

FRIENDS IN SAN ANTONIO

7052 North Vandiver at Eisenhower

May 2011

'American Jesus': When They Say Jesus, Which Jesus Do They Mean?

Stephen Prothero, chairman of the department of religion at Boston University, wrote a cultural history of Jesus as American image and icon. He identified stages:

1. The ponderous metaphysical abstractions of Catholic and Orthodox Christology.
2. The alienating theological architecture of Puritanism, Calvinism's predestination.
3. Thomas Jefferson's Jesus, recast as the Enlightened Sage and shorn of his miracles, resurrection and divinity.
4. Personal redemption from "our friend" Jesus. The nurturing, gentle, humble, passive, willowy "sweet savior" depicted in the lithographs of Currier & Ives.
5. Subsequent movement from theologies of salvation to models for imitation, "a near-and-dear person, fully embodied, with virtues they could imitate, a mind they could understand and qualities they could love."
6. After the Civil War, with Darwinism and modern scientific method, historical consciousness and textual criticism of scripture, most American Christians moved on. They replaced the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone) with *solus Jesus*, despite reactions from fundamentalist Protestants, who insisted on the "strict inerrancy" of the Bible.
7. Christianizing capitalism in the 1920's portrayed Jesus as a kind of spiritually enlightened and morally robust salesman for God.
8. The amiably countercultural hippie-cum-rock-superstar whose personality cult was fostered by the "Jesus freaks" of the 1960's.
9. American markets, politics and philosophy - not least, the perennial pull of pragmatism in all things - have pushed Christianity in the United States into forms and expressions unrecognizable to previous generations of Jesus' followers.

But, for Catholics, "Jesus has been the suffering servant, the compassionate victim and wounded redeemer whose identification with the poor and the forgotten is an act of identity, not charity. Yet the suffering Christ makes few appearances in Mr. Prothero's account. One worries that this Jesus, the Lord of the marginalized and forlorn, may soon become the man nobody knows in 21st-century America."

Abstracted from a review by R. Scott Appleby, *Ecce homo*, January 8, 2004

Somehow the Quaker "image" in 18th century Philadelphia missed out. Between (2) and (3) above came the Quaker vision of Jesus as teacher, God as spirit or Light, and faith in each dependent on personal experience in worship, not on the words of others, even in the

bible. So, George Fox said, of bible learning, “You will say ‘Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of the Light, and hast thou walked in the Light, and when thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?’”

This continues to be the liberal Quaker vision, one of an inward loving spirit.



Personal News

Faith demonstrated weaving to children at the Old Oaks Alpaca Ranch and Fiber Arts Center at Wimberley and Anabel helped at an alpaca shearing, clearing the wool and packing it away. Marian was due to go to Portugal with Global Volunteers in May but a strained ankle prevented it.

At the end of June Ken will be on a panel for Infinite Wisdom Day 2011 of the Sikh Research Institute on “Resistance, Rebellion & Revolution: Exploring a Range of Responses to Social and Political Conflict. This is for its ninth Sidak leadership retreat for Sikh youth from around the world. Last year’s panel considered the question: “How Do We Move from Tolerance to Acceptance?” These questions are suggested for this year’s panel:

- * How do different spiritual beliefs condemn or condone violence?
- * Is it ever right to use violence to uphold the tenets of a belief?
- * How do various belief systems approach resisting unjust laws or social practices?
- * In what ways do we turn to our beliefs when reacting to armed conflict?
- * What differentiates a freedom fighter from a terrorist?
- * How does media coverage affect our perception of religion’s role in war?

To read more about this, go to

<http://www.sikhri.org/download.pdf?id=14172>

Ken’s wisdom is distinctly finite, but no doubt the other panelists will make up for this. What are you involved in? Val is back from her AVP work in central America and Jim S is back in town – we understand he will teach a course on World Hunger. William is now the president of his neighborhood Homeowners Association. By the time you read this Erin and George may have a daughter.

About 12 SA Friends attended SCYM, including three younger Friends. The keynote address was on the theme of Deepening our Experience of the Spirit-led Life. Home Groups considered topics centered on this theme. Workshops studied nonviolence, AFSC’s current plans, the death penalty, imprisonment of women, and others. A minute protesting the treatment of Bradley Manning was approved.

