity School of Duke University.*

In this sense, the Anabaptists were protesting primarily against a Lutheran two-kingdom theology, which held (1) that the Kingdom of Christ is interior and individual, (2) that the Kingdom of this world was external and social, and (3) that Christians should maintain an interior faith while dealing realistically in a sinful world. In the face of what they saw as Christian unfaithfulness, they took as their first task one of witness: we will witness the peace of Christ to the princes of the world, we hope that this witness spurs them on to a change of life, but even if it does not, we will continue to witness to the world.

**SOP: But then, doesn't this Anabaptist focus on witness involve withdrawing from the world?**

SH: No more than monasticism involved withdrawing from the world. In fact, the monastic movement involved a movement to the heart of the world, where Christians live in such a way that all aspects of their lives are imbued with the virtues and the peace of Christ. A close, honest look at the history of monasticism will show that monasteries had an enormous impact on “the world” of medieval Europe. Monasticism involved no mere withdrawal from the world. The same is true of the Anabaptists. They did not withdraw from the world. Rather, they negotiated the world in radically different ways, by means of peace rather than violence.

This is why one of the most important New Testament passages for the Anabaptists was Matthew 18, where Jesus instructs the disciples on what to do if a brother or sister has fallen into sin. First, you go talk to the person; if that doesn't work, you bring two or three others to talk to the person; then if that doesn't work, you bring the matter before the entire Christian community. This process of identifying and exposing a person's sin is an alternative to violence. Rather than allowing wrongs to go unidentified, rather than allowing tensions to fester and grow, you bring it before the whole community and seek to resolve it. This is a way of heading off conflict before it might break out into open violence. So for the Anabaptists, the resolve not to allow presumed wrongs to go unspoken was a concrete way of practicing non-violence.

Now, the critics of the Anabaptists looked on this kind of practice as a “withdrawal” from the world. But this notion of withdrawing—this was a description that was imposed upon them by their adversaries. After all, if they were “withdrawn” from the world, why were so many of them killed? You know, in the Reformation,



the one thing that the Catholics, the Lutherans, and the Calvinists agreed on was that they ought to kill the Anabaptists. They were a threat because they were clear and forthright in stating the truth of the Gospel. In the Schleithem Confession (a statement of belief and practice for the Anabaptists), it is put quite straightforwardly: the sword is simply not part of Christ's government of the world, it is not in "the perfection of Christ." Making that kind of declaration was not a way of withdrawing from the world. It was a way bringing to the world the truth of the Gospel.

**SOP: The Mennonites are so influential in your own thinking. How did you first come into contact with Mennonite thought?**

SH: That's simple. It was John Howard Yoder. I had known a few Mennonites before meeting John. But it was John who brought me into the Mennonite world.

When I was a graduate student at Yale Divinity School, I bought for a dollar a mimeographed pamphlet by someone named J.H. Yoder. The pamphlet was called "Karl Barth and the Problem of War." I read it and concluded that it was the best critique of Barth I had ever read, but I also thought that you'd have to be crazy to accept his (Yoder's) ecclesiology. After Yale, I taught for two years in Rock Island at Augustana College, and then, in 1970, I went to Notre Dame. At that point, I knew that this Yoder guy was in the area. I called him and asked if I could have an appointment, and drove out to Elkhart. John probably thought, "who is this Yale big shot coming out to see the Mennonites?" He was dour in manner. (You know, John never tried to win converts with charm.) I asked him what he was working on and he said, "Oh, not much," and pointed to a shelf with stacks of mimeographs on it. I told him I'd like to read what he had and he gave me a bunch of material. Well, included in that bunch of material was *The Politics of Jesus*. I read it and thought, "My God, this just changes everything!"

Not long after, I was asked to give a paper at a colloquium between the University of Notre Dame and Valparaiso University. I decided to provide a theological assessment and appreciation of Yoder. I began by pointing out that here I am, a Methodist of doubtful theological background, representing a Catholic department of theology, reading a paper to a crowd of Missouri Synod theologians, arguing that the Anabaptists were right all along. It was supposed to be an ecumenical meeting between Catholics and Lutherans, and I helped bring the two together because they both agreed, in reaction

to my paper, that Christians have to kill people. That was my contribution to ecumenism.

**SOP: What was it about Yoder's theology that you found so compelling?**

SH: It was, in a word, his eschatology. Yoder's eschatology is based not on a contrast between present and future but between what he calls the "two aeons" or ages which exist simultaneously. In this sense, the resurrection is a present reality that makes pacifism a constitutive element in christology; this is what I mean by "christological pacifism." At the heart of Yoder's theology, therefore, is a commitment to nonviolence. What this does *not* mean is that, first, you can have a proper understanding of Jesus and then, at a later point, decide whether or not you want to follow Jesus' nonviolence. Rather, at the very heart of God's care for the world is the peace that Jesus embodied in His passion and death. The fact that Jesus underwent his crucifixion nonviolently exemplifies that God redeems us through peace and that Christians are to embody that peace in the world. I knew that this is the kind of theol-

**The resurrection is a present reality that makes pacifism a constitutive element in christology; this is what I mean by "christological pacifism." At the heart of Yoder's theology, therefore, is a commitment to nonviolence.**

ogy that was articulated by Barth, with whom Yoder studied in Basel, but he carried Barth's theology to its logical conclusion. As I came to realize this, Yoder began to have a deep influence on me.

**SOP: So Yoder changed your mind on the issue of war and peace?**

SH: Yoder made me a pacifist. Without him I would not be a pacifist today. Many of Barth's theological convictions were already formed in me, but I didn't understand that, if Barth was right about the Word of God being decisive for Christians, then they must embrace nonviolence as constitutive of their witness to the world. In particular, it was Yoder who taught me to place pacifism in an eschatological framework, as a witness to the Kingdom that is to come and indeed is already here in the church: "the Kingdom of God is among you." Moreover, Yoder confirmed for me that Christian ethics is not about deciding what to do in this or that circumstance but about being a certain kind of person. This was part of my thinking already, but Yoder's theology confirmed it for me.

**SOP: Now, was Yoder teaching at Notre Dame at this point?**

SH: I think John had taught a course or two before I arrived. I got to know him early on when I was there. Once David Burrell became chair of the Department of

Theology, I went to him and said, “There is a major Mennonite thinker right down the road. Why don’t we try to bring him onto the faculty?” And that is what happened. As far as John’s role in this, he didn’t just want to be a faculty member *per se*. He needed an assignment. So he was assigned to teach peace studies, and was very dutiful in fulfilling that role. He always taught peace studies.

**SOP: What kind of impact did Yoder have at Notre Dame?**

SH: John taught theology at Notre Dame throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and most of the 1990s, until he died just after Christmas in 1997. He was always quiet. He was a shy man, very intelligent, very astute, but very shy. He always thought of himself as a guest at Notre Dame. So he usually said very little at faculty meetings. I used to urge him to speak up—after all, he was a full professor and had a voice of authority in the field of Christian ethics—but he never got into the fray. When he was asked to speak in the meetings, he would respond briefly, but he didn’t initiate conversations very often.

One of the most important things Yoder did at Notre Dame came out of a situation with a student in one of my classes. The student was taking my marriage class and he came up asking for help about a personal situation. Turns out, he was in Navy ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps). He had learned recently that while he was on board ship, he would have to train with firearms. The kid couldn’t do it. He was from Orange County, California, a very conservative area, and he wanted help filing for conscientious objector status. I told him I’d help him. I had him read a lot, think a lot, write things out. I served as counsel for the student, a kind of attorney. The Navy was wonderful through the negotiation process. They had put a lot of money into this student, but they were cooperative. Through this process, I got to know the commanders of the NROTC program. Eventually, John and I started a discussion group with the ROTC commanders on the ethics of war.

One of the most important things that John taught me was never to be judgmental about people who haven’t had the opportunity to be exposed to things to which we have been exposed. He was very good at talking with people in the military, wanting them to be conscientious participators, as much as possible. All too often, people committed to nonviolence find themselves in a position in which their just-war interlocutors will say, “Oh, we really respect your stance, but someone’s got to keep the world in order,” and so on. So that puts the issue in terms where someone is the good guy and someone is the bad guy. That is exactly what nonviolence has to deny. Any of us committed to nonviolence must realize that we are every bit as compromised as anyone in the military. Defeating that kind of easy pre-

sumption was something John was very good at. He was a gift to people at Notre Dame.

**SOP: What about Yoder’s influence among the Mennonites?**

SH: Yoder’s influence among the Mennonites has been enormous. But the Mennonite world is more diverse than many outsiders realize. Many Mennonites took Yoder’s writings as the authentic articulation of the Mennonite vision, the authentic Mennonite voice. They have been strongly committed to pacifism and also to Mennonite ecclesial life. At the same time, there was another important Mennonite scholar by the name of Lawrence Burkholder, a student of H. Richard Niebuhr, who did not agree with Yoder’s unswerving pacifism and did not subscribe to Yoder’s strong or “high” christology. This strand of thought has given rise to a host of Mennonites who find Yoder’s position too rigorous and demanding, not sufficiently “pastoral.” They are strong on peace and justice issues but they want to go easy on the christological and ecclesiological claims. So there is strong division among the Mennonites these days.

Of course, none of this is new. There has always been a great variety of groups coming out of the Anabaptist tradition: the Amish, the Brethren, the Mennonites, and scores of groups within those groups. I always say that there are two things that God does not know: how many different orders of Catholic nuns there are, and how many different kinds of Mennonites there are.

**SOP: Speaking of these two groups, what do Mennonites have to offer Catholics?**

SH: If you read the Vatican II documents as I do—that is, as the Council attempting to recover the christological center of Catholicism—then Mennonites can help Catholics identify what such a recovery looks like. Catholics have a strong sense of the Church universal, the unity or communion of the Church worldwide. But they fall short when it comes to local communities, parishes. They do not have a strongly developed sense of the kind of formation needed to sustain a local community. I think the Mennonites have a lot to offer when it comes to the ecclesiology of local communities. What disciplines are necessary to sustain a congregation or parish? A Mennonite contribution to answering this question would be a great gift to Catholics.

It is a good thing that a growing number of Catholics are committed to peace, but one thing the Mennonites have to offer is a sense of the practices that make for peace. To illustrate what I am getting at, I’d like to tell a story that happened while I taught at Notre Dame.

One time in LaGrange County, east of South Bend and Notre Dame, some teenage kids got drunk and were

joyriding, and from their car they threw some rocks into an Amish buggy. The buggy had a young Amish family in it and one of the rocks hit a small child, and the child died. The Amish family wouldn't bring charges against the teenagers, but the State of Indiana did bring charges. The kids were put in prison. But afterwards, the family intervened and asked the Court to work out a plan of restitution. The State agreed and the kids served their sentence by working at an Amish farm. That's the kind of practical way of making peace that the Anabaptists have to offer Catholics.

**SOP: Asking the question in reverse, what does the Catholic Church have to offer to Mennonites?**

SH: The main things Catholics have to offer Mennonites are liturgy and sacraments. I think some Mennonites who have recently become Catholic, like Gerald Schlabach and Ivan Kaufmann, were drawn to Catholicism because of the liturgy, and in particular the Eucharistic celebration. Mennonite worship was strongly influenced by Zwingli, so it often comes off as—let me think of the right word for it—well, thin. I am in no position to judge on this matter, but I think that not having communion as a regular part of their communal worship is a disability. I also think that the way Catholics celebrate baptism could contribute to Mennonite liturgical life. The sense of depth and beauty, the ancient character of the rite of baptism in the Catholic Church, would be helpful for Mennonites. Especially given that baptism is so central to Mennonite belief and practice.

I also think the Mennonites struggle with a sense of communion among churches in ways that Catholics might have something to offer. Also, they lack a sense of authority that would give an understanding of unity among various expressions of the church across time. Catholics have the college of bishops to provide this sense of community.

The Mennonites struggle to generate a sense of communion. And, you know, I think they do it, curiously enough, by traveling a lot. I'm serious, this is literally what they do. They have people on the go, moving among communities, shuttling to and fro from one community to the next. John Howard Yoder was very intentional in keeping up contact with communities by visiting. It was a form of maintaining communion by going on the road.

