



**BAPTIST PEACE
FELLOWSHIP
NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2012**



From the President:

I write just after the close of the Olympic Games. By the time you read this, the Para-olympics will also have ended. In common with most people I enjoyed the games: the skills and commitment of the participants is always inspiring and some of the events were thrillingly exciting. The hysterical British bias of the BBC's commentary team, despite the best efforts of Michael Johnson, brought me less enjoyment, though it did highlight an disturbingly increasing tendency to make the Olympics less a celebration of individual athleticism and more a glorification of national identity.

There has always been this contradiction at the heart of the Olympic movement: on the one hand we have the Olympic flag with its five interlocking rings representing the five continents: on the other we have the athletes parading in national uniforms behind the national flag. The winners are celebrated with the flying of their national flags and the singing of their national anthems. Some medals are competed for by national teams, e.g hockey, basketball etc. This year we had the strange situation of a team representing GB entering the football tournament; football is not administered by a British body, so the cooperation of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland had to be gained before a squad could be chosen. That cooperation was in some cases at best curmudgeonly given. In the event some players refused to play; the Welsh players that did refused to sing the national anthem – though they played their hearts out on the field. There were some needless team events: why, when sufficient individual medals were given for all the events, were their separate team medals in the equestrian disciplines? Team medals were not awarded in boxing or the triathlon, road cycling or other equivalent competitions. Even in track athletics – relays are competed in national teams. If you think that is inevitable note that the men's doubles at Wimbledon this summer was won by a Briton playing with a Dane. They could not enter as a team at the Olympics. Bradley Wiggins won the Tour de France as a member of the Sky racing team: though registered as a British team it comprises cyclists from twelve different countries. The Sky team could not compete in the Olympic road races: its members had to represent their own nations and compete against normal team-mates.

All this was brought home to me by the central place John Lennon's Imagine was given at the closing ceremony. As I heard those familiar lines,

*Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace
You, you may say
I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one*

*Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world*

I couldn't help trying to imagine the Olympic games without flags, without national teams, without anthems, without national colours worn by the competitors. The original Greeks games were competed naked – the athletes only wore their humanity.

This year saw an increase in the celebration of national identity as winning competitors were routinely draped in their national flags and feted by their own national media. The medal table became a badge of pride or disgrace: the Chinese were clearly trying to displace the Americans. The Australians are about to have an inquiry into their poor return of medals: Britain's beating of France and Germany has been a cause for national rejoicing.

Then there's that verse about greed. At the end of his triumph in the 5000 metres Mohamed Farah's wife Tania gave him a Union Jack with the slogan *Fly Mo* emblazoned across it. The officials were immediately alarmed, as was Mo. The famous maker of lawnmowers was presumably not an official sponsor of the games. If he paraded that flag could the organizers even punish him by depriving him of that hard-earned and splendidly won gold medal? The flag was neatly rolled back up and secreted away in crest-fallen Tania's bag. Imagine the Olympic Games without Coca-Cola, Lloyd's Bank and all the other corporations which had used it to promote their companies.

It was easy for me to point the finger. But what of the reference in the song to religion? Of course many of us would subscribe to Bonhoeffer's creed of religionless Christianity. We might say that Jesus attacked religion at least as fiercely as John Lennon. But I suspect Lennon was getting at us: after all he was bigger than Jesus. It is, of course, true that many wars have been fought in the name of God as well as country. Vicious violence has been and is still being meted out by rival sects and groupings even within the same religion, and not always as a cover for greed or pride. Is an organisation such as the "Baptist Peace Fellowship" therefore not only unnecessary but pernicious? Why not just belong to "Fellowship of Reconciliation"? How many of us are primarily Baptist anyway? Many of our members feel more at home in Anglican, URC or even Roman

Catholic circles as we do within many of our Baptist churches and assemblies. Are we not ultimately hoping for a church in which titles like Baptist and Lutheran become anachronisms?