Carol spoke to her daughter Catherine by Skype and found out about a mildly bizarre tradition in England when there’s a big royal wedding. Apparently there are street parties all over, and her town of St. Alban’s has about the most. Later Catherine emailed: “...Called my friend Ginny to confirm the street party details for Friday. She said, ‘You do know, this is basically going to be about sitting around drinking cups of tea with elderly people in the middle of the road?’ Well yeah! Bring it on! Doesn’t get more English than that.”

So Janet and Ken will be sitting in the middle of the road at 4 on that morning, drinking cups of tea and amazing neighbors.

Friends Seminary, Manhattan

We have deeper knowledge of the Quaker school in the news last month. It comes from Ruth: “During the late 1960s and early 1970s, I was the treasurer of the Schools Committee for Friends Seminary and Brooklyn Friends School in New York. The schools had grown over the past century to become large and expensive, with very different styles.

We separated the two financial operations, set up a separate School Committee for each school and turned over much of the financial record-keeping to each school's business manager, with oversight by the School Committee.

Quaker schools provide a quality education for children. Rich folks pay dearly to send their children to a Quaker school, not only do they pay the high tuition, but they contribute generously to the scholarship fund that makes it possible for Friends schools to bring a diverse population of children to the school to ensure a more heterogeneous student body. One of the important jobs of each School Committee is to raise funds for scholarships.

I have past experience with Friends Seminary. Not only is the student population diverse, the teachers are wisely chosen to practice the "peace and justice" philosophy of Friends. Most of the teachers I knew at the two Friends schools in NY were not Quakers, but their understanding of the individual differences among the children and their loving support was evident, in addition to being academically superior. I'm very proud of the results of the dedication and professionalism of the teachers, staff and personnel. Each is a Quaker community. "

Business Meeting

After silence, Meeting for Business commenced with George Fox's query: "You will say 'Christ saith this and the apostles say this', but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of the Light, and hast thou walked in the Light, and when thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?"

After approving last month's minutes, the Nominating Committee's nominations of Jen as Meeting Clerk, George as Recording Clerk, Ken as Treasurer, and Bill as Clerk of Trustees, were accepted, to be seasoned and approved in May. After approval at next month's meeting for business, a meeting of the corporation will be held to approve the appointments of Ken and Bill.

More nominations need to be made soon.

There were no Outreach, M&O, or Treasurer's reports. Not the Treasurer's fault – she handed copies to Ken and he did not find them among his papers. The Grounds committee reported that Tim Grogan has been selected for contractually mowing the Meeting lawn(s). The committee wishes to plant plants that attract butterflies and would welcome suggestions for xeriscape plants.

The Casa Committee is waiting on a report by a structural engineer so as to determine what needs to be done. The P&SC committee gave its annual report on its work surveying membership on their priorities, shortening the list of annual donations to increase the amount, to have a more positive impact for those chosen, and collaborating with the Catholic Worker House. The committee was thanked for its work.

Colette was thanked for her work organizing the Jumble Sale.

Meeting closed in silence.

Sale

Colette, with some help, organized a jumble, or Casa sale in April. It raised over \$1,000, to go towards refurbishing the Casa. Some left-over items have been delivered to the Catholic Worker house; reading glasses went to an optician's office for the Lions Club. The nicer dresses and purses will go to Easter Seal for women who need better looking outfits for interviews. The Battered Women's shelter has a truck that will pick up everything left and what they do not want will go to other non profits, including Medina Children's Home thrift store. The books left from the sale went to the book exchange and finally to Half Price for \$32.00. Marian helped with all of that. Perhaps next time Outreach could have literature and someone there to talk about who we are.

We're very grateful to Colette for all the work she put into the sale.

Seretse

Have you heard of Seretse Khama? A memory of 1950-51 has stayed deep with me for 60 years. Seretse Khama was the heir to the paramount chieftaincy of what was then called Bechuanaland, a British colony NW of South Africa. He had been in England at Oxford and the Inner Temple, the route to becoming a barrister. During this time he met an English girl and they married. This produced an uproar all around. The Labour government banished him from returning home to Bechuanaland. I watched all this in the papers, intrigued and on his side. Why would Labour do that? I found much later that it was because of the expected problems with South Africa, though his uncle also objected. Then something happened to cement my memory.

