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SHALOM

Jewish Peace Letter

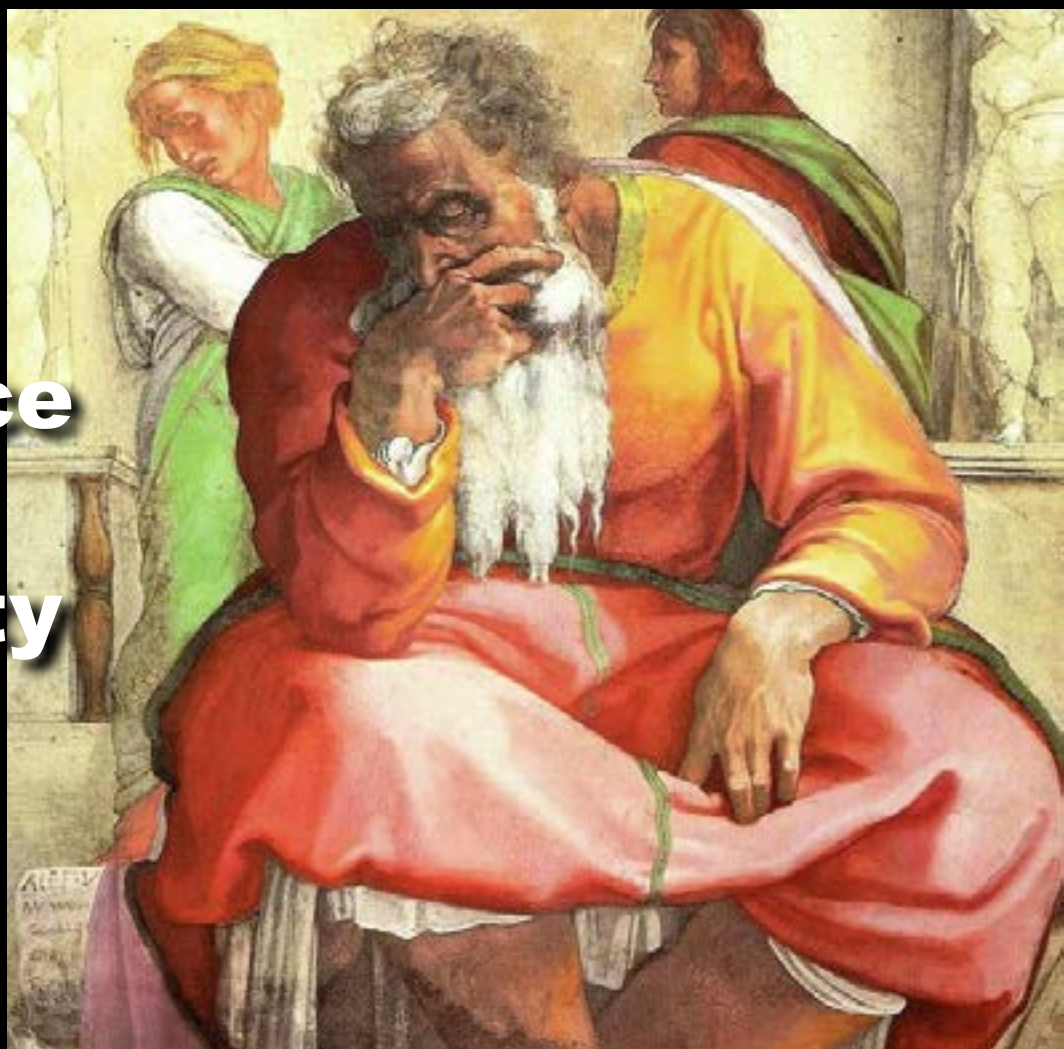
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C O N T E N T S

Recalling God's Deliverance in Times of Difficulty

The Path Forward

Steven Woolley
Pg. 7



Humor Pulls Us Through *Stefan Merken, Pg. 2*

Camus' *The Plague* and Our Coronavirus
Patrick Henry, Pg. 3

A Path to Peace *Joseph J. Fahey, Pg. 5*

Peace and Reconciliation *Dorothy Knudson, Pg. 9*

From Where I Sit

Stefan Merken

Find something that makes you smile and share it.

