

LET US NOT FORGET: This month marks three years that writer Salman Rushdie has been underground, forced into hiding because of a death sentence issued by the late Ayatollah Khomeini. This death sentence is an embarrassment to thinking Muslims, and an outrage to all lovers of freedom, especially freedom of expression. Let us hope, and insist, that the sentence be lifted and Rushdie freed, *now*.

# A Friendly Letter

ISSUE NUMBER 129

Selected for Who's Who In Religion

SECOND MONTH, 1992

Dear Friend,

On First Day, 1/19, the American Friends Service Committee's search committee met and made a long-awaited decision: They selected Kara Newell, currently a college administrator in Portland, Oregon, to succeed Asia Bennett as AFSC's national Executive Secretary. On 1/24, at a 5:30 PM session, the committee reported its recommendation to the AFSC's Board of Directors. The ensuing discussion was scheduled to last until about 7:00 PM. But in fact the Board labored over the recommendation until 10 PM, without finding unity.

The next morning, the Board set aside its planned agenda to continue dealing with the recommendation. In the course of the session several members were at first inclined to stand aside from the recommendation, reflecting much uneasiness on the part of some staff members, particularly those associated with "Third World" constituencies.

The dissidents feared that AFSC's affirmative action policy and practice would be put at risk by Newell's selection. They had been hoping that a national staff member, Warren Witte, would have been selected. Witte was, in fact, one of three finalists for the position, confirming speculation in AFL #127 on his frontrunning status as an inside candidate.

At length, however, the uneasy Board members felt reassured enough to waive their objections, and about noon the Board approved the recommendation. Newell is scheduled to assume the post on Sixth Month First.

And with its extended labor, Friends, the AFSC search committee and board have made Quaker history. They have taken the biggest single step toward major constructive change in the AFSC, and particularly in its relationship to Friends, in the thirteen years since I began following and reporting on this concern. This is truly, and at long last, good news, for which thanks be to God.

Why the enthusiasm?

In short, if asked to identify a near ideal "reform" candidate for the job, Kara Newell would have been the name that occurred to me. She brings several distinct advantages to the post, among them the following:

♦ *Evangelical Quaker Origins.* Kara is of Oregon-Northwest Yearly Meeting stock, and knows the pastoral end of Quakerism in her bones. And she retains from it a firm Christian identity that will be evident to many of the pastoral Friends she will need to deal with if AFSC

is to regain any ground among them. (But not evident to all such, as we shall see presently.)

♦ *A broad ecumenical vision.* Evangelical, yes, but not only, or narrowly so: Kara was Field Secretary for Friends United Meeting from 1979 to 1987, and while there she was in regular and positive touch with the unprogrammed groups in the FUM circle. Further, she was active in the National and World Council of Churches. It is my sense that the most distinguished AFSC chiefs (e.g., Clarence Pickett) had this unusual combination of evangelical origins and grounding and a broader, inclusive vision.

♦ *She's been through the fire.* This is meant both institutionally and personally. On the organizational side, her open, ecumenical outlook caused trouble for her in some FUM quarters, where the NCC and WCC (as well as liberal Quakers) are considered pagan or worse; so she knows the seamier side of Quaker church politics firsthand (See AFL #44 for a report on a particularly tacky example). Personally, she has been through a divorce; and difficult as that was, it appears to have immunized her against much of the insufferable self-righteousness on such "lifestyle" matters one too often encounters in some evangelical circles. This, too, made her a target at FUM; but she left with her head high and displaying much more class and dignity than many of her antagonists.

We will here pass by her extensive administrative experience and exposure to numerous tough social issues, not because they are irrelevant but because other candidates were also reasonably qualified in these areas. It is her qualifications for leading AFSC toward a renewed, authentic articulation with its Quaker base that set her apart; this is, as has been said here before, the need of the hour for AFSC, and it appears the Search Committee and the Board have come to a similar sense of *kairos*.

To be sure, Kara has her work cut out for her. But on the eve of its 75th birthday celebrations, AFSC could not have given itself, and Friends, a better present. There is only one word for it: *Hallelu jah*.