I would maintain with vigour that, despite Lennon's desire for a world without religion, it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that calls me to be a peacemaker, and the gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers me to engage in the task. That is not to say that others from other faiths or of no faith cannot be peacemakers: it is simply to admit that for me the yen to follow the growing bandwagons of commercialism, nationalism and greed which so threaten the ideals even of the Olympic movement would be too powerful without the inspiration of Christ to challenge it. And while denominations remain we need to have a voice within them to speak the authentic gospel of non-violence lest even the Christian faith should lapse once more into jingoism that shames the Christ we follow.

There was a dispiriting moment in the splendid opening ceremony to the games, which reminded me of the size of the work to be done. Eight splendid peacemakers including Nobel peace prize winners and Doreen Lawrence and Daniel Barenboim paraded the Olympic flag to the foot of the Tor. But they did not carry it to the flagpole and unfurl it into the night sky: that task was entrusted to members of the armed forces. Was there ever such a powerful comment on our modern world? For all that our world honours the peacemakers, when the crucial moment comes it is the military in whom it puts its ultimate trust. The need for the coming of the Prince of Peace is greater than ever.

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the warhorses from Jerusalem,
and the battle bow will be broken.
He will proclaim peace to the nations.*

Rev'd Robert Gardiner (President)

SPREAD THE WORD!

Enclosed with this mailing is a copy of our new membership leaflet. It would be very good if each of you could pass this onto a friend, someone at your church, someone you think has sympathy with the aims of the BPF. Use it as a way to start a conversation about peace. Coming up to Remembrance Sunday may give you the ideal opening. How wonderful if the membership of the BPF were to increase and for our message to reach out further into the Baptist community.

AN EVENING WITH JOHN DEAR

John Dear, a Jesuit who has been executive director of the FoR in USA, spoke at Greenbelt 2012 on the story of Lazarus as the archetype for the whole of humanity held in the embrace of death – i.e. locked into the tomb of violence. Priests and disciples could not release Lazarus for true living – only Jesus. At a meeting in London hosted by the Catholic Worker Movement John took a rather different theme. He talked about his experiences of direct actions , 75 arrests for protests against war – including a trespass with 14 others at the Creech Air Base in New Mexico from whence the deadly drones flying above the villages of Afghanistan are controlled. The protesters were arrested and at the court hearing the defendants were forbidden to mention anything about the base, its name, its site or its purpose. Their barrister argued that trespass would be acceptable if children were trapped in a burning building. They were later released. John urges us all to enter the story of the peace-making Jesus in whatever way we can.

IT'S POPPY TIME AGAIN

*In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row . . .*

That poem, written on a battlefield in France in 1915 during the First World War, led to the wearing of red poppies in memory of those who died during those awful four years of carnage. It was claimed to be a war to end all wars, but instead led on to further conflicts, notably the 1939-45 War. And so the red poppy, first sold in Britain in 1921, has gone on to be one way of remembering the military victims of all our wars.

In 1933 the Women's Co-operative Guild produced the white poppy as a commitment to non-violent peace-making in a world that was preparing itself more and more for even more brutal warfare. They believed that conflicts should be resolved without violence and with justice. The Peace Pledge Union produces white poppies nowadays, from whom they can be bought singly or more cheaply in packs of 25 or 100: PPU, 1 Peace Passage, London N7 0BT / 0207 424 9444 / www.ppu.org.uk. The website may lead to the address of an outlet for white poppies near you.

Some of us wear both red and white poppies together on Remembrance Day. We do not wear the red one with pride, as the British Legion has bidden us to do, but with deep sorrow that the destruction and killing caused by war have been part of our nation's story in the world. And don't let us forget that for decades now the vast majority of the casualties in modern warfare are civilians, including children and old folk. The TV channels make it apparently compulsory for all participants, especially presenters & newscasters, to wear a red poppy. It takes courage to wear a white one for non-violent peace-making. But let's do it in our churches this year.

