



MennoLetter from Jerusalem

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*A Middle East View by Mennonite Church Liaison,
Glenn Edward Witmer*

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“The first thing we saw were mounds of dirt and boulders blocking the road, preventing vehicles from entering... The next thing was graffiti—‘Death to Arabs.’”  
—Gila Svirsky, *Coalition of Women for Peace*

“Every non-Jew is seen as a potential enemy. Unless they can overcome their paranoia... there will never be peace.”  
—Fr. Elias Chacour

“Nonviolence, when it becomes active, travels with extraordinary velocity—and then it becomes a miracle.”  
—Mahatma Gandhi

## ~MY VOICE ...

Searching for a pearl of great price, not thrown to the swine.

### *Bring in the Real Treasure Hunters*

At Jerusalem’s Bat Kol Institute, with which I have an affiliation, we call it ‘Excavating the Word of God’. It is a Bible study method that compares well to the treasure-digging that draws so many professional archaeologists and first-time diggers to this incredible land of Israel, so steeped in history and lore that even modern engineers have learned to adapt their methods. “We budget for the unexpected, and expect the budget and schedules to be up-ended once we start to dig,” said one. “When those bulldozers start working, we never know what we will find under the surface.”

That’s what happened 35 years ago beside the Sea of Galilee. Shortly after the six-day war of 1967, a new road was being built along the eastern shore, through captured Syrians areas. True to form, a bulldozer struck a rock—not one like all the others in this land of rocks, but a rock that clearly had been worked and used for building. Construction stopped. Government officials and archaeologists from the Israeli Department of Antiquities were called in to investigate. From that accidental find, there is today the fascinating pilgrimage site of Kursi, where Jesus’ miracle of healing of the demoniac among the tombs and 2000 swine took place [Mark 5:1-20]. Renewed digging last month has uncovered even more of the subsequent story of apparent ruins of a large monastery—believed to date from the Persian massacre of 614 CE which left thousands of monks and Christian pilgrims slaughtered, and most of the Holy Land’s Christian places of worship in ruins. I took part in that dig for a few days [*story next page*] in order to feel first-hand the excitement of reaching back into time and discovering once again how history and stones come alive and retell ancient stories...

*It wasn’t a bulldozer that uncovered the already-famous ossuary* with the intriguing inscription that mentions the Holy Family [*article page 3*]. But bulldozers have been busy scraping

away at this society, in the process revealing layers of residual hate and mistrust between the peoples of these ancient cultures. Israeli settlers claim land where generations of olive trees have been providing the only—meager—source of livelihood for Palestinian landowners, who must flee

the snipers' bullets that keep them from the ripe olives that need harvesting. Bulldozers follow to uproot orchards—"for security purposes!"—with no warning, no explanation, no recourse [see page 5].

Understanding each other, respecting differences in cultures and religions, and learning peaceful coexistence have never been strong-points for humanity throughout history. It is one of the benefits of the Bat Kol Institute's expanded Israel Study program [page 3], bringing groups of Bible teachers and ministers to experience the People, the Land, and the Book in new ways, excavating for treasure in the Scriptures—the most valuable site we know—yet often the least explored. —GEW

## *Galilee Massacre Uncovered—1500 Years Later*

The Persians swept through the land in 614 C.E. tearing down or burning every Christian structure they could find, and massacring thousands of monks and pilgrims. And a group of dedicated persons uncovered the story in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*"More stones and bones, Glenn?"* The twinkle in Fr. Jonathan's eye at the Ratisbonne Center breakfast table used to show his teasing, something I'd expect from him after a time of touring biblical and archaeological sites. I knew from the reaction of a few people in my groups that not everyone gets the same rush of excitement and enthusiasm as I do from climbing around, over, and under the rocks and caves of this historic piece of geography we lovingly call the Holy Land.

