

A Critique of Politics, Culture & Society

TIKKUN

(te•kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world.

JEFF HALPER | A Middle Eastern Union
NOREENA HERTZ | The Debt Threat
JOHN ZORN'S Radical Jewish Culture

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

POST-ELECTION SPECIAL

Now What?

Surviving 4 More Years

**Why America Needs
a Spiritual Left**

BY MICHAEL LERNER

When Jesus Votes

BY ROGER FRIEDLAND



\$5.95 U.S. \$8.75 Canada



Remembering Arafat | Sephardic Culture | Eco-Theology
Reforming Capitalism | Psychology & Politics
Reviews: Jeremy Rifkin, Hardt & Negri, Angels in America

The Central God

This is the central God who passes now in our neighborhood.
He heals and repairs everything, he's got plenty of time, no one
jostles anymore. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, he smiles.
Now he's the central God who comes as a glazier.

A glazier. A new glazier for repairs, from each and every balcony, all
the family members and neighbors, they all see him now,
so thin and slender, almost transparent, passing,
with total ease fixing and arranging, o
lady, not to worry, everything is now shining bright,
window and light, everything is spick and span, and so does the matter
of life get fixed,
as my central God passes
now, as a glazier, in our neighborhood.

This is the central God, the most high, the exalted, and now he passes
in our neighborhood as a gardener. With shovel and spade and one broken pail. He
weeds and he hoes, on the garden of the neighbors on the left he scatters
eternal dust of splendor, on the scalding of the future, of the past, what's
here to fear, he smiles
at the old man and woman, surely nothing
is too late, surely I have
forgiveness, I have understanding, and again God
smiles, this central God,
of glory, thick cloud, the angels and Divine Presence,
at my people, so tired, in the neighborhood,
yesterday, today, tomorrow.

This is the central God, the most high, the exalted, the lofty,
now passing in our neighborhood with a wheelbarrow. This is God
the professional, plasterer, providential scaffold climber, even whitewasher
of plenty, on the wheelbarrow between rollers and tiles
the plasterboard of knowledge and choice stills rolls,
while this God, so thin, the central
God, the remodeling God, who many
years ago founded this universe, pure and perfect, throned on
the cherubim, brave and bright, master, creator, maker and of righteousness
speaker, wearing a fine cloak of light, this
God now passes by me with total ease,
fixing well and arranging
whatever came through misdeed.

—Adriel Kosman
translated by Varda Koch Ocker

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Sikkum

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DEMOCRACY MATTERS: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism

Cornel West, Penguin Press, 2004

Cornel West is a prophetic truth teller, and *Democracy Matters* is a brilliant no-holds-barred analysis of nihilism in America and how it could be overcome by reviving the best of America's democ-



THE HEBREW PROPETS

Rabbi Rami Shapiro, Skylight Paths, 2004

GOD IN ALL MOMENTS

Or Rose, Jewish Lights, 2003

Collections of quotes from holy texts can be problematic and super-



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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I'm a thirty-year-old Jewish woman who is an active member of Philadelphia's P'nai Or community. While I find myself aligned with virtually everything this community stands for, I find myself radically anti-Zionist. This has caused much strife in my immediate family. I do not believe that theocracy is a form of government that works in practice, especially as it is practiced in modern Israel. How can we, as Americans who so greatly value the separation of church and state, when the church in question is not ours, support a state where there is no such separation?

I feel particularly excluded and rejected by certain Israeli laws. The facts that homosexuality is illegal in Israel, that women can't pray at the Wall, and that the only valid marriage is an Orthodox one anger me. I don't feel that I would be welcome in such a society, and because of its theocratic structure, I, as a bisexual female, would not have the voice to change said laws. So, in short, please explain why



the idea of a Jewish state without separation of secular and religious law is a good idea at all.

DEBORAH FRIEDMAN
Philadelphia, PA

Editor Responds:

It's not a good idea. The Tikkun Community explicitly calls for Israel to separate church from state. We support a

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Jewish-oriented society—as an affirmative-action compensation for 2000 years of oppression by much of the rest of the world, though we believe that Israel should be eventually transformed into a normal state with no special status for Jews.

We support a values agenda for Israel similar to the one we support for the United States. But the imposition of specifically Jewish religious practices on the population (most coercively on the secular Jewish population) of Israel is anathema, not only for reasons of civil liberty, but also because it sours everyone on Judaism, turning the loving and generous energies of that tradition into a juggernaut of power and intimidation.

Israel's reliance on military might has distorted Israeli society's relationship to the Palestinian people. This distortion is mirrored in Israel's equally misguided willingness to let the Orthodox religious establishment impose its norms on all other Jews.

To the Editor:

In your November/December editorial, "Girlie Men and the Psychodynamics of Bullies in the 2004 Election," Michael Lerner argues that—tell me if I am wrong—world leaders have to become more girl-like in order to provide the world with more safety and security.

As a woman, while I am pleased to hear you extolling the virtues of femininity, I'm concerned that you've essentialized female identity in a most problematic way. Not all women are peaceful or oriented towards conflict resolution. Witness Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher, for example. They were incredibly warlike, violent people who brought more suffering and pain into the world. I shouldn't have to explain that to you.

Perhaps we can speak about becoming less girl-like, then, and simply more sensitive to pain and suffering?

LEORA KATZ
Ramat Gan, Israel

Editor Responds:

Actually, you are entirely right. The qualities that Governor Schwarzenegger was trying to put down were qualities that have been stereotypically associated with girls and women, but which do not reflect any essential nature of women—just traits that are ascribed to them. There is nothing intrinsically feminine about being sensitive to the pain and suffering of others—

that sensitivity and caring for others and wishing to alleviate their pain is an intrinsic quality of both men and women. However, in patriarchal societies, boys are encouraged to dis-identify from of their humanity in order to develop the hard shell that will protect them as they enter the world of fierce competition and mutual insensitivity that characterizes class society.

In today's world, the struggle of each against all is no longer survival-functional, but instead contributes to irrational social behavior like the war in Iraq, insensitivity to the environment, and an inability to respond to the social justice needs of the poor and the oppressed. This irrational behavior can only be fully uprooted when little boys are taught that they need no longer distance themselves from their mothers' nurturing in order to prove that they are "real men," but instead feel that to be a "real man" is to be in touch with these central parts of their humanity.

Schwarzenegger, Bush, and those who share their worldview, like European fascists in the first half of the twentieth century, have a stake in sustaining the old stereotype of "the real man," and they do that in part by ridiculing men who get in touch with their loving, caring, soft, and gentle sides. Our task is to affirm a very different version of childrearing and of "manliness" and "femininity," in which traditional gender stereotypes are transcended as you suggest, Ms. Katz.

To the Editor:

I was fascinated to read your essay about radical hope in the last issue of *TIKKUN*. I found it completely inspiring. As a twenty-one-year-old Jewish college student who supported Howard Dean's failed candidacy, it gave me great hope to know that I still had reasons to believe in social change despite the fact that the Democratic Party failed to adopt a progressive agenda. Now that the Democrats have been defeated, I need to hear why my culture tells me I can still be optimistic—and critical—in the face of it all.

My one question for Rabbi Lerner is this: I've always been raised to believe that religion and politics were separate. Now that I need the resources of my faith more than ever, how am I to reconcile the fact that for you, Judaism is a form of politics and not necessarily a religion? I am terribly confused by how you conflate the two. If it would be possible for you to describe for me why faith and politics are

related so strongly, perhaps this would help me move forward in the months ahead.

That is to say, yes, I am inspired by your work and that of *TIKKUN*. But I am not entirely convinced of the ways you prescribe.

CHAIM MILLER
Brooklyn, NY

Editor Responds:

There is no ethical commitment that is not rooted in some faith—though not necessarily in an organized religion. The reason: there is no way to establish that it is better to prevent or alleviate human suffering than to intensify it.

Our commitment to building a more loving world and sustaining the environment, and to the notion that it is desirable to worry about the future of the human race cannot be established by reason alone, but they reflect commitments and choices we make. That is what I mean when I talk about a faith perspective.

