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The purpose of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group is to explore the meaning and implications of our Quaker faith and religious experience through discussion and publication. This search for unity in the claim of truth upon us concerns both the content and application of our faith.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Peace Work After 9-11

The world as we knew it changed over two years ago on 9-11. In the previous world we might have felt somewhat safe with just-war limitations of violence, despite pacifist objections to just-war approaches. Those familiar rules, however, no longer apply—at least not for terrorists. Non-combatants are no longer off limits; violence is being carried out not by legitimate state authorities declaring “official” war, but by clandestine groups and individuals; destructive means seem disproportionate to their ends; killing is not limited to defensive purposes; warfare is taken up as a first resort rather than a last resort; and, violence extends beyond the battlefield to threaten the entire world.

Civilians have now become targets—men, women, and children—causing unforeseen crises in military approaches to defense. When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Preemptive strikes, displacing regimes, “bombing people into freedom,” these are but a few of the new measures taken up by the American government. It is not hard to find fault with American foreign policy and the imbalanced ratio between walking softly and big-stick carrying. Then again, to appease terrorist aims, even if they are legitimate ones, by an apparent weak response may function to reward future violence as effective ways forward, thereby inspiring more terrorist attacks rather than preventing them.

So what about peace work in an age of terrorism? Has it also changed radically, or just on the surface? Historically, the Peace Testimony has been levied against advocates of just-war theory, but in the light of recent events, are such approaches still relevant? What about peace work amidst genocide; can it ever be effective? What are the economic implications of the peace effort; are human lives being squandered in our efforts to save other ones? And, what would Jesus do; does the love of enemies apply to all sorts of enemies, or just some of them? These are some of the questions the present issue of Quaker Religious Thought attempts to address.

In addition to the new global terrorist threat, just-war theory has also become outmoded in at least two other ways, forcing a crisis in conventional modes of conflict resolution. The first relates to the fact
over them, the staple diet of diplomatic progress, appears to have become a lost art. Not only is “the other side” inaccessible for constructive dialogue, if its whereabouts were known, destruction would be the coin of the exchange rather than conversation. Further, the economic price of warfare itself is so high that one wonders whether the “saving of lives” is actually costing more lives in the long run. The world really is at war, but the face of war has changed. So, in the midst of the changing landscape, how do we think nowadays about peace work?

First of all, we do well to keep focus on the Kingdom of God as our primary “patriotic” loyalty rather than any earthly domain or reign. The active reign of God—the activity of God’s present leadership and governance—transcends worldly powers and causes, and our loyalty first to the way of the Kingdom will ever provide a way forward amidst ambiguity. Considering the ministry of Jesus, which sheds new light on as many situations as can be imagined, avails fresh insight into how to pose creative alternatives to apparent dichotomies. What Jesus shows us is that there are never only two options forcing an unfortunate choice between evils. God’s dynamic presence in the world is always at work creating new possibilities—a third, or fourth, or fifth way—when we are being told that a true dilemma is what we are facing. Tricia Gates Brown helps us think about these matters in the first essay.

Second, we do well to appreciate the efforts of those who genuinely are attempting to bring about peace, even if we disagree with their means. We also do well to appreciate the efforts of those with whom we are fighting, as many motives are at work in the sorts of decisions people make. Indeed, most of us would probably agree with critiques of American arrogance and shortsightedness abroad, and yet, the employment of violence diminishes the moral high ground of any view or argument. Ann Riggs, however, helps us think about how to be supportive of those who approach peace work in ways we might not endorse, yet can certainly understand. Again, given the new face of the world situation, the standard oppositional stance of the pacifist may need to be rethought and reapplied in active and redemptive directions. In wanting to reduce violence, we’re all on the same side.

Likewise, our responses to genocide and the growing economic crises among developing nations must pique our consciences and cause us to ask if more can’t be done to alleviate human suffering in
that with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD),
the standards of proportionality and limitation of the conflict to com-
batants, are no longer applicable. The global threat of the nuclear
arms race evoked a historic emergence of no fewer than eleven official
peace statements among major Christian denominations in America
alone. Never since the pre-Constantinian era has the Christian move-
ment been so unified in standing against warfare and violence as it has
in the last two decades of the 20th century.¹ The case can even be
argued that the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was due more to
Christian prayer and advocacy for peace (on both sides of the divide)
than the bravado of presidents or political resolve. With the extension
of WMD to non-conventional means, including biological, chemical,
and radiological threats, just-war approaches to the limitation of con-
flict have become obsolete. The fact that no “greater good” could
possibly legitimate an all-out nuclear exchange (and perhaps even a
limited one) brought the weight of conscience to bear against the
senseless arms race. Peace was the only sensible option.

A second aspect of just-war theory’s obsolescence involves the
astounding rise of genocide over the last decade or more. In the for-
mer Yugoslavia and in central Africa, unprecedented outbreaks of
tribal violence have erupted in tragic ways. The limitation of conflict
to combatants, defensive purposes, and authorized parties no longer
applied. Entire villages in Rwanda and Burundi were massacred by
one tribal group or another, creating unprecedented humanitarian
crises in the heart of Africa. Even when weapons are primitive, mass
destruction results from equating safety with the domination of one
group over another. Just-war theory amidst genocide—tribal or oth-
wise—is obsolete.

In the light of these developments, approaches to resolving vio-
lence themselves have changed. Some genocidal conflicts America has
attempted to interrupt with the use of force; others have been
approached through diplomatic means. Regarding terrorism, familiar
stances of nonaggression have ceded place to the apparently noble
cause of protecting hearth and home—fighting on a foreign front
rather than waiting to fight until an enemy is at the door, or even
through it.

Amidst these responses, a healthy concern for how America might
be perceived among international communities has been displaced by
interest in provincial political polls leading up to impending elections.
And, getting people together to discuss concerns instead of fighting
lesser known places. Ironically, when the costs of war—ostensibly for the purpose of saving lives—are tallied, many times more lives could be saved by distributing those resources toward feeding, water-purification, sanitation, and education programs around the world. Even if only a fraction of the costs of the war effort were plied toward humanitarian ventures, there might also be less hostility toward our nation and its policies, and this might even be a more effective means of combating the basis underlying terrorism: frustration with American international policies and demeanor. The essays of Ambassador David Rawson and Cliff Marrs address these concerns.

Finally in this issue, Dean Freiday contributes an appreciative tribute to Calvin Keene, the first editor of *Quaker Religious Thought*, and a leading American theologian in his own right. Calvin Keene died last year, and his contributions will be sorely missed.

**A CALL FOR PAPERS**

In addition to our regular Quaker Theological Discussion Group meetings, held the weekend before Thanksgiving every year in keeping with the AAR/SBL sessions (the next ones will be held in San Antonio, Texas), we will be hosting a residential session of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group at George Fox University the last weekend of June (June 24-27) in Newberg Oregon. In addition to welcoming paper proposals on general topics, we’d like to invite papers along the lines of three subjects: the center of Quaker faith and practice, the impact of John Woolman, and Quakers and the sciences. Proposals may be sent by mail or e-mail to myself, and we’d like to have them by March 15 if possible.

—Paul Anderson

Editor

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1 This historic development is outlined in the collection gathered as a consultation of the Faith and Order Consultation of the National Council of Churches: *The Church’s Peace Witness*, edited by Marlin Miller and Barbara Nelson Gingerich, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1994). See also *The Fragmentation of the Church and Its Unity*, edited by John Rempel and Geoffrey Gros, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2001) for the continued dialogue on peace and nonviolence among the churches. Ironically, one of the most divisive issues within Christianity over its 2,000-year history is the subject of peace.