*"What could this be: bones in piles, without skulls, in large pits..."*

But I just couldn't hide my excitement last month at Kursi, on the eastern shores of Galilee—formerly Syrian controlled land—as we dug through mounds of earth in a series of pits that revealed piles of human bones.\*

These were not normal graves but the size and shape of storerooms, just behind the uncovered foundations and walls of the ancient Byzantine church. And strangely, although we gently lifted out masses of bones, carefully sifted every bucketful for signs of identifiable items, we saw no skulls. We found rings, bracelets, a perfectly maintained glass vase, and scoops of potsherds—pottery was easily identified to the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. But no skulls! What could it be: bones in piles, without skulls, in large pits clearly not proper graves or a cemetery? Chief archaeologist, Vasilios Tzaferis, had put a number of clues together, added a layer of historical evidence from the area, and mixed in excerpts of literary accounts of early pilgrims: "This large site was a huge monastery," he determined, "built to welcome hundreds of pilgrims visiting the place where Jesus cast out a 'legion' of demons who raced two thousand swine over the embankment, into the sea."

A large church with a beautiful mosaic floor was the first part to be found when in 1970 that bulldozer, clearing the field for a new highway, struck a mysterious object, thus starting a dig that will continue well into this century. Ten more years will probably be needed to unearth the whole area. Large rooms, a bath house—normally not part of a convent—and other shapes and forms were unearthed and brushed clean. Then those storerooms of bones. "That kind of burial is typical of a massacre," explained Tzaferis. "The heads are removed and collected in a separate room, and the rest of the bones—unidentified—are heaped in a pit and covered. I hope we'll find skulls somewhere."

It was a strange feeling to be three meters down, crawling in a space to low to stand up in, and scraping away 1500 years of burial soil, knowing I was the first person to see those finds since that terrible bloody day centuries ago.

These aren't just stones and bones, Jonathan! This is real live history.

\* See photos in the separate attachment sent with this letter, or on our website: [www.mennonitechurch.ca/news/jerusalemletter/](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/news/jerusalemletter/)

## *In the Name of the Brother?*

The inscription on the unearthed ossuary is what's causing all the excitement:  
*Ya'akov bar Yosef akhui di Yeshua—"James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."*

The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto will be the center of interest for a group of religious scholars and biblical archaeologists at a conference there later this month. A respected collector of antiquities has allowed the Biblical Archaeology Society—and publishers of *Biblical Archaeology Review* [BAR]—to exhibit there a half-meter-long limestone box once used to hold bones [ossuary], found in present-day Silwan [Siloam] just outside the Old City of Jerusalem. The excitement is palpable as church and government experts lend support to the authenticity of the find, concurring with a Johns Hopkins University evaluation of a paleographic study [script and letter forms] of the age and authenticity of the Aramaic inscription carved in the stone work, “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.” The archaeological treasure was first uncovered years ago, but the collector didn’t know what he had.

It was standard practice for ossuary inscriptions to use the patronymic identification—so-and-so the son of ... So why was the brother’s name added in this case? It had happened once before, where a brother’s name appeared on the burial box, but it is rare. In cases like this, “Either the brother was responsible

for arranging the burial—and so his name is listed—or because the brother is prominent and the deceased is associated with him,” said *BAR* editor, Hershel Shanks to a *Jerusalem Post* reporter. “Now, James was the head of the Jerusalem Church! That’s the clincher as to why the three people—James, Joseph, and Jesus—are all very likely to be the people of those names in the New Testament.” Shanks, who is Jewish, added, “If you want to understand Jesus, you have to understand the Jewish world in which he lived; his vernacular was Aramaic. His brother was buried according to Jewish practice. He was born and he died a Jew.”

Jesus’ teachings are better understood  
when we understand the times and places of his life.

## *Cross-Cultural Experiences for Youth—and Alumni*

The recent ‘Homecoming’ banquet at Eastern Mennonite University [EMU], Harrisonburg, Virginia, launched a year-long celebration of the 20th anniversary of cross-cultural requirements in EMU’s curriculum—i.e., students spend a study semester outside the US. One option for a study venue is the Middle East, and this semester 30 EMU undergrads are living and studying in the region. This week they just completed a new study on ‘understanding Jesus in his Jewish context’, a course that follows the Bat Kol teaching approach of including rabbinic interpretations of the text under study, to get closer to the meaning of Jesus’ thinking and teaching, and to the worldview of the gospel writers.

For 2003, EMU is also arranging four ‘study tours’ for alumni and friends. This offers university alumni and others a chance to experience the cross-cultural program in microcosm. “Our June trip to the Middle East is one of the four,” says program coordinator, Marie Shenk. “That tour group will travel to Israel/Palestine and Jordan. Through field trips and lectures we will explore biblical history, geography, religions, politics, and quests for reconciliation, hearing from Palestinians and Israelis.”

