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## SPIRITUALITY & POLITICS

*Blessed are the pure in heart*

### Politics From the Heart

BY DAVID M. WHETTSTONE

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God* (Matthew 5:8).

The heart is the seat of thought, intention, and action. Purity of heart represents a single-mindedness upon the things of God. To strive for purity of heart is to be steadfastly committed to being God’s love in the world—demonstrating God’s grace, and ever hoping that God’s reign will soon bring about peace.

In the MCC Washington Office, we try to see advocacy in this way. Some readers ask us: “How do you do the work that you do? Don’t you feel discouraged when nothing changes?”

We know that we are not alone in our experiences. God is with us. And God has given us people made in the image of God. We all have the same struggles for purity of heart. Neighbors in our communities, country, and throughout the world are striving to bring about God’s peace. Their actions express concern, care, and encouragement. These assertions take on new meaning in the wake of the Sept. 11 tragedy.

Not only from this sad occasion but regularly, we reexamine our long term commitments and work. We want to get rid of false confidences and idols. We often feel trapped or complicit with a world of much violence and disparity. Militarism, exploitation, and injustice seem to run amok. There is a terrible sense that we are entwined in

such things. We confess and struggle with our thoughts and lack of reflection, our actions and inactions before God. Reexamination and transformation are painful, humbling processes.

In this issue, we invite you to join us in reconsidering our basic foundational beliefs:

- *God is the basis of true security and peace:* Must we turn to military solutions or are there alternatives?
- *The reign of God extends beyond national ethnic boundaries:* Do we truly love others in the name of Christ or do we deem others despised and unwelcomed?
- *Our economic policies should be based on just principles:* Do we really care about people throughout the world with whom we are interrelated?
- *The Earth is the Lord’s:* What does our stewardship of the Earth tell us about ourselves, our relationships with creation and others, and the world we want?

Like the mystery of the reign of God (“already and not yet”), we desire to see God who is both present and far off. We are given the promise that we *will* see God. We see God now in humankind, creation and events. The promise of seeing God ignites our hearts, moves us to action, and gives us hope. Hebrews 10:36 says, “For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.” ■

In this issue, we invite you to join us in reconsidering some of our basic foundational beliefs.

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BY J. DARYL BYLER

**It is in seeing God in the midst of fearful situations that we, like Elisha, find the security to respond to enemies in creative ways.**

## Eyes to See

Nineteen men seemed to change the world Sept. 11, killing more than 6,000 people in carefully choreographed acts of terror in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.

The response to this horrific crime was immediate and sweeping. Stock markets tumbled, thousands lost their jobs, the president declared war on terrorism and Congress quickly committed \$55 billion to rescue, recovery and retaliation efforts.

As the United States now prepares for a protracted war, it is hard to be hopeful. U.S. military strikes will undoubtedly lead to more acts of terror. Violence always gives birth to fear, calls for revenge and more violence—*unless* someone steps back and helps us see the bigger picture.

One of the most fascinating Old Testament stories is told in II Kings 6. The king of Aram invades Israel with a large army and surrounds Dothan, the city where the prophet Elisha lives. Elisha's servant is terrified when he sees the imposing army. "What shall we do?" he cries.

Elisha replies, "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them." Then he prays, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." Elisha's servant is then able to see that the mountains surrounding Dothan are filled with God's chariots.

The story has a remarkable ending. Instead of retaliating for the invasion, Elisha instructs the king of Israel to feed the

Aramean army and send them home in peace. The invasions end.

The prophet is the seer—the one who, with singleness of heart, sees God at work when others are filled with fear and prepared to fight. It is in seeing God in the midst of fearful situations that we, like Elisha, find the security to respond to enemies in creative ways.

In our current uncertain times we desperately need prophets who have eyes to see and voices to proclaim the bigger and fuller picture of what God is doing in the world. In this picture: God comforts all who mourn the loss of loved ones; God reigns sovereign over all nations no matter how rebellious they may seem; God is bringing forth justice and peace; God is creating a community of faith that transcends national borders.

