



# The ANGLICAN PACIFIST of Aotearoa/New Zealand

Newsletter of the New Zealand Branch of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship

## From the Chairman

In the summary of Nick Frater's scholarly Bible study, I was interested to see him quote Reinhold Niebuhr's belief that non-resistance is supported by Scripture, but non-violence is not. This seems to me a strange conclusion when one looks at the Gospels; surely Jesus embraces both.

In the first part of his ministry, Jesus is pro-active and forcing the pace. Attacked from various quarters, he stands up to his adversaries and outwits them, both in theological argument and political manoeuvre. We gain the impression that he is very much in control, and there is no passivity evident. However he consistently rejects armed force, and so, as Nick writes, 'Nowhere is Jesus' discontinuity with Jewish tradition more striking than in the way he disappointed his people's militaristic expectations.'

Active non-violent confrontation with moribund tradition and the forces of evil was the order of the day for most of his recorded ministry. Then comes the Passion, and a remarkable change. Jesus is passive, absorbing all the insults and cruelties. He does not accede to evil, but now his response is one of non-resistance.

Therefore I believe that his life showed phases of non-violent resistance and non-resistance; it was not an 'either/or' but a 'both/and' stance. These differences show up in some of the pacifists I have met. There is a spectrum from complete passive non-resistance, where turning the other cheek is taken at its face value, to active non-violence where turning the other cheek has the deeper interpretation of Walter Wink. For me, both are valid, depending on circumstances. Jesus said that as we are sheep among wolves, we need to be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves. (Matt. 10;16) So sometimes it is head-down, at others, up and walking second miles.

Unfortunately the English language makes it all a bit fuzzy by dealing in negatives. Is it our warrior heritage that deprives us of a positive and unique word for non-violence? But violence itself has so many shades of definition, especially when the psychologically-inclined start to move in. That is why I suggested a Bible study about whether a Christian is allowed to intentionally kill, because there is no fuzziness about death. It is a very clear end-point. I thank Nick for so ably taking up my challenge.

Shalom, Jonathan.



*Conference attendees with guest speaker (l-r): Janet Franks, Dennis Howell (partly obscured), Stephanie Owen, Virginia Shaw, Canon Pine Campbell, Nigel Mander, Nick Frater, Pat Barfoot, Michael Bent, Arthur Palmer. See p 4.*

### Peace & Conflict Studies Centre, Otago

Thanks to a generous donation to the Trust, the Centre has appointed a Deputy Director, NZ born Dr Richard Jackson, currently Professor, Dept of International Politics at Aberystwyth University, Wales.

The centre now has 19 Post Graduate Diploma Students, 15 Masters by thesis and 6 PhD students.

# WHY IS IT WRONG TO KILL?

## THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR NOT KILLING

A precis of Nick Frater's paper at the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship Conference 3 July 2011

by Chris Barfoot



*APF member the Revd Nick Frater is the Vicar of Orakei, Auckland.*

Though the Second or New Testament is the proper starting point for Christian disciples, we need to read the First or Old Testament through the Spirit of Christ,

especially the parts that present some problems. Exodus 14: 26-15: 3 tells of the slaughter of the Egyptian soldiers when God rolled the Red Sea back on their chariots. In Judges 1 we hear how God commands the Israelites to take Canaan by force. Worst of all in Deuteronomy 20: 10-18 and 1 Samuel 15 we hear of the genocide of the indigenous people, including women and children, specifically commanded by God, and the penalty inflicted on Saul for his failure to carry out these instructions to the letter.

Much changed in the exilic and post exilic periods; Jewish people developed a more “global” vision of God’s mission. However, when Jesus came it was widely expected, at least by the common people, that messiah would take the world by military force, straighten it out, and rule it from Jerusalem.

So why look to the Bible for a basis for pacifism? What of the Anglican emphasis on Tradition and Reason as well as Scripture? Unfortunately, tradition is not helpful for since the 4th century the church has legitimised war. And if reason means common sense, everyone seems to have a different view of right and wrong.

We are the Community of disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught from the Jewish Scriptures and acknowledged them as his foundation for faith and conduct. So the Christian Bible is made up of those Jewish Scriptures plus the story and teachings of Jesus and his first disciples, as remembered, written, edited and collected by the community they founded. Christian identity and behaviour is discovered in the ongoing life of this discipleship community. We are a people committed to following in the Way of Christ in Community. Jesus’ teaching, then, is for us the interpretive lens for reading the whole Bible.