Alan Betteridge



Pray for the peace of Jerusalem

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.....

the city of God,
where tribes go up
and the great faiths meet
and the children of Abraham
co-exist in fear;



Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.....

where young Palestinians hurl their stones
young Israelis fire their bullets
and the mothers of them both
bury their dead;

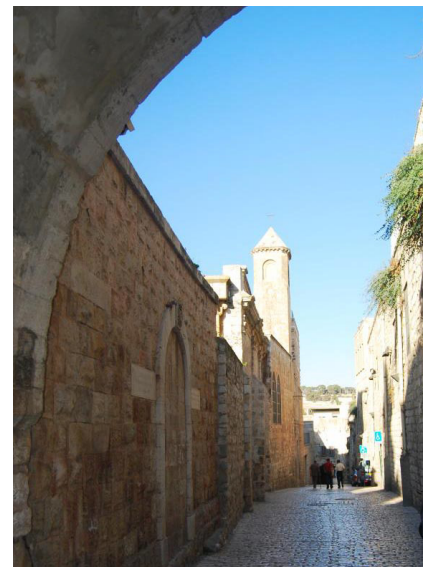


Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.....

for the Jew beseeching at the wailing wall,
for the Muslim bowing in the Al Aksa Mosque
for the Christian walking the narrow uphill way
of the Via Dolorosa;

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.....

Father of Abraham,
have mercy upon your warring children
Jew, Muslim and Christian;
and in your mercy reveal to us
those hidden things that make for peace;
that the night may end
and the day dawn that leads
to the New Jerusalem,
that city which is your gift to all people where
love transcends divisions,
forgiveness destroys barriers,
mercy heals wounds,
and peace finally triumphs,
because you are God.



We ask it in the name of the crucified and risen One, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Patrick Woodhouse (Canon Precentor of Wells Cathedral)

Taken from the book 'With you is the well of life' (subtitled 'Prayers from the depths of the heart'), published by Kevin Mayhew ISBN 1-84417-380-1

Drones: Targeted Killing is only Part of the Problem

The US use of drones for targeted killing has rightly received a lot of media attention over the past few months. Since the beginning of 2012 the US has stepped up its drone assassination programme in Yemen, while continuing to launch drone strikes in Pakistan despite repeated pleas from the Pakistan authorities to stop. Kill lists and extrajudicial killing of suspects, once seen as completely unacceptable to the global community (and to the vast majority, still does) now seems to have become almost a matter of routine for the US and its President.

Journalists as well as commentators – and now churches – have rightly been investigating and criticising this particular use of drones, and in both the US and the UK legal challenges are underway to stop further attacks and to reveal more detail about the process. But it is important to remember that targeted killing is not the only problem with unmanned drones.

A few weeks ago I took part in an online discussion about the use of drones hosted by the Canadian think tank CIC. Author and drone expert, Peter Singer, and Oxford Professor of Ethics and Law, Jennifer Walsh, argued that there was no particular problem with drones *per se*. They argued (as most mainstream commentators do) that it is not the development and use of remote armed technology that is the problem, but rather the fact that it is being used outside ‘official’ armed conflicts to undertake targeted killing. Just to be very clear, the use of drones to undertake assassinations far away from any battlefield is a very serious problem which must be investigated and challenged.

But it is not just the fact that drones have enabled the expansion of targeted killing. The problem with drones goes deeper than that. To put it simply, armed unmanned technology and the concept of ‘remote war’ alters the balance of options available to our political and military leaders in favour of a military response. Armed drones are making the political cost of military intervention much lower than it had previously been.

Before the advent of armed drones (and particularly since the Vietnam war) public antipathy towards risking troops’ lives in foreign wars has meant the balance of the options available to our leaders weighed more on the side of political rather than military intervention (with notable exceptions of course).

Now however, the scales have shifted in the opposite direction and drones enable our political leaders to intervene militarily overseas by launching remote attacks at great distances with no risk to their own forces. Although some argue that it has been possible to launch attacks at great distances for many years by using cruise missiles for example, it is the ability of the drone to sit and loiter over towns and compounds for many hours and days rather than the ‘one-off shot’ of a cruise missile that makes a crucial difference.

While it is still very early in the drone wars era, the fact that the US used unmanned drones to launch attacks in six different countries during 2011 – Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Libya – shows how much easier it now is to undertake military interventions. In addition, this year there has also been US airstrikes in Mali and the Philippines although it has yet to be confirmed that these were carried out by US drones.