**SOP: As a professor at Duke, you have spent a lot of time and energy teaching Yoder's theology to your students. What are your aims in doing that?**

SH: I want to convey to my students how Yoder taught us to ask different questions. We like to have answers, and like the answers we have. So we tend not to like having the questions changed. Yoder changes questions. After reading Yoder, you don't ask, what is the relationship between faith and politics? Because you don't want to allow that there is a realm called "politics" that is independent of faith. You know that the very meaning of "politics" is transformed theologically. After reading Yoder, you don't ask, what is the relationship between love and justice? Because both of those terms are mere abstractions that fail to do justice to the christological shape of both love and justice. Learning to think differently is very important, very freeing. It frees you to embrace the Gospel.

**SOP: So, as a professor who teaches pacifism, how does teaching change the world?**

SH: It produces students.

Look, peace is patience. It takes a long time. This was Yoder's problem with revolutions. The problem is not that they use violence to change things; the problem is that they don't really change things at all. The most important revolutions are the quiet ones, the ones that occur over the long haul. It takes generations to create new ways of thinking, of seeing the world.

Like it or not, we are coming to the end of Christendom. And we will surely need imagination to give some glimpse of what Christianity might look like when there is no more Christendom. Right now, I don't think we know what Christianity will really look like at that point. We just can't see it. John Howard Yoder's work has helped all of us see what we might otherwise not be able to see. ✂

**Reading Guides for  
*The Sign of Peace*  
are available for download  
on the CPF website.**



# The Witness of Dirk Willhem

BY THE STAFF OF THE CATHOLIC PEACE FELLOWSHIP

In the spring of 1569, Dirk Willem was arrested and found guilty for holding secret church services in his home during which participants were re-baptized and for being re-baptized himself. While awaiting sentence in his hometown of Asperen in Holland, Willem managed to make a rope out of strips of cloth, slid down over the prison wall, and began making his escape. A guard chased him to a nearby

pond that was frozen over with a thin layer of ice. Willem risked a dash across the pond and made it safely to the other side. But the ice broke under the feet of the guard pursuing him who then cried out for help. Mindful of the teaching of Jesus to love one's enemies, Willem turned back and pulled the floundering guard out of the frigid water. In gratitude for his life, the prison guard was ready to let

Willem escape. But by this time, the chief magistrate of Asperen was standing on the shore watching, and he ordered the prison guard to bring Willem back, sternly reminding the guard of the oath he had sworn as an officer of the "peace." The prison guard complied and the sentence was eventually carried out: death by burning at the stake. The record indicates that wind blew heavily that day, prolonging the time it took for the flames to do their work and making Willem's suffering long and

miserable. He cried out time and again to God. Finally, one of the authorities ordered an underling to put an end to the suffering. Thus it was that on May 16, 1569 Dirk Willem was martyred.

This is one of the stories recorded in *Martyrs Mirror*, a sixteenth-century compilation recalling Anabaptists who were put to death for their faith. As their name indicates, the Anabaptists held that get-

members should separate themselves from worldly activities, including ceremonies and customs of churches that contradict the simplicity and purity of the Gospel; that shepherds or pastors should be exemplary in their behavior and reliable in their teaching; that their members may not take up the sword, nor go to courts to settle worldly disputes, nor serve as civil authorities or magistrates; that they should not swear allegiance or take oaths in God's name; and that those members who depart from these principles should be admonished twice in private, and if they persist, they should be banned from the community.

Taken together, these beliefs and practices constituted a serious challenge to the way most people lived, worked, worshipped, and viewed the world. Not only did they

directly call into question the teachings and practices of Catholic and Protestant churches; they also, because these churches were closely connected to the ruling powers of the day, challenged royal authority and were regarded as socially disruptive, politically subversive. For this reason, many Anabaptists (at least 1,500) met a fate similar to that of Dirk Willem: arrest, trial, conviction, imprisonment, torture, and death.

As modern-day heirs to the



ting re-baptized as adults was the way for believers to make a full, free, conscious decision to follow the teaching and example of Christ. Hence the phrase associated with their movement: "believer's baptism."

With this practice as the cornerstone of their movement, the Anabaptists also adhered to other related principles and practices: that the breaking of bread should be practiced only by those who have been baptized properly; that their

Anabaptist tradition, Mennonites read and teach the stories in the *Martyrs Mirror* to their children, drawing out the obvious lesson that faith in Jesus and following His teaching and example is a gift more precious than life itself, a means to a clear conscience in this life and a way to salvation in the life to come. But for Catholics, different lessons can be drawn from these stories—in particular, from the story of Dirk Willem. For as it turns out, the prison guard who apprehended Willem after being rescued by him was a Catholic. So was the magistrate who ordered him to do so. And the executioner and king at the time were also Catholic. In short, Dirk Willem was horribly martyred under the authority of the Catholic Church.

### **A Lesson from the Story of Dirk Willem**

What lesson can Catholics draw from Dirk Willem's story? The lesson is, in a word, *repentance*.

For Catholics, repentance usually brings to mind the sacrament of reconciliation: confessing one's sins, making a firm purpose of amendment, receiving absolution, and performing a penance. This is all well and good. Catholics believe in the power of the sacraments to confer grace. Many receive the sacrament of reconciliation on a regular basis, especially during the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent. A graphic description of the traditional manner in which this is done can be found at the beginning of Dorothy Day's autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, under the title "Confession."

But going to confession is only one aspect of repentance; for Catholics, a necessary aspect to be sure; yet still, only one aspect. Dorothy Day's life and work testifies that repentance involves much more. It involves seeing things differently, seeing everything differently, seeing our lives, our history, the entire universe differently—in the light of a new reality: Jesus.

This new reality of Jesus is what

captured the minds and hearts of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. Accused of founding a new and dangerous religious movement, they themselves saw their movement as not new or dangerous at all. Their movement was not new; it was in fact, quite old, going back to the very beginning of Christianity. Nor was it dangerous, not any more than proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus as did Peter and the first apostles. The Anabaptists saw their movement as genuinely apostolic, and this was confirmed for them by the fact that, like the apostles preaching and teaching, theirs got them into deep trouble.

### **The Acts of the Apostles**

As recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, on Pentecost, Peter stood up before the people, recounted the history of the salvation of Israel, and then concluded his sermon with these words: "For this reason the whole House of Israel can be certain that the Lord and Christ whom God has made is this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Hearing this, his listeners "were cut to the heart" and asked him and the other apostles, "What are we to do, brothers?" "You must repent," Peter answered, "and every one of you must be bap-

tributing the proceeds in accord with what each one needed (Acts 2:42-27).

However, the story does not end there. Soon there were healings, more preaching, more conversions, so much so that the religious authorities, the Sanhedrin, hauled the apostles into court and forbade them to teach in the name of Jesus. They refused, of course, and were eventually locked up for it. Still they persisted, until a great persecution was launched against the community, resulting in the first martyrdom of a deacon by the name of Stephen and many others as well (Acts 3-8).

These events recorded in the early chapters of the Book of Acts provide a lens through which to interpret the events surrounding the death of Dirk Willem—a lens that can help Catholics see themselves, their history, their universe, in the light of Jesus, and so lead them, like the early listeners of Peter, to repentance.

In light of the events in Acts, it is Dirk Willem, the Anabaptist, who plays the part of the apostles: preaching in the name of Jesus and joining a new community that lives according to His teachings. And it is the prison guard, the magistrate, and the other civil authorities—all

**The Anabaptist movement was not new; it was in fact, quite old, going back to the very beginning of Christianity. Nor was it dangerous, not any more dangerous than proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus as did Peter and the first apostles.**

tized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). After more conversation, "they accepted what he said and were baptized. That very day about three thousand were added to their number" (Acts 2:41). So it was that the first Christians preached Jesus and inspired repentance in their listeners, who were then baptized into this new Way of praying together, breaking bread, living in common, and selling their possessions and

Catholics—who take on the role of the Sanhedrin, the jailors, and the other civil authorities of Jerusalem seeking to snuff out this new "Jesus movement" (as some scholars refer to the early church). This makes for a disturbing reversal of roles. It puts Catholics on the wrong side of the story.

But there is a lesson in this for Catholics, and the lesson lies at the heart of the Anabaptist vision. The lesson is this: the claims of civil authority should be regarded warily

by Christians, inasmuch as they put us “outside the perfection of Christ.”

### **“Outside the Perfection of Christ”**

The phrase comes from the Schleithem Confession, a statement of seven articles drawn up by Anabaptists from Switzerland and south Germany in 1527. The purpose of the seven articles was to establish the true elements of Anabaptist life and witness from false or counterfeit elements that had arisen at the time. Most of the articles drawn up by the Anabaptists who gathered in the town of Schleithem focus on the inner life of this new community. But one in particular, Article Six, addresses the relation of the community with civil authorities who employ coercive power, who wield “the sword.” Referring to Romans 13:1-7, the Article states that “the sword is ordained by God outside the perfection of Christ,” that is to say, the sword is permitted by God for use by civil authorities, but it is not meant to be used by the followers of Jesus. The Article clarifies the matter as follows: “Now, many who do not recognize what Christ wills for us will ask whether a Christian may also use the sword against evil people for the sake of protecting the good or for the sake of love. Our unanimous answer is as follows: Christ teaches us to learn from him that we should be mild and humble of heart, and in this way we will find rest for our souls.”

It should be noted here that the question raised—if Christians may use the sword to protect the good out of love—was a reference to the teaching of the Catholic Church on violence and war. It is not surprising that the Anabaptists at Schleithem raised this question, for the primary author of their Confession was Michael Sattler, a former prior of a Benedictine monastery. He would have been concerned to distinguish his newfound beliefs from those of the Church he had recently left. The Anabaptist teaching, therefore, that

using the sword is “outside the perfection of Christ,” was a conscious departure from the Catholic teaching calling for Christians to take up the sword in defense of the good of society. In later sections of Article Six, the same basic reasoning leads to the conclusion that Christians

call it, signaled the movement of Christianity from a persecuted minority to a socially dominant, imperial religion. Along with this shift, there emerged a rationale for why Christians are permitted, indeed obligated, to employ civilly sanctioned force to maintain social

**Article Six of the Schleithem Confession teaches that Christians may not use the coercive power of the state or resort to the processes of civil authority in managing their affairs. “Worldly people are armed with spikes and irons,” it states, “but Christians are armed with the armor of God—with truth, and with justice, with peace, faith, and salvation, and the word of God.”**

may not go to court and may not serve as magistrates (judges) in positions of governmental authority.

Taken as a whole, Article Six of the Schleithem Confession teaches that Christians may not use the coercive power of the state or resort to the processes of civil authority in managing their affairs. “Worldly people are armed with spikes and iron,” it states, “but Christians are armed with the armor of God—with truth, and with justice, with peace, faith, and salvation, and with the word of God.”

### **The Problem of Constantinianism**

This sharp contrast between Catholic and Anabaptist teaching on civil authority explains how the Catholic prison guard, magistrate, and other officials ended up playing a sinister part in the execution of Dirk Willem.

The problem was, in a word, “Constantinianism.” Derived from Constantine, the Roman emperor who converted to Christianity after praying in the midst of a battle with the imperial enemies, the word “Constantinian” refers not simply to the man but to the entire process whereby Christianity became legalized by Rome with the Edict of Milan in 313 AD. This “Constantinian shift,” as scholars

and political order at home and to wage war against imperial enemies abroad.

The key thinker was Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa who, in letters, sermons, and lengthy treatises, set forth a powerful vision of Christian responsibility in political life, including the responsibility of public authorities to wield the sword against injustice out of love. In the centuries that followed, Medieval theologians elaborated this theme, eventually developing a full-fledged doctrine on civil authorities imposing coercive force for the sake of political stability and public peace. Thus, by the sixteenth century, the teaching of the Catholic Church affirmed that civil authorities had a duty to carry out the laws of the state.

And so it came to pass that the Catholics responsible for the death of Dirk Willem believed that they were carrying out the will of God. Catholics were not alone in holding this belief. Depending on different theological trajectories but arriving at the same basic conclusion, sixteenth-century Lutherans and Calvinists likewise felt duty bound to extinguish the Anabaptists from their lands. They too played the role of the Sanhedrin and other civil-religious authorities of Jerusalem in persecuting followers of the Way. The Anabaptists were alone in their



gentle, unswerving adherence to the Gospel. They alone faithfully witnessed to the teaching and example of Jesus on peace.