*Meanwhile, over at Bat Kol*, 16 Bible teachers, pastors, and workers in Christian education from eight countries have arrived for the fourth Israel Study Session. This intensive month of study—“Excavating the Word of God in the Book of Exodus”—provides the participants with new exposure to the people and the land that form the backdrop to Scripture. Bat Kol President, Dr. Maureena Fritz, stated: “The life and teaching of Jesus are so firmly rooted in Jewish traditions that he cannot be fully understood without an awareness of his Jewish traditions.” Bat Kol’s 2003 study program—*Love, Law and Lore: Holiness & Wilderness Themes in the Book of Leviticus*—has just been announced, and can be reviewed further at their website, [www.batkol.info](http://www.batkol.info).

## *Christian Peacemaker Denied Entry to Israel*

*“The Israeli government is using the US-led international climate of anti-terrorism to run roughshod over Palestinians.”*

Kathleen Kern, Bible scholar and member of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), was denied entry to Israel at Ben Gurion Airport recently. Kern, a forty-year-old writer of Sunday School materials, was on her way to join the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Israel/Palestine. On numerous trips with CPT over the past eight years, Kern has repeatedly intervened in conflict situations to reduce violence and to protect human rights. She has been assaulted by Israeli settlers, but never arrested by Israeli authorities. Kern is the third member of CPT to be denied entry in the last five months.

Kern was scheduled to be part of the CPT Rapid Response Team, based in Jerusalem and charged with responding as quickly as possible to attacks or threats of attacks against any civilian populations, Israeli or Palestinian. “Kathy is the least threatening person you can imagine,” said Mark Shelly of the Rochester, New York, Mennonite Fellowship where Kern is a member. “She is never harsh or rough, verbally or physically. She is always working to try to understand others’ positions. She has been a leader in improving Jewish/Christian/Muslim dialogue in our area.

*Harassment by Israeli authorities at Ben Gurion Airport* also led four Palestinian church leaders to give up their attempt to attend a conference in London. Bishop Riah Abu El-Asal, Head of the Anglican Church; Bishop Munib Younan, Head of the Lutheran Church; and Bishop Boutros Mouallem and Elias Chacour of the Greek Catholic Church were on their way to attend follow-up meetings on the Alexandria Declaration,\* an initiative for interfaith dialogue between Christians, Moslems, and Jews, when the problem occurred. “We were humiliated as never before,” said Bishop Riah. Security officials at the airport insisted that Archbishop Mouallem provide a certificate proving that he was a bishop, then he was taken into a private room at the VIP lounge for interrogation.

Father Chacour said that the Greek Catholic archbishop, who carries a Vatican passport, had never experienced such humiliation. “Every non-Jew is seen as a potential enemy,” Father Chacour said. “We want to be friends with the Israelis and build bridges between our communities but it is becoming very difficult. We either build this state together or it won’t be built,” he said. “Unless they can overcome their paranoia, their feeling that they are victims, there will never be peace.” Bishop Munib said that pressure against the Christian community and its leaders has been increasing. “It’s constantly like this,” he said in describing his difficulties during recent border crossings. “If we are treated this way, how do they treat normal Palestinian Christians?”

*“The Israeli government is using the US-led international climate of anti-terrorism and Iraq war fever to run roughshod over Palestinians in general and human rights workers in particular,”* according to Gene Stoltzfus, Christian Peacemaker Teams director. “This is done by tightening the noose at Tel Aviv’s airport or on-the-ground restrictions and arrests of human rights workers, as well as with renewed home demolitions and attacks on population centers. Kern’s rejection at Tel Aviv airport is a wake up call for all Christians to start doing something about the blood that is flowing in that place called the Holy Land.” *From Episcopal News Service and a CPT release. Christian Peacemaker Teams is a program of Brethren, Quaker, and Mennonite Churches. See also [www.prairienet.org/cpt](http://www.prairienet.org/cpt).*

\* For further information on the declaration, click here: [First Alexandria Declaration of the Religious Leaders of the Holy Land](#), originally issued in Alexandria, Egypt, on January 21, 2002.