I do not believe that these kinds of faith commitments require any of the trappings of belief in a Supernatural Being or a set of religious rituals. I believe it is just as possible to be a morally centered atheist as a morally centered theist. I've met plenty of both types of people, and plenty of immoral variants of both as well.

What religion adds is another dimension—celebration with awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation. And what Judaism adds in addition is belief in the Force of Healing and Transformation—that is, a belief that the world is tilted toward the ultimate development of love and kindness, as a manifestation of the actual desire of the universe to be an embodiment of goodness. This helps us sustain radical hope. It is on this basis that the Jewish people were able to sustain themselves for thousands of years, and to bring to the world thinkers like Spinoza, Freud, Marx, and Einstein—a rather disproportionate contribution to hope for a people that represents less than .01% of the world's population.

*However, I am all too well aware of how those Jewish foundations can be twisted in other directions toward the opposite message—one of triumphalism, radical nationalist chauvinism, and narrow self-interest. *TIKKUN* is committed to challenging that message, both in theory and in practice.* □

Reforming Capitalism

George Vradenburg

TIKKUN has called for A New Bottom Line to measure American institutional performance—adding new ethical, spiritual, and ecological standards to today's emphasis on financial metrics that produce a focus on wealth and power. By setting a BHAG (Big, Humongous Aspirational Goal), TIKKUN is challenging us to reform all of our institutions, including the subject of this piece, our corporations.

This writer is a strong supporter of corporate capitalism as a system that has contributed both to our economic prosperity and to a more just society by rewarding individual merit and creativity rather than group power. And since a capitalist system is designed to respond impersonally to a marketplace indifferent to family legacy, skin color, ethnicity, race, or class, I believe in the progressive power of consumerism as well. (Only in a hotel does an upper-class Brit reside immediately next door to a lower-income Sudanese.) So, it is fair to say that I come at the question of reforming capitalism, corporatism, and consumerism from a quite different personal perspective than the writers on the editorial side of this magazine.

Yet I support the balanced inclusion of social goals alongside the financial metrics of the capitalist system, particularly as corporations and corporate leaders are required to take on more of a stewardship role in a global environment increasingly characterized by democratic capitalism. Whether one starts as a capitalist or not, reform of capitalism should be a shared goal.

There is a fundamental consistency between long-term financial performance and sensitivity to ethical and environmental norms. Examples: At the Davos Conferences each year, corporate executives from around the globe meet to discuss how best to improve health, education, and income outcomes in the most under-developed nations around the world, on the premise that increased wealth and output in poorer nations is in the long-term interest of all. Microsoft's Bill Gates has taken the lead on an international immunization effort designed to eliminate death from malaria and other widespread diseases. Such instances do not represent a full implementation of TIKKUN's New Bottom Line by any means. But they do suggest that the New Bottom Line is consistent with progressive thinking within the corporate community itself.

The same can be said for TIKKUN's call for corporate

recognition of employees' personal and spiritual autonomy. There is a growing awareness that a company's capacity to innovate is dependent on the quality of its human—not just financial—capital. Attracting and retaining mobile, creative human capital is causing more progressive corporate CEOs to view themselves not as top-down autocrats but as “servant leaders” whose role it is to inspire the best and most creative work from their employees. This change in management style is leading to a greater respect for the personal lives and creative capacity of each employee.

There is, of course, a compelling need to assure that the increasing power of corporations is subject to democratic checks and controls. This is emerging through several quite independent, but mutually reinforcing, trends. First, we see it in the growing “social responsibility” movement focused on articulating and spreading “best practices” in corporate America enforced by the scrutiny of non-profit advocates and the media. Second, there is an emerging effort to change state incorporation laws to include a social responsibility requirement, making enforcement of social responsibility obligations explicit. Third, environmental and labor laws that set the framework for positive practices are emerging. And fourth, there is increasing pressure from international organizations on multinational companies, particularly in the extractive and environmental sectors, to articulate in corporate annual reports their human, environmental, and other social impacts.

This emerging movement toward social responsibility and bottom-up management within the corporate community is certainly not as explicitly values-oriented or as coherent as TIKKUN's New Bottom Line, but the two initiatives point in the same direction. By understanding the vocabulary of and forces affecting the corporate world, a more comprehensive New Bottom Line movement can be accelerated and consolidated.

A balanced path to the reform of capitalism requires two pillars: first, a recognition that corporations are responsible for their impact on the humans they employ, the natural resources they consume, and the social impacts caused by their production methods and their products; and, second, a recognition that long-term profitability and economic prosperity is not the enemy but the engine of reform.

A New Bottom Line in assessing institutional performance is realistic and achievable. Executing that vision is up to all of us. □

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of TIKKUN.

Remembering Yasser Arafat

Michael Lerner

When Yasser Arafat became a founder of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the mid-1960s, only a small percentage of the world's population even recognized the existence of a Palestinian people.

Under Arafat's leadership, the PLO argued that national liberation would be the work of the people themselves, and that Palestinians could not depend upon surrounding Arab states, who had already betrayed Palestine by failing to send significant military support during what the Israelis called the War of Independence and the Arabs called Al-Nakba, the Great Disaster of 1948.

When Israel decisively defeated Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the 1967 Six Day War and took possession of the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank, Arafat's PLO raised the cry of the colonized and became the vanguard of a new national consciousness of the Palestinian people. Instead of being merely a collection of refugees spread around the world, they became a national entity under occupation and in exile, striving both militarily and politically for independence. Like most post-World-War-II rebellions against colonial occupations, Arafat's PLO adopted the path of violent revolution, using—and defining—the modern practice of terrorism: staging hijackings of jetliners and school buses, attacking Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics, taking civilians hostage. As spectacular and inexcusable as such terrorist acts were, the moral paradox is that Arafat's PLO was entirely effective at waking the world up to the horrible plight of the Palestinian people.

However, for several decades, Arafat and the PLO leadership were unable to recognize that their opponent was not a traditional colonial power, but a state filled with Jewish refugees, many of whom, ironically, were refugees from Islamic countries where Jewish life had become untenable in the wake of Israel's independence. Arafat's blindness to the nature of his enemy and oppressor accounts for the particular failure of his mission. On the one hand, he was a charismatic leader who was able to unify the Palestinian people enough to allow them to emerge into world history as a genuine independent entity and then to convince the world of their right to a state of their own. Contrast that with the Kurds or Tibetan Buddhists or many others, and you get a sense of the monumental political accomplishments of the PLO under the leadership of Arafat.

On the other hand, because Arafat was blind to the humanity and suffering of the Jewish people, imagining them to be little more than a tool of Western colonialism, he could not move beyond the tactics of terrorism until the mid-1990s. By

that point, the violent moral legacy of his PLO had created so much anger and fear in the consciousness of the Israeli people that it was very difficult for them to fully trust that Arafat was genuine when he finally agreed to renounce violence and accept the Oslo Accord with its promise of a peaceful transition to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

Nor was this suspicion without foundation. There is evidence that Arafat himself ordered specific acts of murder and terror, acts for which he would have earned life in prison had he been captured and tried. Even after signing the Oslo Accords, Arafat did little to use the power he had been given by Israel to govern the Occupied Territories to eliminate terrorist groups within Palestinian society who intended to continue the armed struggle against Israel. The dichotomy between Arafat's public pronouncements in English, in which he affirmed peace, and his pronouncements in Arabic, in which, he reaffirmed the need for struggle and Jihad (which he claimed had no necessarily violent intent, but which he knew would be heard as inciting violence by many in the Palestinian world); his unwillingness to confront a "right of return" and say clearly to his own people that they would have to recognize that the Israeli people were never going to give Palestinians the ability to reclaim their lost homes or land; his inability to embrace non-violence in principle (not just as a momentary tactic but as a principled way to challenge occupation); his failure to use the Camp David negotiations with Barak in 2000 in a constructive way to articulate clearly what would be the terms that Palestinians would accept as "enough"; his failure to whole-heartedly embrace the Geneva Accord even when it was negotiated by his lieutenant Abed Rabbo with former Israeli Minister of Justice Yossi Beilin—all of these were ways in which Arafat was a monumental failure to his people, pulling them into dead-ends that perpetuated their suffering and gave solace to the most right-wing elements in Israel.