Yours in the Light,

*Chuck Fager*  
Chuck Fager



## WHITING THE SEPULCHRES: CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND THE GULF WAR

*Just War and The Gulf War*, James Turner Johnson & George Weigel. Washington: Ethics & Public Policy Center, cloth, 170 pp., \$19.95.

*But Was It Just?* David E. Decosse, Editor. New York: Doubleday, paper, 150 pp., \$15.00.

*Lines In The Sand*, Alan Geyer and Barbara Green. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, paper, 187 pp., \$11.95.

Early in his *Journal* John Woolman tells of killing a mother robin who was protecting her nest, then remorsefully killing her young as a less evil fate than starvation. His behavior, he said, fulfilled the Scriptural proverb, "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." (Proverbs 12:10)

This incident and the convicting verse came to mind often as I read *Just War and the Gulf War*. I do not doubt the authors' sincere belief, or that of George Bush, that the war was a stark contest between good and evil. Nor is there reason to doubt the report in the 12/1991 issue of the American Bar Association *Journal* that the Gulf War was "the most legalistic war ever," with military lawyers hovering over the targeting lists and consulting with commanders frequently to assure that each day's battle plans fell within the regulations in the military's manuals on the law of war. There was a form of conscientiousness about the war that is undeniable.

## FADING PLAUSIBILITY

Similarly, at first blush there is a kind of plausibility to the efforts of Weigel and Johnson to show that when the Gulf War is weighed by the moral criteria of the Christian just war tradition, it more than passes muster. "Indeed," Johnson declares confidently, "Iraq was an easy case." Weigel is even more enthusiastic. In 3/91 he effused that Desert Storm was the most just war imaginable, being: "as closely conformed as is possible, in this kind of world, to the classic moral criteria of the just war tradition."

There's no denying that some good things came out of the Gulf War-

-destruction of Saddam Hussein's nascent nuclear weapons projects perhaps chief among them. But as the war recedes, the list of unsavory revelations about it continues to multiply, and the moral value of all those lawyers in the War Room is likewise being steadily diluted. Belief in Desert Storm's justice and long-term value, as distinct from its short-term success, depends increasingly on a capacity for denial.

*Just War and The Gulf War* is pervaded by such denial, and as a result turns out to be, however sincere, utterly unpersuasive as an apologia for Desert Storm, on almost every count. It falls short most egregiously at the same point where the Pentagon's lawyers also did, in a failure to confront what can be called the mathematics of massacre.

The basic equation of this mathematics is simple and chilling: *An Iraqi civilian's life, it turns out, equals approximately 1/35th to 1/70th of a Kuwaiti's life.*

## MATHEMATICS AND MASSACRE

This calculus sums up the best estimates of casualty figures in the Gulf War, thus: A Kuwaiti estimate broadcast late last month put the toll of killed and missing during the Iraqi occupation at about 2100; we'll assume here that all the missing Kuwaitis were murdered by Saddam Hussein's troops.

For Iraq, the most credible estimates of *civilian* casualties as a result of Desert Storm and its direct aftermath range from about 70,000 (the figure adopted by U.S. Census Bureau statisticians for use in making their annual population projections), to 157,000 and counting, by a Harvard study team that surveyed Iraq last fall. Other estimates exceed 200,000.

(I repeat that these are *civilian* deaths only. However, a strong case can be made that the killing of 100,000-plus Iraqi soldiers--by Pentagon unofficial figures--most of whom were unwilling conscripts of a totalitarian government, was also excessive. This case is made cogently in another new book on the war, *Lines In The Sand* by Alan Geyer and Barbara Green. I will get to this book shortly; but we will leave the fate of the hapless Iraqi

troops out of these calculations.)

The figures on casualties are important initially because, in 90 pages of densely-argued text, neither Weigel nor Turner ever mentions them. And their silence speaks all too loudly of the underlying thrust of their argument.

Johnson is a professor at Rutgers, and Weigel is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Johnson has written several books on the ethics of war, most importantly *Can Modern War Be Just?* His answer, to cut to the chase, is *you bet*; in *Just War and The Gulf War* he insists that Desert Storm proves it.

