



'Trident Replacement? What does theology say?'

A report from Joanna Bazley

First speaker was Peter Hunter O.P. He said: "Nuclear rearmament? Perhaps we should just shut up and say 'we're agin it!' The trouble is, a lot of people are 'for it', so we need to explain. We need to establish a moral basis which explains why nuclear weapons should never be built (even as a threat), and why (certainly) they should never ever be used."

The second speaker, Gerry W. Hughes S.J. said: "No word is adequate to describe the menace of nuclear weapons." He then described three images;

Dining with a naval commander who cheerfully details of the firepower of his Polaris submarine. How could he sit and enjoy his food and talk about fire power? This shows the extent to which the human mind can become compartmentalised.

Walking in the Scottish countryside around Loch Lomond, and being acutely aware that underneath all that beauty lay a huge store of atomic weapons

Watching a submarine periscope moving slowly out from Holy Loch (Polaris submarine base), surrounded by the calm expanse of mountains and sea. The contrast between the surface beauty of the scene and the terrible destructive power underneath.

The third speaker was Canon Professor Marilyn McCord-Adams, Regius Professor of Divinity, Oxford. She said:

"Theology can become complex and technical, but the essence of the Gospel is very simple. God created all things and Christianity deals with the implications of this basic truth. As a Christian pacifist Prof. McCord-Adams rejects war of any kind.

Warfare is bestial, and it is totally unacceptable that society commissions/coerces some of its members to

act in its name to destroy other human beings (images of God).

Nuclear weapons have the power to destroy Creation. Warheads have the capacity to incinerate and vaporise people without trace. Nuclear weapons also have lingering and persistent effects, contaminating the environment and the gene pool."

Discussion

There was considerable discussion about pacifism and whether it is ever necessary to do what is morally wrong. Are there always alternatives?

The government is about to decide whether to start the process of replacing Trident, we are at a point of decision. This is a pivotal moment.

In the Professor's opinion it would be a great act of Christian witness by the UK government to refuse to start the process of Trident replacement. The UK has a tradition of gradualism, and a decision not to replace would be a 'gentle first step' in comparison with unilateral disarmament. We must show that it is possible to be civilised without brutality.

Peter Hunter said that he would put it more simply. If the nuclear deterrent is immoral, we shouldn't have one, and shouldn't replace the one we've got. He was not himself a pacifist and didn't believe every war was wicked. We don't live in an ideal world. We will be threatened, the poor and the weak will be threatened. Will we be willing to respond if others are threatened?

However, Trident is not a military weapon. It is a political toy. The existence of nuclear weapons has a destructive effect on us all. The diversion of money to support their development simply reinforces the threat to the whole of society.

The World Council of Churches, at a recent meeting in Brazil, had issued lots of statements about nuclear weapons, so the churches are beginning to speak out more loudly.

The UK position on nuclear weapons is damaging to building relationships throughout the world. Claiming that we need such weapons for our own safety (while other countries don't) is hypocrisy.

Most people do not know what is going on. Nuclear weapons are not understood by the general public.

A questioner asked what aspect of Trident the panel thought would create most 'resonance' and encourage other theologians to speak out - producing the answer "I wish I knew!"

The Professor suggested that "confidence in universal human sympathy" will be the key to ending war, meaning that we shall eventually feel that we can afford to take the risk of being attacked. Society must cease to dump its dirty work upon its soldiers.

When asked whether the UK would be "letting down the USA" in giving up nuclear weapons, the Professor replied that "Good friends are supposed to give advice in time of trial". The UK has taken leadership in other matters independently of the US. Violence was not an appropriate way to deal with 9/11. The US is 'off base' and the UK should say so.

There will be a debate on Trident, and this will give us the opportunity to contribute. We must watch the press, listen to the media, write letters etc. as the debate develops.

Nuclear weapons are useless in a changed world ('war on terror', global warming, US as single superpower etc.)



Marilyn McCord Adams

At the end of the speaker session Barbara Sunderland gave a vote of thanks.