STEFAN MERKEN
is Chair of the Jewish
Peace Fellowship.

Humor Pulls Us Through

If not so already, it seems certain that in the coming months and years all of us will be discussing and writing volumes on our reactions, emotions, and memories of the weeks we spent in isolation, attempting to avoid infecting or being infected by our neighbors, friends, or relatives, from the COVID-19 virus that has swept our country and the world.

We have been sequestered in our home (being high risk they tell us). My wife Betty, who is not only a fabulous cook, a great conversationalist, but also a driven artist who wakes every morning makes coffee, exercises, and gets right to work in her studio. This leaves me here at my computer in my office to write. What more could anyone ask?

Like many of you, we've been in the house in Seattle now for more than a month. We shop for groceries every other week,

talk on the phone to friends and relatives daily, and watch the news to keep up with what is happening in the world.

But mostly, the focus that has pulled us through this period is our sense of humor. We

have been receiving emails from numerous friends, filled with humor, videos, and jokes almost daily. Humor and optimism are what can free us all of the stress of being locked in and the constant barrage of news of those passing away and others who are struggling to survive this dreaded virus.

This is not the first time that citizens have been locked in to avoid sickness and it is predicted that it may not be our last. During the London Plague, Shakespeare and many Englanders were sequestered in their homes. In fact, it is said that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* during that recurrence of the plague. On a personal note, my mother and her three sisters were sequestered during the 1918 Spanish flu that killed 650,000 people in the United States alone. Luckily, they survived to tell the story.

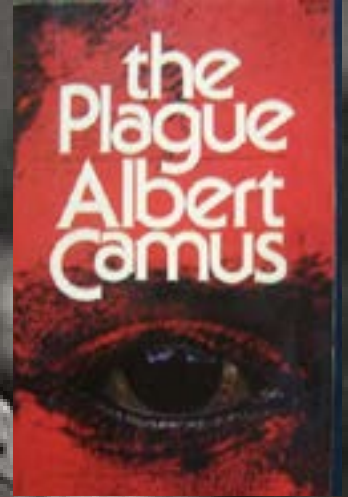
Many of you may remember that Norman Cousins healed himself of a fatal disease by constantly watching Marx Brothers movies and laughing. He wrote a book about his experience, titled *Anatomy of an Illness*. Laughter truly is an often-overlooked medication and now we need it more than ever. So treasure the comic spirit and call a friend, or a relative, a neighbor, or a co-worker and share a funny incident or story with them. Find something on the internet that makes you smile and then send it along. And once we can finally venture out again safely, we will all walk with big, hard-earned smiles on our faces. Until then be safe. ☆



*Peace advocate Norman Cousins (1915–1990) wrote about the healing power of laughter in *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient: Reflections on Healing and Regeneration* (1979), *The Healing Heart: Antidotes to Panic and Helplessness* (1983), and *The Mind Over Illness* (1991).*

“I know that I belong here whether I want it or not. This business is everybody’s business.”

Albert Camus



Small Daily Efforts

Patrick Henry

Today we are experiencing isolation and a heightened sense of community.

Camus’ *The Plague* and Our Coronavirus

Human beings travel side by side for years,” writes Antoine de Saint-Exupery in *Wind, Sand and Stars*, “locked up in their own silence or exchanging words of little substance. Until danger comes. Then they stand shoulder to shoulder. They discover that they belong to the same community.” Perhaps above all, disasters found communities: The Holocaust, WW II in France, 9/11, today throughout our world.

Albert Camus felt this deeply. In July 1942, when his doctor told him that he had tuberculosis in both lungs, he went to the mountains in south-central France to spend the winter. In October, his wife, Francine, went back to Oran, their home in Algeria, to resume teaching. Albert was to follow shortly. On November 7th, however, the Allies invaded North Africa, and four days later, the Germans, fearful of an Allied invasion through the south, descended to occupy the formerly Vichy-controlled zone of France. “November 11th. Like rats,” Camus wrote in his diary. He was trapped.