Johnson believes this because, he says, state of the art weaponry enables modern armies to pinpoint their munitions at the crucial military targets which will disable the enemy with the minimum of "collateral damage", or more truthfully, dead civilians. And this means modern wars like Desert Storm can even more easily pass the crucial just war tests of proportionality and discrimination. These tests boil down to the requirement that the killing and destruction in a war should not exceed the violence it is intended to overcome or punish.

## DUMB BOMBS DO DAMAGE

All of which might be possible in theory; but Johnson's claim that Desert Storm proves his case in practice is sheer fantasy. Ninety-three percent of the 88,500 tons of bombs dropped on Iraq were of the old-fashioned "dumb" sort, of which the majority probably missed their targets; thus said the Pentagon itself--after the ceasefire. And how a bombing campaign can possibly be considered proportionate or discriminate which kills 35 to 70 innocent civilians in one country for each civilian and soldier killed in the nation supposedly being defended, is utterly beyond reason.

Johnson alludes to this problem indirectly--and evasively--by saying that "Applying the criterion of proportionality is properly an exercise in moral and political judgment, not mathematical calculation." There might be some limited merit to this, but the one remark is the end of his discussion. Between them, Johnson and Weigel



devote a total of one sentence and two clauses apiece to the problem of the deceitfully named "collateral damage." Johnson simply asserts that the U.S. "did not use such weapons with indiscriminate or murderous intent", while Weigel acknowledges solemnly that war "include(s), inescapably, the killing of innocents."

In other words, we didn't do it, we didn't really mean to do it, and tough luck if we did do it.

The denial here is so stark and cold-blooded that it undermines all their other claims about the righteousness of the war, and ineluctably raises the question of what other motives and purposes are served by such specious reasoning. In Weigel's case especially, such additional items are not hard to find.

Weigel's Ethics and Public Policy Center is a second-string neoconservative think tank. From it Weigel, a dedicated neoconservative Catholic, relentlessly pursues his own salient in the neocon crusade, aiming particularly to overthrow alleged leftism and pacifism among the American Catholic bishops and other religious "intellectual elites."

## THE FIRST NEOCONSERVATIVE

Weigel is determined to see such softheaded "neo-isolationism" replaced by what he grandly calls the "classic Catholic tradition" of thought on peace and war, all fifteen centuries of which, in his oeuvre at least, just happen to dovetail seamlessly with his neocon agenda in which America is destined to be the definer, exporter, and enforcer of true freedom and democracy in any world order, new, old or otherwise.

Weigel says this concept comes straight from north Africa and Augustine. One would hardly guess, from Weigel's account, that Augustine lived in an empire, and legitimized both the mass slaughter of heretics, and church persecution of the Jews.

Based on this line, Weigel has constructed the religious counterpart of one of the most ominous domestic outcomes of the war, namely the boost it gave to what, on presidential precedent, could be called the "kick-ass" school of geopolitics, a neo-American triumphalism. Among secular pundits Charles Krauthammer embodies this triumphalism in perhaps its purest

form. Weigel fawns over Krauthammer's work, and he in turn contributed a blurb for *Just War and The Gulf War's* dust jacket, praising what can with equal justice be called its "kick-ass theology."

Those who reject his Neo-Cold War agenda are, Weigel says, clearly "alienated from even a critical affection from the American experiment and what it means for the world." With such variants as "deeply alienated," "profoundly alienated" and "fundamentally alienated", this claim is one of his leitmotifs, flung at opponents in endless fusillade throughout his many works; it seems to explain just about everything he dislikes about all doubters, at least to his satisfaction.

So basic are these expressions to his outlook and theories that hereafter we will refer to them simply as DA, PA or FA for short.

## NOVIS CLASSIS, SUMUM MALUM

Being DA, PA or FA, Weigel says, is a product of the Sixties, that doleful decade when--well, you know the rap. This is standard neoconservative Sixtophobia, which was incisively evoked by Sidney Blumenthal in *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment*, describing the neocons as "embittered parents, in rebellion against the young. Long after Yuppies became yuppies, many remained filled with a desire for vengeance, determined to wage the generational war: *Totem and Taboo* in reverse." This fits Weigel like a glove, even though he is of the generation and class he so despises.

