

- A publication of Mennonite Central Committee
- September–October 2002
- Volume XXXIV
- No. 5



CHURCH AND STATE

One Standard or Two?

Two Kingdoms, Two Callings?

BY MARTIN SHUPACK

Two-kingdom theology has been understood by Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in different ways.

This issue of the *Washington Memo* and the following one will focus on the theme of “two-kingdom theology,” in view of its resurgence in Mennonite discussions after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Two-kingdom theology has been understood by Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in different ways. For many, this idea means that there is a profound distinction between the church and “the world.” For example, according to the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, “The only Christian nation is the church of Jesus Christ. . . . Even at its best, a government cannot act completely according to the justice of God because no nation, except the church, confesses Christ’s rule as its foundation.”

More controversially, for some Mennonites two-kingdom theology means that God has two standards of conduct: one for Christians and another for governments. Whereas Christians are called to follow Jesus in nonviolence, governments (“outside the perfection of Christ”) are affirmatively called by God to use lethal force (“the sword”)—including military force—to preserve the security of its citizens by punishing those who do evil. On the basis of this understanding, some Mennonites have supported U.S. bombing of Afghanistan and other military actions against Al Qaeda, while rejecting military service themselves.

Other Mennonites, while affirming a vital distinction between the church and the nations, believe that God has only one will and standard to which all people are called—the standard revealed in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While we cannot expect the unredeemed state to fully commit itself to God’s one will and standard—as believers must—Christians can call governing authorities to move in the direction of that will. This can be termed a “two-kingdom/one standard” position. Mennonites with this view have opposed the U.S. bombings of Afghanistan, and urged the United States to move in the direction of God’s will by pursuing non-military responses to international terrorism.

This *Memo* includes articles presenting the biblical case for each of these two positions (pp.6–7). The next issue will focus on congregational experiences and struggles around two-kingdom views and U.S. military activity. We hope that raising this issue will lead to more discussion and clarity about God’s will in Christ during these difficult times.

In addition, this *Memo* offers excerpts from the three prize-winning high school essays in our recent contest (pp. 4–5). Thanks and congratulations to the 56 Anabaptist young people who submitted papers! ■

IN THIS MEMO

Double-Minded?	2
In the World, Not by Choice	3
High School Essay Winners	4
Two Standards?	6
God’s Purpose for the State	7
Sound the Trumpet!	8

BY J. DARYL BYLER

Sept. 11 has resurfaced profound questions over what Mennonites believe about the appropriate role of government in restraining evil.

Double-Minded?

Mennonite congregations across the country have struggled with how to faithfully respond to the events of Sept. 11. For many, the most immediate response was to gather, light candles, read scripture and pray.

Later, when the United States retaliated against Al Qaeda and the Taliban, Mennonites collected more than 40,000 blankets for Afghan refugees.

Few Mennonites would argue that they personally should fight in the “war against terrorism.” But some believe that this is a legitimate role for the U.S. military.

While some Mennonite congregations planned a day of prayer and fasting on Palm Sunday to urge the president and Congress not to expand U.S. military actions into Iraq, other Mennonites have supported the president’s military responses.

Indeed, Sept. 11 has resurfaced profound questions over what Mennonites believe about the appropriate role of government in restraining evil.

The *Mennonite Confession of Faith* (1963) says that “the state does not and cannot operate on the nonresistant principles of Christ’s kingdom.” Similarly, the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) states: “Even at its best, a government cannot act completely according to the justice of God . . .”

But is it by God’s design that the state cannot operate on nonresistant principles and act according to God’s justice? Or does this reality simply reflect the state’s fallenness?

Does God have different standards for the church and the state?

Perhaps our differences over this question are rooted in differing views about God’s way of engaging evil and our theological understandings of atonement and of the state.

Engaging evil. Does God have two minds about how to engage evil? Does God always love enemies? Or does God also ordain the state to use violent force to subdue and destroy enemies? Does God expect only the church to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21)? Or is this God’s intent for governments as well?

Are the church and the state simply two different tools—both used by God toward the common end of reconstructing or redeeming the world? Does the state, like a giant sledge hammer, demolish the old so that the church can use kinder and gentler tools—mason’s trowels, small hammers and paint brushes—to begin the work of reconstruction?

Atonement. Most Mennonites affirm that through Christ’s choice to nonviolently lay down his life, we are restored to right relationship with God and one another (Ephesians 2). But does Christ’s nonviolent way of the cross work only for redeeming individual sinners? Or is it also the way that God redeems broken systems and rebellious nations?