Nowhere is Jesus’ discontinuity with Jewish tradition more striking than in the way he disappointed his people’s militaristic expectations

of their messiah. Jesus can say “not one jot or tittle” [of the Torah] will pass away until all is accomplished (Matt 5: 18). Yet he seems to interpret the Torah and other Jewish Scripture according to his own inner knowing of God whom he called Abba. He teaches his disciples to expect an equally intimate relationship with God through the Holy Spirit and to trust that Spirit to continue teaching them, in community, as he has done (John 16: 12-15).

However, with the enormous fuzziness of Christians and almost universal compromise of Church leaders on the issue of war and killing, what is required is a more analytical, biblically conservative approach. Those committed to following in the way of Christ in community need to begin with the Second Testament. Hence the writer examines the ethical vision of the New Testament drawing on Richard Hays’ “The Moral Vision of the Second Testament” which sets out a fourfold task:

1. Descriptive: to read the text carefully;
2. Synthetic: to place each Biblical writer in the context of the whole Biblical Canon;
3. Hermeneutical: to relate the text to our situation (our time and cultural context); and
4. Pragmatic: to live the text (or at least suggest how it might be lived in specific, concrete situations (Hays, 3-10).

Hays points to three images which he believes unite the New Testament ethical vision: Community, Cross and New Creation (Hays, 192-204). Firstly, the commands of Jesus are directed to the church, “the community of discipleship” and not to the world. Secondly, Jesus’ death on the cross is the paradigm for faithfulness to God in this world. Lastly, speaking of the New Creation he says the Church also embodies the power of the resurrection in the midst of a not- yet-redeemed world.

As Hays turns to the hermeneutical task of relating the text to our time and cultural context he outlines the strategies of five theologians: Reinhold Niebuhr; Karl Barth; John Howard Yoder; Stanley Hauerwas; and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza.

Niebuhr in his “Christian realism” sees no support in scripture for the doctrine of non-violence – only

for non-resistance. He says that this kind of pacifism seeks to obtain absolute moral perfection rather than to construct a social or political ethic. He ultimately sanctions the use of violence by an existing government.

Barth sees that God's command is always particular and concrete in every situation, not deduced from general principles. He rejects absolute pacifism because it does not allow freedom for God to act, i.e., conceivably to support war in certain circumstances.

Yoder believes that the New Testament consistently bears witness to Jesus' renunciation of violence and that his example is normative for the Christian community. He sees that faithfulness to the example of Jesus is a political choice, not a withdrawal from the realm of politics.

Hauerwas holds that only the community formed by the story of the Kingdom of God can interpret the scriptures rightly. By its character this community offers "a political alternative" of peace, forgiveness, love of enemies and a rejection of war and violence for "violence derives from the self-deceptive story that we are in control..."

Fiorenza considers that the ethical use of the New Testament requires a process of "sifting through patriarchal texts to recover a lost history of women's experience". On violence and war she rejects "passivity and meek acquiescence in suffering" and calls women to act "in the angry power of the Spirit... to... liberate our own people."

Each of these hear the Bible speaking chiefly in a particular "mode"; for Neibuhr the Bible gives us principles or ideals; for Barth it is a book of rules that must be obeyed absolutely until further notice; for Yoder a source of principles and a "definitive paradigm" or model; for Hauerwas it provides paradigms and a symbolic world and for Fiorenza open ended paradigms for ethics. Hays draws from these four modes which he says are all present in the New Testament: rule, principle, paradigm and symbolic world. If we have a personal bias to look for only one kind of mode or voice, we may make everything that doesn't fit subservient, thus distorting its ethical message.

The New Testament, he says, presents itself to us firstly as a story; the mode of paradigm. We find ourselves drawn into a story and find analogies between the story and the life of our own community. This changes our way of seeing the world (Hays, 295). For Hays, "Jesus' death

and resurrection is the central decisive act of God for the salvation of humankind [so that] the cross becomes the hermeneutical centre for the canon as a whole.

Hays then examines the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-48). After acknowledging and dealing with a number of ways Christians "get around" this text, he suggests, rather, that the sermon stands in Matthew "...as Jesus' programmatic disclosure of the kingdom of God and of the life to which the community of disciples is called." (Hays, 320-1). He claims "the evangelists are unanimous in portraying Jesus as a Messiah who subverts all prior expectations by assuming the vocation of suffering rather than conquering Israel's enemies." (Hays, 329). He renounces violence in promoting God's Kingdom (Luke 9:51-56). He teaches his disciples servanthood (Mark 10: 42-45; John 13: 1-17) and to expect suffering at the hands of those in power (Mark 13: 9-13; John 15:18-16:4a). In all four gospels Jesus' death is consistent with his teaching, refusing to lift a finger in his defence, scolding those who try to defend him with violence, and rejecting an angelic "Holy War" (Matt 26:53). He intercedes for his enemies (Luke 23:34a).