As we shall see, Weigel fits another feature of the classic profile, identified by Peter Steinfels in his pioneering 1979 study, *The Neoconservatives*: "To acclaim civility, and yet treat one's adversaries as ignorant, neurotic, or power-driven totalitarians; to honor complexity, and yet divide the intellectual worlds into two camps and set out to police it on behalf of one; to profess independence of mind, and yet insist on a new conformity...in so doing, neoconservatism threatens to discredit the very values it aspires to serve."

For example, Weigel rails against those in the peace movement who used "infantile slogans" such as "we won't

fight for Texaco." He made this charge about AFL #116, though the phrase I actually quoted was from a button that read, "No War For Oil." And this expression deserves some parsing, to see just wherein for Weigel the "infantilism" lies.

Could it be the "Oil?" No: we have the words of George Bush on 8/8 and 8/15, 1990 that control of oil was critical. And if that is not enough, Weigel said the same thing in Twelfth Month of that year.

Then perhaps it is the "War." But Weigel loved the war; he got off on it, gloried in it, wallowed in it. Infantile, maybe, but that can't be it either.

Which leaves the "No." But of course! If it had been "YES, War for Oil," I am confident he would have had no beef.

And yet, perhaps this is too simple. Weigel, in the neocon manner Steinfels described, is big on his version of civility and sophistication in rhetoric and debate. So perhaps it was the shorthand sloganeering itself, and not just the sentiment, which for him was at the root of the immaturity. In which case, taking his complaint to heart--and with due acknowledgement to the influence of his prose style--I am preparing a new button for the next such war, to wit:

## GROWING UP, ABSURDLY

*"Eschew deployment of extensive expeditionary forces for the perpetuation of hegemonic status relative to Mesopotamian petroleum resources."*

There; I feel more grown up already.

But enough about me. In the fall of 1990, the sudden prospect of war with Iraq seemed to offer the neocons a remarkable opportunity to achieve several of their major goals with a single crushing blow: "reasserting" American power; protecting Israel; elbowing the USSR out of the way; plus, in the internal generational vendetta, it would smash the peace movement; kill the "Vietnam Syndrome"; slap down the liberal media; and seemingly guarantee George Bush's reelection.

Seven runs is a big inning, any way you slice it. Thus it was the neocons, including Weigel in his



monthly opinion letter *American Purpose*, who argued most strenuously (indeed, it is no exaggeration to say to say, thirsted and bayed) for the war, almost from the day Hussein invaded. An avid Saddam Hussein demonizer, by 10/1990 Weigel was approvingly quoting Abba Eban's dictum that "if there is any vice from which [Hussein] is exempt, it is because human nature makes no provision for perfection."

Like other neocons, Weigel's jubilation at the war's success was, at first, unbounded. In *American Purpose* for 3/91, Weigel exulted that not only had Desert Storm been the most just war imaginable, but that along the way, "Everything," he exulted, "literally everything, that had been asserted by the misnamed 'peace' movement has been falsified..." by the war (emphasis his).

### ESCHEWING YELLOW RIBBONS

But despite this "great military victory," Weigel's righteous satisfaction was not entirely unalloyed; for all its glory, Desert Storm fell short of his objectives for it: Not only is Saddam Hussein (at this writing) still in power, but possibly even worse, a great many Catholic bishops and church activists, that recalcitrant mass of church-flesh, still haven't seen the light. The questioning continued even afterward, *sotto voce* during the yellow ribbon orgies, but later much more loudly. *La lotta generazione*, it seems, *continua*.

And not just the bishops were restless. It is an odd thing that Weigel, in an essay purportedly aimed at expounding the moral heritage and leadership of the Catholic church on matters of war and peace, does so without ever once mentioning the pope. This is the more remarkable in that in his other writings Weigel often seems to be an out-of-the-closet, practicing papaphile; shouting hosannas whenever John Paul denounces communism, liberation theology, abortion, etc.