In London there were news theatres, where you could drop in at any time and watch an hour of news. I dropped in at one in Charing Cross Road. I went in at the middle of the hour. At the end the lights went on. I sat there to see the rest of the hour and then saw, across from me, Seretse and his wife, Ruth, get up to go out. I stared, fascinated, for the brief time it took them to leave. That sight seemed to give me a personal connection, as I remember it still. Five years later the government let him go home, with Ruth, his wife, provided he renounced his claim to the paramount chieftaincy.

But a few years later he formed a political party, won the election, became prime minister and, in 1966, president of independent Botswana, and a knight - now Sir Seretse. He became known for his intelligence, integrity, and sense of humor, and Ruth became popular. He set about invigorating his country, and it became a beacon for Africa.

In Malloch-Brown's book on Globalization he describes a campaign to treat HIV-AIDS in Africa in 2007 or so. It started, not surprisingly he said, in Botswana, because Botswana had the continent's most honest government. Seretse's legacy - when I saw that it brought his name and memory right back into my mind.

Ken

Midweek Meetings

Two midweek meetings are now being held, each at 6.30 pm, one on the first Thursday of the month in the meetingroom, and the other on the third Wednesday at Julia's house.

Anti-Muslim Bigotry

James Carroll wrote of "The Roots of anti-Muslim Bigotry" in the Boston Globe. It goes back, he says, to the 732AD war between Charles Martel and Muslim armies near Poitiers in France, won by Martel. Christians gave thanks for their liberation from Islam, whose civilization in fact was then more advanced than the Christian.

He says that Mohamed's teachings advanced egalitarianism and divine morality over the rigid tribal idolatrous religions. The monotheistic vision of God in Islam enabled communion with God in a new way, allowing it to spread "like wildfire." But Christians, interpreting *jihad* as warlike, rather than spiritual, perpetuated the bigotry which still exists today.

What Canst Thou Say?

Do you know what Convergent Friends are/is? Here is what Robin Mohr, of San Francisco, says, at <http://robinmsf.blogspot.com/2006/01/robinopediaconvergentfriends.html>.

"This is still my favorite phrase (so far) to describe the coming together of several strands of Quakerism. It describes Friends who are seeking a deeper understanding of our Quaker heritage and a more authentic life in the kingdom of God on Earth, radically inclusive of all who seek to live this life.

It includes, among others, Friends from the politically liberal end of the evangelical branch, the Christian end of the unprogrammed branch, and the more outgoing end of the Conservative branch.

It includes folks who aren't sure what they believe about Jesus and Christ, but who aren't afraid to wrestle with this question. It includes people who think that a lot of Quaker anachronisms are silly but who are willing to experiment to see which are spiritual disciplines that still hold life and power to transform and improve us.”

Miscellany

Gene Sharp warned nonviolent protestors that after overthrowing a dictator, the problem remained of ensuring democratic processes. Egypt is facing this. A constitution favoring the already-organized Muslim Brotherhood was approved. Now secular political parties are sprouting along with multiple religious parties, both Muslim and Christian. But the economy is approaching crisis as tourists stay away.

While the Libyans fall into the trap Sharp warned against – fighting the government, a process at which the government is better.

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The Millennium Development Goals established at the 2000 UN summit are:

- ▶Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- ▶Achieve universal primary education.
- ▶Promote gender equality and empower women.
- ▶Reduce child mortality.
- ▶Improve maternal health.
- ▶Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
- ▶Ensure environmental sustainability.
- ▶Develop a Global Partnership for Development.

Mark Malloch-Brown, deputy UN Secretary-General to Kofi Annan, praises these (which he helped draw up) while also lamenting that they are not nearly enough. He has devoted much of his life to these ends. He has another list – Growth, Opportunity, Limits. Growth, necessary to provide resources to lift people out of poverty; Opportunity, necessary to allow people to then lift themselves; and Limits imposed by the environment and the earth's resources.

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When did the use of “attendees” come into such use? Literally, it means “someone who is attended” but people, even in the *NYT*, use it in place of “attenders.” Well, we don't.

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David Goldfield, in his book, *America Aflame*, points out that, as a percentage, Civil War deaths would today amount to 10 million. And that the cost of the war, \$6.2 billion, would have paid to buy and free the South's 4 million slaves, and given them all reparations and 40 acres, without killing anybody. Not said, at least in Pam Kelley's review, is that the constitution would then have been upheld flawlessly, without a war to enforce it.