And then there was Arafat's ruthless treatment of dissenters among his own people, which created a climate of fear that made it necessary for those who wished to disagree publicly with his policies to have their own countervailing instruments of violence to defend themselves against PLO thugs. De facto, this meant that the most peace-oriented elements of the Palestinian world had to either find a way to articulate their ideas within the context of an Arafat-controlled PLO, or keep their silence and wait for his death, while allowing dissent only from Islamic fundamentalist groups whose militias could defend themselves and thus create autonomous power.

In the last decade of his life, Arafat may have softened and come to a deeper realization that he would have to live with

Israel in peace. The authoritarian power he had amassed, partly with the help of Israel, which armed the PLO in the hopes that it would become a domestic police force in the West Bank and Gaza, gave him the unique position of being the only leader who could actually deliver a peace settlement that could successfully be imposed on warring Palestinian factions. For that reason it was always fantasy to claim that he had become irrelevant. Yet he never used his persuasive powers, charisma, and the respect he had won from many Palestinians to prepare his people psychologically, politically, or spiritually for a warm peace with the Israeli people.

It would be unfair to ignore the overwhelming difficulty that faced Arafat throughout his life: dealing with an Israel that was increasingly under the sway of right-wingers and fanatics who killed Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin after he negotiated the Oslo Accord and who managed to block implementation of Israeli agreements with Arafat. As a result, Arafat was forced to contend with an Israel that repeatedly broke its agreements, promising to leave the West Bank and grant Palestinians autonomy while simultaneously intensifying its occupation, bringing more and more settlers to the Territories, escalating torture and human-rights violations, using daily violence to enforce its control, and building checkpoints that increased the misery of daily life for most Palestinians. The lies told by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak about his "generous offer" rejected by Arafat was just one of the many calumnies Arafat endured at the hands of a well-oiled propaganda machine of Israelis and their U.S. supporters who were never willing to consider the possibility that hundreds of thousands of exiled Palestinians had a right to expect that Arafat would not settle for any agreement that had no provision for compensation for their

refugee status. Such circumstances would have tried the patience and wisdom of any leader.

Yet in the final analysis Yasser Arafat was not up to the challenge of meeting Israeli intransigence with the kind of leadership that a Martin Luther King Jr., a Mahatma Gandhi, or a Nelson Mandela was able to bring to their respective peoples. Arafat could not imagine the humanity of the Jewish people and could not speak to it, and hence could never break out of his vision that violence would play an important role in liberating his people. It is this failure of imagination that will temper history's praise for a man who will be lauded as the father of his country. It is my fervent prayer that the Palestinian people will be allowed to choose a leader democratically who can honestly make and follow through on a commitment to nonviolence and to a generosity of spirit that will melt the icy walls of Israeli fear and provide a path to reconciliation and peace. At the same time, it is going to take creative new leadership in both Israel and Palestine, a leadership that is not only sophisticated in its willingness to make historic compromises, but also in its understanding that political acts will not be enough unless accompanied by efforts to generate a new spirit of open-heartedness and reconciliation—in short, a recognition that what is needed is a grassroots spiritual transformation in the consciousness of both peoples.

One reason we created the Tikkun Community was to be a home to Israelis, Palestinians, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, secular humanists, etc. who recognize the centrality of this kind of spiritual reconciliation. By joining the Tikkun Community, which you can do at www.tikkun.org or by calling (510) 644-1200, and by becoming active with us, you can support this compassionate, balanced "Middle Path" to peace. Meanwhile, let Arafat rest in peace.

Genocide in Darfur; Murder in Iraq

For all the words of moral outrage, little has been done by the international community to end the murder, rape, and pillage of the people of Darfur. The United States should join with other Western countries to enforce an arms embargo, prohibit international travel by members of the government and the economic elite of the Sudan, and send in military units to arrest leadership implicated in the genocide and deliver them to the International Criminal Court in the Hague. Second step: provide reparations and protections so that Darfurians are able to go home and remain there in safety.

That would be a far better use of our military than war in Iraq. Most Americans have no comprehension of the devastation being wrought by the ongoing Occupation of Iraq by U.S. forces. The leveling of cities in order to save them from the insurgents will continue until the troops are

brought home. Stability first? Only if we kill tens of thousands more Iraqis. These are not terrorists. They are people who have taken up arms against the United States and its puppet regime, but their goal is not to overthrow the U.S. government or join Al Qaeda, but simply to run their own affairs. If Sunni and Shiite and Kurdish forces need to be separated into three separate nation-states in order for each to feel secure, let that happen—but it can only happen when the United States has ended its ill-conceived intervention, given up on imposing U.S. and Western corporations on the Iraqi economy, and created the space for the UN to take over and salvage what can be salvaged with the help of badly needed reconstruction dollars from the United States. The imperative to save Iraqi and American lives leads to the only plausible demand for this period: *Bring U.S. troops home now!* □

Vinyl Zionism

Joel Schalit

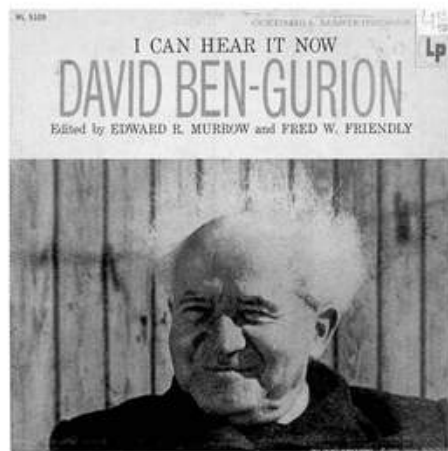
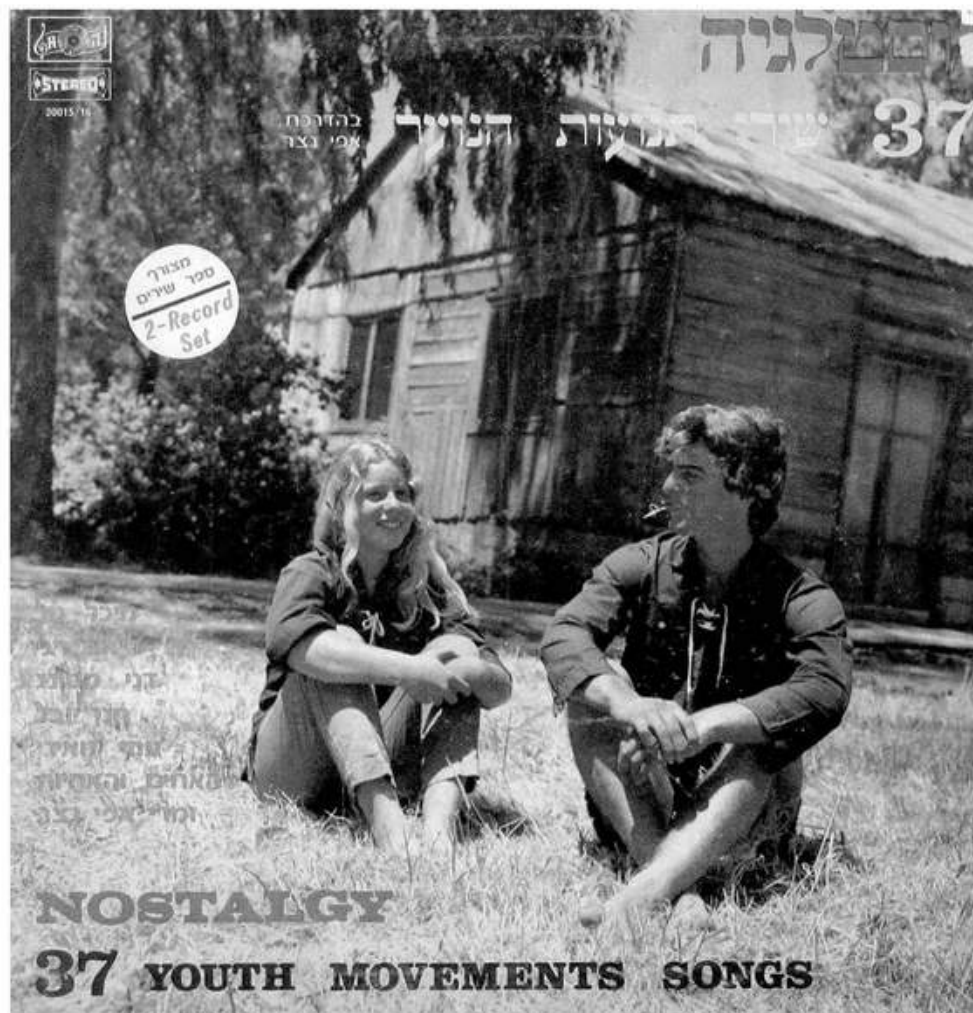
I'm a sound artist. Like many DJs and producers, I use records as the source material for my work. Spending the past fifteen years perusing used record stores in Israel and the United States, I've put together a small but representative collection of vintage Zionist vinyl, as noteworthy for the political messages expressed by their album covers as they are audio artifacts of a bygone era in Jewish history.