But in *Just War and The Gulf War*, there is not a word.

Why not? Well, one possible explanation leaps immediately and cogently to mind: The record shows that this time John Paul II, while not a pacifist, was nonetheless on the other side. Yep, right there with the PA and DA types all the way.

Further, leaders of many other

Christian denominations (the "Lumpenreligentsia", in Weigel's sneering term), also pleaded repeatedly for a delay in the rush to combat, urging more time for sanctions to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait.

(There were similar problems in the ethicists' fraternity, which is Johnson's turf. He notes in passing that the American Society of Christian Ethics adopted a resolution on the Gulf War on 1/13/91, three days before the bombing started. He fails to mention that the resolution stated flatly that the Society's members saw no ethical grounds for going to war at that time.)

But if the Pope is off limits, *Just War and The Gulf War* is intended to exorcise skepticism about the great Gulf victory elsewhere in the churches, by exposing what Weigel calls the "curdled hash" of "unvarnished *tercermundismo*" and "a neo-isolationist version" of "liberal Protestant sentimentality...." among the leading doubters. Johnson also hints darkly about anti-war activists (of whom, in truth, there were a rare fringe few; see AFL#116) who urged "appeasement" of Saddam.

### THE LEAVEN IN THE LUMPEN

As evidence of his charges, Weigel claims to have, you should pardon the expression, the smoking guns: reprints in an appendix of nine antiwar statements by various church leaders, principally the bishops, the National and World Councils of Churches, and the radical evangelical preacher Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* magazine, counterpoised against President Bush's speech to the National Religious Broadcasters on 1/28/1991.

But Weigel's broadside misses its mark widely, and not only because of its glaring failure to confront the mathematics of massacre. There is also the slight matter that if one actually reads the nine church leaders' statements, it becomes evident that they do not fit the DA, PA and FA molds into which Weigel is trying to force them. They are in fact a lot closer to the Pope than to Ramsey Clark.

Take for instance "*tercermundismo*": In nearly sixty pages of text, not a single one of the antiwar church leaders ever uses the term "Third World," and they mention "the poor" only a handful of times, not

nearly as often, in fact, as one would have expected from a bunch of Christian liberals.

Weigel also insinuates that their statements echoed Saddam's line and declares that it "can be said with assurance" that they worked to "reinforce Saddam Hussein's view that the force of public opinion could be used to compel the United States and its allies to stand down from their commitments to Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait."

But as I read them they implied no such things.

For instance, in the nine statements the invasion of Kuwait is explicitly condemned no less than 38 times; it is described as "aggression" 31 more times; and twenty other times the writers insist that Hussein must withdraw his forces from Kuwait. That's at least 89 explicit rebukes in less than 60 pages; if anything, the denunciations get a bit tedious. None of them even hinted that Hussein should be allowed to stay in Kuwait.

Perhaps their support for sanctions as the way to force Hussein out was mistaken or naive. But just how Saddam Hussein was supposed to find sympathy or support in such a catalog of condemnation is a mystery that perhaps only neoconservatives are acute enough to solve.

### TELL IT TO THE JOINT CHIEFS

Furthermore, after several readings I was similarly unable to find in these statements any symptoms of Americans afflicted with the deadly PA, DA or FA viruses. Weigel presumes to know the private political proclivities of the more than 100 individuals from dozens of denominations listed as signatories of the various statements; but my research time is more limited, and I do not. (Indeed, among them are two Quaker staffers: Ed Staudt of Philadelphia YM, and Steve Main of FUM. I cannot claim close familiarity with the political views of either, but evidently Weigel knows them well enough to categorize them.) Their preference for sanctions was shared by, among others, two former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (and the current one, Colin Powell), six former Secretaries of Defense, and nearly half the Congress. Are these latter worthies thereby shown to be DA and PA too?