Camus would remain in those mountains until the latter part of 1943, when he moved to Paris. During that time, he would write the bulk of his novel, *The Plague*, that he had begun in Algeria. In that novel, the plague would become synonymous with exile,

separation, isolation. One of the characters, Rambert, whom Camus claimed he felt the closest to, is a journalist trapped in the city when the gates are definitively closed. He tries everything to escape, but when he finally has the opportunity to do so, he decides to stay: “I know that I belong here whether I want it or not. This business is everybody’s business.” Rambert joined the “sanitary squads” fighting the plague and Camus joined the Resistance.

At the literal level, *The Plague* is the story of a fictional outbreak of the

Continued on next page

In Camus's novel, there is no great heroism, just ordinary people making small daily efforts to help others and not infect them.

disease in the city of Oran, while more generally, it is about the human condition: "Each of us has the plague." "What's natural is the microbe." "What does the plague mean?" "Just life; no more than that." I am focusing on *The Plague* as an allegory of the German Occupation of France: 1940-1944 because recent op-eds on Camus and the Coronavirus have specifically denied it (*NYT*: 3/19/20; *LA Times*: 3/23/20). But it is impossible to miss: the date of the outbreak is 194-; the author refers to "the brutal invasion of the disease" and there are numerous allusions to wartime conditions in France: the hoarding of foodstuffs, the requisitioning of schools, the reruns of old films, the black market, the rationing of gasoline, the reduction in the use of electricity, even the treatment of foreign

Jews "in the isolation camps" and several references to "crematorium [ovens]."

Today we too have experienced isolation and a heightened sense of community. But technology has developed to such an extent that we are not nearly as isolated from loved ones as were those trapped inside France during the Occupation. We may not be able to be with those we love but we are able to speak with them every day and even spend time with them, seeing and talking with them, on Facetime or other devices. In this respect, comparatively speaking, we have much to be grateful for.

More than anything, what brings me back to Camus' novel during our current pandemic is the simple, ordinary morality that he delineates throughout the text. There is no heroism here, just ordinary people behaving in a decent manner, making "small daily efforts" not to infect others: fighting the plague by doing one's job, thinking of others, or, as the nonviolent character Tarrou explains it, "try at least not to propagate the microbe deliberately."

As in our situation, Camus' plague has its deniers, its leaders dragging their feet, its hoarders, and its profiteers. But watching our health care workers risking their lives day after day, some of whom are inadequately protected, working long hospital shifts in make-shift hospitals; businesses offering free lunches to those in need; supermarket employees putting their health at risk so that the rest of us can buy groceries; the great majority of people conscientiously practicing social distancing, many of whom are delivering meals to those who cannot leave their homes; experiencing this marvelous sense of community among the exiled, I concur with the narrator, Doctor Rieux, who concludes that, in times of pestilence, what one learns is that: "There are more things to admire in human beings than to scorn." ☆

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SHALOM

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Past, Present, and Perpetual Peace

Joseph J. Fahey

A Path to Peace

Just over one hundred years ago, on Nov. 11, 1918, World War I ended with the deaths of some 8,500,000 soldiers who died of wounds or disease. Today's nation states are far better armed than in World War I and if an international war is fought the few who remain living will truly envy the dead. Is there a way out? Is there hope for peace? Scholars are shedding light on a path to peace.

Peace Studies—an academic field that is just over fifty years old—is providing some useful insights into how to resolve conflicts between nations without resort to war. Peace scholars tell us that peace has in fact been the dominant human experience and that war—rather than the rule—is an aberration in human affairs. Nor is war very old. War becomes possible with the advent of territoriality (agriculture) about 10,000 years ago and begins to develop with the rise of cities about 5,000 years ago.

Peace research tells us that peace between states is possible under six conditions. The first three of these conditions are informal or citizen-based initiatives: (1) athletic games, (2) intellectual discourse, and (3) artistic celebrations. The next three are formal or government-based actions: (4) trade agreements, (5) diplomatic recognition, and (6) international alliances.

