

Will we blame God for not intervening in our plight?

The churches of Britain are empty. This is not something new. Most of the people of England stopped going to church during World War II, and they have not gone back.

When the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London was in this country some years ago, I asked him about this. He ventured the opinion that the last two world wars had done a good deal to bring on the church crisis in England. He said that the English people felt that the horror of those wars has fallen on them undeserved.

England had lived a good life, so to speak, as a nation. As far as most of its citizens were concerned, they had done nothing to warrant the catastrophe that befell them twice in a single generation. It seemed unfair.

And so, many of the English lost, if not their faith in God, at least their interest in the church.

They have never regained it.

If casualties continue to run high in our nation's war on terrorism, will the people who flocked to services of remembrance following the destruction at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11 give up their faith and blame God for not intervening in our plight? Will America become like England?

Whenever good people suffer, it raises doubts in their minds about God. It isn't only the great physical sufferings which afflict so many that make us doubt how almighty and loving God is. When disappointment, failure and loneliness come, we are apt to lose faith in God.

Can we say that such adversities are part of God's plan for our world? The answer is no — if his plan for us is that we should be happy and comfortable all the time and live long and pros-



george
plagenz

• saints & sinners

perous lives.

But suppose we are here to build our characters. That puts a different face on trouble and misfortune. Perhaps God is interested in what we become, in what we make of ourselves.

If this is God's plan for us, then adversity may be a part of it. Think of all the things that make a man a man and a woman a woman, things such as courage, faith, sacrifice and love. Can you

imagine what would happen to those things if we lived in a world with no grief, disappointment, pain or loneliness?

Ask yourself whether this is the best of all possible worlds. You may decide that it isn't. But then ask yourself another question: Is this the best of all possible worlds for the growth of the human soul?

Maude Petre, the English writer, said in her autobiography that the question of suffering is one on which she finds the greatest difference between the present generation and her own.

"In our upbringing," she says, "suffering was something sacred. We were brought up to be soldiers of Christ and soldiers reckon not of scars. Our life was to be one of achievement but achievement through effort — and the highest effort implies suffering.

"I have no doubt that we felt pain and avoided it as much as people do now, but all the same we regarded it as a lawful and honorable factor in life."

She closes her remarks with a memorable line.

"As I went on in years," she writes, "I came to see that few people were worth much until they had suffered."

The late Dean Chester Emerson, an Episcopal clergyman, said this prayer each night when he went to bed: "O God, do with me whatever you want, only no matter what befalls me, let me feel your arm across my shoulder."

That would be a good prayer to sustain us as our country faces an uncertain and dangerous future.

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America's 'peace churches' struggling with how to react to terrorism

By Richard N. Ostling

AP Religion Writer

America's "peace churches," with some 1 million members, are restating their pacifist beliefs but also struggling with how they and the nation should react to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Pacifists say they are confronting questions of citizenship that have been dormant for decades. The current conflict is "much more complicated" than previous ones, says a pacifist scholar, Albert N. Keim.

"These people are killing people in a particularly dreadful way. We pacifists know how to behave in war, but we're still learning how to react to terrorism. We're finding it very, very difficult," said Keim, a retired history professor at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

Retha McCutchen, national general secretary of the Friends United Meet-

ing, better known as the Quakers, describes what her fellow believers have been experiencing during the extraordinary days since the attacks: "Grief. Some fear. Anger, of course, and concerns for future loss of life."

Like millions, they look for ways to assist relief efforts and console the suffering, and they worry about discrimination against Arab-Americans.

Unlike millions, they hear a renewed call to oppose war. This week the Quakers urged members to recall the words of their 17th century founder, George Fox: "The Spirit of Christ ... will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons."

Besides Quakers, the pacifist or "peace church" tradition is upheld by Mennonites, Amish and various Brethren groups, among others. All told, there are more than a hundred such denominations in the United States with

a following of 1 million people. Though not considered strict pacifists, the 862,000 Seventh-day Adventists are asked never to bear arms, and are allowed to take noncombatant jobs if they join the military.

The religious reasoning of the peace churches is straightforward.

"We believe Jesus meant what he said about loving our enemies," explains Bruce Birchard, general secretary of the Philadelphia-based Friends General Conference.

True, there's lots of warmaking in the Bible, but "we tend to interpret the Old Testament through the eyes of the New Testament, and the New Testament through the words of Jesus," says Ron Byler of Elkhart, Ind., associate executive director of the Mennonite Church USA.

There are individual pacifists in mainstream Christian bodies, and the

peace churches are pleased at the dovish pronouncements coming from those quarters.

Top officials from some denominations in the National Council of Churches have joined several prominent Catholics, Jews and Muslims in this plea to the U.S. government: "We must not, out of anger and vengeance, indiscriminately retaliate in ways that bring on even more loss of innocent life."

That's close to what the pacifist churches have been saying. If America now carries out "widespread killing of innocent civilians," asks Birchard, "what distinguishes us from the terrorists?"

"Violent reactions to violence only produce more violence. It's difficult to understand why more people don't see that," Byler laments.