But how is it possible to see God in a world filled with violence and hatred? In the sixth beatitude, Jesus assures us that those who are pure in heart *will* see God (Matt. 5:8). This is not just a promise for the future. It is for today as well.

The Greek word *katharos*—translated as "pure"—means to be clean, unmixed, authentic, uncompromised. The image is of grain from which the chaff has been sifted. In a psalm that parallels this beatitude, the psalmist notes that the pure in heart are not beholden to what is false or deceitful (Psalm 24:4).

But who would dare claim to be pure in heart? The psalmist recognizes that only God is able to create a clean heart from the divided fragments and multiple loyalties of our lives (Psalm 51:10).

In the MCC Washington Office it sometimes seems impossible to live with singleness of focus in a political climate laden with compromise. This year, we began taking a spiritual retreat one day a month to step away from the din and pressure of Capitol Hill. It is our hope that these retreats will help us better connect with the bigger picture of God's work in the world.

At this time when we are tempted to respond out of fear and insecurity, may God give us eyes to see. ■

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WASHINGTON MEMO is written by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. It interprets national legislation and policy, seeking to reflect biblical concerns for justice and peace as represented in the work and statements of MCC U.S. and Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

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To contact the MCC U.S. Washington Office, please see our address on the back page. See our weekly commentary at [www.thirdway.com](http://www.thirdway.com)

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# Lone Voice

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart, one that is filled with sorrow for the families and loved ones who were killed and injured in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Only the most foolish or the most callous would not understand the grief that has gripped the American people and millions across the world.

This unspeakable attack on the United States has forced me to rely on my moral compass, my conscience, and my God for direction.

Sept. 11 changed the world. Our deepest fears now haunt us. Yet I am convinced that military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States.

I know that this use-of-force resolution will pass although we all know that the president can wage a war even without this resolution. However difficult this vote may be, some of us must urge the use of restraint. There must be some of us who say, let's step back for a moment and think through the implications of our actions today—let us more fully understand its consequences. . . .

We must not rush to judgment. Far too many innocent people have already died. Our country is in mourning. If we rush to launch a counter-attack, we run too great a risk that women, children, and other non-combatants will be caught in the crossfire.

Nor can we let our justified anger over these outrageous acts by vicious murderers inflame prejudice against all Arab Americans, Muslims, Southeast Asians, or any other people because of their race, religion, or ethnicity.

Finally, we must be careful not to embark on an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target. We cannot repeat past mistakes.

In 1964, Congress gave President Lyndon Johnson the power to “take all necessary measures” to repel attacks and prevent further aggression. In so doing, this House abandoned its own constitutional responsibilities and launched our country into years of undeclared war in Vietnam. . . .

I have agonized over this vote. But I came to grips with it in the very painful yet beautiful memorial service today at the National Cathedral. As a member of the clergy so eloquently said, “As we act, let us not become the evil that we deplore.” ■

BY BARBARA LEE

In response to the Sept. 11 attacks at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Congress on Sept. 14 authorized the president to use “all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided” the attacks. The bill passed the Senate, 98-0, and the House, 420-1, with Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) offering the lone dissenting voice. Her speech explaining her vote is excerpted here.

## CAPITAL QUOTES

“ . . . We must get beyond the stereotype of the ‘terrible racist’ and recognize in all of us the potential for racist attitudes. Things are subtler, more insidious, and we really have to address them courageously and honestly.”

—Mary Robinson, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, regarding the United Nations 2001 World Conference Against Racism.

“The American people would be willing to accept ground casualties, if we demonstrably win. It’s time now to start talking about killing people.”

—Army Lt. Col. Ralph Peters, opining that the U.S. public would be willing to accept the deaths of civilians in foreign countries targeted by retaliatory U.S. military action (Washington Post, September 13, 2001).

“We are neither with you nor with the terrorists . . . [The United States] expect[s] the entire world to help them because their interests demand it. Do you ever care about other’s interests? These are the characteristics that make America so hated in the world.”

—Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, on September 26, 2001.

## Pontius' Puddle



# An Unwavering Welcome

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BY ELISABETH T. HARDER

Until the morning of Sept. 11, substantive improvements in U.S. immigration policy seemed imminent. Plans were being made for a migration agreement with Mexico, expansion of guestworker programs, and the granting of legal status to many thousands of undocumented immigrants.