Hence, if a nation wishes to have peaceful relations with another nation, it will encourage the exchange of athletes, artists, and scholars, while pursuing trade, diplomacy, and international law as guarantors of peace. Consequently, when conflicts between states arise, there are many cultural, economic, diplomatic, and legal alternatives to war as a method of dispute resolution. Communication is the first stage of peace.

Conversely, if a nation seeks war with another nation it will prevent athletes, intellectuals, and artists from visiting the targeted nation. Then it will break trade agreements, remove its diplomats, and withdraw from international treaties. War can easily develop since there are no peaceful constraints to hold it back. Refusal to communicate is the first stage of war.

These six conditions for peace have been found in ancient, classical, medieval, and contemporary relations between states. Although these conditions vary according to time and culture, peace between states cannot exist without most of them being in place.

Perhaps there is no better illustration of this path to peace than the European Union (EU). War has dominated European history for several millennia. Wars were fought between the Celts and the Romans, between Catholics and Protestants, and between the numerous nation states that emerged after the 16th century. The

Refusal to communicate is the first stage of war.

Peace research points to 6 conditions that make peace possible between nation states. The first three of these conditions are informal or citizen-based initiatives.



1. International athletic games such as the Olympic games



2. International discourse such as this one in Malaysia



3. Artistic celebrations such as the International Festival of the arts

Continued on next page

Past, Present, and Perpetual Peace

Today, “armies” of workers, tourists, and sports fans travel freely and peacefully within the EU.

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Latin maxim “*Si vis pacem para bellum*” (“If you wish peace, prepare for war”) led many a nation down the path to war, not peace. Knights, fortresses, and continuous bloodshed were used to make “peace,” but greater wars always resulted.

The bloodshed and slaughter in Europe came to a head in the Great War of the 20th century (1914-1945). Almost nine million soldiers died in the first phase of this war (1914-1918) and fifty million people were killed in the second phase (1939-1945). Countless millions starved or died of disease and millions of children grew up without parents.

Finally, the Europeans had enough. Winston Churchill’s proposal for a “United States of Europe” in 1946 was initially greeted with derision but soon the idea gained acceptance and took hold.

Immanuel Kant’s vision in *Perpetual Peace* (1795) of an international “federation of free states” became the philosophical foundation for today’s European Union (EU). The EU was formally inaugurated in 1993 as an economic and political union following a “yes” vote by the citizens of all participating states.

Today there are twenty-seven (27) member states that include former Fascist and Communist nations that fought hot and cold wars until as recently as 1989. Today armies of workers, tourists, and sports fans travel freely within these states. Today Germany battles England and France battles Italy on the athletic fields of Europe. Small nations such as Ireland and Luxembourg thrive as never before. A common currency, the Euro, has replaced the nationalist currencies of old. Also, it is highly likely that despite England’s “Brexit” vote it will be forced to return to the EU to survive economically.

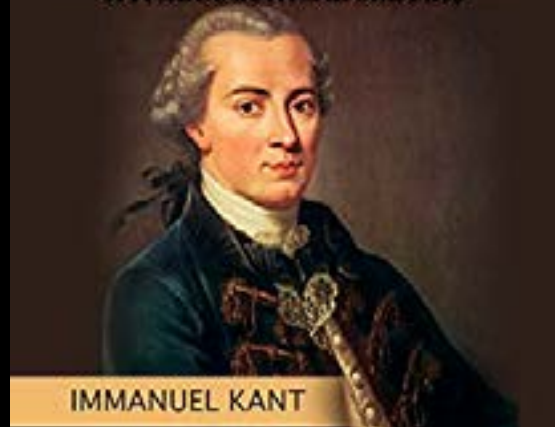
While it is difficult to predict the future, it seems virtually impossible that Europe will repeat the wars of the 20th century in the years remaining in the 21st century. Perhaps this century and those beyond can do what all the wars have failed to accomplish: bring a true, just, and perpetual peace to Europe.