Joanna's comments: fantastic morning - brilliant speakers. Let's go back and organise events all over the country. Get people talking about it. 54% do not want nuclear weapons. People were horrified by the treatment of Walter Wolfgang and Maya Evans. We should build on this.

Our grateful thanks to our speakers, to all who helped organise this event, to Joanna for this report and all who attended and helped make it a success.



Peter Hunter

CCND publications

The new edition of our pack for the Churches called 'Nuclear weapons; What can Christians do?' is ready! It contains fresh material and focuses on the current window of opportunity to get rid of British nuclear weapons and on all the ways we Christians can increase the moral debate about Trident. It is a veritable manual of ideas for effective action and prayer. Contact us for a copy which you and your church can use. (The pack is still free, though you might like to make a small contribution towards the cost of production.)

The promised booklet containing the scripts of the three key speakers at our Theology Day School (Gerry Hugh SJ, Dr Marilyn McCord Adams - Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, and Peter Hunter OB) can also be ordered now (available in four weeks or so). This is invaluable, of great interest and contains photos of the participants. We suggest a donation of £2.



Local Government Pensions: Is YOUR pension plan funding the arms trade?

CAAT (Campaign Against Arms Trade) has carried out a Freedom of Information exercise and discovered that one in three council pension funds help to finance the manufacture of nuclear weapons through investments in Lockheed Martin, the world's largest arms company which manufactures Trident nuclear missiles for the US and Britain and is a contractor at the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE).

67 of Britain's 99 council pension funds invest nearly £244m in BAE systems, the UK's largest arms company. Their findings reveal councils investing in firms such as General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and Halliburton. CAAT says all this raises serious questions about the ethical values and democratic oversight of local authorities investments.

More details on the CAAT website: www.caat.org.uk

Money Matters (but not that much!)

Thank you for your continuing and generous support. Although postage and costs generally have gone up we are not raising subscriptions - would much rather keep you than have your money!

However, should any members wish to increase their standing orders a little, it would be helpful and gratefully accepted - or why not look at our list of sales items to see what you could use?



Faslane 365

A civil resistance project is planned to apply critical public pressure for the disarmament of Britain's nuclear weapons by a people's blockade of the home base of Trident at Faslane in Scotland.

The aim is to have a blockade which will continue for hundreds of days. To make this happen, groups and organisations from Scotland, England and Wales, and beyond are being invited to come and shut down the base for at least one 48-hour period each during the year. There will be a launch event approximately one month before the first blockade.

Some events at the Edinburgh Festival have been organised by Come Clean - The WMD Awareness Project. There will be workshops and meetings, vigils and religious services.

A resource pack is available.

For more details of Faslane 365:

Web: www.faslane365.org Email: info@faslane365.org
Telephone: 01263 512049.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 20 May: Levellers Day 2006. "Identity: where we live, who we are." 10 to 5pm 2006. Burford. Oxfordshire. Speeches, debate, procession, music.
<http://www.levellers.org.uk/contact.htm#>

Tuesday 6 June: 'The Peace We Seek'. Are nuclear weapons compatible with a commitment for peace? A discussion with four speakers from different faith backgrounds, including Bruce Kent. 6.30pm - 8.30pm. St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation & Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation & Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. Booking essential: to reserve a place contact 020 7496 1610 enquiries@stethelburgas.org www.stethelburgas.org/

Sunday 11 June: Day of Prayer to end the arms trade. Organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade Christian Network. Focussing on raising awareness about DESO. (Defence Export Services Organisation). Contact Christian@caat.org.uk CAAT, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ. 020 7281 0297.

Monday 12 June: Early morning vigil and service at AWE Aldermaston to coincide with Block the Builders' blockade. Meet before 7.0am at the Tadley/Heath End Gate, off the A340. We also have rooms booked for the night before. Contact the office for details and to book - leave a message and phone number! Also see www.blockthebuilders.org.uk/

Saturday 17 June: 21st Annual Celebration of the London Peace Pagoda, 2pm. Battersea Park. Ring 020 7228 9620 for more details.