The records in this photo spread were made between 1948 and 1975. Ranging from anthologies of Israel Defense Forces anthems and Hebrew-language primers to documentaries of the Six Day War, youth movement sing-alongs, and speeches and interviews with Israel's founding politicians, these LPs are long-forgotten examples of how Zionism was taught to Israelis and diaspora Jews alike during the first three decades of Israel's existence.

Like the best propaganda, these album covers don't just offer a specific worldview. They also invite us to partake in an intoxicating vision of Israel's future that is both flagrantly ideological in its glorification of Israeli military power and falsely Edenic in its portrayal of a new Jewish pastoralism rooted in agricultural labor and collectivist comradery.

For those of us too young to remember the Israel that once thought of itself this way, such recordings are crucial cultural documents with the same educational value as a good history class. The only difference is their remarkable utility: as a form of visual instruction about the evolution of Zionist ideology, and as a resource for creating new works of art that problematize what it means to be Israeli. □

Joel Schalit is managing editor of *TIKKUN*.



Letter of Resignation from the Jewish People

Bertell Ollman

Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Whenever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe.

—Elie Wiesel (Acceptance Speech, Nobel Prize for Peace, December 10, 1986)

Did you ever wonder what your last thought would be just before you died or believed you might die? Well, I did, and a few years ago in the waning moments before going under the knife for a life-threatening operation, I got my answer. As the nurses wheeled me into the operating room, what burst upon my consciousness was not, as might be expected, the fear of dying but a terrible angst at the idea of dying a Jew. I was appalled to finish my life with my umbilical cord still tied to a people with whom I can no longer identify. That this should be my “last” thought greatly surprised me at the time, and it still does.

What did it mean... and why is it so hard to resign from a people? I was born in Milwaukee to Russian Jewish parents who never went to synagogue or kept kosher but often spoke Yiddish at home and considered themselves Jews. I went to Hebrew School for four years and had a bar mitzvah. With this background, I held some vaguely Jewish religious beliefs until my late teens when I became an atheist. I still identified myself as a Jew but in a sense that became increasingly hard to define. Some of my friends had become Zionists, and—though I briefly played basketball for a Zionist youth club—they made no headway in converting me to their cause, chiefly, I think, because its main plank seemed to call for moving to Israel. Yet, what I learned in these years about the Holocaust and the plight of Jews around the world was enough to make me sympathetic to the idea of a Jewish homeland, assuming—I always added—some kind of arrangement could be made with the Palestinians who already lived there.

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It was in college—the University of Wisconsin in the mid-1950s—that I became a socialist and an internationalist. Milwaukee, at least my Milwaukee, had been very provincial, and I rejoiced in the opportunities Madison offered for meeting people from all over the world. I think I joined every foreign student organization in my first year there, and not a few of the progressive political clubs. It was also there that I heard a lot more about Israel/Palestine, except now I was learning about it not as a Jew from Milwaukee but as an internationalist, a member of the human community to which Jews and Arabs belonged as equals.

In the following years, as the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians deteriorated from bad to worse and then to much worse, two surprising developments—surprising at least to me—began to unfold. I found myself, despite my best efforts to be fair to both sides, becoming increasingly anti-Israel, while most American Jews, including some Jewish friends who never considered themselves Zionists, became enthusiastic supporters of the Israeli cause. Already in the 1980s, with the first intifada, Israel's oppression and humiliation of the Palestinians got so bad that I winced at the thought of belonging to the same people as those who could commit such crimes or, in the case of most American Jews, so easily rationalize them away. Now things have reached such a point that I want out. The problem is how to do it. One can

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STEVEN RUSHEFSKY

Letter to Bertell Ollman

Jonathan Schorsch

Professor Ollman,

The ideals and laments you express in your letter are stirring, your passions righteous and right. I agree with you wholeheartedly in your frustration, even disgust with what Israel has become, and American Jewry along with it. Still, it has been a long time since I've read something quite as unnuanced, and unself-conscious, as your letter. I don't know whether to laugh or cry. The answer to one of your questions is rather simple: it is very easy to resign from a people. You resigned long ago from the Jewish people, only without knowing it. The only real solution to your search for moral rectitude is to resign from the human race, for, alas, it is not (yet) to be found in any collective, national or otherwise.

In responding to your letter, allow me to begin at the end. You finish your piece by taking Lenny Bruce's brilliant *epater-la-bourgeoisie* slyness and turning it into an ugly, actionable Selektion: this person to that side, this figure to the other side; this person allowed in, this one excised. Ideology in this sense is always juvenile, black-or-white. One is either "with us or against us." On one level, it is not my desire here to defend Israel. Like you, I believe Israeli policies toward Palestinians and Israeli Arabs have often been shortsighted, ill-conceived, even ill-intentioned. I have no wish to apologize for them and I have ardently sought over the years to change them. Still, my unapologetic love and sympathy for Israel places me awkwardly in certain political communities, precisely because I am uncomfortable with the group-think pressures inevitable among believers in the religion of politics. Though I write this under the melancholy shadow of "another four years," I increasingly despise the kind of debates brought up by these believers (and keep thinking of Woody Allen's great line that *Dissent* and *Commentary* merged to form *Dysentery*). One seemingly must know the facts and all of them, but these are precisely what is up for interpretation, yet woe unto you if your interpretation differs. I am beginning to think about political praxis as the early, radical Hasidim thought about doing the commandments: the ideal is to do it in secret lest it goes to your head and gives you the mistaken impression that you're something special, because in reality you are only doing what you are obliged to do.

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Judaism, whatever its problems, and they are many, is an identity characterized by substance: one is supposed to do certain things, not do other things; one is supposed to love certain things and hate or avoid others; one has a plethora of texts to study, songs to sing, ways of relating to the week, to the natural world, to humanity. This is so even if Jews have always been blessedly divided about all of these issues. On the other hand, Jewishness, which is not the same thing as yiddishkeit, is a product of the modern world (Enlightenment, democracy, nationalism, even commercialization). It is an empty cipher, a racist substitute for culture, the alleged facticity of biology standing in for beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Jewishness is goyish, that is, "Christian": nothing but feeling and belief, smoke and mirrors. (Please don't misunderstand me to be saying there is only one way, a religious way, to be Jewish—though you seem unwilling to consider as good Jews anyone but those who dismiss Judaism. Atheism can have the highest purposes; it can aim, as Buber wrote, to "annihilate God because it must reject the hitherto existing images of God." Cosmopolitanism in this sense is "Christian" as well: a certain kind of particularism masking itself as universality, free-floatingness suppressing attachment to no place, belief in pure spirit hiding attachment to one particular practice, sisterhood with all humanity covering up attachment only to people who believe as you do. A recent hip-hop cover of a Fela Anikulapo Kuti song astutely glosses the imperialism of "reasonable" Christianity: "They came. They had the Bible and we had the land. Now we have the Bible and they have the land." You essentially want Jews to dispense with our attachment to and love for a certain piece of land (I am not saying our land only) for the sake of those who hate people (other people, of course, not themselves) who are attached to a particular place.