The state. And what is our theological understanding of the state? Do we see it as part of God’s good creation? Or do we understand it primarily as a by-product of the fall? When the state uses violent force, is it acting according to God’s will or only within the scope of behavior that God permits?

May God guide us as we sort through these many and difficult questions. ■

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.

Staff: J. Daryl Byler (Director), Elisabeth T. Harder, Rachele Schlabach (Managing Editor), Martin Shupack, David Whettstone.

To contact the MCC U.S. Washington Office, please see our address on the back page. See our weekly commentary at www.thirdway.com and visit our web site at www.mcc.org/us/washington.

Washington Memo (USPS 130-310) is published bi-monthly by Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, PA. Periodical postage paid at Akron, PA. This issue went to press August 15, 2002.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE: Washington Memo subscription rates are \$10 for one year; \$18 for two years. Send request and check to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500. For address changes, send your old address with your new address to MCC. Allow 2–4 weeks for address change. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501.

IF YOU ARE A SUBSCRIBER: Please check the top of your mailing label for your subscription’s ending date. If it is within the next three months, please send in

In the World—Even if Not by Choice

BY RACHELLE SCHLABACH

The young pastor spoke of the great dangers he encounters every day in Córdoba, a northern province of Colombia. He told of “constant executions” by the paramilitaries, who have a stronghold in the area. When he described the danger he and his family—including his wife and young child—are in, tears began to form in his eyes. Yet, he said, “It’s in my heart to stay.” He leads his congregation’s efforts to respond to the families around them who have lost everything due to the war.

Many Christians in Colombia have long seen themselves as separate from “the world.” But the war is changing this view. With more than 600 churches closed, and dozens of pastors killed or kidnapped, the effects of the conflict are inescapable. As a result, more and more churches are responding to the call of the Gospel to be peacemakers in the midst of great violence.

Many of Colombia’s rural areas have little government presence. This lack of mayors, judges and police, as well as schools and hospitals, makes conditions ripe for armed groups to move in and establish control on their terms. Because of this, Colombians recognize the need for a state presence that can provide stability and enforce justice.

There is continuing debate as to what this state presence should be like. The new president, Alvaro Uribe, has promised to give more power to the state and military. Others question his model of authority, which leaves little space for community input. Rather than more authority, they say, government officials need to use their power responsibly, to ensure freedom to express differing views and respect for diversity.

Fifteen years ago, a group of Colombian Mennonites organized an agency called “Justapaz”—combining the Spanish words for justice and peace. Their vision was to work with government, armed groups and civil society in an effort to build the foundation necessary for peace. Although some churches were initially resistant to the idea, Justapaz has grown into a thriving organization, respected in broader church and secular communities.

Working for peace in the middle of a war is not easy, as Justapaz staff and the young pastor well know. But as Ricardo Esquivia, the director of Justapaz, points out, the church has the unique role of being a “builder of bridges” between all sectors of society. ■

The United States continues to send hundreds of millions of dollars of military aid to Colombia, escalating the violence in which these churches work. On Sept. 27, educational and advocacy activities on Colombia will take place in communities across the nation. For more information, see www.colombiamobilization.org or contact the MCC Washington Office.

CAPITAL QUOTES

“A country as wealthy as ours should be providing three to five times that amount to combat what is unquestionably the worst public health crisis in human history.”

—Senator Patrick Leahy, chair of the Foreign Operations subcommittee, after the committee voted \$750 million for global AIDS prevention and treatment.

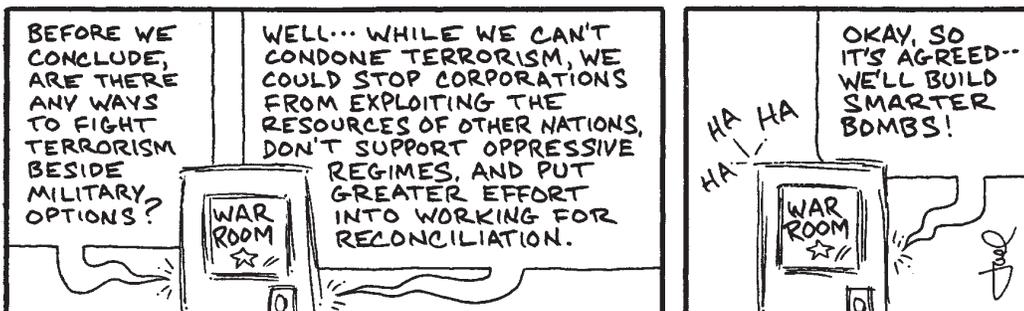
“Is there anyone here that can give us some hope that a war is worthwhile . . . ?”