21 - 23 July: 25th Annual RC Justice and Peace Conference: "The Desert will Bloom, Scattering Seeds of Hope" Booking: NJPN Administrator, 39 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1BX Tel: 020 7901 4864

21 - 23 July: Anglican Pacifist Fellowship conference held jointly with Church and Peace. Wydale Hall, Sawdon, Scarborough. More information later. 11 Weavers End, Hanslope Milton Keynes MK19 7PA 01908 510642. ajkempster@aol.com www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk/

29 July - 17 August: Trident Ploughshares International Disarmament Camp. For more information before the camp call 0845 45 88 361 e-mail: info@tridentploughshares.org website: www.tridentploughshares.org Phone number at the camp: 0845 45 88 361.

Sunday 6th August: HIROSHIMA DAY 2006. Lord Mayor of Coventry's Committee for Peace and Reconciliation. Chapel of Unity Coventry Cathedral 2pm [please note the service is earlier than usual] The service will be followed by a Peace Picnic on Unity Lawn outside the Chapel. Please bring food and soft drinks to share Everybody is welcome. For further information please contact Penny Walker on 024 7666 3031.

9 August: Nagasaki Day. Anniversary of the execution of Franz JÄGERSTÄTTER.

Peace walk from Westminster Cathedral (7.30pm) to the London Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park, followed by the Floating Lantern Ceremony. Phone 020 7228 9620.

Thursday 21 September: International Day of Peace; www.peaceday.org/ www.un.org/events/peaceday/2005

Friday 29 September: MANA Concert for Peace with the MANA Chamber Orchestra conducted by Levon Parikian. St James's Church, Piccadilly. The programme will include Mozart's Flute Concerto in G major - Soloist: Philippa Davies. Contact MANA Administration, 71 Greenfield Gardens, London NW2 1HU tel 020 8455 1030.

1 - 8 October: Keep Space for Peace Week: International Days of Protest to Stop the Militarization of Space. Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, PO Box 652, Brunswick, ME 04011 USA (207) 729-0517 global-net@mindspring.com <http://www.space4peace.org>

15 - 22 October: Week of Prayer for World Peace. www.weekofprayer.org.uk

22 - 29 October: One World Week: Mind the Gap! Change Minds - Shrink Gaps. One World Week, PO Box 2555, Reading, RG1 4XW T: 0118 939 4933 F: 0118 939 4936 enquiries@oneworldweek.org www.oneworldweek.org/

Peace Camps & Regular Events

Regular Meeting for Worship outside Menwith Hill and Fylingdales US bases in Yorkshire Outside Menwith Hill US spy base and 'star wars' station at 2.00pm-3.00pm at the Main Entrance on **Saturday 3 December and the first Saturday of even months** (Feb, April). Contact Anni on 01943 466405 or Lindis on 01482 702033 or email Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases at mailto:caab@btlick.com for more information.

Outside Fylingdales joint UK-US 'star wars' station at 12.00pm-1.00pm at the approach road entrance on the **first Saturday of odd months (Jan, March, May)**. This witness has been almost continuous since the 1980s. Contact Anni on 01943 466405 or Lindis on 01482 702033 or email Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases at mailto:caab@btlick.com for more information.

Every Tuesday: Menwith Hill Peace Camp, 6-8pm, protest vigil. Contact: Anni 01943 466 405.

4th Saturday each month: Quaker Meeting for Worship at USAF Fairford. 2pm.

Permanent: Faslane Peace Camp, 81 Shandon, near Helensburgh, G84 8NT Tel: 01436-820901
E-mail: faslanepeacecamp@conscious.every1.net

Don't forget our sales items! See the enclosed booking form. Place your order now for the booklet on the Theology Day School and the new updated Churches' Pack. And renew your summer wardrobe with a CCND t-shirt!

Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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