This agenda was put on hold as the attacks dramatically altered attitudes. Alongside the new national obsession with security are a sluggish economy and massive job layoffs. New policies that would give order to the natural movement of workers and families across our borders now seem unlikely.

While the focus on immigration remains strong, it has shifted toward more restrictive and potentially harmful policies. Several examples include:

- Anti-terrorism legislation is moving rapidly through Congress as the *Memo* goes to press. Several immigration-related components, not yet finalized, will be included. Attorney General Ashcroft pushed hard for new powers to detain and deport non-citizens thought to be a “threat to national security,” but was forced to compromise with more cautious members of Congress. Still, for example, it appears that the new legislation would allow immigrants to be held in custody for up to seven days (previously 24 hours) without being charged with an offense.
- Foreign students in the United States will likely be subject to greater scrutiny in coming months. Senator Feinstein (D-Calif.) proposed a six-month moratorium on student visas. The bill would also allocate \$32.3 million for a tracking program previously approved by Congress but not put into operation. Colleges and universities would be required to monitor international students to ensure school attendance and that visas are not overstayed.

- Militarization of the border, particularly between Mexico and the United States, has gained new momentum. The House recently passed an amendment by Rep. Traficant (D-Ohio) that would allow deployment of armed military patrols to assist the Border Control. Rep. Tancredo (R-Colo.) is expected to propose a halt to all immigration for at least six months. He suggested that a military defense structure be established along the border zone during that time.

As people of faith, our unique contribution to the current immigration debate is sorely needed. Ours is the biblical standard of welcoming and speaking up for the rights of the “sojourners” among us (Lev. 19:33–34, Num. 15:15–16, Deut. 24:17). May we create a climate of hospitality for recent immigrants in our communities—a refuge from the current atmosphere of fear and distrust.

We need to take the additional step of speaking out on behalf of immigrants so that new security precautions do not trump their dignity and rights. More lengthy procedures at the Mexican and Canadian borders, as well as other points of entry, may be necessary to screen out those individuals who clearly intend to do harm. But blocking or severely restricting entry for the majority of would-be immigrants—particularly with the use of military troops—is unacceptable.

“For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (I Cor. 12:13, 26).

Let us keep our sights on the long-term goal of suffering and rejoicing together with immigrants—no matter how the tide may turn. As one body, let us seek the welfare of all. ■

**You and the [sojourner] shall be alike before the Lord.**

**You and the [sojourner] who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance” (Lev. 15:15b–16).**

# Secure Energy

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Anabaptists have long emphasized the importance of living simply. This grows out of our convictions that the earth belongs to God (Psalm 24:1), that we are to be good stewards (Gen. 2:15), and that we are to share the earth's resources equitably and generously with the global community (II Cor. 8:13–15). Many of the choices we must make relate to our use of energy.

Since Sept. 11, a growing number of voices in Congress and the media have been talking about "energy security." The concept refers to our nation's reliance on steady energy supplies to keep our economy going.

Currently, the United States imports more than half of its oil supply. Many U.S. policies in the Middle East are linked to oil, where two-thirds of the world's oil reserves are located. Others point out the vulnerability of power plants as targets for future attacks.

How does all of this fit with our commitment as people of faith to live lightly on the earth? Fortunately, we as a nation can make many energy choices which address these concerns *and* demonstrate good stewardship. These choices include a greater emphasis on energy efficiency and conservation and a shift to renewable energy sources.

An editorial on a mainstream news website soon after the attacks listed 10 things U.S. Americans could do to fight terrorism. The list included suggestions for conserving energy and encouraged Congress to provide more funding for alternative fuels, in order to reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

Indeed, the United States has tremendous potential for development of renewable energy sources. Options include wind, solar, geothermal and biomass (in which plant matter or animal waste is burned to produce energy). About 2 percent of our nation's electricity supply currently comes from these sources.

Costs for these technologies are going down as demand for them grows. Electricity from some types of renewable energy is now as inexpensive as that derived from fossil fuels. Renewable energy could reduce considerably our reliance on oil and other fossil fuels.