—Senator Richard Lugar, member of the Foreign Relations Committee, expressing his doubts after listening to a panel of experts testify about the costs and risks of a U.S. war against Iraq.

“Under [the Senate Finance Committee’s bill], some people could spend their entire five years—there’s a five-year work requirement on welfare—going to college. Now, that’s not my view of helping people become independent.”

—President George W. Bush, July 29, 2002.
(A note of clarification: the Senate bill limits the amount of

Pontius’ Puddle



BY BLAKE JOHNSON

Blake Johnson won first prize for his essay, condensed here, in our annual high school essay contest. Blake graduated from Shawnee Heights High School in Topeka, Kansas.

Christians should be helping lead the war against global warming.

The Debate Over Global Warming

The earth has been getting warmer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reported that the 20th century was the hottest in the last 1,000 years, and that the nine hottest years on record all occurred since 1987.

Still, many are more worried about what scientists expect to happen in the future. Predictions vary from a total rise in temperature of 1.8 to 6.3 degrees Fahrenheit over the next 100 years, with some regions getting colder. A shift in rain patterns could have a devastating effect on agriculture, disrupting the world's economy.

Global warming results partly from the "greenhouse effect," which occurs when certain gases (called greenhouse gases) trap heat inside the atmosphere instead of releasing it into space. With the exception of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other man-made gases, greenhouse gases are natural gases that have always been a part of our atmosphere. In the past there has been a balance, keeping the earth's temperature fairly steady.

Human emissions threaten to upset this balance, creating an "enhanced greenhouse effect." Most common is the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas). When burned, carbon is released in the form of carbon dioxide—the gas that contributes most to the greenhouse effect.

General consensus among world leaders is that this harmful air pollution has to stop. But critics say some countries could fall apart economically if forced to switch to more environmentally-friendly techniques. And even if all human emissions of greenhouse gases could be eliminated, it would

be centuries before the concentration of these gases returned to pre-industrial levels.

The most recent international attempt to reverse the effects of global warming was the Kyoto Protocol. Over 170 nations signed the treaty, agreeing to reduce emissions of six greenhouse gases. The United States—which is responsible for about 25 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions—signed, but never ratified, the treaty. Temporarily put on hold [last] year when the United States withdrew, many of the world's industrialized nations are proceeding with the treaty anyway.

In June [2001], President Bush "suggested" the United States deal with global warming through market-based incentives and development of energy efficient technology. But these suggestions fall short of a solid commitment. And an international effort will be far more effective than individual countries trying to create their own plan.

One task to reduce the effects of global warming is to develop non-polluting energy sources, since 40 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions come from power plants. Market-based incentives, government restrictions and even planting trees are all good ideas.

For those who want to help, car pool to work. Make sure most of your trash is recycled, not burned. Don't work in facilities that release toxic fumes into the atmosphere.

Christians should be helping lead the war against global warming. Being Christian should strengthen the position of someone who considers himself both a Christian and a scientist. After all, we have more to fight for. The Earth is the Lord's.

As a Christian, I find it disturbing that most people don't think twice before taking actions that may damage God's creation. According to Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." It is our job to take care of the earth and wildlife that live here. ■

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH!

Enter this year's contest, for your chance to win a cash prize and see your work reprinted in the *Washington Memo*! We are accepting both written essays and audio-taped speeches. Your essay or speech must be submitted by November 2002 and should be on one of the following topics: Global HIV/AIDS, Civil Liberties, Universal Health Care, Domestic Violence or the "Axis of Evil" Nations (Iraq, Iran, North Korea). For more information, contact the Washington Office.

Response to Sept. 11

WINNING HIGH SCHOOL ESSAYS

On Sept. 11, 2001, the world watched as the majestic Twin Towers fell to the ground. . . . The United States will never be the same again.

The terrorist attacks were very tragic and have changed the lives of millions of people. Many people have lost loved ones, jobs, and a sense of security.

Violence has gotten increasingly worse in nearly all parts of the world as an act of retaliation and a way to quickly solve problems. Because the United States is so wealthy and powerful, it's not a big surprise that [members of] a smaller, less fortunate country would choose us as a target. In fact, over the past five decades, the United States has launched many military attacks and interventions that have caused many people to feel resentment, anger, and hatred toward us.

The United States has to be held accountable for all the problems that we have caused. We need to make amends with the people we have hurt and caused to become bitter. . . . We should also give generously to the innocent people whose lives have been shattered. We should work closely with other law enforcement agencies around the world . . . to prosecute those who [are] chargeable for their crimes.

