# Book Reviews

Donald B. Kraybill and Linda Gehman Peachey, editors, *Where was God on Sept. 11? Seeds of Faith and Hope*. Scottdale, PA & Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2002.

As a pastor I felt almost overwhelmed trying to find ways to help our congregation respond meaningfully to the events of Sept. 11, 2001. Even in Canada we felt that we could not "worship as normal." Feelings ran all over the map. People did not want shallow clichés. But neither were they ready immediately for a more in-depth analysis. Some wanted only to grieve; some wanted to express their anger and their fear. Some wanted to examine the root causes of the attacks. Some felt very angry when U.S. foreign policies were included in these root causes — "You are blaming the victims." I can only imagine that my colleagues in the United States faced all these issues and feelings and people in a far more intense way.

Then, along came *Where was God on Sept. 11? Seeds of Faith and Hope*. The book's scope is wide. It gives voice both to a spectrum of theological longings and personal feelings, and to some of the complex currents and counter-currents that were overwhelming me in September. Initially I was dissatisfied as I started reading. I had hoped for a more systematic treatment of theological, Biblical, and political perspectives. What I was reading were pieces, wonderful pieces but pieces none-the-less. Many pieces, almost too many. Most, but not all, were by Mennonites and North Americans. Most were too short for what I craved.

But as the pieces accumulated, I was drawn in emotionally as well as intellectually. And there did emerge a direction, a point of view, a "system," which in the end felt like it had a lot of depth after all. This direction is well described by the editors: "Many people, understandably, swelled with anger and rage. Some hungered for retaliation; others were paralyzed with fear. These essays offer a third track, another way of responding, a search for nonviolent alternatives in the midst of rage and despair" (11). The many voices rising in these essays are not uniform or consistent, but they do clearly speak for this third track. Read together, they become powerful.

The book is organized around seven chapters. 1) God Amid the Terror? 2) Jesus and the Way of Peace, 3) Revenge, Justice, or Forgiveness? 4) Will Violence Bring Peace? 5)Voices from Our Global Family, 6) Citizens of Two Kingdoms, and 7) Another Way of Responding. Some seventy writers search in different ways and for different angles of God's non-violent voice.

Along the way I was gripped by a number of the stories told and the images developed. One question that stays with me was posed by Nancy Good Sider: "Which wolf do we feed?" Sider tells the story of a Native American grandfather talking to his grandson. "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, gentle, compassionate one." "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?" asked the grandson. "The one I feed," replied his grandfather.

This book helps feed the "peace" wolf in us. It does so in a compelling, powerful way.

*Gary Harder*, Pastor, Toronto United Mennonite Church, Toronto, ON

Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century Of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Peter Ackerman, an authority on nonviolent action, and Jack DuVall, a veteran writer, offer here a compassionate and triumphant review of popular movements of the past century that used nonviolent action to overthrow dictators, obstruct military invaders, and secure human rights in country after country. This long overdue book explores not the wars of one nation against another, nor even of a nation against itself, but rather the warfare of the ruling elite against those who comprise the vital backbone and even rightful center of a society. In *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*, this approach to social and political change is placed front and center, exemplifying the carefully crafted and excellently executed successful methods utilized to combat the despotic ruling elite. The world-wide spread of democracy in the twentieth century, documentary writers Ackerman and DuVall maintain, "would not have come to pass without the power of ordinary people who defied oppressive

rulers not by the force of arms, but by nonviolent action"(6).

*A Force More Powerful* is about popular movements battling entrenched regimes or military forces with weapons very different from guns and bullets. In many of the conflicts covered in this volume, strikes, boycotts, or other disruptive actions were used as sanctions, as aggressive measures to constrain or punish opponents and to win concessions. Protests such as petitions, parades, walkouts, and demonstrations roused public support for the resisters. Forms of non-cooperation such as prohibitions, resignations, and civil disobedience helped subvert the operations of government. And direct intervention such as sit-ins, nonviolent sabotage, and blockades frustrated many rulers' will to subjugate the people.

By way of example, Ackerman and DuVall articulate these successful methods — from the collapse of the Argentine military regime following peaceful protests by the mothers of men and women who had been murdered by the secret police; the eventual undermining of the Polish Communist regime by the nonviolent Solidarity labor movement; the refusal of the Danish people to comply with the laws of their Nazi occupiers during World War II; and the exemplary work done in India (and earlier, in South Africa) by Mohandas Ghandi, who took great pains to emphasize that nonviolence does not imply passivity. In all, twelve of the past century's most exhilarating cases are extensively documented, from the "The People's Strike" of 1905 in Russia to the democratic tide engulfing Eastern Europe, China, and Mongolia. Current events in Burma, Serbia, and Kosovo are further evinced to highlight today's inspiring climate of change.