He blames the evangelical and self-righteous Christians of the Republican party for forcing the issue. Now, without President Bush, could we have simply paid Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Saddam Hussein to quit?

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“Godly Play” is a dynamic, Quaker-friendly approach to religious education and the Bible that is open-ended and honors the spiritual lives of children. There is a Quaker supplement, “Faith and Play.” Both are Montessori-inspired. To learn more, go to www.faihandplay.org. There will be a workshop at Pendle Hill on September 23-25.

Have you ever seen a bird fly down to land on a twig and miss?

Quaker Action

The Spring issue of *Quaker Action*, the magazine of AFSC, is devoted to issues of immigration, introduced by “And if a stranger sojourn with ye in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land.” (Leviticus 19:33-35.)

Pedro Rios writes of “Living with the Wall,” with military technology, stadium-style lights, ground sensor systems, night-vision scopes, helicopters with heat-sensing capabilities, unmanned aerial vehicles, and destructive hollow-point bullets. Alexis Moore writes of a family with two children whose mother had been taken away from them and deported. “Immigration policy is complex,” says an entry, “but how we are called by our faiths to treat and respond to our immigrant neighbors is not.”

A cartoon story illustrates the lengthy processes of becoming a legal immigrant and eventually a citizen. Six boxes show you being kicked out with the caption, “Sorry, you’re out of luck.” Christian Ramirez describes how “It’s become routine for policymakers and the media to reduce immigration to a criminal act that must be controlled and prosecuted, regardless of the effects on families and communities.”

Austin Tan Cerca

Austin Tan Cerca de la Frontera, which embraces a theology of Solidarity with Maquiladora Workers south of the US border, will take a delegation to Piedras Negras and Del Rio on May 20-22. The cost is \$225, including transportation, translation, food, and lodging. An earlier participant says, “We live very separately from the marginalized. But on the delegations we get to eat in their kitchens, stroll in their streets, talk about their work with them and share their food. This is where Jesus lived; if he came back, this is where he would live again.” Another said, “We go with all the answers. We come back with all the questions. We are turned upside down . . . converted.”

ATCF was part of the AFSC office in Austin before it closed. It is now trying to continue independently. Its office is in Austin meetinghouse.

ProNica

ProNica is a Quaker program of SWYM “empowering Nicaraguans.” There is a Casa Materna program advocating tubal ligation for high-risk women to avoid constant childbirth or pills. “I have felt such a great sense of rest and relaxation in not being pregnant and giving birth every two years . . . I am a very happy woman,” said one.

A volunteer at Casa del Nino describes days never passing without “a chorus of gut-splitting, tear-jerking, laughter . . . I hadn’t expected to be the one receiving so much.”

The program has donated grants to libraries for books, shelving and arts and crafts supplies, clinics for procedures and education, food, beauty supplies, agriculture tools, and seeds. A delegation member describes street children becoming victims of Cold War whims, glue-sniffing addiction, family divisions due to the old conflict, and the desperate poverty, all being engaged by ProNica. A 20-year-old footbridge is the only access to Rio Blanco schools and it suffers from rust and woodrot. ProNica works with Potters for Peace to help Nicaraguan potters obtain clay more easily than by digging it.

It is possible to donate to specific programs of ProNica. Go to www.pronica.org or write to stateside@pronica.org.

Forums

The forum on May 8 will consider the origin of the Quaker Peace Testimony in a formal

declaration addressed to King Charles II in 1660:

“Our principle is and our practices have always been, to seek peace, and ensue it, and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and the welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all. All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fighting with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world. That spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ which leads us all into all Truth will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.”

On May 22 Sharon Shen will speak about Jewish Religious Practice In the Time of Jesus. The Jewish religious practices in 33 A.D. were vastly different from the Judaism that developed after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Everything we know about the historical Jesus leaves no doubt that, first and foremost, Jesus was an observant Jew, a rabbi and a religious teacher. The forum will look at the religious world of ancient Judaism and its influence on Christian teachings.

On May 29 Ken will speak of the book by Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, which was used by nonviolent protestors in Serbia, Tunisia, and Egypt to overturn the dictatorial regimes. Though short, it has detailed accounts of what protestors should be aware of and how they should behave. He is particularly emphatic that violence should be avoided because this is precisely what the regime is good at. But he advocates nonviolence not for its spirituality but because it is more effective than violence.