[The United States is one of] the largest suppliers of weapons. We should not export weapons to [countries] that are undemocratic and violate human rights. We also need to ban the transaction of weapons to areas of conflict.

We have to rise above violence, promote action for peace, come up with ideas and goals, and then act upon them. . . . A man once said, "Violence plus violence does not equal peace!" [We should apply this idea] not only [to] serious world issues, but also our everyday lives! ■

BY JENNIFER WEAVER

Jennifer's essay, excerpted here, was awarded second prize. She recently graduated from Central Christian High School in Kidron, Ohio.

We have to rise above violence and promote action for peace.

Restorative Justice: A Healing Approach to Crime

Restorative justice focuses on the future, offering a new understanding and approach to crime and justice. . . . Restorative justice places the needs of the victim and the responsibilities of the offender at the center of the justice process, which aids in their recovery. . . .

Unfortunately, the current system views the justice process as a crime committed by the offender against the state, rather than a violation of the relationship between the victim and offender. . . .

Prisons warp the offender's understanding of violence, making them view violence as a normal and necessary part of life. The prison environment prevents change and growth from occurring. . . . Prisons contradict the purpose of the justice process. . . . Howard Zehr, an expert in the field of restorative justice, states, "Instead of defining justice as retribution, let us define jus-

justice as restoration. If crime is injury, then justice will repair injuries and promote healing. . . ."

Restorative justice. . . reintegrates the offenders into the community by renewing the trust between the victims, community and offenders. Through dialogue and reconciliation, offenders improve their relationships with the victims and community. . . .

Crime leaves the community feeling vulnerable and lowers people's trust in one another. Taking an active role in the justice process allows the community to move beyond feelings of helplessness and insecurity. . . .

Restorative justice holds the offenders directly accountable to the victims, empowers the victims and communities affected by crime, and provides an environment that promotes recovery and transformation. ■

BY ANGIE LEDERACH

These remarks are excerpted from Angie's third-place essay. She recently graduated from Eastern Mennonite High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Does God Have Two Standards?

BY LOIS Y. BARRETT

Lois Y. Barrett is director of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary's Great Plains Extension, in North Newton, Kansas, where she is also assistant professor of theology and Anabaptist studies.

God has one will for all peoples, and that will cannot be understood apart from Jesus Christ.

There are problems with the way the question is usually phrased. The two things for which different standards of behavior are proposed are not in the same category: one is individual Christians, the other is a political body—the government of a nation-state.

The question makes the church into simply a collection of saved individuals. However, the church and the nation-state are both political bodies. (If you don't believe it, look up all the "kingdom," "citizen," and "lordship" language in the New Testament.)

The church is the "holy nation" that claims Jesus Christ as its head and follows Jesus in overcoming evil with good. It has no national boundaries. Modern nation-states are territorial, often resulting in violence or coercion. The church is a "city on a hill," God's model polity that demonstrates God's will for the nations. Understanding the church in this way helps us see that God's standard for church and state are the same.

The question implies that Jesus is relevant to individual behavior but not to communal, political behavior. Does the triune God have a standard of behavior for governments other than the standard we see in Jesus? Romans 13 understands a government that punishes only the guilty as relatively better than a one that is a terror to those who do good.

But this does not mean that God has a different standard for nation-states than for the church. Jesus is still the way toward which organizations, systems, governments, and powers should be called to move. The

unlikelihood that most of them will ever do so does not take away the one-ness of the triune God or God's sovereignty over all of creation—even if not all of creation recognizes it. God has one will for all peoples, and that will cannot be understood apart from Jesus Christ.

The only Christian nation is the church of Jesus Christ. The church can call other nations to move toward the path of Jesus—toward more justice, more peaceful resolution of conflict, more compassion. When the church engages in this nation-to-nation behavior, it becomes "ambassadors of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). Ephesians 3:10 says it a different way—through the church the wisdom of God is to be made known to the principalities and powers.

How might the church in 2002 be ambassadors of reconciliation?