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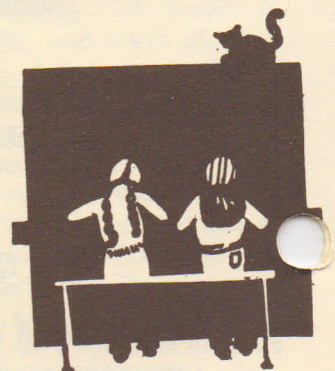
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For that matter, is it really so that *"everything"* they predicted about the war was "falsified" by events? True, one statement made a veiled allusion to a world war; two others spoke of possible Arab uprisings elsewhere; neither happened. But to a person, they pleaded for avoiding a U.S. war above all because they feared it meant massive destruction and loss of life, including many American casualties; and here, while wrong about the American portion, they were proven right--in spades--about the rest.

In sum, despite Johnson's call to *"put aside our fears that contemporary war must, by its very nature, be an indiscriminate, disproportionate holocaust,"* and take comfort from the lingering image of Pentagon lawyers poring earnestly over target lists, you can perhaps see why the defense of the Gulf War in *Just War and The Gulf War* brings to mind Woolman's echo of the words attributed to Solomon: *"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel indeed."* (Proverbs 10:12)

#### THE LUMPEN-POPE-IGENTSIA

And Weigel's indictment of church leaders who opposed the war is massively refuted by his own evidence. The nine statements express alienation from Desert Storm, *yes*; from such "experiments" as Weigel's neo-Cold War, *yes*; but from America, *NO*. If the leaders represented there, including Ed Staudt and Steve Main, are the *"lumpenreligentsia,"* (which means, roughly, "church scum") it proves to be a rather insightful and morally sensitive company as well as a weighty one, including as it does even Weigel's own tough-minded spiritual leader.

It is certainly possible to make a credible, non-neocon defense of the Gulf War; but this is likely to be much more restrained both in tone and claims than in *Just War and The Gulf War*. Indeed, in *But Was It Just?*, Michael Walzer, Jean Bethke Elshtain and J. Bryan Hehir all defend Desert Storm in just such a more moderate and somber manner, though for my money none of them takes full account of the mathematics of massacre either.

On the other side, it is also possible to make a careful, detailed, telling critique of the war from a religious, just war perspective. Alan

Geyer of Wesley Theological Seminary and Barbara Green, a Presbyterian staffer, do just that in *Lines In the Sand* (Westminster/John Knox, \$11.95).

Their analysis is particularly trenchant in the way it fills in what the others assiduously avoid, namely the checkered and often sleazy record of U.S. involvement in the Gulf region, manipulating first one side and then another, and for decades pouring in a constant stream of ever more dangerous weapons. With no little force they quote a former high Pentagon official's admission about Iraq that, *"We created this monster."*

#### MAKING TRUTH A CASUALTY

Similarly, Geyer and Green are the only ones who speak at any length about the string of official lies and manipulation that were employed in persuading Americans to support the war, among which the shameful episode of the Kuwaiti ambassador's daughter and the phony incubator massacre is but the latest of many appalling revelations.

Then there was the gross press censorship during the actual fighting. Here Geyer and Green could have made an even stronger case. James Turner Johnson, who like Weigel completely ignores these factors, nonetheless leans hard on such notions as *"a just political order," "the protection of human rights"* and *"other such intangibles"* as being *"among the paramount values the just war tradition seeks to preserve."*

(This is as close as he gets to addressing the mathematics of massacre: evidently, it was okay, indeed necessary, to kill 35 to 75 Iraqi civilians to redress the loss of "human rights" of a single dead Kuwaiti. How these notions relate to the Emirate of Kuwait, with no voting and no citizenship rights for the vast majority of its residents, is a matter Johnson also ignores.)

But that aside, these "intangibles" cut two ways: what about the war's impact on human rights *in the USA*? Press freedom is a central pillar of the "American experiment", yet it was utterly subverted during the war, in ways likely to become standard repressive practice in future wars.

In *Lines In The Sand*, Geyer and Green do allude to censorship as a cost of the war, harder to quantify than

thousands of dead Iraqi civilians, but real and dangerous nonetheless. It is a political "smart bomb" aimed right down the chimney of our "just political order". (Geyer and Green do not mention, but should have, the atrocious treatment by the military of the several thousand GIs who filed for conscientious objector status when ordered to report for duty. Hundreds were arrested or shipped unwillingly to the Gulf, then harassed and threatened while thousands of miles away from counsel. Scores are still in prison, with virtually no publicity and facing heavy penalties for having attempted to follow their consciences--as if they were citizens of a "just society.")