Ackerman and DuVall effectively exhibit that the greatest misconception pertaining to conflict is that violence is always the ultimate form of power and that no other method of advancing a just cause or defeating injustice can surprise it. Yet, Russians, Indians, Poles, Danes, Salvadorans, African-Americans, Chileans, South Africans and many others have proven that one side's choices in a conflict are not foreclosed by the other side's use of violence, and that other, nonviolent measures can be a force more powerful(8). This is perhaps best exemplified by the work of Ghandi, who for decades dedicated his life to the absolute enfranchisement of all Indian people. For him, nonviolent resistance was more than the product of belief. He conceived of it as a kind of

science, with laws to be applied, yielding power that was predictable(5).

*A Force More Powerful* masterfully correlates past nonviolent movements across space and time. Nationalist leader Ghandi was inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1905; Martin Luther King, Jr., and other African-American leaders travelled to India to study Ghandi's tactics; and when Chileans organized against the dictatorship of General Pinochet in the 1980s, they were heavily influenced by Richard Attenborough's motion picture *Ghandi*.

Rather unfortunately, however, the authors fail to include, or even take note of, movements where peaceful action was also accompanied by civilian violence. In case examples such as Chile, South Africa, and the American civil rights movement, mention of violent activity is kept to an extreme minimum, suggesting that aggressive, physical revolt was non-existent or at the very least ineffectual on the eventual outcome. This is increasingly complicated in the case of the (first) Intifada, in 1987-88: descriptions of events in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alternate between pacifistic activities and armed struggle. Well-organized and valuable methods of defiance such as protests, strikes, non-cooperation, and a improvised shift in home economy are contrasted by "stone throwing," Molotov cocktails, and other means of "limited violence"(409). Nevertheless, most accounts as retold through the authors' interpretations are fair and accurate, without the spin doctoring often accompanying comparable studies.

*A Force More Powerful* is a requisite for any political and social activist, or even for a casual reader interested in such issues. This contextual book provides a sampling of how to achieve success against the greatest of odds; it also provides stimulus and optimism for people around the world who continue to persist in their own struggles for self-determination and a minimum standard of human rights. Readers intrigued by the concepts discussed by Ackerman and DuVall would also be wise to view their supplementary six-part PBS series of the same name.

*Howard Waserman*, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, ON

James C. Juhnke and Carol M. Hunter, *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History.* Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2001; co-published with Herald Press.

As its authors point out, "This book is an invitation to a fresh look at United States history from the viewpoint of peace values" (269). They recount in considerable detail the violence which has characterized US history, including not only well-known facts but also numerous lesser-known episodes and statistics. They challenge the prevailing self-image of Americans, who see themselves as using violence for redemptive purposes — gaining "freedom," establishing democracy and peace, and overcoming injustice, crime, and even violence itself. US reliance on violence has tended to lead to the further glorification and use of violence, bringing in the present highly-militarized political system, which subverts democracy, justice, community, care for the environment, and prospects for a viable world order.

Nevertheless, with every expression of violence in US history, voices have spoken out clearly against violence, arguing for peaceful alternatives and often taking vigorous nonviolent actions. The authors document this alternative, largely overlooked, history, urging it be given a prominent place in American consciousness. Well before the War for Independence, for example, Americans were employing creative, nonviolent means of protest and defiance against British oppression that could well have succeeded without any need for war, thereby establishing a radically different precedent for American self-understanding.

Unfortunately, the European settlers arrived in North America with strong proclivities for violence, which were soon expressed in conflict with each other and with native peoples, and in the beginnings of slavery. Americans generally understand now that native peoples were not the violent savages they were long depicted to be, but that the colonists' treachery and violence against them provoked counter-violence. But few know about the powerful peacemaking traditions of the native peoples, which Juhnke and Hunter describe and see as crucial to these peoples' ability to survive, thrive increasingly in our day, and equip them with resources that could richly contribute to the type of community life we need.

The decades-long struggle by abolitionists to overcome slavery is rather well known, although access to details provided by the authors are useful. Not so familiar are the views of those who opposed resorting to the Civil War. Quite unfamiliar is the authors' argument that conflicts between North and South, including those about slavery, might have been overcome gradually without this extremely violent, destructive war. The bitterness it engendered was expressed in the violence of Reconstruction, and in the exploitive, brutal institutions of segregation which were "as violent and vengeful as the old system of slavery" (135). The nonviolent transformation of relations between blacks and whites by the civil rights movement, however, brought into effective reality a highly creative alternative strain of nonviolence in American history. The authors note that the most potent expressions of nonviolence come from those who have experienced most repression — native peoples, blacks, labour, and women.

Juhnke and Hunter argue that, when Woodrow Wilson led the US into World War I, justifying it as the way to achieve such idealistic goals as making the world safe for democracy, he failed "because he chose to join in using means which contradicted his ends" (195). The war fostered a potent, vengeful spirit which prevented the establishment of an effective League of Nations, and sowed the seeds for the most destructive war yet — World War II. The authors challenge the prevailing notion that this was the "Good War." In opposing the evils of the Fascist and Nazi regimes, along with Japanese imperialism, the US and its allies participated in saturation bombing of civilian populations. The unnecessary, tragic use of atomic bombs on Japan promoted the nuclear arms race which, even after the Cold War, threatens the entire world with annihilation.