- Grieve with all who suffer because of war or violence, but without calling for revenge. Adopt the slogan of the peace marchers in New York City shortly after Sept. 11: "Our grief is not a cry for war."
- Call on governments to deal with those who kill and destroy according to national and international law. It is better for a government to act according to the rule of law than to kill civilians, destroy homes and make land unfit for agriculture in a war of revenge. The U.S. government and its allies have a choice of treating the Sept. 11 event as a crime or as an act of war.
- Be ambassadors to governments of nation-states, advocating that they act more justly, more peaceably, more compassionately, more fairly.
- Demonstrate through the church the possibilities of overcoming evil with good, reconciling enemies, and restoring offenders. ■

God's Purpose for the State

The events of Sept. 11 have caused me to re-evaluate my understanding of Christ's way of peace. Shortly after Sept. 11, Anabaptist Christians in my city planned a prayer gathering. I noticed that one of the prayer petitions to be offered was for there to be no military response. I thought, "I can't pray that. The murder of some two thousand plus people is a great evil and it must be punished."

In my pre-Christian college days, I was adamantly opposed to the Vietnam War and active in the anti-war movement. When I came to Christ 32 years ago, I had already developed pacifist convictions. These convictions, along with others, eventually led me to embrace the Anabaptist spiritual tradition.

I am convinced that the teaching and example of Jesus, along with the New Testament, prohibit Christ's disciples from participating in the state-sanctioned taking of life called war. Those who have been regenerated by and possess the Spirit of Christ cannot use the methods of this world. Like our Lord, His followers seek to save rather than destroy the lost.

The New Testament ethic of love and non-violence is a moral obligation for all Christians in all circumstances. However, this ethic is not for all persons in society generally. Followers of Christ are empowered by the Spirit of Christ, who enables them to live out this ethic, in contrast to non-believers, whose lives are governed by "the god of this world." We live in a fallen world and we will never experience universal peace among people and nations until the Second Advent.

Romans 13 tells us that the civil government is ordained by God. God gave the state the coercive power of the sword to protect its citizenry and to punish wrongdoers. The state has the responsibility to provide for the welfare of its citizens, preserve the social order and to safeguard its citizens from those, either within or without, who seek its destruction.

I am not saying that the state is naturally good or that only good people get into office. Nor am I suggesting that obedience to the state is always to be absolute and unconditional. What I am saying is that God, who is sovereign, ordained the state for a purpose (Romans 13:1-5). If the state is to fulfill this purpose, sometimes the use of lethal violence is necessary. The early Anabaptists referred to this as "outside the perfection of Christ." According to the *Schleitheim Confession of Faith* (1527), "The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ; it punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good."

Those who perpetrated the events of Sept. 11 were wicked. The U.S. government was justified in its decision to go after and punish these people. Did the United States go after the right people? Was the degree of military response appropriate? Were U.S. motives tainted by the desire for domination in the region? What about the suffering of the Afghan people? These are all questions we have a legitimate right to ask.

Encouraging political leaders to seek non-violent resolutions to conflict, and other forms of nonviolent witness, are likewise legitimate. While not all pacifist Christians agree on how to make peace, we should all be working toward that end. ■

IN OTHERS' WORDS

BY LINDSEY ROBINSON

Lindsey Robinson is Conference Minister for the Lancaster Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

God gave the state the coercive power of the sword to protect its citizenry and to punish wrongdoers.



21 South 12th Street
PO Box 500
Akron, PA 17501-0500

UPCOMING EVENTS

Peace One Day—Sept. 21

The United Nations has declared Sept. 21 an International Day of Peace, calling for a day-long global ceasefire and celebrations of peace. To learn more, visit www.peaceoneday.org or contact the MCC U.S. Washington Office.

Bread for the World Sunday—Oct. 27

Bread for the World encourages congregations to use this Sunday to renew their commitment to ending hunger in God's world. For more information, see www.bread.org or contact the MCC U.S. Washington Office.

SOUND THE TRUMPET!

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
IRAQ	Congress has begun holding hearings to consider the implications of U.S. military action against Iraq, most likely early next year. Some experts warn that a U.S. invasion will result in thousands of Iraqi civilian deaths and internal and regional instability.	Urge the president and Congress to count the costs of war and consider nonviolent alternatives. For worship and advocacy resources, see: http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/iraqaugust/index.html .
DEBT RELIEF	Under the current debt cancellation program, 26 impoverished countries have seen their debt service payments cut from \$3 billion annually to \$2 billion. The Debt Relief Enhancement Act (H.R. 4524) would cut this debt service by another \$1 billion.	Ask your representative to co-sponsor this legislation. Similar legislation has already passed the Senate.

USEFUL ADDRESSES



MCC U.S. Washington Office
110 Maryland Ave NE
Suite 502
Washington DC 20002
(202) 544-6564
mccwash@mcc.org

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-3121
www.senate.gov

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515
(202) 224-3121
www.house.gov

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington DC 20500
(202) 456-1111
president@whitehouse.gov