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**D***espite the discouraging times*, there are Israeli activists continuing to struggle for reconciliation on many fronts. *Women in Black* continue the vigils throughout Israel—one hour every week, dressed in black and carrying signs, ‘End the Occupation’. “It’s hard to imagine that we have been standing here for almost 15 years,” said one mother. Their numbers have increased in recent months, in response to organized assaults by extreme right-wingers in Jerusalem. In testimony to the import of this international movement, an Israeli representative of *Women in Black* was invited to address the UN Security Council.

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## *Right-Wing Evangelicals Rally in Support of Israel*

*“I hope it sends a friendly but firm message to the White House.”*

Some of George W. Bush’s most ardent supporters gathered at the White House to express their differences with the president over policy toward Israel. The ‘Christian Solidarity with Israel’ rally, organized by the Christian Coalition, said its primary aim was to demonstrate that evangelical Christians in America support the state of Israel. “I hope it sends a friendly but firm message to the White House that, in a number of areas, conservative Christians feel that the administration is going down the wrong road,” said former Republican presidential candidate Gary Bauer in an interview with *WorldNetDaily*.

Bauer, a rally speaker, recalled that there were low expectations for Bush regarding Israel when he entered office because of the record of his father who “tilted toward the oil producing states” in the region. “So everybody has been excited that the president has repeatedly said that Israel has the right to defend itself and has been so clear in his statements about Yasser Arafat,” said Bauer, president of the lobby group, American Values, based near Washington, D.C.

“However,” he continued, “there is a repeated pattern of pressuring Israel to back off when it’s attempting to counter terrorist attacks. It’s inappropriate...and it’s disappointing, and I hope that we will be able to convince the president that Israel has the same right to do what we would do under the circumstances.”

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## *Picking Olives for Peace*

*In the wake of ongoing attacks by settlers*

against the residents of the Palestinian village of Kfar Yassuf, and following several recent shooting incidents and the theft of olives, a group decided to quickly organize help with the olive harvest. This action was called by *Rabbis for Human Rights* and the *Israel Committee Against Home Demolitions*, but activists from many organizations joined in. The first thing we saw at the entrance to the village were mounds of dirt and boulders

that blocked the road, preventing vehicles from entering, and thereby forcing villagers to walk several hundred meters from the road to their homes, often carrying heavy packages. The next thing was graffiti, “Death to Arabs,” presumably painted by the Kahane extremist settlers of Tapuah. At the entrance to the village, hundreds of residents met and welcomed us, and many more joined as we walked through the village.

*“The first thing we saw were mounds of dirt and boulders blocking the road... the next thing was graffiti, ‘Death to Arabs.’”*

We quickly went to the olive orchard near the Tapuah settlement where the olive groves had been raided by settlers. Palestinian villagers and Israeli peace activists set to work at once with great energy, out of fear—soon confirmed—that we would soon be interrupted by settlers and security forces.

At first, about 15 soldiers and police stood on the hill between us and the settlement, and allowed us to continue the harvest. A short while later, some 20 settlers gathered above us, some of them armed. The settlers began to advance toward us shouting and cursing. At that point, the senior officer approached and requested that we leave the hillside to avoid clashes. A short while later, the district army commander arrived and demanded that we entirely evacuate the area on the grounds that it was a ‘closed military zone’...

*“Let them harvest their olives when there’s a Palestinian state”*

After discussing this with the villagers, we agreed to leave out of concern for their welfare. Our request that the security forces disperse the settlers and allow the villagers to complete their harvest was jeeringly denied. “Let them harvest their olives when there’s a Palestinian state,” the commander said. Documenting this event were a Canadian TV crew and a reporter from an Israeli newspaper.

—Gila Svirsky, *Coalition of Women for a Just Peace*.

See also: [www.coalitionofwomen4peace.org](http://www.coalitionofwomen4peace.org)

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For details of International Solidarity Movement’s Olive Harvest Campaign, see www.palsolidarity.org

Hizbollah Leader Blasts Christian Zionists

“Islamic fundamentalists are having a field day with these comments, which have been replayed throughout the Muslim world.”

“Christian Zionists are gaining strength in the US and that they have a powerful impact on US foreign policy,” said Hizbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. He has accused the US Christian supporters of Israel of hatching a ‘plot’ to liquidate the Arabs and drive them into exile, the Beirut *Daily Star* has reported. Nasrallah said that Christian groups in America are financed by oil companies and weapons firms, and seek to encourage Jews to move to Israel and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. However, a *Jerusalem Post* article reports, he added, “If they all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide.”