There are, of course, some “caveats” in this model of peace. Questions like fair wages and collective bargaining for workers, fair prices for consumers, and the protection of our oceans, air, the environment are real and must be continually regulated through international law. But the benefits of this model are also real: all profit when nations play together, think together, sing together, work together, share together, and live under a common rule of law together.

Can the six conditions for peace and the European Union serve as models for global peace? Can we one day establish a *Global Union* that will abolish war and secure human rights for all? Of course we can. This is no pipedream. Peace has existed for thousands of years and we are only now beginning to learn the power of nonviolence as a solution to war. Our best days lie ahead. There is hope. ☆

PERPETUAL PEACE

A PHILOSOPHICAL SKETCH



Immanuel Kant's Perpetual Peace book cover (1795)

The Path Forward

Recalling God's Deliverance in Times of Difficulty

Steven Woolley



Detail from *The Prophet Jeremiah*, painted on the Sistine Chapel circa 1510–1511 by Michelangelo (1475–1564).

The seasons of Passover and Easter have just passed. They always bring questions about their meaning, and how or whether they're related, but this year is different. The COVID-19 pandemic has generated other questions, among them: What do the Hebrew and Christian scriptures have to say that might be helpful?

The first thing to note is they do not promise magical answers to the difficulties of life, including the frightening threat of pandemics. Nor, contrary to what some may have heard, do they promise that right belief, or prayers said in the right way, will lead to a prosperous life of plenty free from the realities others have to endure.

From start to finish they are the stories of persevering endurance as people learned what it means to have faith in God, who is free to engage with creation as 'He' will, and always for its good in God's own time. Paul, writing to the churches in Rome, tried to put it in words like these: "Suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint." In the same letter he wrote, "God makes all things work together for good for those who love God." He wrote those words having endured prison, beatings, shipwrecks, and poverty. Yet, out of it the good news of salvation spread to a world of spiritually starving people suffering the hardest of hard lives. Paul, having experienced the fullness of God's love, declared everything else to be trash. It was worth that much.

His experience was not an exception. The Hebrew scriptures are filled with stories of people such as Isaac, Joseph, Moses and Jeremiah. Isaac was a ne'er-do-well son who scammed anyone he could. Escaping the posse, he became the indentured servant of his uncle, an even bigger scam artist, whom he had to serve for over fourteen years before he could make his escape. It took him all that time to mature into the responsible patriarch from whom would come the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joseph was a teenage brat so irritating that his older brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. It took a decade in an Egyptian prison for him to become the man who would rise to save Egypt, and his own family, from years of famine. In time, the Hebrews who took refuge in Egypt became an enslaved people. Four hundred years later, Moses,

The Passover and Easter stories demonstrate preserving endurance as people learn how to engage with creation.

Continued on next page

The Path Forward

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raised in Pharaoh's household of wealth and privilege, was exiled to the desert where he learned its ways, and came face-to-face with God. Through him, God delivered the people from slavery into new life in a promised land.

Indentured servitude, years in prison, and desert exile are not the good things of life, but through them God prepared the way of deliverance and a greater good to come for God's people.

It didn't always go well, largely due to human selfishness, greed, and the desire to make gods into their own image. Centuries later, Jeremiah was called by God to be 'His' prophet when he was only a boy, a job he held until old age. He was reviled during the whole of his life for telling the people the truth about their misbehavior, warning them about what would happen if they kept it up. They didn't listen, the worst happened, Jeremiah was blamed, and he complained bitterly to God about how he was mistreated. But through his misery and national defeat and destruction, a path was opened for the fullness of Jewish faith to develop, and with it renewed hope for better times. For us Christians, it also prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, who opened an even broader path to encompass all humanity.

What Hebrew and Christian scripture offers is the story of God's love giving strength and fullness of life for those willing to accept it. But it never promises an easy life. It's a pattern repeated through the ages right to our own time. This nation has struggled through wars, famine, plague, civil unrest, and corruption, always to emerge in a better place, with God's faithful helping lead the way through, and the way forward.

The seasons of Passover and Easter recall with thanksgiving the difficult, often brutal times through which our ancestors were delivered by the abounding and steadfast love of God, the difficult times of our lives that we've endured by God's grace, and the greater good that lies ahead for us, and for generations yet to come.