I don't say that the case in *Lines In The Sand* is unanswerable, but the book's detailed, informed critique of the war, based on just war criteria, is one that none of the war supporters I have read have yet come close to answering.

For their parts, Weigel and Johnson hardly even try. Their "kick-ass theology" in *Just War and The Gulf War* will certainly suit the interests of a new, sanctified Pax Americana. It can provide the religious rationale for many of its future bloody adventures; it contains whitewash enough for lots of sepulchres.

#### PUTTING IT IN THE RECORD

Evidently George Bush thinks this would be a fine idea; but it seems to have a long way to go yet to conquer the churches. For that I say, thank god. In the meantime, where's Cardinal Ratzinger when we really need him?

(Two Footnotes:

#1. All three books reviewed here can be ordered from the Friends General Conference Book Service in Philadelphia, 1-800-966-4556.

#2. I'm considering compiling a book of Quaker responses to the Gulf War. The working title is *No Yellow Ribbons*. It would include several of my articles, and a selection of minutes and reports on Quaker work and witness during the war. If you are interested in this idea, will you help by sending copies of minutes and other reports? Friends were reverently and widely active during this crisis; we should not let our witness slip into forgetfulness. Write to No Yellow Ribbons, P.O. Box 1361, Falls Church VA 22041.)



INSIDE: Earthquake in Philadelphia--the AFSC  
Opts for Reform; and a Review of  
Books on the Morality of Desert Storm

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### THIS MONTH IN QUAKER HISTORY

On the first day of Second Month, 1865, Abraham Lincoln signed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, formally abolishing slavery in the United States. The amendment had cleared Congress the day before, and went from Lincoln's desk to the states to be ratified.

Lincoln signed the amendment on a Wednesday, or Fourth Day, in Quaker parlance. The next day, in Amesbury, Massachusetts, a small town northwest of Boston, John Greenleaf Whittier went to Fifth Day or mid-week Meeting, a common part of Quaker routine in those days.

As the Quaker poet sat in the quiet meetinghouse, suddenly the bells of the town's other churches began pealing wildly, and a cannon fired a salute, in celebration of the event so long-awaited in the strongly antislavery commonwealth.

Amid the din of public rejoicing, it would seem that Whittier and the other Friends sat in their usual gathered silence. But it would not be correct to say they were unmoved by the clamor; for in Whittier's mind, the bells set off an answering rhythm of verse, a poem which he later said "wrote itself, or rather sang itself,

while the bells rang." After meeting, he hurried home, recited the lines to his household, and wrote them down.

Whittier had labored in the antislavery crusade for more than thirty years, as an propagandist, organizer, and poet. During a visit to an antislavery convention in Philadelphia in 1838, he was in danger of his life from a proslavery mob that attacked and burned the building in which he and others were speaking against slavery.

Thus it is no wonder that the poem is entitled "Laus Deo," or *Praise God*. Here are two stanzas:

*It is done!  
Clang of bell and roar of gun  
Send the tidings up and down.  
How the belfries rock and reel!  
How the great guns, peal on peal,  
Fling the joy from town to town....*

*Blotted out!  
All within and all about  
Shall a fresher life begin;  
Freer breathe the universe  
As it rolls its heavy curse  
On the dead and buried sin!*

### QUAKER CHUCKLE

In 1719, Friend Sylvanus Bevan was married in Westminster Meeting in London, amid a very fashionable gathering that even included members of the royal family. An older, conservative minister named George Whitehead preached at length during the meeting, reportedly endeavoring to show that in wedlock the man was the head of the woman.

A few moments after Whitehead had finished, a

spirited older woman Friend, Alice Hays, stood and remarked that she felt Whitehead had been mistaken, inasmuch as it was said in Scripture that a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, and--noting the presence of royalty--observed that a crown rests above the head.

Whitehead was not amused; but the royals in attendance, it is reliably reported, were.