The issue was inflamed in part by recent comments from well-known Christian fundamentalists who were then led to apologetic statements only after it was too late, and the terrible damage was done. Just two weeks ago, on CBS’s *60 Minutes*, Jerry Falwell announced that Muhammad was “a terrorist.” Earlier, Pat Robertson called Muhammad “a robber and a brigand” and described Islam as “a monumental scam.” Billy Graham’s son, Franklin, called Islam “a very evil and wicked religion.” What concerns many people about such unnecessary and harmful statements is that they have gone largely unchallenged, and have also been received with silence from the White House.

“Commentators who froth at the mouth when they read of one crackpot mullah in Egypt saying noxious things about Christians or Jews, are now silent,” writes *Newsweek* columnist, Fareed Zakaria. “And in this case, the “extremists” are not obscure characters but rather three of the best-known religious leaders in America, with tens of millions of followers and huge political influence... Islamic fundamentalists are having a field day replaying these comments throughout the Muslim world.”

~ OTHER VOICES...

The Very Revd Michael Sellors, St. George’s Cathedral, Jerusalem

Heads of Churches ‘Greatly Troubled’ Over Bush Jerusalem Policy

“Jerusalem is occupied territory, and should be protected by international law.”

Following last month’s White House signing of the congressional bill altering the US position on Jerusalem as the capital of Israel [requiring the American embassy to move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem], The Very Revd Michael Sellors of St. George’s Cathedral, and coordinator for the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, sent a message to George Bush:

“We are greatly troubled as we learn of the new legislation you have signed in recent days—specifically section 214 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act relating to Jerusalem. At a time when so many efforts are being made to end the bloodshed and violence of this Land and work for peace it seems provocative to us that your Congress should seem to want to pre-empt the

careful negotiation and legislation which have already been deemed necessary especially under the Oslo Agreement and UN Resolutions 242, 338.

“Jerusalem is occupied territory, and as such should be currently protected by international law. Areas of the City are sacred to Jews, Moslems, and Christians. As such, these areas need to be freely open and access safeguarded to adherents of these Faiths. We fully appreciate the infinite patience, care and goodwill which will be necessary to resolve the final status of the Holy City of Jerusalem and therefore appeal to you not to jeopardize future peace efforts, otherwise there will be increased suffering in an already troubled area.”

Akiva Eldar

“The political and military establishments have been slow to recognize the value of the transition, particularly in the West Bank, from a violent intifada to non-violent popular unrest.”

In Favor of Gandhi’s Legacy

Even after the terrible murder she would keep marching toward Israeli tanks, armed only with fresh flowers.

Shadan Abu-Hajla was 50 years old when she died two weeks ago from an Israeli soldier’s bullet as she sat embroidering in a Nablus park. Her husband, an elderly, well-known doctor, was wounded in the head, and their son got a bullet in the neck. Abu-Hajla was the neighborhood coordinator of a Nablus women’s organization which, since the intifada, has been providing aid to the needy and preaching non-violent civil disobedience as a form of resistance to the occupation.

“No act of Israeli violence will change their minds...the struggle against the occupation does not justify violence against Israeli civilians.”

Anan Kadri is one of the group’s leaders, and paid a condolence call on the Abu-Hajla family recently. She said that even after the terrible murder she and her friends would keep marching toward Israeli tanks, armed only with fresh flowers. No act of Israeli violence will change their minds, which have not been changed by the events of the last two years—that the struggle against the occupation does not justify violence against Israeli civilians.

The political and military establishments have been slow to recognize the value of the transition, particularly in the West Bank, from a violent *intifada* to non-violent popular unrest. But Moshe Ya’alon, Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has deigned to recognize the importance of the change, saying his iron fist should get the credit for the Palestinian soul-searching.

“The IDF is in no hurry to expose the peace marches by the women and children to the Israeli public and to world opinion...”

Emphasizing the seemingly intrinsic and obvious connection between the tough measures the IDF is taking in the territories, and the institutionalization of the internal criticism of the suicide bombings, is

not merely patting oneself on the back. The message between the lines is that now is not the time to stop. Let the IDF win a little bit more, and more Palestinians will lay down their weapons. Let Ya’alon “exterminate the terrorist nests in Gaza” and you’ll see how they will understand that violence doesn’t pay.