Ours is a curious faith. If you want magic, it's not for you. We are called to love God and love one another, stranger and friend alike. That's the one rule not open to debate. It's the way to a better life, a good life, not for us only but for all. It's true we stumble along the way, but in God's abounding and steadfast love a path forward will always be opened. ✧

The call to love God and one another points the way to a good life.



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Common Ground

Dorothy Knudson

Peace and Reconciliation

How do people who have opposed each other change their minds? How does peace and reconciliation take place? A 2019 film, *The Best of Enemies*, a fictionalized account of school integration in Durham, North Carolina in 1971, sheds a great deal of light on this question.

After the city had been sued by the NAACP to integrate immediately, the case went to a judge who in turn suggested the Charrette Protocol process to the city council. A charrette is defined as a meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions.

The city council agreed to be bound by the decision of the charrette. Bill Riccard, who had been successful with the same process in York, Pennsylvania, came to Durham and began by selecting two co-chairs: Ann Atwater, an in-your-face Black community organizer and C. P. Ellis, the president of the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. Appointing them insured that the most extreme positions would be represented along with Black and White citizens on a spectrum.

How does reconciliation begin? While it is clear that this was a bitterly divisive matter, Bill Riccard began by gathering issues and concerns that all groups had in common. From the outset they realize there are matters which unite rather than divide them.

For C.P., joining the Klan was “the first time in my life when I didn’t feel alone. I felt part of something much bigger than me. When I was elected president, I was over the moon. It was a real brotherhood. It was not for self but for others...people doing for others.” He was welcomed and made to feel a part of a larger entity, an invisible empire. He felt that this entity of which he was now a part was spreading “good” in an alien world.

Meetings began with a prayer to fight the good fight. I oppose the Ku Klux Klan but this much of his experience is one I share. I think we all want to feel we are doing good for the world. For people with deep racial prejudices, the Klan would both reinforce and legitimate those prejudices.

Riccard’s Durham friend hoped for the same success in Durham as had been true in York, Pennsylvania. It proved to be immensely more difficult. Seeing that Ellis represented a great many people in town, Riccard invited him to lunch along with Ann Atwater. (Not an easy proposition for a white supremacist to meet in an integrated café.)

From the outset, people on the bitterly divided sides realize there are matters which unite them.



The film The Best of Enemies (directed by Robin Bissell, U.S.A., 2019) stars Taraji P. Henson as Ann Atwater, Sam Rockwell as C. P. Ellis, and Anne Heche as C. P.’s wife Mary.

Continued on next page

Common Ground

Neither wanted to be a vice-chairman but to refuse might mean a more “accommodating” person would be selected. Ann had had too many bad experiences with “crackers.” Thus, while they disliked each other intensely, each accepted in order to be sure that their side would be represented.

At the initial community meeting, C. P. talked about the problems his sons were having in school. Howard, a leader of the Black Solidarity Committee, recognized that he had “opened up his heart about his sons...That makes him my brother,” he said.

Not all were thrilled with this new “brotherhood.” Black members of the community told how the books they used were so out of date that their children were one grade behind.

Riccard listed issues and concerns and assigned “integrated” smaller groups to discuss those concerns. Both sides worked hard to get strong representatives to the twelve-member Senate which could vote on resolutions. The vote would have to have a two-thirds majority. A Black preacher suggested that ending with Gospel music would bring a positive note. The whites did not agree. C. P. wanted to bring Klan materials. Ann vociferously objected and Riccard told her that he had heard she was “all talk and no listening.” Each side had to give in because in a charrette people are trying to understand each other.

When a few Black teenagers seek to destroy the Klan material which C. P. had been allowed to display, Ann stops them. Then looking directly at the hooded Klan outfit causes her to shudder. C. P. notices her reaction and begins to understand the fear and horror that costume represents for Blacks. Each is beginning to appreciate the common humanity of the other.