Diversity Among Friends

There has been concern recently about the tension between Christocentric and universalist Quakers. This is an aspect of Friends which has been with us from the very start. Though it does not appear then as a tension, but rather a loving acceptance. Here are three early references:

• George Fox, 1672:

“The governor, with his wife, received us lovingly; but a doctor there would needs dispute with us. And truly his opposing us was of good service, giving occasion for the opening of many things to the people concerning the Light and Spirit of God, which he denied to be in everyone; and affirmed that it was not in the Indians. Whereupon I called an Indian to us and asked him “Whether or no, when he did lie or do wrong to anyone, there was not something in him that did reprove him for it?” He said “There was such a thing in him that did so reprove him; and he was ashamed when he had done wrong, or spoken wrong.’ So we shamed the doctor before the governor and people.”

• William Penn, 1693, 11 years after *No Cross No Crown*, and without any clear context:

“The Humble, Meek, Merciful, Just, Pious and Devout Souls, are everywhere of one religion; and when Death has taken off the Mask, they will know one another, though the divers Liveries they wear here make them Strangers.”

• John Woolman, 1762:

“There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren.”

Penn, in *No Cross No Crown*, said in criticism of the monastic life, “But taking up the cross of

Jesus is a more interior exercise: it is the circumspection and discipline of the soul in conformity to the divine mind therein revealed.” And it was “ first written during my confinement in the Tower of London, in the year 1668,” when he had ample opportunity to seek that divine mind. And he signed himself, “Thy fervent Christian Friend, WILLIAM PENN”

Friends General Conference

The “Gathering” of Friends General Conference will take place at Grinnell College in Iowa during July 3 to 9. John Calvi will speak on Friends’ work to abolish torture; Evalyn Parry will sing; Winona LaDuke, author of Last Standing Woman, will speak of the earth and her own, Ojibwe, people; Bruce Birchard will address the teme “Meeting at the Center” from his wide experience among Friends; and there will be community dancing.

Workshop topics include Conversations on Racism, the Interfaith Movement, the Bible and Quaker Eldering, Integral Nonviolence, Photography as a Spiritual Practice, Quaker Spiritual Experiences, in History and Now, Quilting as a Spiritual Discipline, (literal) Wool Gathering, the Evolution of Quakerism in America – altogether 45 choices. There will be children’s programs.

To learn more and register, go to www.FGCgather.org. To inquire, send questions to gathering@FGCquaker.org.

The Road to Discharge

The *NY Times* on Feb 23 told of a midshipman, Michael Izbicki, who, after graduating at the US Naval Academy, took a psychological exam which asked if he would, if ordered, launch a nuclear missile. He said no, and that started a two-year trail. He became a resident in a Quaker community in New London, where he prays, studies Hebrew to read the Old Testament, and gardens. A chaplain advised him to apply for CO status. He was refused twice, one commander saying Quakerism was inconsistent with mainstream Christianity, comparing it to Jim Jones’s suicide cult at the People’s Temple. Saying he did not believe everything in the bible was inspired by God, an investigator asked how he could be sure the Sermon on the Mount was true or if Jesus really existed. The distance between his beliefs and those of conservative Christians was questioned. He finally got his CO discharge.

Calendar, May, 2011

Meeting for Worship is held on Sunday at 10 a.m., followed by refreshments and a Forum discussion at 11.30, usually lasting until about 12.45. Children are invited to join worship for the first fifteen minutes, after which they may go to join with the Young Friends program. Child care is available during Forum.

- 1. Sunday Potluck lunch at 11.30.**
- 5. Thursday Midweek Meeting, 6.30, in the meetingroom.**
- 8. Sunday Forum –Spiritual Quaker Process: M&O Queries in Small-Groups. The Peace Testimony.**
- 15, Sunday..... Meeting for Business, 11.30, followed by Corporation Meeting..**
- 18, Wednesday Midweek Meeting, 6.30, at Julia’s house.**
- 22, Sunday Forum – Religious life in Palestine at the time of Jesus.**
- 29, Sunday Forum – Nonviolent Revolution – Gene Sharp.**

Each Thursday, at 4-5 pm, a silent peace vigil is held at the corners of S. Flores and Commerce, one block west of Main Plaza near City Hall.

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