The overwhelming majority of Jews are neither socialists nor Zionists. The majority of Jews today are Jews in name only. "Born of Jewish parents," as some have put it. They know little or nothing about their own heritage—whether religious, cultural, or intellectual—much less live it. They care little about Israel and probably far more about humanity, though this does not make them socialists. Statistics show that Jewish philanthropists routinely donate a much greater percentage to non-Jewish causes than to Jewish ones. Most Jews are, in short, already what you seem to decry about Zionists: they are like everyone else in the world, attached to the same gamut of inanities, self-interest,

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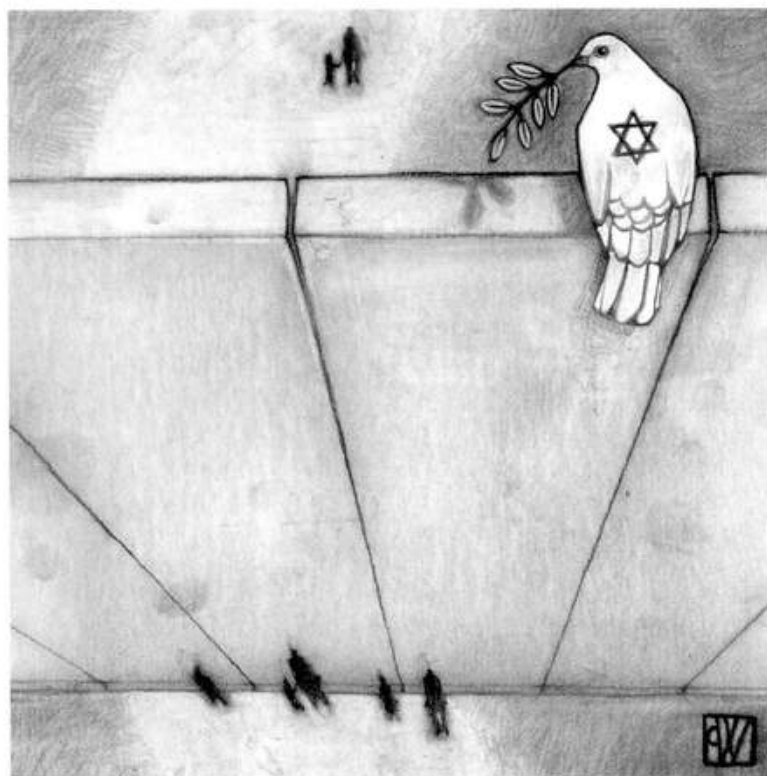
The Lack of a Vision: Utopia and Peace in Israeli Discourse

Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin

Following the signing of the Oslo Accords, many Israeli writers, politicians, and supporters of the peace process described their conceptions of a future peace, depicting different aspects of an imagined Middle East that they believed would be realized in the immediate future. The media was full of such descriptions, which contained visions of prosperity, open markets, high-tech industries, large roads and economic development, restaurants in Ramallah and Damascus, and Israeli projects in Jordan. No more violence, no more anxieties, no more responsibilities: a peaceful land in which Israel will finally be ready for a process of cultural regeneration and for the completion of the so-called political revival of the Jewish people. "Peace" was perceived as a revival of the allegedly original values of Israeli society. Proponents of Oslo produced an image of a just and progressive Jewish-Israeli society that would emerge at the end of occupation and the "end of conflict."

However, none of these utopian visions were concerned with the fate and the future of even a single child in a Palestinian refugee camp. Of course, many speakers mentioned the advantages of peace for the Palestinians, but it was not the realization of Palestinian self-determination that was celebrated by Israelis, but the return to a homogeneous Jewish society. The idea of peace was to get rid of the Occupation in order to get rid of the Palestinians, in order to recover the Israeli self-image as innocent and progressive, an image that had been seriously damaged by thirty years of occupation, particularly after the first intifada. The "peace process" was not associated with a desire for reconciliation, a vision of equality and partnership between Jews and Arabs, nor a desire for a common future.

On the contrary, the leading concept of the peace process was not the co-existence of two states, but separation. In



other words, the idea of a Palestinian state in Israeli discourse was not perceived as a means of fulfilling Palestinian rights, not a vision of co-existence based on the recognition of the responsibility for Palestinian suffering and hope for a peaceful common future for both people. Thus the Israeli vision of peace did not include the intention to undermine the division between Jews and Arabs, but rather to emphasize it. The rationale for the agreements, as the initiator (Yitzhak Rabin) of the Oslo Accords presented it, was to prevent the creation of a binational state, and in fact, to deny any vision and any perspective that includes both Israeli-Jews and Palestinians living together in peaceful coexistence.

It is striking to note the similarities between these images of peace and those of early Zionism. Since the late nineteenth century, Zionist writers and artists have produced various utopian visions. In spite of important differences between them that reflect the versatility of Zionist social and cultural values, they also shared major components: the idea

CAMILLE WAINER

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of an *Alteneuland*, a New Old Land (the title of Herzl's most famous and influential utopian novel), which would include the revival of the Biblical past within a framework of a modern, western-oriented Jewish secular community, established in opposition to the "Orient," thus bringing the gospel of progress and modernity to the primitive "East." The return was not towards the concrete land, Palestine/Eretz-Yisrael, but to the image of the land associated with European images of the ideal society and state.

The location of this vision was perceived as an "empty land," a land without history since the destruction of the Temple, uncivilized, indeed—a utopia, a no-land. In Herzl's novel, the Arabs were described as grateful to the Jews who improved their lives and saved them from their primitive conditions. Other writers described the Arabs as representing the ancient Hebrew culture, the one Zionism should imitate. But none of these images considered the desires, hopes, or dreams of the Arabs. These utopian images manifested themselves in the most obvious way—the link between the theological and the colonialist dimensions embodied in the core of the secular Zionist myth. The "return" was formulated in obvious European terms and was considered as a process of Westernization of the Jews and of the land, in clearly Orientalist terms.

The concept of "peace" did not produce an alternative vision, but was rather perceived as the fulfillment of original Zionist desires, an image referring to a vision of Jewish identity associated with a secular western civil identity, directed against religion and particularly against Shas, the Orthodox Sephardi movement, the political position of which at the time was not far from the principles of the "peace process." Not only were the Israeli Arabs not included, but the idea was to ignore them, as exemplified by Barak's slogan "we are here—they are there," identical to the slogan of the Moledet party's ideology of transfer. The vision of peace and the vision of transfer were not so different—and in spite of the essential moral difference, they shared a common vision of a homogeneous Jewish society. The difference was in the positioning of the border, not the vision. Both expressed the desire for a Jewish state without Arabs.

Of course, during the process of Zionist settlement, as well as after the establishment of the state of Israel, many different attitudes with respect to "the Arab question" have been developed. However, most of them explicitly excluded the Arabs from the Zionist vision of redemption, and later from their rights, leaving them as refugees, or as non-citizens under occupation, or—at best—second class citizens of the State of Israel, the state of "the Jewish People," leaving them as victims of a continuous dispossession and policy of discrimination. Palestinian citizens of Israel, allegedly possessing equal rights, remain equal only in their right to vote or to be elected to office. Subject to continuous land confiscations and unable to purchase property from the Jewish Agency, whatever equal rights accorded to Israeli Arabs by the

Jewish state remain severely limited, if not negated, by their permanent marginalization within Israeli society.

Nothing better clarifies this notion of peace than "the demographic discourse" that is associated with the peace process. When peace is perceived and legitimized only as a means to protect the Jewish majority, it explicitly excludes Israeli Arabs by defining the limits of their citizenship as the only way to protect the Jewish majority in a way that makes the Palestinian citizens an enemy minority whose marginalization is a permanent goal of state policy.

This explains how a partial Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian cities (but not from most of the occupied land) after the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993, was perceived as the end of conflict and the fulfillment of the Zionist vision. The disappearance of the Palestinians from Israeli cities, a process that had started earlier, had already been accomplished. This is why the Israeli public ignored the fact that during the 1990s, the principle of separation was not realized by an establishment of a Palestinian State but instead had been prevented by an ongoing process of growth of the settlements and the gradual creation of a system of apartheid by the construction of bypass roads for Jews; of settlements that divided the Occupied Territories and prevented Palestinians from securing freedom of movement in their own land. That explains why the crowd celebrating the victory of Ehud Barak in 1999 shouted "Just not Shas," rather than calling for the renewal of the peace process. That explains the surprise of the Israeli public when the Palestinians refused to accept Israeli insistence that they give up all of their demands for the establishment of a Palestinian state with limited sovereignty in most of the territories—and without geographical contiguity.

It is this vision, this "utopia," that has brought us to the current situation. Finally, the vision of separation was realized by erecting a separation wall between Israel and Palestine. The wall, and the entire system of apartheid that is gradually being established in the Occupied Territories, and the suffering that it inflicts on the Palestinians, is legitimized in the name of the "war against terror," and as a means of preventing suicide bombers from entering Israel. But we should remember that the wall was there long before its present monstrous realization. What we call the separation wall was actually the Israeli vision of peace.

Against this, a new utopia should be constructed, a Jewish-Arab one. One that takes into consideration both communities, redefining their common right for self-determination under the values of equality, mutual recognition, and historical justice. It is certainly difficult to imagine such a reality from the state of oppression and violence we are currently experiencing. However, knowing these difficulties, this is the only perspective and set of values that may direct both peoples towards a process of reconciliation, of Palestinian liberation associated with the de-colonization of the State of Israel, and Israeli consciousness.

As long as we do not have a vision of partnership and co-existence, any process will fail. As long as we seek “solutions” and “ends,” produce virtual “agreements” and documents that try to escape the main issues and avoid responsibility, we will experience a continuous deterioration and barbarism, a move towards a catastrophe. Within the theological colonialist language of “utopia,” a radical change of the Jewish consciousness is needed.

In 1931, Gershom Scholem declared:

Zionism took its stand, whether involuntarily or, as was more often the case, voluntarily, on the side of declining rather than rising forces. It saw its success in the intrigues of war—Versailles and San Remo and the signing of the Mandate—as a victory. But this victory has now become a handicap and a stumbling block for the entire movement. The force which Zionism joined in those victories was the revealed force, the aggressor. Zionism forgot to link up with the hidden force, the oppressed, which would rise and be revealed soon after. Could a revival movement indeed be on their side, or, more accurately, take shelter under the wings of the victors of the war? ... Zionism is not in the heavens, and it does not possess the power to unite fire and water. Either it shall be swept away in the waters of imperialism, or else it shall be burnt in the revolutionary conflagration of the wakening East. Mortal dangers beset it on either side and nevertheless, the Zionist movement cannot avoid a decision....

And if we do not win once again, and the fire of revolution consume us, at least we will be among those standing on the right side of the barricades.

Reality has dramatically changed since then. Scholem himself changed his mind in later years, but the sensitivity he and his friends in Brit Shalom expressed is even more relevant today. Today, “the hidden force” is constituted by the victims of Zionism, those who are suppressed even under the utopia of peace. Against the messianic desire of right-wing messianic groups, the alternative is an approach towards the inclusion of both Jews and Palestinians in a common dream. We may not win, once again, but we should stand on the right side of the barricades, against the dominant anti-Arab sentiment.

The vision of Arab and Jewish partnership, the vision of equality and justice, is of course complicated and raises difficult questions. But it does not refer only to Israeli Jews. Its principles deny the distinction between Arab and Jew, as against the total identification of the established world Jewry with the anti-Islamic and anti-Arab attitudes. As Gil Anidjar taught us recently, (*The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*, 2002) the division between the Jew and the Arab is the core of Christian political theology: the Jew and the Arab are associated and divided at the same time. Jews can continue leading the radical anti-Islamic sentiment in Europe and the United States. But Jews can and should suggest another way. □

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Israel in a Middle East Union: A “Two-stage” Approach to the Conflict

By Jeff Halper

[W]hen 2.5 million people live in a closed-off Gaza, it's going to be a human catastrophe. Those people will become even bigger animals than they are today, with the aid of an insane fundamentalist Islam. The pressure at the border will be awful. It's going to be a terrible war. So, if we want to remain alive, we will have to kill and kill and kill. All day, every day. If we don't kill, we will cease to exist. The only thing that concerns me is how to ensure that the boys and men who are going to have to do the killing will be able to return home to their families and be normal human beings.

—Arnon Sofer, professor of Geography at Haifa University, father of Sharon's “separation plan,” quoted in *The Jerusalem Post* weekend supplement, May 21, 2004.

Let's begin by re-framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The way it's presented by Israeli governments (Labor as well as Likud), by AIPAC, by all those *aparachiks* in Hillel and Birthright endeavoring to turn Jewish students into unthinking organs of Israel's PR machine, is simple and compelling: Israel is “our” country. The Palestinians are our implacable and permanent enemies who have violently rejected all our “generous offers” of peace. Any Israeli action against the Arabs comes only out of self-defense. We are the victims, they are the perpetrators. We bear no responsibility for what is happening, they are to blame. We need not feel guilty about what we do to them, the Palestinians only bring it upon themselves. “No other nation in history faced with comparable challenges,” Alan Dershowitz tells us in *The Case for Israel*, “has ever adhered to a higher standard of human rights, been more sensitive to the safety of innocent civilians, tried harder to operate under the rule of law, or been willing to take more risks for peace.”

If this framing is true, then the source of the conflict is Arab terrorism, and security for Israel should be our prime concern. It means, of course, that peace is impossible. If the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict is at bottom a “clash of civilizations” in which fanatical Muslims aspire to drive the Jews into the sea, then, yes, we had better build 26-foot

walls of concrete around ourselves and keep our nuclear weapons at the ready. We are caught not in a political conflict, but in a permanent state of conflict that is the core of our national existence. This security-based ideology, pressed on the public, the media, Congress, and American Jewish students too emotionally manipulated to use their critical intellect, is neat and compelling indeed. It feeds directly into support for Israel's extreme Right. It also dovetails smartly with the Islamophobic rhetoric manufactured by Jewish neo-cons who see Israel as the “good cop” policing the Middle Eastern theater of the American Empire.

It is also wrong. If the critical Israeli peace movement—what we call “left of Peace Now”—has any contribution to make, it is less in its resistance to the Occupation “on the ground” than its ability to translate its knowledge of “the ground” into a fundamental reframing of what the conflict is all about. Without such a reframing we can never identify the right way out of the conflict.

According to this perspective, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is a political one resolvable only by acknowledging the legitimate and recognized claims of both peoples to the country. It rejects the claim, pressed by former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, that Israel has “no partners for peace,” noting that the Palestinians have formally and repeatedly recognized the State of Israel within the 1967 lines (the 1949 armistice line, the “Green Line”), thereby relinquishing political claim to 78 percent of historic Palestine. It also acknowledges the exceptional significance of the 2002 Saudi Initiative, a fundamental term of reference in the Road Map, in which the Arab League offered Israel recognition, peace, and full integration into the region in return for an end to the Occupation—an offer that Israel responded to only by insisting that the Saudi Initiative be removed from the Road Map altogether. Clearly something else is at work besides concerns for security.

We know what that “something else” is; since Israel took the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza in 1967, successive Israeli governments have announced their intention to foreclose the establishment of a viable Palestinian state forever. Despite his image as a clumsy bull in a china shop, Sharon, as Prime Minister, has cleverly camouflaged this by professing his support for the Quarter's Road Map, yet conditioning it on fourteen “reservations” that, though cloaked in “secu-

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city" concerns, permit only a truncated Palestinian mini-state on no more than 10 to 15 percent of the country and with no territorial contiguity or economic potential and no control over its borders, water, airspace, or foreign policy. It would be a country with no meaningful presence in its capital city, Jerusalem. It is a state that can never compromise Israeli control of the entire country west of the Jordan River, nor jeopardize Israel's settlement blocs, nor be truly sovereign and viable. But this Palestinian state would serve an important function: to relieve Israel of a Palestinian population that it cannot assimilate, while leaving Israel in control of the entire country. It is a conception shared with Labor, which also rejects any notion of a viable, truly sovereign Palestinian state (although Labor does favor a somewhat larger Palestine than does the Likud).

Some Fundamental Elements of a Just Peace

Assuming that apartheid is neither an acceptable nor a sustainable solution to the conflict, what is? Before addressing that question we must identify the elements essential for any just and sustainable peace. I would suggest five:

(1) *National expression for the two peoples.* The Israel-Palestine conflict concerns two peoples, two nations, each of which claims the right of collective self-determination. This is what gives such compelling logic to the two-state solution. The problem is that such a solution has been rendered irrelevant by Israel's settlement policies. Since Israel insists on permanent control over the entire country, it leaves no space for Palestinian self-determination. Even if Israel eventually allows a Palestinian mini-state to emerge, that will not end the conflict. The progressive Zionist camp (including *Tikkun*) places great hopes on the Geneva Initiative (also called the Geneva Accord). While the "22 percent formula" (the Palestinians must get 22 percent of the country so that Israel can retain its 78 percent within the Green Line) might be achievable through territorial exchanges, such proposals still have to grapple with Labor and Likud's long-shared position that no truly sovereign Palestinian state is admissible west of the Jordan River.

(2) *Viability.* Whatever form a Palestinian state takes, it must be viable as well as sovereign. It must control its borders and its basic resources (such as water). It must possess territorial contiguity and, above all, the ability to develop a viable economy. We must take into account two fundamental elements that cannot be dismissed or minimized. First, besides normal processes of development, *the small Palestinian state will have to accept and integrate its refugees.* Second, more than 60 percent of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories and in the refugee camps is under the age of twenty-five, a young generation that has been brutalized, traumatized, impoverished, and left with little education and few skills. The Palestinians' demand for a *viable* state stems not from intractability but from a sober evalua-

tion of the enormity of the national challenge facing them.

(3) *Refugees.* Eighty percent of the Palestinians are refugees. A sustainable peace cannot emerge from technical arrangements alone. Beyond self-determination and viability lies the issue of justice. Any sustainable peace is dependent upon the just resolution of the refugee issue. Contrary to the slogans we all hear, the refugee issue is not difficult to resolve, as even the refugees in the camps have indicated. It depends on a "package" of three elements: First, Israel must acknowledge the refugees' *right* of return, an inalienable right embedded in *internal Palestinian law* not dependent upon Israeli acceptance. Second, Israel needs to acknowledge its responsibility in creating the refugee issue so that a healing process may begin. No one knows more than the Jews the importance of having one's suffering acknowledged. Indeed, this symbolic gesture is more important to refugees than is any tangible relief of their situation. Third, when these requirements are satisfied—an eventuality Israel resolutely refuses even to consider—technical solutions must be found that do not compromise the integrity of Israel.

(4) *A regional dimension.* Despite our almost exclusive focus on Israel/Palestine, the main issues facing both peoples are regional in scope. Refugees, security, water, economic development, democratization—none of these can be addressed effectively within the narrow confines of Israel/Palestine. Even if the Palestinians and Israelis resolve their differences, the prospect of them enjoying a safe and prosperous future in a progressive society is dimmed if the region as a whole remains poor, autocratic, and seething with unaddressed grievances.

(5) *Israel's security.* Israel, of course, has fundamental and legitimate security needs. Unlike Israeli governments, the Israeli peace camp believes that security cannot be addressed in isolation, that Israel will not find peace and security unless it both enters into a viable peace with the Palestinians and achieves a measure of integration into the Middle East region. We certainly reject the notion that security can be achieved through military means. Israel's assertion that the security issue be resolved before any political progress can be made is as illogical as it is self-serving. We know—and the Israeli authorities know, and the Palestinians know—that terrorism is a symptom that can only be addressed as part of a broader approach to the grievances underlying the conflict. Like the United States, Israel uses security concerns to advance a political agenda; in our case, to justify repressive force intended to compel the Palestinians to submit to an Israeli-controlled Bantustan.

Working Around the Occupation: The Two-Stage Approach

So where does all this lead us? To a point where we can begin to critically evaluate the options before us and start thinking outside the box. Given the parameters outlined above, it seems to me we are left with four "solutions,"

only one of which, the confederal, appears workable. They are:

(1) *The traditional two-state solution in which a Palestinian state emerges on all of the Occupied Territories (with minor adjustments).* This is the position of the Palestinian National Authority and three out of the four members of the Road Map's "Quartet" (Europe, Russia, and the UN, since the United States has officially joined the "Israel Plus-Palestine Minus" option advocated by Israeli governments). It is also the option pursued by progressive Zionists within Israel, especially those associated with the Geneva Initiative, and their supporters within the Diaspora Jewish community.

(2) *An "Israel Plus-Palestine Minus" two-state solution,* pursued by both Labor and Likud governments. This option envisions a semi-sovereign, semi-viable Palestinian state arising between Israel's major settlement blocs, with the Palestinians compensated by minor territorial swaps. Israeli leaders believe that faced with military defeat, impoverishment, transfer, political isolation, and its "Iron Wall" of settlements and barriers, a carefully groomed post-Arafat Palestinian leadership can be coaxed to agree. The critical peace movement in Israel considers this option unworkable and unsustainable, a sophisticated form of apartheid.

(3) *A "Two-State Plus" solution.* This approach, which I will describe in more detail presently, proposes a two-stage process in which the requirements of national self-determination are disconnected from wider regional concerns with economic viability. Given the Israeli "facts on the ground," a Palestinian state would emerge on as much of the Occupied Territories as possible, thus giving the Palestinians their venue for national expression. But such a state would not be viable. To address this requirement, a second stage would be necessary: the emergence of an Israeli-Palestinian confederation in which all of its residents have the right to live anywhere they choose within the confederation. It would later be expanded to include Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and other states of the region to become a Middle East Union.

(4) *A single state, either bi-national or democratic.* On the surface this seems the most natural and just alternative to a two-state solution rendered irrelevant by Israel. Yet, in the realpolitik of today, it is a non-starter. As an option that entails the transformation of Israel from a Jewish state into a democratic one (with a Palestinian majority), it would be opposed totally by the Israeli Jewish population, Diaspora Jews, the U.S. government, and significant sectors of Europe. Although the one-state solution enjoys widespread popular



support among Palestinians, the Palestinian leadership is loath to shift to a new political program with such slight chance of success. The one-state option remains an evolutionary hope of Palestinians, however.

The one-state option offers a way to "work around" the now-permanent Occupation and to neutralize it. It simply incorporates the settlements and roads into a broader political entity that supercedes the Jewish state: a democratic state in the whole of Israel/Palestine that extends equal rights to all its citizens. But the "Greater Israel" ideology assumes, of course, Jewish sovereignty and control; the notion of sharing the country with another people is an absolute non-starter. For the Palestinians, the one-state approach, though enjoying popular support, has its problems. Sharing a state with Israeli Jews means compromising the principle of self-determination.

