

Peggy Faw Gish, *Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013.

In *Walking Through Fire*, Peggy Faw Gish recounts her experience of living among and working with Iraqi citizens under the umbrella of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) from the summer of 2004 until the summer of 2011. It is a follow-up to her first book, *Iraq: A Journey of Hope and Peace* (Harrisonburg/Waterloo: Herald Press, 2004). Gish identifies herself as a “mother, grandmother, community mediator, and a member of the Church of the Brethren,” and this initial description sets the stage for the care and love obvious in this present book, and indicates the framework guiding her interpretation of her experience.

The author offers numerous stories about her encounters with Iraqis and their perspectives as told to her during the occupation of Iraq by American military troops. In particular, she describes living conditions within a war zone and the daily emotional struggles of citizens attempting to persevere. Within these stories she shares her personal frustrations and sorrows in trying to minister to those around her. Her pacifistic, religious commitment is readily apparent.

Gish emphasizes that the CPT's political role in Iraq was one of solidarity with war victims and as a third-party witness to the power structures. This dual role of Christian ministry accompanied with physical witness is a form of nonviolent resistance particular to Anabaptists of the 21st-century (among others), but is reminiscent of nonviolent solidarity during the civil rights movement and in the Nazi era. The CPT presence includes myth-busting when it comes to war stories, according to Gish. She attempts to be a different voice than that of the “win or lose” mentality often accompanying military actions.

The nagging question arising from Gish's work comes from the strong anti-military view that accompanies the Anabaptist tradition. Throughout the book Gish blames the war machine and American intervention for creating an unlivable and dangerous situation for Iraqi citizens, which is an accurate evaluation from the stories she tells. However, she also recounts how many Iraqi citizens blame Western countries for not doing enough and for not becoming more involved in cases of human rights violations. This leads to questions as to how any outside influence could have occurred in Iraq during Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, and, if intervention does not occur, how guilty

countries are for not intervening.

Gish raises important questions about human rights and the responsibility to protect, but does not offer genuine answers. In part this is because her focus is on the current situation and does not delve into long-standing issues resulting from a colonization mentality still extant within and around formerly colonized countries.

This lack also highlights a larger problem. There is a dire need for more work within Anabaptist theology to consider a rigorous justice theology for the global level. Just as a peace theology developed as a cultural and contextual result of faith during the changing world of Dirk Willems's time, justice is begging for Anabaptist theology to form a Christian response to international violence during our time. If war and occupation are not the answer to human violation, what are the answers? How does the Anabaptist community speak justice from a theological perspective to the global power machines that are called government? Does our Anabaptist history of "refusing to pass judgments in worldly disputes," as stated in *The Schleithem Confession*, violate the Christian ethic of empathy for victims? Is physical witness enough? Continuing globalization puts pressure on our previous theology to reformulate, from a peace witness, our conversation with the world and the prevailing understanding of justice.

Gish concedes that she does not have the answers to this problem. However, she makes a good point that individual practitioners must bring themselves to the place where their gifts can be used to minister and witness to events oppressing the weak. She also shows that emotional awareness and honesty are necessities in any approach. While her anger at governmental and impersonal systems may have caused her to miss the issues of colonization on a large scale, she does indicate that CPT participants are acutely aware of colonization in their own encounters. They take precautions against coming in as another colonizer by assessing their own reactions and their openness to being ministers to victims of violence, rather than overseers.

Gish offers a sensitive, thorough account that brings personal stories to the forefront while addressing issues of peace and war important to Anabaptist Christians. Her book is not only a valuable addition to Anabaptist theology, but a vigorous testimony for laypersons and peace practitioners.

*Annette Mosher*, Assistant Professor of Ethics, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands