

METHODIST RECORDER

BOOK REVIEW

by

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The most significant and timely book I have read this year is **Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence** by Jonathan Sacks (Hodder and Stoughton 2015, £20). It is not surprising, he says, that young radicals living in our culture of consumerism, individualism and hedonism want to change it. To resort to violence in the name of God however is blasphemy. Religion can be a source of violence, as can secularism, but religion can also be a resource for peace, justice and reconciliation.

I commend this book because I have never before come across such an illuminating exploration of the stories in Genesis. Dualism, scapegoating, God having favourites, the universality of justice, the particularity of love, sibling rivalry; these are examined as the author expounds the stories of Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers. I read his expositions with amazement as he turns these stories upside down and inside out. Sacks has given me new eyes with which to read the Old Testament.

Can the world be changed? His answer is an affirming yes, but not by power but by persuasion, not by daggers but by debate, not by weapons but by words.