In addition, renewable energy resources are located throughout the country and often consumed locally (e.g., fuel cells or solar water heaters). A decentralized energy supply is far less susceptible to attacks.

This fall, the U.S. Congress is considering various proposals for future energy policy. The House passed a bill containing large incentives for fossil fuel industries and a token increase in fuel economy standards for sport utility vehicles and light trucks. (The increase was less than what automakers had already pledged to meet.)

Several senators have proposed bills which would give support to renewable energy. One way to do so is by setting up a federal "renewable portfolio standard" that requires a minimum level of electricity to come from renewable sources. Credits could be traded between suppliers in different states. Fourteen states already have such standards in place.

Support for sustainable energy will likely make our nation's energy supply more secure. More importantly, it also conveys respect for the true source of our security—our Creator—and the wondrous creation to which we have been entrusted. ■

BY RACHELLE SCHLABACH

*We as a nation can make many energy choices which address security concerns and demonstrate good stewardship.*

## SEND THE MEMO TO A FRIEND!

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# Will Congress Retreat on Economic Justice Issues?

BY MARTIN SHUPACK

In the post-Sept. 11 rush to “support the president,” Congress is under tremendous pressure to abdicate its responsibilities as a deliberative body and rubber stamp the president’s wishes. This makes a faithful, committed advocacy for global economic justice more imperative than ever.

## Trade Issues

Last spring President Bush asked Congress to provide him with “fast track” Trade Promotion Authority. This legislation would severely limit the ability of Congress—and therefore the public—to influence international trade agreements. Congress twice denied President Clinton this authority, and the Bush administration had previously faced an uphill struggle as well.

But now “fast track” supporters in Congress say that the president’s request must be granted as an important element in the war on terrorism.

“Fast track” authority would make it easier to conclude a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. In addition, the United States hopes to secure agreement at the World Trade Organization meeting in November for a new round of global trade negotiations. Both these efforts would advance trade relationships that critics have denounced as biased in favor of the affluent industrial nations and harmful to impoverished communities in the global South.

Whatever happens with “fast track,” it seems clear that the post-Sept. 11 political climate will require a greater effort to work for just global trade policies.

The post-Sept. 11 political climate will require a greater effort to work for just global trade policies.

## Debt Relief & Foreign Aid

Countries that support the U.S. military response to terrorism can probably expect to be rewarded with more foreign aid and debt relief. But these will not necessarily be the countries with the greatest needs. Nor will concerns about human rights or how the money is used carry as much weight as they have in the past.

In addition, the Bush administration wants Congress to lift human rights restrictions on foreign military aid. Such an action would set aside legislation like the Leahy Law (named after its principal sponsor, Senator Leahy, D-Vt.), which prohibits assistance to foreign military units involved in serious human rights violations. Congress needs our backing to resist such a sweeping abandonment of principle.

## AIDS Funding

The emergency appropriations of \$40 billion and \$15 billion in response to Sept. 11 shows how much money the United States government has available for its real priorities. Sadly, these priorities do not include helping the millions of people dying from AIDS in poor countries around the world.

Congress was gearing up to provide between \$500 million–\$750 million for global AIDS prevention and treatment for 2002, and will probably still do this. However, the emergency spending diminishes the hope of increasing this funding for now. Advocates estimate that up to \$15 billion annually is needed from all donor countries to address this terrible global epidemic. We must convey the message that our own nation’s experience of horrific suffering should make us more compassionate toward the suffering of others.

It is still too early to know if post-Sept. 11 militarization will derail the global economic justice agenda. That will not depend only on the U.S. Congress and administration. It will also depend on all of us. ■

# Glaciers Move Mountains

**M**e? Pure in heart? Ah, I'm being asked to write because of my "single minded loyalty" to a cause. Interpret that: stubbornness—too naive to know a losing cause when I see it.

What gives energy, and even hope, when results are so molasses slow? That clearly comes from the victims—the "least of these"—victims of direct violence, and victims who suffer disease and malnutrition because life-giving resources go to military spending, rather than the healing that could prevent more violence.