Maybe that’s why the IDF is in no hurry to expose the peace marches by the women and children in Nablus to the Israeli public and to world opinion: Ya’alon needs a few more months to finish his mission of “searing the Palestinian consciousness.” If they take the cessation of violence too seriously, it could increase international pressure on Israel to end the renewed occupation. The joint demonstration a while back by Palestinian peace activists and hundreds from Ta’aysuh, the Israeli Jewish-Arab cooperation group, was rebuffed by tear gas fired by IDF troops.

In the Fatah leadership they understand that the terrorist attacks won’t move the Sharon government from a single settlement, “or, as you

“Arafat’s declining stature in the world and especially in Israeli eyes, doesn’t leave him any chance to turn into the Palestinian Mahatma Gandhi.”

call them, outposts.” But they have no intention of accepting the occupation and won’t give up a centimeter of the 22 percent of historic Palestine they claim as theirs. Unlike you, they say, we have reached the conclusion that what wasn’t achieved through force won’t be won by more force, and that a child pushing a flower into a tank barrel advances our cause a thousand times more than a thousand bullets bouncing off the tank.

The proponents of non-violence in the territories say they won’t allow anyone—not the Hamas zealots who prefer violence, and not even Yasser Arafat, who grew used to speaking in two tongues—from budging their principled position against violence. On the one hand, Arafat’s declining stature in the world and especially in

Israeli eyes, doesn't leave him any chance to turn into the Palestinian Mahatma Gandhi. On the other hand, there's no outstanding charismatic leader in the Palestinian political and intellectual communities who has stood at the front of the crowd. At most they appear briefly in front of the TV cameras and then go home to wipe off the dust. In Israel, a poll published recently by Tel Aviv

University on behalf of Search for Common Ground shows that every second Israeli supports the right of the Palestinians to non-violent protest. But these many, good people, who could do a lot to get the violence out of the conflict, aren't getting out of their armchairs. —in *Ha'aretz*

A Prison for Palestinians, A Ghetto for Israelis

It is called 'the fence' but in reality it is a 3-storey high concrete wall being constructed by the Israelis. Demolition orders for hundreds of Palestinian homes have been issued. It's the plan of the Sharon government to completely separate the Israeli and Palestinian areas from north to south. This monster is going to be a symbol of eternal war. It will be the tomb of any hope of peace, reconciliation, and partnership between the two peoples of this country. The building of the wall will entail a giant land theft, and many Palestinians will lose what remains of their land. Whole villages will be cut off from the rest of the West Bank. In other places, the wall will separate the houses of the villages from their own land. Kalkiliya, a town with a population of tens of thousands, will become an enclave surrounded by walls on all sides. This will not bring security but only deepen the hostility and eternalize the conflict. Only the Green Line is the border of peace. —*Uri Avnery*

~ YOUR VOICE...

Following last month's article about balancing voices and opinions from all sides, a pastor writes:

"I certainly do not agree with the Israeli occupation or the measures they are using to extend their territory; however, one could get the impression from [*MennoLetter* No. 6] that Muslims and Islam are virtually innocent. You do not even hint at the violence and intolerance of Islam to other religions in countries such as Indonesia,

"All you have to do is read the doctrine. Chapter 9 of the Qur'an is nothing but a declaration of war."

Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, etc. In fact, it is hard to find a dominantly Muslim country where Christians and other minorities are shown tolerance... You also relegate all violent acts to extremists within the Islamic religion.

I read something quite different in the May/June 2002 issue of *Faith Today*. An ex-militant Muslim from Lebanon who turned to Christianity said even his father hired assassins to kill him. In this article he mentioned that, "A lot of people think that Islam is okay, that those who are making these terrorist attacks are not from Islam. It's actually the other way around. The people who are nice are not really true Muslims—all you have to do is read the doctrine. Chapter 9 of the *Qur'an* is nothing but a declaration of war..."

"I should clarify that I don't feel Israel has special status as the people of God; that, to me, is old covenant. I feel, as you likely do too, that both sides need to own up to the wrongs they have done and work toward peace."

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*Your letters are welcome about the articles we include, or with your suggestions on other topics you would like to read about.*

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