This book is a provocative, informative alternative to conventional histories of the US — a much needed antidote to American illusions about the redemptive power of violence. It provides rich detail in extensive endnotes but the sparse index unfortunately fails to do justice to the authors' thorough documentation. Nevertheless, this volume is a valuable resource for advocates of nonviolence.

*George Crowell*, Windsor, ON

Lee Griffith, *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God*. Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2002.

Griffith's book is timely, to understate the matter. Written in large measure before the attacks of "9/11" in response to the bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998, it required, sadly, very little adaptation to fit the post-9/11 event, one which presumably "changed our world forever."

With a nod to Karl Barth, who insisted Christians should read the Bible and the newspaper together, Griffith adds to them a third item — history. Each of his five chapters is thus organized around a dialogue between "newspaper," church history, and Bible, roughly in that order. Griffith provides a remarkably elegant, profound, and moving exploration of the meaning and experience of terror and its underpinnings as he guides readers through contemporary places of violence (e.g., Vietnam, Rwanda, Iraq, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Palestine, the militia movement in the US), history (e.g., the French Revolution, the origins of anti-Semitism, the abolitionist movement in the US, great peacemakers such as Leo Tolstoy, Dorothy Day, and Desmond Tutu), and the Bible (e.g., Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and, fittingly, if to many surprisingly, Revelation). The chapter titles give a hint of the range of topics examined: The Meaning of Terror, Terror and the Death of Community, The Ethics of Terrorism, The Terror of God, and Beyond Terror and Counterterror.

Griffith claims not to be an expert (xiv), but he is an expert wordsmith, often finding startling ways of capturing the heart of an issue, providing pleasure in the reading even as he forces a deep consideration or reconsideration of issues related to terrorism. Who other than an expert could successfully bring together Bonhoeffer, Simone Weil, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Huck Finn in a mold-shattering discussion of hell as a realm God invades with the terror of his love? He is an expert at engaged analysis and reflection, fuelled by a prophet's passionate hope-filled protest, a practitioner's keen sense of reality, and a scholar's sharp gift of discernment and analysis.

At the heart of Griffith's study are several key issues: all terror is finally of the same species, whether perpetrated by "terrorists" or by states practicing "counterterror." All terrorism is rooted in a deadly ethical dualism which demonizes the other while masking "our" terror as "just war." Griffith brilliantly

unmasks the hypocrisy of states whose "freedom fighters" become "terrorists" when "we" become the target, who feign horror at terrorism while continuing to stockpile weapons of mass destruction as a safeguard against "rogue states." God's judgment falls on all such violence. But, and this is a central feature of Griffith's book, judgment must never itself be identified with violence, whether terror or war. God's "terror" comes to fullest expression in a persistent love that pursues the enemy to hell in the interests of reconciliation. "This is the terror of God from which we cannot hide because, in Jesus, God invades not only the earth but hell itself. God is the one who decides to go to hell. Hallelujah and amen" (185). Nowhere is such love clearer than in the "terror" of resurrection, which spells the death of death. "Resurrection deprives Empire of its only power, the power of death. [...] It is the slaughtered Lamb who conquers. It is this resurrection terror of God that marks the imminent demise of earthly terror" (214).

With a deliberately monotonous drumbeat, the Postscript lists ways in which the world did *not* change on 9/11: the ideological and culturally entrenched reflexes which feed the spiral of violence are not only still in place but have only grown more predictable; the innocent still bear the brunt of terror and counterterror; now, more than ever, it's "us" versus "them;" terrorists and counterterrorists still learn from each other, eventually becoming indistinguishable in their clutching dance of death; and there is no change in the prevalence of seeing God as a tribal deity ("our" God), visiting vengeance on "them" — the "evil ones" (271-76).

Griffith's prophetic protest does not end there. Despair does not have the last word. Hope does. But like the biblical prophets he listens to so well, Griffith knows that hope is tethered not to human progress, to yet another liberal strategy for betterment through education, but to the God who has visited us in the slaughtered and resurrected lamb, to the God who "marks" the first terrorist Cain not for death, but for life (276), to the God who is present with us still in the faithful "remnant" of peace witnesses. "Take hope," are thus fittingly the two last words in the book (278).

This profound book amply rewards repeated readings. I am less sure than Griffith that we can know the full shape of God's sovereignty in this world wracked by violence and terror, that we can know that violence is never in some mysterious sense a feature of God's judgment in the world. It is the

Bible Griffith reads so attentively that makes me cautious. But Griffith's book makes me want to read the Bible yet again in its light. I am less sure than Griffith that the meaning of God's "terror" is exhausted by Easter. But Griffith is more right than wrong on that point, that God's "terror" must finally be nothing other than a frontal assault on all terror, all violence, all despoiling of the earth and its vulnerable inhabitants, callous participants or not. And "terror" it is to those who have made their pact with death. Griffith has been gripped deeply by the persistent, suffering, and powerfully transforming love of God, and that makes him an important partner in the search for a biblical peace theology. Lee Griffith and his book are one part of the reason we can "take hope."

*Tom Yoder Neufeld*, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, ON