### Unthinking Constantinianism

The fact that they persevered in their witness is a great grace to Christians today—although it comes to us as the disturbing grace of repentance. For Catholics, this grace of repentance has meant, so to speak, unthinking the monumental “Constantinian shift” that occurred sixteen centuries ago.

Signs of the Church moving beyond Constantinianism have emerged in recent years. As far as official teaching goes, the Second Vatican Council, in *Dignitatis Humanae*, renounced the use of coercion in establishing and maintaining its position of primacy in the political order and affirmed religious freedom as a principle of human dignity and a right of all peoples. Moreover, in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Council affirmed the value of non-violence and the right of those who

they promulgated their pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace* (1983), which pointed to the early church as a true basis for a counter-cultural peace witness.

Theologically, this counter-cultural Catholic perspective was bolstered by scholars articulating the Anabaptist vision of peace and non-violence, most notably, John Howard Yoder. In lectures he delivered in Poland in 1983 (published this year by Baylor University Press), Yoder saw developments along these lines as a sign of an emerging peace witness among Catholics in the United States (see “Memos from Yoder,” pp. 18-20). Since then, a younger generation of post-conciliar Catholic theologians influenced by Stanley Hauerwas have further articulated a post-Constantinian, Catholic vision of peacemaking (see “Peace is Patience,” pp. 7-10). At the same time, Catholic activists, teachers, and scholars have worked to incorporate the Church’s teaching on peace in the curricula of high schools, colleges, universities. Some Catholics have even called for the

in the Catholic Church in the United States are moving in the direction of a post-Constantinian perspective on peacemaking and the state that lies at the heart of the Anabaptist vision.

### Treading on Thin Ice

We at the Catholic Peace Fellowship consider ourselves part of this trend. Some of us began working with civilian and military conscientious objectors at the behest of Mennonite friends. All of us have received strong support in our work from many Mennonite fellow-travelers living in Northern Indiana. Most importantly, we feel graced in the way Mennonites continue to point us, through their lives and witness, toward the life and witness of the early church from which our faith originated and is still fortified. As Catholics, we are well aware that the differences in our respective traditions remain. But at the same time, we remain hopeful that our tradition continues to develop in the direction it has in recent years.

Given our longstanding Constantinian lineage, moving in a post-Constantinian theological direction can seem to be a rash and dangerous thing—like crossing a frozen pond on a dark night, treading on thin ice, and falling in. But even if we do fall into the cold water, our faith tells us that we will be rescued by one like Dirk Willem. Perhaps now, more than four centuries later, we will have the faith and courage to repent, and to be led by our Mennonite brothers and sisters to the other side, there to learn anew the life and peace proclaimed by Peter and the other apostles—the life and peace of Jesus. ✠

**The Anabaptists were alone in their gentle, unswerving adherence to the Gospel. They alone faithfully embodied the teaching and example of Jesus.**

conscientiously object to participating in war, a clear development in Catholic doctrine. The promulgation of this teaching vindicated Catholics who had been witnessing to and working for peace, most notably those associated with the Catholic Worker and the Catholic peace movement that emerged in the late sixties. Their efforts were further vindicated by the Catholic bishops in the United States when

Church to become a “peace church,” a theme that originated from activists in the Mennonite Central Committee. Moreover, during the past ten years or so, Catholics and Mennonites have begun a regular dialogue aimed at discovering their common life and witness called “Bridgefolk” (see “Proceeding through Friendship,” pp. 15-17). Such developments indicate that many strong activists and scholars

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# Proceeding through Friendship

BY MARGARET PFEIL AND BIFF WEIDMAN

Following the publication of his article, “Confessions of a Mennonite Catholic” in 1985, Ivan Kauffman and his wife Lois began receiving more calls and visits from kindred spirits. Some were Mennonites intrigued by the sacramental tradition and spiritual practices of Catholicism, and others were Catholics who hungered for a more prophetic peace witness on the part of the Christian community and so appreciated the peace church tradition.

In 1999, the Kauffmans, together with Gerald Schlabach, Weldon Nisly, and Marlene Kropf, convened a group of twenty-five Mennonites and Catholics at a Mennonite retreat center in Laurelville, Pennsylvania, to explore further this mutual attraction that seemed to be gathering momentum. The invitation asked, “Do you feel somehow at home in both traditions — and for that very reason, not entirely at home in either?” Pat Shaver of Seattle Mennonite Church remembers, “The invitation went on to say that the hope was that the gathering would have some of the feel and informality of a family reunion, with time for telling our stories and informal chatting, and that’s just what it felt like, an invitation to a family reunion to meet a family I didn’t quite realize I had, other people who shared the experience of living in multiple spiritual homes, with the passion, joy, depth, frustration, loneliness and gratitude it seemed to entail.” This, it turned out, was the first meeting of Bridgefolk.

Two years later, Abbot John Klassen of St. John’s Abbey offered the support of his community to the group, paving the way for the first publicized Bridgefolk conference in Collegeville, Minnesota, in 2002. Since that time, about 300 people have participated in at least one of these annual gatherings, with a core group of about forty people attending nearly every year. “Proceed through friendship,” Andrea Bartoli of the Sant’Egidio community advised Bridgefolk, and we have taken his words to heart.

Initially, though, an atmosphere of polite caution prevailed at our meetings. Answering anonymous questions from a hat proved a merciful way to dispel some common myths about each tradition. How do the Amish stand in relationship to Mennonites? Why do Catholics abstain from meat on Lenten Fridays? What is the Mennonite “name game”? How does one use rosary

beads? What is the *Martyrs Mirror*?

Gradually, we could begin to touch the wounds of a divided Christian community. In 2003 and 2004, Bridgefolk took the opportunity to promote research on sixteenth-century martyrdom through a scholarly colloquium that immediately preceded the Bridgefolk conference. Cradle Catholics could learn, some for the first time, the extent of savage, systematic persecution of early Anabaptists at the hands of Catholics and those of other incipient Christian denominations. Our ignorance of such massacres only compounds the painful sense of complicity.

The *Martyrs Mirror* reports Michael Sattler’s gruesome fate in typically sparse prose: Having been condemned as a heretic, he “shall be delivered to the executioner, who shall lead him to the place of execution, and cut out his tongue; then throw him upon a wagon, and there tear his body twice with red hot tongs; and after he has been brought without the gate, he shall be pinched five times in the same manner.” Regarded as the primary author of the Schleithem Confession, Sattler had been Prior of St. Peter’s Benedictine monastery in Freiburg, experiencing firsthand the crucible of church and state political machinations increasingly from the perspective of those who suffered most from this systemic violence, the poorest peasants.

Some 475 years after Sattler’s death, Mennonites and Catholics remembered his Benedictine roots, breaking bread together at St. John’s Abbey. The warmth of Benedictine hospitality provided the encouragement needed to gradually, tentatively, dare to ask deeper questions as relationships grew from year to year. In 2006, we took up the theme of “Making Peace: At the Table, in the World,” recognizing the brokenness of the Christian Eucharistic table but also allowing ourselves to imagine ways of healing and extending it. The iconic image of Brother Roger of the Taizé community receiving the Eucharist from the hand of then-Josef Cardinal Ratzinger at John Paul II’s funeral Mass provided hopeful encouragement—*spe salvi*! The year 2007 found us coming together in Elkhart, Indiana, at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) to consider theological understandings of baptism and formation in Christian discipleship. “Holiness the Way: Saints and the Spirituality that Sustains” framed our gathering in 2008 as we contemplated together the witnesses to holiness available to us in both traditions, from the monks of Tibhirine and Franz Jägerstätter to Lois Kauffman’s father, who narrowly escaped the hangman’s rope at the hands of a US Army unit for remaining steadfast in his conviction as a conscientious objec-

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*Biff, a Mennonite, and Margie, a Catholic, met at the 2002 Bridgefolk conference. They are members of the St. Peter Claver Catholic Worker community in South Bend, Indiana and are engaged to marry. Margie is also assistant professor of theology at Notre Dame and a Bridgefolk board member.*

tor in World War I.

In addition to these more extensive annual conferences, regional meetings of Bridgefolk have also unfolded in various locations, including Winnipeg, Toronto, and the northern Indiana area, affording the opportunity to enter into sustained relationship and to explore particular issues further. As the Mennonite World Conference began more formal dialogue with the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (1998-2003), local Bridgefolk groups met to read and study the fruits of their labor, "Called Together to Be Peacemakers," issued in 2004. In conjunction with the 2007 Bridgefolk meeting, AMBS and the University of Notre Dame hosted a scholarly conference to examine this text through a theological and historical lens.

Over the course of this first decade of Bridgefolk, the broad strokes of conversation seem consistently to lead in the direction of spiritual disciplines of peacemaking. Drinking deeply from the well of monastic spirituality, Bridgefolk participants have often reflected upon pre-Reformation resources in the Christian tradition as

### **What resources has God given us, Mennonites and Catholics together to serve a suffering world?**

potentially fruitful common ground for considering what "joint formation" of Catholics and Mennonites might look like today. Not surprisingly, we have gravitated toward monastic resources. "At the heart of both monasticism and Anabaptism," Arnold Snyder astutely observed at the 2002 conference, "lies the conviction that Jesus Christ called out disciples who would follow him, and not simply 'believers' who would believe in him."

Preparing the soil for the seeds of joint formation, certain shared practices have become ritualized at the annual Bridgefolk gathering. The "Hymn Sing" gives Catholics an all-too-rare chance to revel in beautiful four-part harmonies, sweetened by the prospect of an ice cream social to follow, and many Mennonites have been drawn into the restful rhythm of the Liturgy of the Hours with the monks of St. John's. When possible, we have worshipped in the local community together at a Catholic parish and a Mennonite church, bearing witness through friendship to the hope of Christian unity even amid very real theological differences that divide us.

Often, we have been heartened by these mutual immersions into Mennonite and Catholic cultures, finding many grounds for hope in common worship, including our shared appreciation of extended periods of silent prayer in Catholic liturgy and the generally broad-based participation of Mennonite congregants in the order of worship. Gathering this year in Lauroville again to mark the tenth anniversary of Bridgefolk, we worshipped with Scottdale Mennonite Church and St. John the Baptist Catholic Church. As we filed into the

pews at Scottdale, we were given a special handout for visitors with helpful information, including a note that only regular members were encouraged to give an offering in the collection. Catholic Bridgefolk members exchanged knowing grins, fairly confident that we would never see such a caveat in a Catholic bulletin but feeling all the more compelled to contribute to the Scottdale community's needs that morning.

In the ebb and flow of this mutual learning that continually offers reasons for hope, even as it washes away any illusion of easy solutions to the deep rifts among Christ's followers, Bridgefolk participants have taken consolation in an ancient, shared Christian ritual. On the final day of the conference each year, we conclude with an agape meal, prayer, and foot washing. As we read the Johannine account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet before breaking bread for the last time with them, we are aware of the brokenness of the Christian eucharistic table, but also aware of the powerful common call to humble discipleship.

What resources has God given us, Mennonites and Catholics together, to serve a suffering world?

Proceeding through friendship, year to year, this question becomes enfolded first in our own relationships as participants in Bridgefolk. When we gathered at Eastern Mennonite University in 2005, we paired off, one Catholic and one Mennonite, for the foot washing ritual, baring ourselves to one another while bearing the weight of historical memory. We do aspire to works of peace together in the world, but such efforts can only spring from our shared practices of vulnerability in mutual love. Disarmed, we take up the cross and walk this path of discipleship together.

During a Bridgefolk planning retreat in 2001, Gerald Schlabach was inspired to write what has become a centering prayer for all subsequent Bridgefolk gatherings.



*Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples, Rembrandt, c. 1655*



Whatever shared spiritual disciplines and practices we might embrace in the future, they will, we hope, embody the spirit of this prayer:

O Lord our God,  
eternally living and giving,  
a Trinity of persons,  
may all your Christian people  
come to share in truth  
the table of your Son Jesus Christ,  
unified and peaceable,  
joining in the communion of saints,  
martyrs, apostles and bishops  
who have beaten their swords  
into ploughshares.

