

FIELD NOTES

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fields of peace • communities of faith teaching peace and nonviolence

In this batch of *Field Notes* you'll find:

- A look at a great theologian who became an outspoken peace activist
- A five-star general (&President) who exhorted Americans to spend less on warships and more on food for the hungry
- A selection of quotes which we hope you'll find useful in your next sermon, newsletter or meditation.

As **Fields of Peace** enters its second year, we thank you for participating. May 2011 bring peace to you, your faith community and our hurting world.

Sincerely,

Charles and Cathey Busch

Quotes

“Those who begin by burning books will end by burning people.”

-Heinrich Heine

“Sometimes you wake up at 3 AM when everything seems dark, and you think, ‘Life isn’t fair. I’ve got too much to do. I’m too put-upon.’ It’s a rat run of self-pity! But when you feel compassion, you dethrone yourself from the center of the world. Doing that has made me a more peaceful person.”

-Karen Armstrong

“We should, I believe, be judged by our compromises more than by our ideals and our norms. Ideals may tell us something important about what we would like to be. But compromises tell us who we are.”

-Avishai Margalit

“I found one day in school a boy of medium size ill-treating a smaller boy. I expostulated, but he replied: ‘The bigs hit me, so I hit the babies, that’s fair.’ In these words he epitomized the history of the human race.”

-Bertrand Russell

Education and the Social Order

“In the end, people will support the next war because the TV tells them to.”

-Paul Fussell

“Observance of customs and laws can very easily be a cloak for a lie so subtle that our fellow human beings are unable to detect it. It may help us to escape all criticism, we may even be able to deceive ourselves in the belief of our obvious righteousness. But deep down, below the surface of the average man’s conscience, he hears a voice, ‘There is something not right,’ no matter how much his rightness is supported by public opinion or by moral code.”

-Carl Jung

Abraham Joshua Heschel: Peacemaker

The most challenging part of being a peacemaker is managing one's own interior peace. Fear, hurry, disappointment, fatigue, frailty, calamity intrude.

In answer, Abraham Heschel (1907-1972), Jewish scholar and teacher, lifted up the 4th commandment: "*Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.*"

This, said Heschel, is not a life-style suggestion. To keep the Sabbath is as important as not lying or stealing or murdering. Of the 10, it is the longest and most detailed:

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work---you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.

Exodus 20:1-17

Our day-to-day work takes on a momentum that is hard to stop. We need a voice to tell us: Loaf. Don't pick-up anything heavier than an apple or poem. Sit with friends. Stroll. Stretch out on the grass. Float with the clouds. Hear the sounds of children at play.

In the Sabbath commandment, there is no mention of worship. Perhaps the peace which comes with rest makes each taste of bread, each intake of breath a moment of worship.

In his book, The Sabbath, Heschel writes:

- The Sabbath as a day of rest is not for the purpose of recovering one's lost strength and becoming fit for the forth coming labor. The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life.

- The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation.
- The seventh day is like a palace in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a date but an atmosphere.
- What the Sabbath imparts to man is something real, almost open to perception, a light...that shines from within, that glows out of his face. Something happens to man on the Sabbath day.
- What *we are* depends on what *the Sabbath* is to us.

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It would have been enough if Abraham Heschel had only reminded us of the gift of the Sabbath, but his peacemaking offered another generous surprise. He understood that much of the violence in the world is caused by the people of one religion thinking themselves superior to those of another religion. Heschel urged his Jewish colleagues to talk with and befriend Christian and Muslim leaders. “The God of Israel,” he said, “is also the God of Syria and the God of Egypt.”

He saw each religion as a part of God’s plan. “The religions of the world are no more self-sufficient, no more independent, no more isolated than individuals or nations... We must choose between interfaith and inter-nihilism.”

Heschel saw a future in which the peoples of the world become friends, serve one another, and live in peace.

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It would have been enough if Heschel had only reminded us of the gift of the Sabbath and urged us to interfaith friendship, but his peacemaking evolved into activism.

In the 1960's the U.S. was at war with Vietnam, and Heschel could not ignore the front-page photos, the rhetoric of government leaders, vibration of bombs, the body bags and body counts. He could not ignore the voice of his own conscience.

Heschel left the comfort of his study and class rooms at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and went out and spoke out. "At this hour," he said, "Vietnam is our most urgent, our most disturbing religious problem. ...All religious duties recede, all rituals are suspended, except one: to save life and relieve pain"

Heschel, who had dedicated decades to studying and writing about the prophets of ancient Israel---Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Malachi, became a prophetic voice.

**"To speak about God and remain silent on Vietnam,
is blasphemous."**

He stood before microphones at rallies, marched with thousands of others in the streets, and wrote letters to the President and to religious leaders and newspaper editors:

"The most basic way in which all men may be divided," he said, "is between those who believe that war is unnecessary and those who believe that war is inevitable: Between those to whom the sword is the symbol of honor and those to whom seeking to convert swords into plowshares is the only way to keep our civilization from disaster."

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It would have been enough if Heschel had only reminded us of the importance of the Sabbath, the necessity of interfaith friendship, and sacrificial activism, but Heschel also called us to prayer:

"O Lord...We are a generation that has lost the capacity for outrage. We must continue to remind ourselves that in a free society all are involved in what some are doing. Some are guilty, all are responsible." Amen.

“A Theft From Those Who Hunger”

At a time when the most basic needs of so many citizens in our country remain unmet, last year (2010) the Pentagon received \$708 billion dollars to spend. This amount, voted by Congress, is 60 percent of our nation’s discretionary budget. Perspective: The U.S. spends more on its military than the countries with the next 15 largest military budgets combined.

In his 1953, “Cross of Iron” speech, President Eisenhower said:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.

Eisenhower warned that the influence of the military-industrial complex was “economic, political, even spiritual,” and urged Americans to break away from their reliance on military might as a guarantor of liberty and “use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment.”

What can we do?

Joanna Macy, Buddhist scholar and teacher, and author of *Despair and Empowerment in the Nuclear Age*, has created a national campaign---**Not My Priorities**---to provoke a serious debate in Congress about our defense spending. It’s purpose is to:

- Educate the American public about our national budget priorities.
- Generate a national dialogue and Congressional debate on just how much we really need to spend to defend ourselves.

Macy asks that each citizen who is upset by wanton “defense” spending, simply send 4 postcards (one to President Obama, your Representative, and Senators) asking for a significant reduction in the 2011 Defense Budget.

For a free set of 4 “pie chart” postcards, go to www.notmypriorities.org or e-mail Barry Hermanson, barry@notmypriorities.org.

Now is the time to let our elected representatives know that our real priorities are: Developing clean alternative energy, green jobs, rebuilding infrastructure, health care, homelessness, housing, and education.