John A. Lapp, retired executive di-

rector of the Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pa., worries about the international impact of U.S. action. "The United States will be identified as a quote Christian unquote power and that becomes part of the Christian burden in the world everywhere."

Christian pacifists have been a distinct minority element in America's religious mix since colonial times. They've sometimes suffered for their faith. During World War I, men who refused compulsory military service were usually imprisoned and several died from mistreatment while in custody.

In 1935 the Brethren, Friends and Mennonites formed an alliance that eventually convinced the government to adopt a more sympathetic policy.

Thus, during World War II, Christian conscientious objectors were allowed to forsake military service and do con-

servation work with the Civilian Public Service. Some were "smoke jumpers" who parachuted in to fight forest fires. Later in the war, many helped staff mental hospitals.

When the military draft was reinstated between 1951 and 1973, the Selective Service was even more accommodating, allowing pacifists to fulfill their duty by serving with private humanitarian agencies.

Resumption of the draft would be a pressing matter for all peace churches. But even without it, many Mennonites, Brethren and Amish will confront debates about citizenship they haven't seen since World War II.

For instance: Is it permissible to fly the flag? To salute the flag? To sing the national anthem or? Such issues had little pertinence during Korean and Vietnam wars, when national opinion was divided.

Bible Baptist Church

Pastor: Don Crutcher
Fifth & Broadway
899-7368

Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am
Worship Service: 10 am
Evening Service: 6:30 pm
Wednesday: Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

Calvary Gospel Church

Pastor: Rev. Steve Rains
Fourth & College • 899-3605
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
Morning Worship: 10:30 am
Evening Worship: 6:30 pm
Wednesday: Family Night: 7 pm
Adult Bible Study and Youth Group
Saturday: Prayer Meeting: 5-7 pm

If you would like to receive a free newsletter, please call the church office.

Church of Christ

401 Caldwell
899-6185

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:45 am
Worship Service: 10:45 am
Evening Service: 6 pm
Wednesday: Bible Study: 7 pm

Church of the Nazarene

Pastor: Matthew Delp
Third & Caldwell
899-2080 or 899-3797

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am
Worship Service: 10:50 am
Evening Service: 6 pm
Wednesday: Evening Service: 7 pm

First Baptist Church

Pastor: Bud Chester
Fifth & Center • 899-3450

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
Morning Worship: 10:30 am
Evening Worship: 6:30 pm
Tuesday: Mens' Prayer Group: 6:00 am
Thursday: Night Bible Study: 7:00 pm

Seventh Day Adventist Church

Pastor: Arlin Cochran • 785-332-2888
Saturday: Sabbath School: 9:30 am
Worship Service: 11 am



First United Methodist Church

First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

Pastor: Loren Strait
Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233

Sunday: Worship Service: 9 am
Activities: Junior High & High School Youth Groups,
Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups,
Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship
Special Notice: Handicap Accessible, Hearing
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First United Methodist Church

1116 Sherman
899-3631

Pastor: Rev. Carol Moore-Ramey
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am
Worship Service: 10:30 am

Sonrise Christian Church

Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398

Minister: Tony Kafka
Youth Minister: Doug Bean
Sunday: Worship Service: 9:30 am
Sunday School: 10:45 am
Wednesday:
Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm
Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

13th & Sherman • 899-6161

Pastor: Scott Grimshaw
Sunday: Sunday School: 8:45 am
Worship Service: 10 am
Wednesday: Confirmation: 6 pm

Kanorado

United Methodist Church

Pastor: Leonard Cox
399-2468

Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am
Worship Service: 10:15 am

Goodland Bible Church

109 Willow Road • 899-6400

Pastor:
Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am
Morning Worship: 11 am
Evening Worship: 6 pm
Wednesday: Call for location

Grace Fellowship Church

104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423

Pastor: Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am
Worship Service: 11 am

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

13th & Center

899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114
Priest: Father Charles Schneider
Deacon: Gretchen Talitha
Adult Forum: Sunday : 8:30 am
Morning Prayer: 9:30 am 1st & 5th Sundays
Holy Eucharist: 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sundays: 9:30
Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470

Sacrament Meeting: 9:30 am
Sunday School: 10:45 am
Priesthood/Relief Society: 11:30 am

Word of Life Foursquare Church

223 E. 10th
899-5250

Pastor: John Coumerilh
Sunday: Worship Celebration &
Kids' Church: 10:30 am

United Methodist Church

Brewster:

Pastor:

Worship Service: 10:45 am CST
Sunday School: 9:45 am CST

Winona:

Minister: Rev. Bob Winters
Worship Service: 9 am CST
Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

Iglesia Del Dios Vivo

La Luz Del Mundo

Spanish Speaking Church

Minister: Esteban Ortiz B.

1601 Texas • 899-5275

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Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm
Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Pastor: Father Daryl Olmstead
307 W. 13th • 899-7205

Sacrament of Reconciliation:
4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment

Mass Schedule:

Saturday: 6 pm
Sunday: 8 am and 9:30 am
Spanish Mass:
1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

Pleasant Home Church

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899-5784

Sunday: Worship Service: 9 am
Sunday School: 10 am
Evening Service: 6 pm

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