Empowered by that very grace  
of your Holy Spirit  
who unites the Trinity in mutual love  
they have been a bridge  
to your coming Kingdom,  
already present in our broken world.  
By that same grace and love,  
empower us then we pray—  
empower us here today—  
to be a bridge to that future  
of unity and peace  
which you ever yearn to give to your Church  
yet ever give in earnest through your Church  
as you set a table before us  
making present the life and death,  
body and blood,  
faith, hope and love of your Son,  
in whose name we pray,  
Amen. ✠

### Recommended Links for more on Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue

#### Bridgefolk

[www.bridgefolk.net](http://www.bridgefolk.net)

#### ***Called Together to be Peacemakers***

Link to Report and Colloquia on the Report  
[www.bridgefolk.net/theology/colloquia/2007theology/](http://www.bridgefolk.net/theology/colloquia/2007theology/)

#### **“A Mennonite and Catholic Contribution to the World Council of Churches’ Decade to Overcome Violence”**

A 2008 document produced by members of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Mennonite World Conference which states: “We affirm Jesus’ teaching and example on non-violence as normative for Christians.” The document can be found at:

[www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources/documents/declarations-on-just-peace/contributions/from-confessional-bodies-councils/a-mennonite-and-catholic-contribution-to-the-wccs-dov.html](http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources/documents/declarations-on-just-peace/contributions/from-confessional-bodies-councils/a-mennonite-and-catholic-contribution-to-the-wccs-dov.html)

## Excerpts from ***Called Together to be Peacemakers***

An international dialogue between Catholics and Mennonites took place between 1998 and 2003, beginning with the theme “Toward a Healing of Memories,” and concluding with a report entitled *Called Together to Be Peacemakers*. Below are some excerpts from this important document:

26. . . . Re-reading the past together helps us to regain and restore certain aspects of our ecclesial experience that we may have undervalued or even discounted due to centuries of separation and antagonism.

27. Our common re-reading of the history of the church will hopefully contribute to the development of a common interpretation of the past. This can lead to a shared new memory and understanding. In turn, a shared new memory can free us from the prison of the past.

145. Through our dialogue, we have come to understand that Catholics and Mennonites share a common commitment to peacemaking. That commitment is rooted in our communion with “the God of Peace” (Rom 15:33) and in the church’s response to Jesus’ proclamation of “the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). Christ has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. As “ambassadors of Christ” (2 Cor 5:20) we are called to be reconciled to God and to one another. Moved by the Spirit, we want to share with our brothers and sisters in faith, and with a wider world, our call to be instruments of God’s peace.

174. *Christology and Peace*. The peace witness of both Mennonites and Catholics is rooted in Jesus Christ “who is our peace, who has made us both one . . . making peace that he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross” (Eph 2:14-16). We understand peace through the teachings, life and death of Jesus Christ. In his mission of reconciliation he remained faithful unto death on the cross and his fidelity was confirmed in the resurrection. The cross is the sign of God’s love of enemies.

175. *Ecclesiology and Peace*. The Church is called to be a peace church, a peacemaking church. This is based on a conviction that we hold in common. We hold that the Church, founded by Christ, is called to be a living sign and an effective instrument of peace, overcoming every form of enmity and reconciling all peoples in the peace of Christ (Eph 4:1-3). We affirm that Christ, in his Church, through baptism, overcomes the differences between peoples (Gal 3:28). By virtue of their baptism into Christ, all Christians are called to be peacemakers. ences and in building international peace.

179. We hold the conviction in common that reconciliation, nonviolence, and active peacemaking belong to the heart of the Gospel (Mt 5:9; Rom 12:14-21; Eph 6:15).

180. *Discipleship and Peace*. Both agree that discipleship, understood as following Christ in life in accordance with the teaching and example of Jesus, is basic to the Christian life. ✠

# Memos from Yoder

BY MICHAEL J. BAXTER

*Editors' note: The following is adapted from the foreword to a recently published set of lectures by John Howard Yoder entitled Nonviolence—A Brief History: The Warsaw Lectures (Baylor University Press, 2010).*

In the wake of his untimely death in December 1997, John Howard Yoder left behind numerous unpublished manuscripts, books, articles, and lectures, including the lectures he delivered in Warsaw in May 1983 on the history of nonviolence, published here for the first time. But one genre of his writing is likely to remain unpublished: his memos.

Yoder was a diligent and prolific author of memos. For years, he could be seen scribbling memos in barely legible handwriting on departmental stationery or yellow legal pads, in his office, in departmental meetings, and in between sessions at academic conferences. He sent them out in all directions: memos to graduate students awaiting his comments on a paper or dissertation chapter, memos to colleagues about a draft of an article or an upcoming committee meeting, memos to fellow Mennonites concerned about a son joining the military or the moral implications of paying phone tax (which originated as a war tax). Toward the end of his life, with the help of email, he was able to send out memos at an accelerated pace. And he sent them out right up to the end. One graduate student received an email memo from John that was sent forty-five minutes before he collapsed on the third floor of Decio Hall—an uncereemonious way to go, but not an unlikely one for someone who spent so much of his life writing.

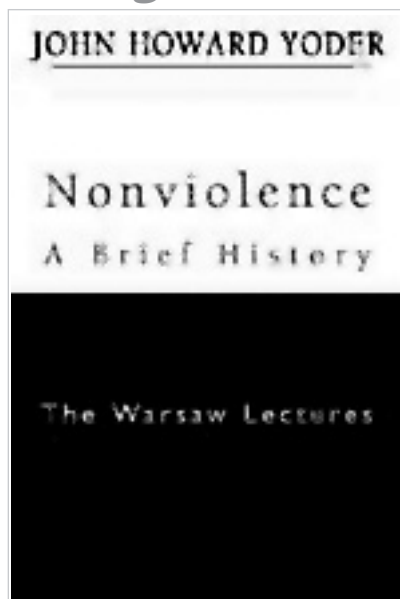
I was initiated into the world of Yoder's memos in the fall semester of 1996, shortly after arriving at Notre Dame to teach theology. At the time, I was holding out against the newfangled, more efficient mode of communication, so it came to me the old fashioned way: typed-out on departmental stationery and placed in my mailbox. The topic of the memo was Saint Marcellus.

Saint Marcellus, Yoder explained in his memo, was a third-century Christian centurion in the Trajana Legion who one day declared that he would no longer participate in the pagan festivals celebrated by the Roman imperial army. The incident occurred in 298 in the city of Tangiers. (Here I am quoting from *War and the Christian Conscience*, ed. Albert Marrin [Chicago: Regnery, 1971]; the pertinent pages were dutifully attached to John's memo.) The story goes that one day Marcellus, "thinking about the profane goings-on at

those festivals, threw down his military belt in front of the Legion, declaring in a loud voice," 'I serve Jesus Christ the everlasting King.' He cast away the centurion's staff and arms, adding: 'With this I cease to serve

your emperors, and I disdain to worship your wooden and stone gods, who are deaf and dumb idols. If such be the conditions of service that men are compelled to sacrifice to the gods and emperors, then behold, I throw away the staff and belt; I renounce the standards and refuse to serve.'" Everyone was stunned by the action. Marcellus was immediately placed in prison. At the conclusion of the festivals he was brought before the commander of the Legion who, upon learning of the incident, referred the case to the local governor, Aurelius Agricola. After hearing testimony that Marcellus "scorned the military belt, . . . declared himself to be a Christian, and in the presence of all the people . . . uttered many slanders against the gods and against Caesar," Agricola interrogated him. "By what madness," he asked, "were you incited so that you renounced the oaths and spoke such things?" To which Marcellus replied, "There is no madness in those who fear the Lord." Confronted with such intransigence, Agricola pronounced his judgment: these "acts of Marcellus . . . ought to be punished with discipline. It is my resolve to punish with death Marcellus, who served as a regular centurion, who abandoned his oath publicly, who desecrated it, and who, moreover, during the proceedings before the governor insanely made other statements." As he was being led away by the bailiff, Marcellus is reported to have declared to Agricola, "May God bless you."

Why was Yoder bringing attention to the acts of this heroic but obscure third-century martyr? In part, of course, it was because Marcellus exemplified the witness of pre-Constantinian Christianity, a topic of theological interest to him throughout his life. But in addition to this, it was because a relic of Marcellus had found its way to the campus of the University of Notre Dame.



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Referring to a page in a book on Notre Dame by Tom Schlerith, *A Spire of Faith* (also xeroxed and attached to the memo), Yoder noted that, in keeping with the ancient custom of venerating relics, a custom that was still practiced by nineteenth-century French Catholics, the founder of the University of Notre Dame, Rev. Edward Sorin, CSC, had arranged to have a relic of Saint Marcellus brought from overseas to the wilderness of northern Indiana, whereupon he had it placed in the base of the altar of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. For more than a hundred years, a relic of Marcellus had resided at the University of Notre Dame. Yoder thought that his presence on campus (so to speak) should be recognized, especially given that the fall of 1998 would mark the 1700th anniversary of his martyrdom. Perhaps, Yoder suggested, a scholarly conference could be held with papers on topics related to Marcellus. Perhaps a pamphlet could be published and distributed to pilgrims visiting the Basilica, or even a book by and for interested scholars.

As it turned out, the plan did not materialize, Yoder passed away, and the 1700th centenary of the martyrdom of Marcellus of Tangiers came and went without ceremony, except for an early morning Mass attended by a handful of students and faculty in the crypt of the Basilica on October 30, the day set aside on the Church's liturgical calendar for celebrating his feast.

Still, Yoder's memo is worth remembering because it so vividly illustrates his contribution to theology and the life of the church. He pointed out aspects of our belief and practice that had long been overlooked, neglected, forgotten, and entombed—like the relic of Marcellus placed in the base of the altar at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. His primary contributions, of course, came mainly in the form of articles and books that drew attention to the largely forgotten but ever-present heart of the Gospel: Jesus' teaching and example on peace and nonviolence. To our good fortune, in addition to the books by and about Yoder, many of which remain in print, we have these lectures, delivered in 1983 to the Polish Ecumenical Council and now published under the title, *Nonviolence—A Brief History*.

Readers familiar with Yoder's published writings will find in these lectures things "old and new." Many of the themes of *The Politics of Jesus* (1972) are repeated here. His critique of just-war theory, articulated in *When War is Unjust* (1984), appears in these lectures in incipient form. And his attempt to correlate the truths of Christian practices with insights gained from sociological analysis, published in *Body Politics* (1992), is a leading emphasis in this volume. Still, although these themes appear in his previous works, it is beneficial to follow along as Yoder carefully sets aside distortions, misinterpretations, and scholarly arguments that are

beside the point, in order to advance the chief and much-avoided point: to confess Jesus as Messiah entails embracing His teaching and example on nonviolence.

On the other hand, these lectures also bring forth new things. Yoder offers a generous commendation of Tolstoy for identifying the "key" of the Gospel and traces how this "key" was carried forward by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. And he shows that nonviolence is increasingly being embraced by Catholics, as evidenced in three "varieties of Catholic Peace Theology."

The first variety of Catholic peace theology is embodied in the Catholic Worker and the writers, activists, and movements associated with it: Thomas Merton, James Douglass, Daniel Berrigan, Pax Christi, and the Catholic Peace Fellowship. The second comes from the Catholic "professors and pastors" (John Courtney Murray, John C. Ford, Popes Pius XII and John XXIII, to name a few) whose critiques of modern warfare on the basis of just-war theory culminated in the US Catholic bishops pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. The third was coming out of liberation theology in Latin America, where exponents

such as Dom Helder Camara and the artist-activist Adolfo Perez Esquivel of Argentina were demonstrating that (in the words of the Latin American bishops in a 1977 declaration on nonviolence) "it is love, not violence or hatred, that will have the last word in history." The lesson Yoder draws

from this idea serves as a blunt and abrupt conclusion to the lectures as a whole: "If that is the last word, say Camara and Perez Esquivel, it must be our word now."

This concluding sentence captures Yoder's eschatology in a nutshell. Christians are to live and love like Jesus, knowing, in spite of evidence to the contrary, that God's purposes will prevail with the coming of the Kingdom. It is an eschatology that rejects effectiveness as the ultimate measure of moral validity, for when effectiveness becomes the ultimate measure, nonviolence is all too easily dismissed.