Biblical images are a prod, like walking around Jericho seven times when you've already been the whole way around four times and can't see even a hair-line fracture. The work would quickly overwhelm if it were not for one glorious revelation: I don't have to perform miracles! The miracle is not up to me. What a relief! All I have to do is bring the loaves and fishes out of which miracles are made. That takes one who is a prayerful, contemplative critic of government policy. One needs to assure that the fish are fresh and that the loaves are whole-grain.

Political advocacy can be seen and carried out as ministry. Some of my most precious relationships are with members of Congress and their staffs. To speak truth to power one must listen, love and understand, thus building a relationship of mutual support and prodding. The Lord's Prayer or a hymn are excellent intercessory prayers. "Senator so-and-so's father who art in heaven . . ." "Lead her not into the temptations of . . ."

A few days after the horrors of Sept. 11, I returned to Capitol Hill to lobby for the Peace Tax Fund bill, which would allow conscientious objection to be extended to taxes. The legislative director for one member of Congress began our visit with a cautionary, "I'm not a pacifist, Marian." I joked that of course our visit wasn't yet over and asked, "OK, so what kind of a 'not-pacifist' are you? The kind who seeks ten-fold revenge or the 'weeping prophet' who truly seeks an outcome of peace which implies justice?"

I mentioned the hundreds of thousands of children who have died in Iraq since the Gulf War because of the U.S. embargo on medicines and food. He seemed surprised at the statistics and admitted the embargo may well be experienced as terrorism. Later he withdrew another caution, ("I think you should lie low for a while"), and encouraged me to keep on explaining that some taxpayers, for reasons of deep belief and conscience, cannot participate in military actions whether that participation is physical or financial. No witness for conscience is ever lost.

God is tricky and takes you one step at a time into places you never thought you'd see, and actions you never thought would be required or even doable. In mountain climbing one foot is always firmly placed, the other is searching for higher ground. When one foot has found an action that is fruitful, the other must seek a new level of inner growth, which leads to a new action, and on and on.

Impatience at the speed of change is a virtue. The work moves at glacial speed, no doubt about that. But glaciers move mountains. ■

## IN OTHER'S WORDS

BY MARIAN FRANZ

Marian Franz has been the director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund since 1982. A peace tax fund would allow conscientious objection to be extended to taxes, or as Franz likes to say, would "establish alternative service for drafted dollars."

**Biblical images are a prod, like walking around Jericho seven times when you've already been the whole way around four times and can't see even a hair-line fracture.**



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**SPRING SEMINAR**

April 14-16, 2002

The 2002 MCC Washington Office Spring Seminar will focus on domestic poverty. What has been the effect of the 1996 welfare reform law? What does poverty in the United States look like today? What is our role as people of faith?

We invite you to join us in Washington April 14-16 for a look at this important topic. Look for a registration form in the next issue of the *Washington Memo*.

**SOUND THE TRUMPET!**

Messages opposing U.S. military strikes continue to be an important focus of post-Sept. 11 advocacy. U.S. government responses to Sept. 11 are also impacting a number of other issues of importance to MCC, including immigration (see p. 4), energy policy (p. 5) and Trade Promotion Authority (p. 6). Civil rights and funding for domestic programs are at risk as well. We urge you to contact elected officials about at least one of these issues.

**FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC PROGRAMS:** President Bush's economic stimulus plan proposes new tax breaks on top of this summer's mammoth cuts—further raiding funds needed for programs that support low-income working families. A one-time rebate for those who didn't receive one earlier this year would be the only temporary measure, while corporate tax cuts would be made permanent. Ask your member of Congress to oppose making any new tax cuts permanent, particularly if they will not reach low-income individuals.

**CIVIL RIGHTS:** Racial profiling involves law officers relying essentially on race or ethnicity in selecting persons to stop and investigate. Both the President and Attorney General have said it is wrong and should end. Since Sept. 11, many immigrants, Arab Americans and others have been detained based on stereotypes. Express your concern and report local incidences at your member's district office. Though not due for a vote soon, urge your legislators to co-sponsor the "End Racial Profiling Act" (H.R. 2074, S. 989).

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