On top of this, is the concern that drones may also make it much easier to launch attacks within particular theatres of war. According to The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ) there have been around 330 US drone strikes in Pakistan and around 40 drone strikes in Yemen. Though the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq are the first ‘official’ wars in which armed drones have been used in a sustained and comprehensive way, there is as yet no public analysis of the impact of unmanned drones in these conflicts.

Given that the US has ten times the number of Britain’s five armed Reaper drones in Afghanistan – and Britain’s drones have launched over 250 drone strikes – it is quite possible that there have been over 2,000 drone strikes in Afghanistan (although this is simply a guess).

Due to the secrecy surrounding the use of armed drones it is difficult at this stage to say for definite that the ‘risk free’ nature of drone is actually increasing the frequency of attacks. However an official US military report into an attack in February 2010 which resulted in the deaths of a number of Afghan civilians found that the drone pilots in Creech “had a propensity/bias for kinetic operations”.

We know that drones are loitering over particular areas, towns and compounds for hours and days at a time looking for “targets of opportunity” and this is of serious concern. Laura Arbour, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and currently chief of the International Crisis Group said about the growing use of unmanned drones recently “The most serious concern is the secrecy which surrounds these operations, added to the fact that they are mostly deployed in isolated, inaccessible areas, which makes it virtually impossible to determine whether they are used in compliance with the laws of war.”

While it is right and important that there is growing condemnation of the use of drones for targeted killing, we need also to be challenging the growing use of unmanned weapons technology itself. No doubt some will respond with the cliché that ‘guns don’t kill people, people kill people’. And like most clichés there is a rather grim element of truth to that. And others will say also that drones are not intrinsically bad like cluster bombs or anti-personnel landmines as they can be used in other ways than for killing. Nevertheless armed drones by their nature and the way they are designed to be used, simply makes the world a more dangerous place.

Chris Cole

For more information about drones see www.dronewars.net
and www.dronecampaignnetwork.org.uk

The Glorious Art of Peace - from the Iliad to Iraq

John Gittings, Oxford University Press, 2012

ISBN 978-0-19-957576-3 304 pages with 12 plates. £18.99

When you see a book with this title you feel that as peacenik you ought to get a copy to read. Armed with some tokens I did just that. It is a scholarly work with 38 pages of notes, 3 of Select Bibliography before a 20 page index.

However, the scholarship is initially well hidden in the writing and it is a most informative book. The thesis is that the writings of war such as Machivelli have triumphed over the writings of peace such as Erasmus. The appeal to patriotism has invariably been used to drown the arguments for peace.

In this book Gittings reminds us how strongly and how frequently the call for peace and negotiated solutions has been made over the centuries. The text is well provided with apt quotations. It is a book that often brings a feeling of sadness/melancholy as you follow his analysis of the ways that armed force has become the resort of so many 'leaders'. One recalls how our present prime minister was able to welcome Aung San Suu Kyi as a heroine of peaceful struggle in Burma as he allocated funds for the renewal of Trident.

This review is an attempt to summarise a book that is itself a summary - condensing 3000 years into 240 pages. Perhaps I'll concentrate on his concluding chapter where he attempts to throw a positive light and analyses the most encouraging outcomes of recent years. He lists:

- 1) The appreciation of the dreadful reality of war in spite of government diversionary appeals to heroism.
- 2) The continuing existence of the UN in spite of failures and the ignored abilities of its many agencies to do good work quietly.
- 3) The growth in stature of International courts in spite of the reluctance of the USA to take a full part in them.
- 4) The rise of popular anti-war movements and the application of nonviolent techniques by civilian populations.
- 5) The coming of academic studies of peacemaking.
- 6) The realisation that military spending and its use of resources is incompatible with the health of our planet.
- 7) That we are still here!

Gittings then enumerates his suggestions for the future and it is here that a Christian pacifist may part company with his secular emphasis although we would agree that advocates of peace need to be heard as often as the advocates of war (who tend to shout louder!). *Norman Kember*

P.S. When great aunt Jemima leaves you a considerable legacy you might buy the four volume Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace. It's a snip at £300.