Yoder was well aware of this pitfall, having begun his work in theology when Reinhold Niebuhr's "Christian realism" was reigning supreme. However, this does not mean that Christian nonviolence cannot or will not be effective, for this would imply that God's grace must be confined to the church alone and does not operate in historical movements beyond it. Yoder was aware of this pitfall in two respects: in the overly narrow ecclesiology of his own peace-church tradition which he strove to correct, and in the charge of "sectarianism" levied by mainstream theologians who failed to see the depth and subtlety of his position. What is significant about these lectures is that Yoder avoids both pitfalls and arrives at a nuanced position that can be stated as follows: Nonviolence is the norm for Christians, effective or not, but if and when this norm does prove to be effective for

**Christians are to live and love like Jesus, knowing, in spite of evidence to the contrary, that God's purposes will prevail with the coming of the Kingdom.**



Christians or for any others, we should not be surprised because Jesus is both fully human and fully divine, which means that the norm of nonviolence works “with the grain of the cosmos.”

Herein lay the significance of the Tolstoy-Gandhi-King trajectory: it demonstrates the power of nonviolent thought and action working both in the church and beyond it. The same is true of the emergent “varieties of Catholic peace theology.” They signify the effective power of nonviolent thought and action beyond the peace-church traditions. Yoder’s favorable depiction of the Catholic Worker and “the peace community” flowing from it is unusually effusive: “it is the restoration of original Christianity which we are seeing at work in our day, such as has not been the case with the same breadth and depth since the age of Francis. That is the privilege of living in our age.”

His account of the US Catholic bishops’ pastoral letter is equally enthusiastic: the bishops are on the verge of producing “a landmark in modern Catholic thought” that “reopens the possibility of resistance as a possible Christian response to a government making unjust demands.” Thus “American Catholicism has entered a new phase of civil courage and pastoral responsibility.”

Yoder was not temperamentally inclined to such enthusiasm. But for a man who devoted his life to arguing that Jesus is the norm in Christian ethics, and that the truth of this norm will be ultimately vindicated in history, the events in 1983 marked a time of profound hope that the Catholic Church was becoming (once again) a genuine “peace church.”

More than a quarter of a century has elapsed since these lectures were delivered. Much has happened since. Some events have borne out the hope that Yoder expressed. With the Revolutions of 1989, the Communist bloc crumbled and this, as Pope John Paul II noted *Centesimus annus*, “was accomplished almost everywhere by means of peaceful protest, using only the weapons of truth and justice” (n. 23). In the summer of 1991, after the Persian Gulf War, *La Civiltà Cattolica* published an editorial approved by the Vatican that questioned the ability of modern states to wage a just war. For more than decade thereafter, the US Catholic bishops along with the Vatican condemned the US-led embargo against Iraq. And while the Bush Administration prepared to launch an invasion of Iraq, the plans were denounced by several offices of the Holy See, and by the Holy Father himself, who sent an emissary to Washington, D.C. on Ash Wednesday 2003 to dissuade the Administration from its reckless course. All these can be read as signs of the Catholic Church embracing anew the nonviolent “key” to the Gospel.

There have been, of course, counter-signs to this nonviolent impulse as well: a resurgence of Catholic nationalism in the United States, recast now in terms of a “clash of civilizations” between militant Islam and the so-called Christian West; uncertainty on the part of US

Catholic bishops as to how to bring just-war thinking to bear on the consciences of Catholics and others; and a general malaise in the mainstream churches, both Protestant and Catholic, owing to the political divisions between liberal and conservative. The final outcome of history we know by faith, but its present direction remains obscure, a mysterious commingling of signs and counter-signs. . .

We must read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel. This is what the Second Vatican Council taught us. What Yoder taught us is that in order to read the signs of the times rightly, we must focus on the “key” of the Gospel, so as not to confuse Jesus’ call to nonviolence with the alluring security offered by the nations and empires of this world.

In this sense, these lectures come to us like a memo written years ago, pointing out things that we may be tempted to overlook or neglect or forget. They remind us that living faithfully in history comes by building peaceful, nonviolent communities in the manner of Tolstoy, Gandhi, King, Dorothy Day, and Dom Helder Camara: agrarian communes of prayer and retreat, houses of hospitality to the poor, civil disobedience against unjust laws, a discerning use of just laws on behalf of those in need, and writing in plain, direct prose about our life and work and what we believe.

Many Christians trying to do these things now are doing so because of Yoder’s work. His writing and teaching has had remarkable effects: his graduate students writing and teaching their own students about the norm of Jesus, congregations reading his books for clarity and inspiration, Christian communities following his thought as a guide for practicing nonviolence in neighborhoods and cities. There are signs of his effects near and far, in this country and around the world.

At Notre Dame and in South Bend, Yoder’s effects are especially palpable. In the years since he died, many of us have continued to gather on October 30, the Feast of Saint Marcellus. At first, we gathered simply for Mass; a few years later, for a meeting of Catholics and Mennonites on peacemaking, followed by a prayer service; in recent years, for an annual celebration of “Saint Marcellus Day,” including classes, speakers, and a dramatic reenactment of the Martyrdom of Saint Marcellus. This past year, 500 Catholics, Mennonites, and others gathered at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart for an evening of prayer and reflection. It began with a priest addressing the assembly on the ancient practice of preserving and venerating relics. They are, he explained, material evidence of God’s power in the world, signs of how our lives can be transformed into the likeness of Christ. So as it turns out, Marcellus’ presence is being noticed, his story is being told, and we are encouraged to re-enact his story now, in our day, in our own lives. For if it is true, as Camara and Esquivel say, that love will have the last word in history, then it is also true, as Yoder says, that “it must be our word now.” ✠

# Learning to Live Like Christians

BY ALAN F. KREIDER

*Editors' note: A version of this address was delivered at the St. Marcellus Day Peace Institute Luncheon and Lecture on October 30, 2008 at Sacred Heart Parish Center in Notre Dame, Indiana.*

We meet to honor Marcellus, who on this day, October 30, 298, was martyred in Tingis (Tangier), in North Africa. Marcellus has been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church, and his relics lie under the high altar of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame. Marcellus was a soldier, a centurion. His life and his death raise the issue about how Christians in the early church related to military service and by implication about how Christians today should relate to matters military.

Scholars do not agree on how to interpret the early church on this issue. For centuries Christians of many traditions have looked to early Christianity for inspiration; since the 1950s Catholic scholars have engaged in *ressourcement*, going back to the sources, especially the writings of the early Christians.

But what do the sources say? About participation in the military, the sources, including the acts of Marcellus himself, seem to give a picture which on close examination is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, Marcellus, on the emperor's birthday, created a scene: in the midst of his legion's celebratory birthday banquet, Marcellus got up, dramatically threw down his soldier's belt and loudly declared: "I am a soldier of Jesus Christ, the eternal king. From now on I cease to serve your emperors. And I despise the worship of your gods of wood and stone, for they are deaf and dumb images." Under cross-examination after his arrest, Marcellus said that he "could not serve under the military oath, but only for Christ Jesus, the son of God the Father almighty." He concluded: "It is not fitting that a Christian, who fights for Christ his Lord, should fight for the armies of this world."<sup>1</sup> As he was led out to be beheaded, Marcellus said to the prefect, "Agricolanus, may God do good to you."

So Marcellus died dramatically and heroically, as a military objector. But his story raises questions. What was it in the military that Marcellus objected to? Indeed, what was Marcellus, a Christian, doing in the legions? How long had he been a Christian? As a soldier, what had he done? Had he killed? We don't know. In the third century there was a militarization of the imperial

civil service, so that soldiers delivered the post and engaged in administration. It is possible that Marcellus was in the legions doing nonviolent work—to serve (*militare*) but not to kill (*bellare*). Marcellus clearly objected to idolatry—he despises the gods of wood and stone. But he seems also to have other objections. He cannot serve under the military oath (*sacramentum*) because he is involved in a battle, fighting for his Lord Jesus Christ; and because it is not right for a Christian, a member of the *militia Christi*, to "fight in the armies of the world." No one—Marcellus might be quoting Jesus (Matt 6:24)—can serve two masters. But he does not expressly say that killing is against the teaching and way of the Christian church.

So Marcellus presents us with questions as well as answers. In this essay I want to face into these questions, allowing for complexities. However, I believe that there are four statements that one can make about the approaches of the early Christians to warfare during the three centuries of periodic persecution and before its emergence as the imperial religion:

1) The Christians of the first three centuries, although divided on military service, were primarily at the same time, committed to peace and at times were explicitly anti-militarist.

2) The church's bishops and theologians who wrote on military service disapproved of it; instead they attempted to foster Christian churches which were cultures of peace.

3) The Christians were committed not to participate in idolatry. But they also opposed killing of all sorts—including gladiatorial combat, abortion, capital punishment, and military service.

4) In the fourth century things changed. In the years following the accession of Constantine to the imperial throne in 312 and his adherence to the Christian church, Christianity was legalized. To become a Christian became socially advantageous. Under these circumstances the Christian bishops and theologians gradually "developed" their position. And this development reflected a changing Christian sociology—the growth in numbers of Christians and the conversion of aristocratic males. By the end of the fourth century, the Christian church adopted approaches to warfare, killing, and peace which have dominated the Christian tradition ever since.<sup>2</sup>

These statements are based on a range of sources. Let us look at a selection of documented beliefs and practices, some of which address the Christians' position on warfare directly, and others which do so obliquely.

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**1. A catechetical document: “we cultivate peace.”** [—Clement of Alexandria, *The Pegagogue* (ca. 200)]. Clement was instructing new Christians about what kinds of signet rings they could have to authenticate documents. People went to jewelers’ shops to buy rings, which had various images on them as *intaglios*, depressions which were filled with ink. But, Clement taught, only some kinds of *intaglios* were suitable for Christians. Christians should not buy rings with idols, lovers, or drinking cups on them, “for we practice temperance.” Similarly, Christians should not use rings whose images were of a sword or bow, “for we cultivate peace.” Instead, let Christians acquire signet rings with images of “a dove or fish or ship in full sail,” all of which had Christian allusions (Spirit, Jesus Christ, the cross) and were suitable to a community which was creating a culture of peace. In this culture, according to Clement’s catechesis, peace was a prime Christian value—as important as chastity, as important as rejecting idolatry (3.5.57).

**2. Biblical passages memorized in catechesis: “swords into plowshares” and “love your enemies.”** The early Christians lived in a society in which ninety percent of the people were illiterate. Although the Christian faith was a spur to literacy, the vast majority of the Christians learned the Bible orally/aurally—and they learned a selection of biblical passages as they underwent catechesis in preparation for baptism. Two texts—one from the Old Testament and one from the New—stand out as texts of which the early Christian writers were aware and cited so frequently that all believers knew them. Both had to do with peace. The Old Testament passage was Isaiah 2:2-4, which the great theologian Origen referred to in a letter to his friend Julius Africanus (15). Citing Isaiah 2:4, Origen comments, “who of all believers does not know the words in Isaiah? ‘And in the last days . . . they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’” All Christians, Origen assumed, knew that text.

The New Testament passage was Matthew 5:43ff/Luke 6:27ff. When the apologist Athenagoras was asked: “What, then, are these teachings in which we are reared?” he responded: “I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who persecute you.” This text was known by all, including “unlettered people, tradesmen, and old women . . . [who] do not rehearse speeches, but evidence good deeds. When struck, they do not strike back.”<sup>3</sup> Scholars have pointed out that the “love your enemies” passage was the text which the early Christians most frequently cited from Matthew’s gospel.<sup>4</sup>

Why were these passages significant? According to Justin Martyr, the Isaiah passage was important because it stated what the Christians had experienced in coming into a culture of peace: “we who delighted in war . . . and in every other kind of iniquity, have con-

verted our weapons of war into implements of peace—our swords into plowshares . . .”<sup>5</sup> And the “love your enemies” passage may explain why Christians, in situations of stress, responded with peculiar, nonviolent reflexes.