All the participants begin to become more aware that people with different colored skin have a lot in common. That, in turn, allows people to listen to each other. Isn't

that where peacemaking begins? We come to realize that our “enemies” are much like us in many ways. The charrette makes this opportunity available for people who had never experienced this in the gut, so to speak.

In the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., the process of seeking consensus on whether or not to ordain gay people followed much the same pattern. People from all points of view were selected to be on the study committee. While it is easy to hate people we have labeled “wrong,” “misguided,” or “unthinking,” it is discovering what we have in common that allows us to move toward reconciliation. The final recommendation in favor was by consensus.

C. P. wants to coerce the vote of a White man and learns he had served this country as a soldier in Vietnam. This set him back on his heels. How can a patriot be a liberal? Getting closer to people we admire only to learn they see things differently makes us think. It is exactly this way of thinking that allows us to change.

Ann observes that the same God who made her made C. P. and along with that she points out that all people have the same color

Ann and C. P. begin to recognize their common humanity.



*Ann Atwater, left, and C.P. Ellis, right, talk as they wait to see the premiere in 2002 of the documentary film *An Unlikely Friendship* at the University of North Carolina campus in Chapel Hill. (Grant Halverson/AP)*

Continued on next page

Common Ground

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blood. Even as she's locked in battle with C.P. she has gone out of her way to help with one of his family problems. His wife responds with appreciation.

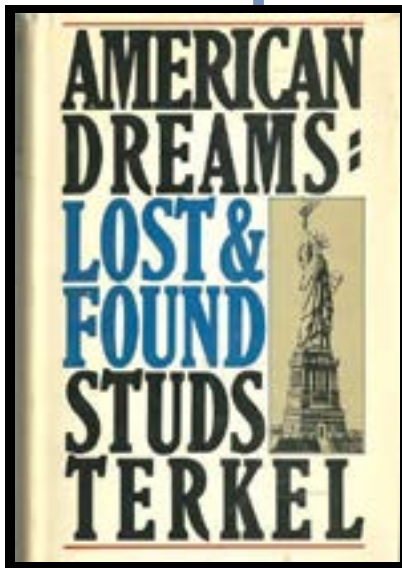
While the community experience of a charette has a greater or lesser effect on all the participants, not all are persuaded. There are always those who are willing to intimidate others in order to get their way. It is hard to give up power and privilege. In Eugene Peterson's Message version of the Bible, the beatitude we're used to reading as "Blessed are the Peacemakers for they will be called children of God," his version states: "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family."

C.P.'s realization that he no longer believed Blacks are inferior costs him Klan membership. Not so different from many leaders who seek peace and justice. There is often a high cost. Some pay with their lives. C. P.'s Klan friends deserted him. He has lost a way of life which had met a great need. Ann's attitude and behavior toward "crackers" changed. She could no longer put all Whites in the same category.

The bonus features to the film introduce us to a number of the real people in the movie. We learn that Ann and C. P. became great friends, traveling a talk circuit to share their experience. When he died in 2005, she gave his eulogy.

We might say the movie has a happy ending. Yet the film makes it clear that to be a peacemaker, to work for reconciliation, is costly. People of every religious persuasion, and none, however, continue to do so because it is a cost they are willing to pay. ☆

Seeking reconciliation comes with a cost—but a cost that many are willing to pay.



For Further Reading and Viewing

The unlikely, remarkable relationship between Ann Atwater and C. P. Ellis is so compelling that writers and filmmakers have been drawn to it repeatedly. Consider seeking out these accounts:

An interview with C. P. Ellis appears in Studs Terkel's *American Dreams: Lost and Found* (Ballantine Books, 1980).

The 2019 film *The Best of Enemies* was based on the book *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South* by Osha Gray Davidson (University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

In 2002, Ann Atwater was the subject of two documentary films: *An Unlikely Friendship* (directed by Diane Bloom, U.S.A.), and *Ann Atwater: Grassroots Organizer and Veteran of America's Freedom Struggle*.

Osha Gray Davidson's book was adapted into a stage play in 2011 by Mark St. Germain. The play debuted in Durham, North Carolina, in 2013.