In the book of Acts the community of disciples follow Jesus' example, preaching, healing, worshipping, sharing, suffering violence but never claiming territory through a military operation (Hays, 330). In Paul's writings the death of Christ is God's peace initiative. God, instead of killing his enemies, gives his son to die for them. We are called, in life, to imitate Christ's self-emptying love (Phil. 2:1-13) and to identify with his suffering (Romans 8:17). Romans 12:14-21 explicitly teaches a lifestyle remarkably parallel to that of Matthew 5. (Hays 330-331).

To sum up: Nick's paper anchors the Biblical basis for not killing firmly in the spirit-filled life of the community of Christ's disciples drawing both on Christ's teaching and the paradigm of his own life.

*(Full text available from the Secretary)*

### **Peace Sunday**

At the main service in the Auckland Cathedral on 7th August the theme was Peace. Two APF members read the lessons and Dr Allan Davidson preached. A few of the congregation went home with pamphlets and/or membership forms.

*For the next newsletter it would be interesting to hear how other APF branchlets observed the day.*

## Conference and AGM 2011, Houchen House, Hamilton, 1-3 July

It was good to have the company and wise counsel of our Protector, Archbishop David Moxon, at dinner and the AGM on Friday evening.

The Saturday morning Bible study, "Why is it wrong to kill?" by Nick Frater (see pp 2-3) gave us much food for thought.

This was followed by a session where members disclosed the stories of how they became pacifists.

Two members had been positively influenced by their family backgrounds – one so much so that he became a conscientious objector and was incarcerated in WW2. Two with no family history of pacifism were initially made uneasy by the Suez crisis in 1956. Another had felt uneasy about his participation as an officer in the Cadet Corps while teaching at church schools. One had questioned his own enthusiasm for war games as a child when his father had expressed pity for the pilot of a plane he had shot down in WW2.

One had seen at first hand the horror of war as a child when the Japanese invaded China. Another had lived through the Blitz in England.

One had discovered pacifism in the Sermon on the Mount in the course of her Bible reading. Six were influenced by the example and words of the following APF members: Patricia Cooper, Chris Barfoot and Roger Barker, and the late Lance Robinson, Walter Robinson, Walter Arnold and Phil Crump.

One joined the APF during Sidney Hinkes' mission to New Zealand in 1991. Three others became pacifists as a result of attending APF conferences. One of these said that at APF meetings he became aware of loving relationships between people and

he experienced a new dimension of church where Christ was the Prince of Peace.

In the afternoon Canon Pine Campbell from Tikanga Maori introduced us to the early Maori missionaries, listed on p10 of the NZ Prayer Book/ He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, who had brought the Gospel to different iwi or who had died for their faith. Next he led us in the poi chant by Kingi Ihaka which tells of the spreading of the Gospel through the Maori missionaries (Prayer Book p154). He then spoke about the Maori prophets as described in the book *Mana from Heaven* by Bronwyn Elsmore (Moana Press, Tauranga).

As Saturday evening was billed for DIY entertainment, we were fortunate to have among our number Nigel Mander (yes, the son of the late Dudley and Margaret and brother of Indrea and Bronwyn) who held us enthralled with stories of his experiences as a clown, especially of his fire eating.

The highlight on Sunday was the Eucharist at St Peter's Cathedral where we given a great welcome and two members read the lessons. At coffee afterwards our members gave out a number of membership forms.

We missed Chairman Jonathan (and Meg who, we understand, is making a good recovery from surgery) and some of our other 'regulars'. But smaller numbers than usual (only ten) meant we had more opportunity of getting to know one another, and people were more relaxed about contributing to the discussions.

As a sequel to the conference, Stephanie Owen and Dennis Howell held a meeting of interested people in Hamilton a few days later and signed up three new members.



*Time for refreshments! (l-r): Stephanie Owen, Chris Barfoot, Nick Frater, Dennis Howell, Arthur Palmer, Nigel Mander, Virginia Shaw.*

### Anglican Pacifist Fellowship New Zealand Branch

[www.converge.org.nz/pma/apf](http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/apf) or [www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk](http://www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk)

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