**3. The sign of peace: making peace in worship.** It was not only memorized texts that shaped the Christians’ approach to violence. So also did their worship, which was rooted in peacemaking understandings and contained a peacemaking ritual. Since the 1960s “the peace” has been an important part of the liturgies of many Christian traditions. So it also was in the early church. But various documents indicate that it had a deeper significance for the early Christians than it has for most people today; it was not simply a time when worshippers

wished the blessing of God’s peace on the person sitting next to them. Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, in the mid-third century, saw this as a time when Christians could be “peacemakers,” especially when they were in disagreement with other Christians and alienated from them. This was urgently necessary for the integrity of their worship; God would “not receive the sacrifice of a person who is in disagreement.” So “the peace” offered Christians an opportunity, before they participated in the eucharist, to ask forgiveness and to settle disputes. According to Cyprian, God is “appeased by the prayers of a peacemaker. Our peace and brotherly agreement is the greater sacrifice to God.”<sup>6</sup> Third-century church leaders in Syria took a similar position. Reminding their readers that Jesus in Matthew 5:24ff had commanded his disciples to make peace before they worshipped God, the Syrian leaders ordered the deacons, “with a loud voice,” to call out, “Is there anyone who has anything against his brother or sister?” Why? “So that your prayer will be heard and your eucharist will be accepted.”<sup>7</sup> For the early Christians, “the peace” was not only a sign of peace; it was a place in the liturgy where conflict could be transformed and believers who were at odds could be reconciled.<sup>8</sup> The early Christians came from churches that not only spoke peace; they made peace.

**4. Conversion: overcoming violence and xenophobia.** Christians who came into the early churches experienced life-changing conversion. As Justin, a philosopher and catechist, who wrote in about the year 150 in Rome, people came to be Christians through facing into their addictions and compulsions, and allowing God to liberate them from their bondages. In his *First Apology*, Justin made the behavior of Christians a central part of his apologetic argument. People, he observed, needed to change to become Christians. According to Justin, people typically were unfree in one or more of four areas, in each of which God “through his

**The early Christians not only came from churches that spoke peace, they made peace.**



Son" has changed their lives. In sex, Christians have moved from fornication to "delight in self-control." In the occult, Christians who used to "make use of the magic arts" have ceased to do so. In wealth, Christians "who once took most pleasure in increasing our wealth" now bring what they have into a common fund and share with the needy. And in violence, Christians used "to hate and kill one another and would not associate with people of different tribes." No longer. Because of the teaching and work of Christ, "we now live together and pray for our enemies and try to persuade those who unjustly hate us." For a reason—so that the enemies may become believers, sharing with the other Christians a life rooted in the Sermon on the Mount and liberated from addictions. This was not only for special Christians; according to Justin, people who "don't live as [Christ] taught should know that they are not really Christians." Christ came to set people free—if they were caught in the addictions of sex or the occult or the acquisitive materialism or hating and killing enemies, they were not free. What process of change converted them to become like this?

**5. Catechesis: learning to live like a Christian.** According to the third-century church

order, the *Apostolic Tradition*, Christians became members of the church through a period of catechesis which often took several years. Before they were admitted to this formative process, the would-be catechumens and their sponsors needed to answer the catechists' questions. What was their marital status? Were they sexually pure? And what was their job? Did it involve them with something that could make them unable to receive the church's teaching—e.g., with idolatry, pagan mythology, or violence? If they were gladiators whose job was violence, they could not be received into the catechumenate. If they were lower-ranking soldiers, they could become catechumens, but only if they agreed not to kill; "if they are ordered to kill, they shall not carry out the order." Soldiers who had the power to command the use of the sword were not admitted as catechumens unless they left the armed forces. Of course the church leaders were concerned with idolatry; but the concern which the *Apostolic Tradition* expresses about soldiers was not idolatry in the legions but killing. Why? The early Christian leaders knew that the church's witness lay in their members' distinctive behavior. They also believed that only people who were already living in ways largely in keeping with the church's teaching were "able to hear the word." Soldiers who were not willing to renounce killing could not receive the church's full cat-

echesis without defensiveness or argument. On the other hand, soldiers who were ready to repudiate killing—through doing civil service jobs while in the legions—could submit to their catechists. They could memorize the biblical passages about peace; they could internalize the church's narratives, from both Testaments of the Bible and from the acts of the martyrs; they could learn to live like Christians, honoring the widows and visiting the sick; they could learn to treat their enemies with prayer and nonviolence, renouncing both idolatry and killing.

**The early Christian leaders were convinced that not killing mattered.** They had many reasons. Some of these were missionary. According to Justin Martyr, it was Christian behavior that attracted pagans. Many non-Christians, he noted, "have turned from the ways of violence and tyranny, overcome by observing the consistent lives of their neighbors, or noting the strange patience of their injured acquaintances, or experiencing the way they did business with them." In fact, the way Christians who had renounced hatred and killing loved their enemies persuaded these enemies to "share with us the good hope."<sup>9</sup> This had to do with killing in the military;

but it also had to do with killing in other arenas of life. The apologist Athenagoras states the consistent opposition to killing that runs through a broad swath of early Christian writings: "We . . . cannot endure to see a man being put to death even justly . . . We see little difference between watching a man being put to death and killing him. So we have given up [gladiatorial] spectacles . . . What reason would we have to commit murder when we say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God? . . . But we are altogether consistent in our conduct . . ."<sup>10</sup> Consistent repudiation of killing—in capital punishment, entertainment, abortions, the exposure of unwanted infants, and warfare—was a conviction of the early church. It was articulated by magisterial instructions, (*Apostolic Tradition*, *Canons of Hippolytus*, etc.), by theologians such as Origen, Tertullian and Justin, and by ordinary Christians.<sup>11</sup>

**Not all early Christians agreed with their church's teaching.** The early Christians didn't always do what their leaders taught. In 180, the pagan philosopher Celsus assumed that the Christians would not fight: "If everyone were to do the same as you, there would be nothing to prevent [the emperor] from being abandoned, alone and deserted, while earthly things

would come into the power of the most lawless and savage barbarians . . .”<sup>12</sup> But in the late second century, evidence appears of the presence of Christians in the Roman legions. Some of these Christian soldiers may have been in civil service roles, but others were evidently in fighting units. Despite the teaching and discipline of the church, through the third century, the number of soldiers who were Christian grew, and by 303 their presence gave offense to the emperor Diocletian. The Christian legionaries began to think theologically. As early as 200, in North Africa, the theologian Tertullian encountered soldiers who had a well-worked-out rationale: in the Old Testament, Moses, Joshua and others fought; in the New Testament, John the Baptist gave soldiers “the formula of their rule”—no extortion, no bullying, be satisfied with your wages (Luke 3:14); and Jesus received a centurion who had faith. Tertullian accused these soldiers of “sporting with the subject.” To him, there could be “no agreement between the divine sacrament and the human sacrament, “between baptism and the soldier’s oath,” and he claimed that Jesus, who “disarmed Peter, disarmed every soldier.”<sup>13</sup>

Not all troops were convinced. To what extent did the bishops attempt to get laymen to honor the church’s teaching in their lives? One such example comes from Palestine in 260. Marinus was accused by a fellow soldier of being a Christian, and a magistrate gave him three days to consider the choice—either sacrifice to the Roman emperors or be beheaded. Marinus went to Theotecnus, bishop of Caesarea, to ask his advice. Theotecnus took him into the building where the church met. “Drawing aside Marinus’ cloak [he] pointed to the sword attached to his side. At the same time he brought a copy of the divine Gospels and he set it before Marinus, asking him to choose which he preferred.” Marinus extended his right hand and grasped the

Gospels. Bishop Theotecnus, seeing that he chose the Gospels rather than the sword, said, “Go in peace,” and Marinus returned to his legion to be executed.<sup>14</sup>

### **After Constantine, the Church made peace with war...Theologians gradually modulated their teaching to fit the realities of the empire that was being Christianized.**

**After Constantine, the Church made peace with war.** In the fourth century the emperor Constantine adhered to Christianity and the church grew rapidly. Theologians gradually modulated their teaching to fit the realities of the empire that was being Christianized. Aristocratic males worried that “the preaching and doctrine [of Christ] are not adaptable to the customs of the state,” but the great Augustine reassured them, “Love your enemies” did not have to do with behavior, but with “the interior dispositions of the heart.”<sup>15</sup> The “swords to plowshares” text from Isaiah 2 rapidly lost its place as a central Christian text. The peace greeting became impersonal as congregations became large. Catechesis became rapid, as the numbers of catechumens increased; then it almost disappeared.<sup>16</sup> Killing, at least in warfare, became a normal part of the life experience of many Christians, although it was restrict-

ed to some extent by the pagan just war tradition which theologians Christianized. Augustine led in the development of the Christian just war doctrine, but he also appealed to the Bible: to the Old Testament patriarchs who fought; to Jesus who admired the faith of the centurion who said to the Lord, “I am not worthy for you to come under my roof;” and especially to John the Baptist, who did not forbid the soldiers to kill but “commanded them to be content with their pay.”<sup>17</sup> Augustine was thus both an innovator—in adopting the just war ethics—and also an idiosyncratic catholic: he continued the tradition of the early Christian laity who appealed to the Bible to justify warfare. And he passed over in silence the tradition of early Christian theologians who repudiated killing in warfare. ¶

#### **Notes:**

1. *Acta Marcelli*, in Herbert Musurillo, ed., *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 251-255.
2. The approach of this article is spelled out in greater detail in Alan Kreider, “Military Service in the Church Orders.” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31:3 (2003): 415-442. See also David G. Hunter, “A Decade of Research on Early Christians and Military Service.” *Religious Studies Review* 18, no. 2 (1992): 87-94.
3. Athenagoras, *Legatio* 11, 34-35
4. Wolf-Dietrich Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthauevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, 2 Reihe 24. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1987), 541ff.
5. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 110.2-3.
6. Cyprian, *The Lord’s Prayer* 22-24.
7. *Didascalia Apostolorum* 2.53-54.

8. Alan Kreider, “Peacemaking in Worship in the Syrian Church Orders,” *Studia Liturgica* 34.2 (2004), 177-190.
9. Justin, 1 *Apology* 16, 14.
10. Athenagoras, *Legatio* 11, 34-35.
11. Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1960), 5-6.
12. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.68.
13. Tertullian, *On Idolatry* 19.
14. *Martyrdom of St Marinus*, in Musurillo, 241.
15. Augustine, *Letters* 135, 137.
16. Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 6-8.
17. Augustine, *Letter* 189, to Boniface.

# Augustinian Skepticism about a “Just War”?

BY MSGR. MICHAEL HEINTZ

*Editors' note: A version of this address was delivered at the St. Marcellus Day Peace Institute Luncheon and Lecture on October 29, 2009 at the Our Lady of the Road Cafe in South Bend, Indiana.*

When the question of the morality of war or military action is raised, it is not uncommon to see Augustine trotted out and credited as the principal architect of the “Just War Theory.” This is a stretch. While Augustine was certainly not a pacifist, at least not in any meaningful sense of the word (it is, after all, a rather modern term), it must also be observed that his thinking on war is much more complex than is often assumed. Nor is it the case that he offered a systematic analysis of the morality of warfare.

I myself write as a Catholic who is not a pacifist. I can understand and acknowledge the basic principles laid out in the categories *ius ad bellum* (“just use of war”) and *ius in bello* (“just means within war”), as enumerated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, § 2309-2317. However, in ways analogous to John Paul II’s teaching on capital punishment, while I grant, in theory, the possibility of just warfare, at the same time I acknowledge that, given the circumstances of modern warfare, the justification for the use of military force is, in reality, “very rare, if not practically non-existent” (cf. *Catechism* § 2267). Quite frankly, it is actually the conduct carried out within war (which would receive moral analysis under the category *ius in bello*) that is in fact most troubling and disconcerting to me. And so, while the justification might be offered for initiating armed response to aggression, in our modern context, the moment that response is made in concrete action, it seems to me that this response will likely violate the precepts of proper moral action.

## Augustine, the Bishop

First and perhaps most easily lost on later readers, Augustine was not a systematic theologian in the modern sense of the term. He was not an academic. All of his works were occasioned by particular, often pastoral problems and circumstances. He was first and foremost a bishop, which in antiquity meant spending long hours listening to the appeals of Christians who were wran-

gling about familial or business disputes. In effect, the local bishop was considered a patron—and an authoritative one—to whom one would appeal, rather than get tangled up in civil courts, for an impartial decision when the disagreement involved two or more believers. Far from romanticizing about some gilded age of the “early Church,” it is important to recognize the bracing fact that, where two or three were gathered, more often than not there was some kind of problem. Given the demands placed upon him by his pastoral responsibilities, it is remarkable that Augustine was able to write at all, much less produce such a vast corpus of texts.

