

# Peace Messenger

News, Connections & Commentary

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Speaking the truth in love

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## Trial of Christian Peace Witness Participants Begins



The trial of fourteen of the 222 citizens arrested during the March 16 [Christian Peace Witness for Iraq](#) civil disobedience in front of the White House began Friday, June 22 in Superior Court, Washington, D.C. The civil

disobedience was one of the largest single civil disobedience actions at the White House, and the Christian Peace Witness was the largest Christian peace demonstration since the beginning of the Iraq war four years ago.

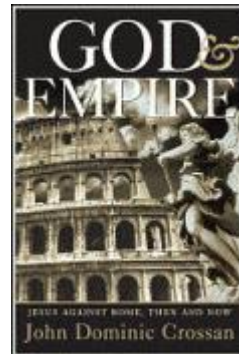
"While our President continues pursuing a failed policy of escalating violence in Iraq, fourteen courageous citizens are continuing their own witness against the war," said Rev. Andrew Foster Connors, one of the organizers of the civil disobedience action and pastor of Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church in Baltimore. "If thousands more of us were willing to present our own bodies as living sacrifices, perhaps another mother would be spared the loss of her son. Perhaps the President would be forced to listen to the will of the people, end this war, and bring our troops home."

A worship service at the National Cathedral attended by thousands from across the country began the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, which was followed by a candlelit procession to Lafayette Park for a rally before the civil disobedience action began. More than one hundred local vigils took place the same day around the nation. Participants attending the public witness intended to repent of their complicity with the invasion and occupation of Iraq and to renew their commitment to peacemaking on the fourth anniversary of the war in Iraq.

## Peace Messenger Recent Issues:

- \*Who are Representing Christ? (June 15)
- \*Anti-torture Legislation (June 8)
- \*"Last Throes": The Second Anniversary (June 1)

## Jesus and Caesar: Counterclaims



"...Imagine this question. There was a human being in the first century who was called "Divine," "Son of God," "God," and "God from God," whose titles were "Lord," "Redeemer," "Liberator," and "Saviour of the World." Who was that person? Most people who know the Western tradition would probably answer, unless alerted by the question's too-obviousness, Jesus of Nazareth. And most Christians probably think that those titles were originally created and uniquely applied to Christ. But before Jesus ever existed, all those terms belonged to Caesar Augustus. To proclaim them of Jesus the Christ was thereby to deny them of Caesar."

From John Dominic Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2007).

While most of the 222 participants who were arrested took the option of posting \$100 and forfeiting a trial, these fourteen defendants elected to have their cases tried in court. One of them, Mary Pat Brennan, says: "I knew right from the start that this war in particular was not the answer to September 11, but as the war dragged on, I realized more and more I just could not go about the ordinary business of my life while people were dying needlessly and that it was up to me to take a clear and visible stand for peace in partnership with other committed people of faith."

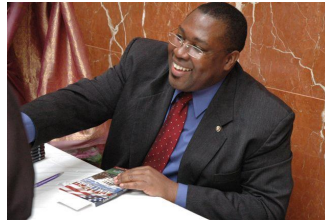
The trial is open to the media and the general public. The [Adventist Peace Fellowship](#) is one of the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq sponsoring organizations. [comment](#)

### Young Adventists in World of War

The June 14 issue of the *Adventist Review* contains a very informative feature by Elizabeth Lechleitner on the wide variety of views on participation in military combat in the Seventh-day Adventist church today. The article expands on an [Adventist News Network feature](#) last fall, reported in the October 20, 2006 issue of the *Peace Messenger*, but also incorporates commentary from several additional interviews.