When one looks to him for insight about war, one does not find any neatly crafted or sustained reflection on the issue. Rather, one must read deeply and widely in order to gain a genuine appreciation of just what he taught about war. While it is accurate to suggest that he has had enormous influence on Western Christian thought, including moral reflection on issues such as war, it is not the case that he was a particularly sanguine advocate of military action, much less that he formulated a “Just War Theory.”

## City of God

While his critics would have us believe that Augustine was preoccupied with sex, there was another *libido* which caused him graver concern: the *libido dominiandi*, the lust for mastery; the inbred desire to control, manipulate and dominate others which marks human life, from the most basic level of interpersonal relations to the political insecurities and expansionist designs among peoples and nations.

This is one of the recurring themes of the *City of God*, a huge and daunting work (to use his words), taking him thirteen years to complete and spanning, in its most popular English translation, nearly 1200 pages.<sup>1</sup> Prompted by fallout from the sack of Rome by Alaric and the Goths in August 410, there is a twofold apologetic purpose for the work. The more obvious, external apologetic is directed against pagan suspicions and criticism of the Christian faith’s idiosyncratic and exclusive worship of the God of Jesus Christ as the source of the Empire’s recent political and social ills.<sup>2</sup> Augustine is eager to demonstrate, through a lengthy historical and moral disquisition, that Rome’s ills certainly predate the advent of the Gospel, and that the old religion of the Republic and Empire was never a guarantor of moral or social excellence. In short, he deconstructs the narrative that had been embraced and enshrined by pagan Rome.

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But in the *City of God* there is a more subtle, internal apologetic as well, one which is directed to a particularly Christian vision of Empire. With the accession of Constantine and his toleration of and personal involvement in the affairs of the Church, some Christians began to understand this new patronage as an act of God, something of a (to use an anachronistic and Americanist term) “manifest destiny,” a divine validation of a “Christian empire.” Constantine could not have asked for a better spin doctor than the learned and eloquent Eusebius of Caesarea (+ c. 340 AD), positively ebullient at the possibilities of a providentially managed imperial patronage of the Church.

Eusebius’ panegyric on the occasion of Constantine’s thirtieth anniversary of accession is replete with refer-

**Politics, political leadership, governing bodies, and their constitutions . . . are incapable of dealing with the deepest hurts of the human heart and healing the social repercussions of sinful human choice.**

ences to the “divinely inspired emperor” who is likened to God’s very *logos*, the one who orders and sustains creation. The hearer is left to infer that God has entrusted the emperor with such tasks in the order of politics.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the beneficiary of the century or so between Constantine’s accession and his own situation, and the (at times) less than stellar performance of Christians in public office, Augustine was far less enthusiastic about such a link between Church and Empire in the minds and hearts of many of his co-religionists. As Rome, the heart of the vast empire, was ravaged by marauding bands of “barbarians,” a number of whom followed a heretical version of Christianity known as Arianism, the world of many orthodox Christians was also rocked. Their hopes for and assumptions about a “Christian empire” were shaken. Perhaps it was the beginning of the end.<sup>5</sup> More than the pagan critique of Christianity’s impact on the social order, it was this Eusebian “theology” that Augustine saw as even more insidious and which accounts for the alternate narrative he offers in books 11-22.

It was the particular genius of Augustine to see that the vagaries of the temporal order, including national catastrophes, bear little upon the life of Christians. The followers of Christ live in this age as pilgrims, *paroikoi* in the language of the New Testament, perhaps best rendered, according to Rowan Williams, as “settled migrants.” Christians, he argued, live and move in the here and now, yet expect little from this age in terms of ultimate justice and peace. They can thrive quite frankly in any particular state or place provided the exercise of their faith and the worship of God is permitted.

For Augustine, politics and political leadership, governing bodies and their constitutions, regardless of how

noble their aims and purposes, are incapable of dealing with the deepest hurts of the human heart and healing the social repercussions of sinful human choice. Unlike Thomas Aquinas who follows Aristotle in seeing humans by nature not merely as social but also political, Augustine saw political life as a result of the fall.<sup>6</sup> At best, politics and government are simply necessary mechanisms to maintain a minimum of common good. This meant little more than keeping the various disordered human *libidines* in check, but not delivering to the human community the salvation for which it yearns. Justice and peace in this age are always provisional. Ultimate, abiding justice and peace belong to the age to come. Relationships of subordination, whether political or social, are indicative of fallen human nature, and, as Augustine is at pains to maintain, they are not intrinsic to human nature as created by God.

This is why Augustine was so keen to warn continually of the danger of *libido dominandi*. As he understood it, humans suffer from a disordered desire for domination and power which has both a microcosmic and macrocosmic expression: the individual’s drive to control and manipulate others and the lust for domination that marks statecraft. Thus, for Augustine, Christians should be neither too elated at the prospect of temporal success, including the chimera of a “Christian empire,” nor too downcast at social upheaval or political failure.

In keeping with this chastened view of politics, for Augustine, war is neither glorious nor noble. Here, it should be noted, he thought exclusively in terms of defensive war. Wars of empire-building and expansion, which mark the history of Rome, were spun repeatedly by their perpetrators as necessary and defensive, when in fact they were neither, in which case *pax* simply became code for *dominium*. In fact, recent scholarship has shown Augustine’s shrewd awareness of what today we call “media spin” in both advocating and then masking injustice.<sup>7</sup> In Augustine’s mind, war is a tragedy that wreaks havoc and destroys life. The just leader will lament its necessity and undertake such military action only with reluctance and a spirit of penitence, not with glee or enthusiasm.<sup>8</sup> War, and the use of force that it employs, unleashes and engenders the *libido dominandi*, and history is rife with accounts of gross violence and cruelty. The line between just, defensive use of force and the lust for domination is quickly and easily blurred within warfare. He was far less optimistic about what we categorize as *ius in bello* than later commentators and just-war theorists often take him to be.

### **Ancient Christian Doubts about War**

Augustine was not alone in his wariness toward war. It was in fact part and parcel of the early Christian disposition toward violence and force to which Augustine was far more the heir than the radical dissenter. We possess, for example, an exchange of letters that was written a generation or so before Augustine, between the Easterners Basil of Caesarea (+ 379 AD) and his less-

er known *confrère*, the bishop of Iconium, Amphilochius. In the letters, the two hash out the various types of penance appropriate for particular kinds of human sinfulness. One of the more fascinating exchanges concerns the kind of penance one would suggest for a soldier who had justly and in self-defense taken a human life. While acknowledging that even if the justice of his cause and the rightness of such self-defensive action can be ascertained, it is still advisable that he refrain from Eucharistic communion for a period of three years.<sup>9</sup> Whether or not this was consistently in practice is immaterial; the fact that such penance was recommended itself speaks of the innate sense that shedding human blood is always a problem. In another of these letters, even the individual who has taken another's life accidentally or unintentionally is expected to do penance.<sup>10</sup> Killing, while no doubt having an effect on the victim, is understood also as having an effect on the killer, regardless of intent or circumstances. In some respects, this should not surprise us. Recall that David was not permitted by God to build the temple because he was a warrior who had blood on his hands.<sup>11</sup> In fact, perhaps the modern Christian's tacit acquiescence to the culture of violence (it's simply part of the way things are, and so we've become rather numb to it) reveals perhaps how far we in fact are from the mental world of the early Christians.

On this score, we can recall Augustine's friend Alypius, who did not share Augustine's rather strong sexual appetites. Alypius' struggle, his addiction, was not to the flesh, but to violence. In ways that hit eerily close to home in a culture where pornography and its enslavement are all too easily available on the screen of the computer, the gladiatorial shows—not "shows" in our modern sense, where what happens isn't really *real*—elicited a kind of bloodlust. Alypius was driven to look, to see, to gaze, and ineluctably, incrementally, inevitably, to become numbed by and to cruelty, torture, and bloodshed.<sup>12</sup>

We need to see that Alypius is not so different from us. We're the culture that can produce children who, upon seeing airplanes collide with the twin towers in New York and the conflagration that followed, respond "cool." That's only possible when we've made violence and carnage, à la Bruce Willis and a host of other latter-day gladiators, a form of entertainment and amusement. But for us the distinction between the genuine horror of violence and bloodshed and its Hollywood or Nintendo avatar is collapsed, making us increasingly callous. It becomes easy to envision missile strikes as little more than spectacles on a screen, with the unfortunate but necessary "collateral damage" of human life.

As a critic of violence and bloodshed, Augustine's views on war, while not pacifist, have much more in common with what might be called the earlier tradition of the martyrs, valorized and canonized in the Apocalypse, than with later theorists of "just warfare." He would likely not be amused when contemporary

pundits and politicians invoke his authority in this regard.

### Augustine on Love, Faith & Salvation

One of the subtle themes of the *City of God* is the juxtaposition of the heroes of the Greek and Roman cultural imagination to the martyrs of the New Covenant. Those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes and whose violent deaths somehow share in Christ's death, confront earthly, political power not with force or aggression, but with agapic, even Eucharistic, love.<sup>13</sup>

In the last book of *City of God*, Augustine reflects on Cicero's account of the limited justifications for war. It is precisely here that he raises and sustains a discussion of the martyrs, their witness, and the miracles associated with their relics.<sup>14</sup> The connection may seem tenuous to us, but perhaps lurking behind this discussion is the very nature of

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power, *dunamis* in Greek, the most common term in the Synoptic Gospels for "miracle." In discussing the witness of the martyrs and the miracles associated with them, Augustine is deconstructing earthly, political "power," divesting it of meaning, redefining it in terms of the miraculous, moving almost seamlessly into discussion of resurrection (and ascension), the grandest miracle or demonstration of power of all—a miracle wrought from a seemingly senseless and cruel death, a demonstration of the very Power and Wisdom of God whom St. Paul knew as Christ Crucified.

Cicero, the authoritative Roman political theorist whom Augustine engages repeatedly in the *City of God*, had taught that there were two bases upon which a legitimate or noble state might engage in war: when its safety (*salus*) was threatened or when an ally or neighbor had broken faith (*fides*) with it, though without qualifying which of the two was more important.<sup>15</sup> But Cicero, Augustine observes, was hampered by a defective view of the world as "just there," not as created, not as gift, and his imagination was hampered by a horizon that was ultimately finite, that lacked the perspective of an age to come. Earthly safety (*salus*) is precarious; human experience is sadly marked by infidelity. Punning and transforming at the same time, Augustine asserts that the martyrs, by the gift of faith (*fides*), attain genuine salvation (*salus*); in fact, rather than as alternatives, *fides* and *salus* exist together in the martyrs in an exemplary way.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps Augustine's rejoinder to Cicero's rationale for war, limited as it may be to

**Augustine. . . invites us to see and gaze through a different frame of reference, to expand our imaginative horizon beyond the finite contingencies of a world dominated, he would tell us, by its own lust for domination.**

two bases or justifications, is to point out the limits of his imagination. For Augustine next launches into a lengthy account of the miracles associated with the martyrs. In one digression, he recounts some twenty miraculous events associated with the martyrs.<sup>17</sup> The power of the martyrs, he concludes, lies not in their fighting back (*repugnando*), but by their dying (*moriendo*), their sharing in a death like Christ's, and so witnessing to that most distinctive and radical Christian conviction, the resurrection of the flesh.<sup>18</sup> That is their *fides*, and that is also their *salus*. And the miracles associated with them, their "power," is best understood not like

the demonic demonstrations and portents that would occasionally wow late antique pagans and Christians alike, but rather a proleptic breaking-in of the age to come in the here and now. Rather than blithely adapting a Ciceronian rationale for warfare to Christian purposes, Augustine ultimately rejects it, and invites us to consider a different kind of *fides* and *salus*, to see and gaze through a different frame of reference, to expand our imaginative horizon beyond the finite contingencies of a world dominated, he would insist, by its own lust for domination.