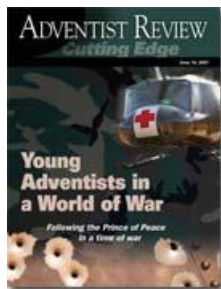
Here are couple of samples:

"I don't recommend [carrying a weapon]. Kind of like FDR's 'I have seen war' speech. I can tell you—based on my experience in the Gulf War—avoid [combatancy] at all costs." *Terry Johnsson, associate pastor of the Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, who also served as a member of the White House Honor Guard.*



"For me, it [military combat] was more of an issue of duty to God and country. [I got a] sense through the Bible that God always had an army; God always had a group of committed people ready to stand up for what's right." *Felipe Viemann, youth pastor of the Chula Vista Seventh-day Adventist Church in San Diego, California, and veteran of the war in Iraq.*

The same issue of the *Adventist Review* includes an article by *Peace Messenger* editor Douglas Morgan on how the founders of Seventh-day Adventism dealt with this challenge. Here's an excerpt:

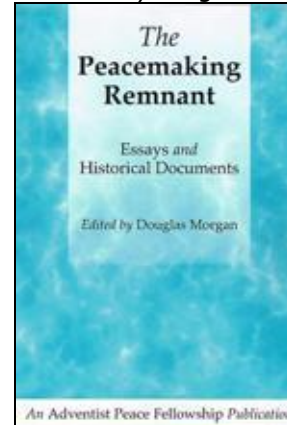


Many early Adventists were also influenced by the Christian nonresistance movement that [William Lloyd] Garrison led. They regarded scripturally grounded pacifism as part of that radical faith that set them apart from the large majority of Americans. Christian nonresistance had been espoused by the Millerite Adventist reformer Joshua V. Himes, as well as William Miller himself (according to Garrison). That commitment was also apparent in the post-1844 group that formed the nucleus of the

Ryan Bell identifies this passage in a very rich summary and analysis in his blog entry on [chapter 1](#).

### The Peacemaking Remnant

"A revolutionary work in that it broadens the concept of remnant"  
--*Ministry* magazine



### Historical Documents

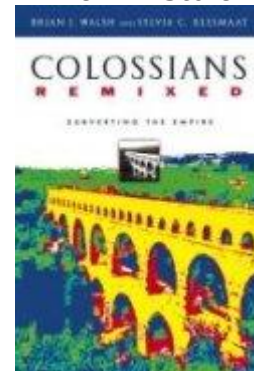
**1860s GC Resolution**  
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Ellen White  
George W. Amadon  
Alonzo T. Jones

### Contemporary Essays

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emerging Seventh-day Adventist Church. It found occasional expression in the early publications of the Sabbathkeeping Adventists during the late 1840s and 1850s.

To them, the scriptural basis for this stance seemed quite clear. Just as they took literally what the fourth commandment said about the seventh day being the "Sabbath of the Lord thy God," they believed that the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," prohibited the taking of life. They also believed Jesus meant what He said in telling His followers to "love your enemies." Participation in military combat seemed a clear and simple violation of the sixth commandment and the teachings of Christ. [comment](#)

### **Truth and Retribution**

The response to Eric Fair's public confession to abusing a prisoner while serving as a civilian contractor in Iraq suggests much about the moral state of American society (see "The Interrogator: What Happened After He Confessed," *Newsweek*, June 18, 2007, p. 13).

First, the good news. Positive responses to the opinion piece by Fair that appeared in the *Washington Post* last February have outnumbered negative ones by two to one.

However, the vitriolic depth of the unfavorable reactions surprised the 35-year-old resident of Bethlehem, PA. They included accusations of "undermining troop morale" and "treason," suggestions that "he appease his own guilty conscience by committing suicide," and a few direct death threats. "I didn't anticipate how palpable the hatred would be," he said.

He had hoped his confession would encourage others to come forward and talk openly. But even the interrogators who expressed support to him felt they could not speak publicly about their experiences. "For people who want to continue working for the Pentagon or for contractors, speaking up is a career ender," says Fair.

In his second inaugural address in January 2005, President George W. Bush stated, "From the day of our founding, we have proclaimed the every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity and matchless value, because they bear the image of the maker of heaven and earth." He declared the mission of "advancing these ideals" to be the nation's "calling" as it moved toward the "ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."

The reality is that the militaristic culture over which he presides is so shot through with hypocrisy, deceit, and suppression of the truth that those who know first hand about the nation's utter violation of the ideals it espouses cannot speak of it without fear of devastating retribution.

The experience has confirmed Eric Fair's decision to try to make a difference as a Presbyterian minister. He plans to begin seminary this fall. [comment](#)

### **Colossians Remixed: *Subverting the Empire***

By Brian W. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmat

33% discount

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**Editor:** Doug Morgan

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