**A**ugustine, while not a pacifist in our modern sense, was nonetheless much closer in outlook to St. Marcellus than to later and certainly modern proponents of "just war." The real shift in justification of war, I would posit (and it is not my place to take this up here), came in the late Middle Ages with the rise of nominalism and voluntarism, when the primary category for thinking about God shifted from *logos* to will.<sup>18</sup> ✠

## Notes:

1. The best translations are those of Robert Dyson, *The City of God against the Pagans* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998) and Henry Bettenson, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* (London: Penguin, 1972); an elegant but dated rendering is that of Marcus Dods, *The City of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872).
2. On the "threat" Christian worship—categorized as *coniuratio* and *superstitio*—posed to Imperial religion, cf. the new and important book of Allen Brent, *A Political History of Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), esp. pp. 32-39. He makes the case that Christians were not merely a rhetorical or social scapegoat, but rather that their worship was perceived as a genuine threat to the social (and inextricably natural) order of the cosmos.
3. The panegyric was given on July 25, 336. On the speech and its context, cf. Timothy Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Harvard: University Press, 1981), esp. pp. 253-255.
4. Cf. the brief but trenchant argument by James O'Donnell, "The Inspiration for Augustine's *De civitate Dei*," in *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1989):75-79.
5. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), pp. 6-11.
6. Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004) and his earlier "Eloquent Lies, Just Wars and the Politics of Persuasion: Reading Augustine's *City of God* in a 'Postmodern' World," in *Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994):77-138; cf also Louis Swift, "Augustine on War and Killing: Another View," in *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973):369-383 and David Lenihan, "The Just War Theory in the Work of St. Augustine," in *Augustinian Studies* 19 (1988):37-69.
7. *City of God* 19.7 and Elshtain, 105-107.
8. Basil, *Ep* 188.13.
9. Basil, *Ep* 217.57.
10. Cf. 1 Chronicles 22.8ff. Some thirty years before writing *City of God*, Augustine had expressed concern that killing, even when sanc-

tioned by law, is problematic: cf. the aporetic exchange between Augustine and Evodius, *On Free Choice of the Will* 1.5 and the typically sage remarks of John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), pp. 194-195 and 231-232.

9 *Confessions* 6.8.13.

12. The recent literature on martyrdom is vast. One might begin with Robin Young's Marquette Lecture, *In Procession before the World: Martyrdom as Public Liturgy in Early Christianity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001). Cf now also George Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007) and Joshua Whitfield, *Pilgrim Holiness: Martyrdom as Descriptive Witness* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009).

13. 22.6-10.

14. *City of God* 22.6; referring to a passage from Cicero's Republic no longer extant, but perhaps also available to him through Livy; cf. O'Daly, 226, n. 52. It should be noted that Cicero was no warmonger himself and in his work was likely seeking to limit the bases for justifiable military action. Cf. also *City of God* 8.27.

15. Cf. O'Daly 226-227.

16. *City of God* 22.7-10.

17. *City of God* 22.9.

18. On this, cf. Elshtain 2009, pp. 1-27, where she discusses the influence of nominalism, and this shift from *logos* to will, on notions of political sovereignty and absolutism.

## Saint Marcellus Day Celebration 2010 October 28-29

South Bend/Notre Dame, Indiana  
Keynote Speaker - William T. Cavanaugh

Information will be made available on the website for the Center for Peace & Nonviolence: <http://cpnv.net>



## GOOD FRIDAY; THE PENITENT SPEAKS

You come toward me  
prestigious in Your wounds  
the grand inquisitor's rants  
coping those frail and speechless bones

Your credentials;  
dying sombrely for others.

What a burden! —  
fake and true vows,  
crucifixes grislier  
than the event —

And the glory gap —  
larger than life  
begetting less than life,  
the faith that strikes healthy eyes  
blind; Believe! Believe!

Christians  
tapping down a street  
in harness to their seeing-eye god.

Only in solitude  
or in a passing tic of insight  
(gone soon as granted) —  
You come toward me,  
free of accretive  
thousands of dead egos

Can one befriend his God?  
The question is inadmissable, I know.

Nevertheless, a fiery recognition  
lights us  
    broken by life  
making our comeback.

— Daniel Berrigan, SJ

# On Earth as it is in Heaven

BY ANNA NUSSBAUM KEATING

On October 2, 2006, Charles Carl Roberts IV walked into a one-room Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, and shot ten little girls, killing five, before taking his own life. Over half of those in attendance at his funeral were Amish.

The killing and its aftermath prompted three scholars of Amish history and culture, Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David Weaver-Zercher, to write the book *Amish Grace* (Jossey-Bass, 2007), which details the shooting and the Amish community's acts of forgiveness and love toward the shooter's surviving family.

*Amish Grace* is a series of first-person accounts of the tragedy, as well as a history of the Amish people. In the book, Kraybill, Nolt, and Weaver-Zercher argue that the practice of forgiving one's enemies is deeply rooted in Amish spirituality. From the first Anabaptist martyrs who forgave their murderers as they were being executed, to the centrality of the Lord's Prayer in Amish worship, forgiveness is an everyday part of Amish life.

The Amish interpret the Lord's Prayer, Jesus' prayer, in particular the words, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," to mean strictly that in order to be forgiven, one must also be forgiving.

In a world where violence provokes violence, and public figures issue ersatz apologies as part of public relations campaigns rather than as authentic statements of contrition, let alone forgiveness, it is moving, indeed, to read about a community who offers and seeks forgiveness, and attempts to follow Christ—especially when this community has so often been the victim of violent crime.

Shortly after the shooting, the Amish of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania brought food to the gunman's widow, sat with her in her mourning, and forgave the man who had killed their children. Not only did they say, "We forgive you," they lived it, recognizing the gunman's widow in word and deed as a fellow victim and human being. What's more, no Amish minister or

church instructed its members to offer forgiveness to the killer or to extend kindnesses to his widow. These actions, the authors suggest, came from the people themselves, born of a lifetime of practice.

On the day of the shooting, Marian, a thirteen year old girl, quickly assumed leadership of the younger girls in the schoolhouse, and like the Good Shepherd, did everything she could to protect them. Realizing that Charles Roberts planned to kill them all, and hoping to save the little ones in her care she said, "Shoot me first."

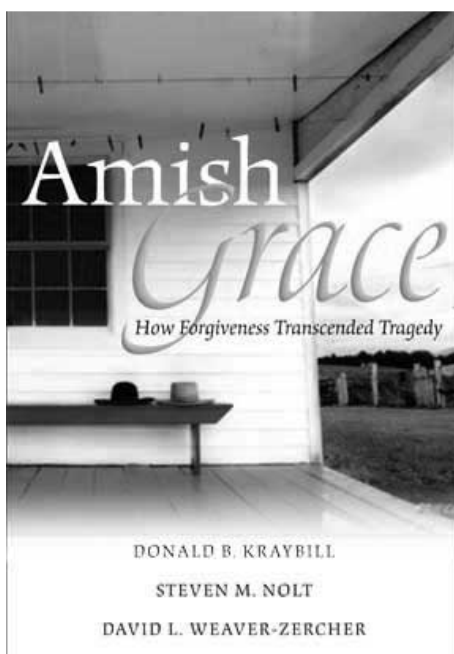
The result of this wasn't a matter of intellectual assent. It was formation. She was formed to follow Christ even in the face of evil.

This book offers a challenging portrait of the Amish and Anabaptist traditions of discipleship, that is, the idea of not just worshipping, but also personally emulating the person of Jesus, from his courage, to his nonresistance, to his utter forgiveness of us all.

It also asks difficult questions about when, if ever, such forgiveness is warranted; but in the end, the authors seem to suggest that forgiveness is different from pardon. Forgiveness, they argue, works to heal both forgiver and forgiven, while not necessarily exculpating the offender from punishment or responsibility.

In a culture where vengeance is the heroic norm, such unmerited forgiveness and grace, freely given, seems strange indeed.

Many people consider the Amish to be sectarian fundamentalist Christians. We live in an age that is deeply, and rightly, concerned about religious fundamentalists of all kinds. And yet, there are certain teachings of Jesus that are given in plain speech, and do not lend themselves to a glut of interpretations. However dangerous fundamentalism may be, there is also a danger in interpreting the teachings of Christ so broadly that they come to mean nothing at all. After all, how many ways are there to correctly interpret Christ's command to "love your enemies" or to "do good to those who hurt you," let alone Paul's exhortation in Romans to, "be not overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good"? Perhaps we have a great deal to learn from the Amish about Christian witness after all. ✠



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Anna Nussbaum Keating teaches high school students at Trinity School at Greenlawn in South Bend, Indiana.

# To Our Readers

**T**he late John Howard Yoder observed that when it comes to war, most Christians in this country are neither “just war,” nor “pacifist,” but rather “blank check.” What Yoder meant by this is that Christians support war whenever their political leaders tell them to. Not a very flattering description, and yet an accurate one when it comes to Catholics. We are, unfortunately, a “blank check” Church.

At CPF we work to change our Church’s uncritical support of war. But to do that we need financial help. Since 2001 the average household in the US has spent \$8,634 on war. We are asking for considerably less. Here are some ways in which you can help support our projects.

- *The Sign of Peace*: Please consider joining our growing list of sponsors who upon receiving the journal, send us a check for \$100. This helps to cover the cost of printing and mailing. The computer we have used to produce this journal met its end earlier this year and we are in need of another. Please consider making a donation to aid us in purchasing another.

- Catechesis and Workshops: In bringing Catholic teaching on war, peace and conscience to colleges, high schools and parishes, we are developing educational materials.

- GI Rights counseling and advocacy work: In the coming months we hope to expand our work in counseling men and women in the military about their rights and options. This is our most urgent work. Please help us to help those who contact us for assistance and guidance.

We know that these are difficult financial times; we have felt this ourselves. But we believe in our work and we need your help. While we certainly would be delighted to receive a “blank check.” We ask instead that you give what you can to support the efforts of the Catholic Peace Fellowship.

Donations can be made via *PayPal* on our website ([www.catholicpeacefellowship.org](http://www.catholicpeacefellowship.org)) or via snail mail at: P.O. Box 4232 / South Bend, IN 46634.

Please contact us if you are interested in knowing more about our work. And as always, we ask for your prayers.

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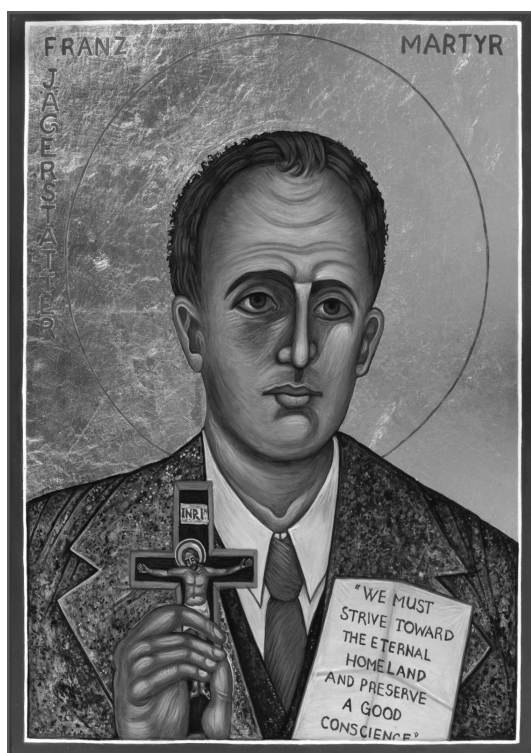
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The Catholic Peace Fellowship is pleased to make available icons of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, a Catholic from Austria who was martyred on August 9, 1943 for being a conscientious objector to the Nazi army. The CPF commissioned iconographer Sharon Kolansinski to make this icon. Proceeds from its sale will fund the Catholic Peace Fellowship's mission to support Catholic conscientious objectors through education, counseling, and advocacy and to resist war by helping those who choose not to participate in it, one person at a time.

Currently, the CPF is offering two versions of this mounted icon. A small icon (approximately 5 x 7 inches) is available for \$20.00 + \$5.00 shipping & handling and a large icon (7.5 x 11 inches) is available for \$30.00 + \$5.00 shipping & handling. Bulk shipping rates are available upon request.

To place an order please contact the CPF office by telephone at 574.232.2811 or by email at [staff@catholicpeacefellowship.org](mailto:staff@catholicpeacefellowship.org) to place an order. A color photograph of the icon can be viewed on the CPF website: [www.catholicpeacefellowship.org](http://www.catholicpeacefellowship.org).