If a genuine two-state solution has been rendered impossible and a one-state solution is a non-starter, and if we eliminate the "Israel Plus-Palestine Minus" option as unjust, then only one other option remains: a regional confederation. Less elegant than the others, more complex, more difficult to present in a sound bite, it is also far more workable. Like the European Union, it preserves a balance between national sovereignty and the freedom to live anywhere within the region. Rather than eliminating the Occupation, it neutralizes it by compensating the Palestinians' readiness to compromise on territory with the economic, social, and geographic depth afforded by a regional confederation.

In contrast to the two-state solution which is limited in scope, technical in conception, and unable to address many of the underlying issues of the conflict, the "two-stage" approach emphasizes processes—of peace-making, trust-building, economic development, the establishment of strong civil societies, and reconciliation leading to a genuine resolution of the conflict. Its outlines are straightforward and transparent.

Stage 1: A Palestinian State Alongside Israel

Recognizing that Palestinian demands for self-determination represent a fundamental element of the conflict, the first stage of the confederal approach provides for the establishment of a Palestinian state. This meets the Palestinians' requirements for national sovereignty, political identity, and membership in the international community. Statehood, however, does not address the crucial issue of viability. If it were only a state the Palestinians needed, they

could have one tomorrow—the mini-state “offered” by Barak and Sharon.

No, the Palestinians can have their state. Their fear, however, is being locked into a Bantustan, a prison-state that cannot possibly serve as a vehicle for their national life and challenges. The “two-stage” approach offers a way out of this trap, even if the Israeli presence is reduced but not significantly eliminated. The Palestinians might be induced to accept a state on something less than the entire 22 percent of the country conquered in 1967 *on condition* that the international community guarantees the emergence of a regional confederation within a reasonable period of time. While the first stage, the establishment of a Palestinian state on most of the Occupied Territories (including borders with Jordan, Syria, and Egypt) addresses the issue of self-determination and gives the Palestinians a place in the international community, the second stage, a regional confederation, would give them a regional “depth” in which to meet their long-term social and economic needs.

Stage 2: A Regional Confederation Leading to a Wider Middle East Union

Following upon the emergence of a Palestinian state, the international community would broker, within a reasonable period (five to ten years), a regional confederation among Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. With a resolution of the Golan issue, Syria and Lebanon would likely join as well. Over time, with the entrance of Egypt and other countries of the region into the confederation, a full-blown Middle East Union might emerge.

The key element of this approach is the ability of all members of the confederation to live and work anywhere within the confederation’s boundaries. That breaks the Palestinians out of their prison. Rather than burdening the

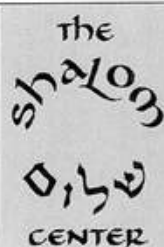
small emergent state with responsibilities it cannot possibly fulfill, the confederal approach distributes that burden across the entire region. It also addresses the core of the refugee issue, which is individual choice. Palestinians residing within the confederation would have the choice of becoming citizens of the Palestinian state, retaining citizenship in their current countries of residence, or leaving the region entirely for a new life abroad. They could choose to return “home” to what is today Israel, but they would do so as Palestinian citizens or citizens of another member state. Israel would be under no obligation to grant them citizenship, just as Israelis living in Palestine (Jews who choose to remain in Ma’aleh Adumim or Hebron, for example, former “settlers”) would retain Israeli citizenship. This addresses Israeli concerns about the integrity of their state.

In such a confederation, even a major influx of Palestinian refugees into Israel would pose no problem. It is not the presence of the refugees themselves that is threatening to Israel. After all, 300,000 foreign workers and an even greater number of Russian Christians reside in Israel today. The threat to Israeli sovereignty comes from the possibility of refugees claiming Israeli citizenship. By disconnecting the Right of Return from citizenship, the refugees would realize their political identity through citizenship in a Palestinian state while posing no challenge to Israeli sovereignty, thus enjoying substantive individual justice by living in any part of Palestine/Israel or the wider region they choose. And since a confederal solution does not require that the settlements be dismantled—although they will be integrated—it is not dependent upon “ending the Occupation,” the main obstacle to the two-state solution. It will simply neutralize it, rendering all the walls, checkpoints, bypass roads, and segregated cities irrelevant.

The two-stage solution will encounter opposition. Israel, perceiving itself as a kind of Singapore, has no desire to integrate into the Middle East, relinquish its control over the country or, to say the least, accommodate Palestinian refugees. But it does offer the Israeli people, 70 percent of whom would like to truly disengage from the Occupation according to repeated polls, a way out of an untenable situation. The autocratic regimes of the region might resist such a project out of fear of the democratization it would entail, but the advantages of an end to the conflict in the region are obvious. International pressures and economic inducements, combined with a strong civil-society initiative, should persuade the region’s countries to participate. And for the Palestinians there are only advantages. The two-stage approach offers them much more than the traditional two-state solution, and is far more achievable than a single state.

Although such a union sounds like a pipedream in the present context of intense conflict, the infrastructure already exists. Israel already has far more extensive relations with Arab and Muslim countries than people realize. It has

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The Ideological Roots of Christian Zionism

Tony Campolo

George W. Bush begins his second term with a war raging in Iraq, escalating threats against Iran from his administration, and turmoil in Israel/Palestine. What the anti-war Left may not realize is that this crisis in the Middle East is actually welcomed by many of Bush's most fervent followers. These Christians see in the current chaos in the Middle East a harbinger of the end of days, when Christ will return to Jerusalem after a long and bloody Armageddon.

The guiding ideology for this strange but increasingly influential Christian Zionist movement is a theology named dispensationalism, created by John Darby, a nineteenth-century Anglican priest from Plymouth, England. Few people have ever heard of John Darby, let alone read up on his theological perspective. Without understanding dispensationalism, however, it is almost impossible to understand how Christian Zionism has come to dominate American Evangelicalism and been so influential on the course of U.S. Middle East policy.

I. End Time in Jerusalem

The basic tenants of Christianity have always encompassed teachings about the Second Coming. Christians have always believed that the same Jesus Christ who died on the cross for their sins was resurrected three days later. We also believe that after spending forty days providing further teaching to his disciples, he ascended into heaven. But we do not believe that Christ's involvement in history ends there. Sometime in the future, he will return to Earth, put down evil, and establish the kingdom promised by the Hebrew prophets.

For many Christians—including the ancient church fathers, from Justin Martyr through St. Augustine, and the



Members of the International Christian Zionist Center.

great theologians of Christendom, including St. Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin—the nature and timing of Christ's return is obscure, largely an object of faith. For Christians who read the Bible literally, however, the specificity of the Hebrew prophets' vision of a Messianic Age—particularly Isaiah's famous vision in 65:17-25 of the lion lying down with the lamb—suggests that the Bible encoded the events of world history in a way that could be deciphered.

John Darby offered to his followers a system of biblical prophecies that made the Bible harmonious with historical events. It was a scheme that also explained what he believed were God's hidden plans for the world, and offered specific details as to how those plans would be fulfilled in the future. He focused particularly on the Second Coming, offering guidance to enable astute Christians to discern "the signs of the times."

Before the Kingdom of God comes into its fullness, Darby's followers believe, the following must occur:

The nation of Israel must be re-established.

The Jews must return to the Holy Land and become the

sole occupiers of the land.

The Jewish Temple that once stood on Mt. Zion must be rebuilt and the temple sacrifices of ancient Israel must be reinstated.

Jesus will then *almost* return. Actually, Darby predicted that he would hover over the Earth and that "born again" Christians "would fly up to meet him in the air." As a result of this event, called "the Rapture," true bonafide Christians would leave behind all non-believers, along with apostate Christians (which they believe will include the liberal clergy of mainline denominations and those whom they led astray, along with unregenerate Catholics).

Following the Rapture, there will be seven cataclysmic years marked by horrendous wars, famine, and disease. Satanic forces, led by a messianic imposter called the anti-Christ, will delude people into following him.

Against the evil host of the anti-Christ will stand 144,000 Jews who will have by then been converted to Christianity, and who will go about evangelizing those who have been "left behind." The 144,000 will join with those they convert to Christianity in a climactic battle called Armageddon, in which the evil forces will be soundly defeated.

At the end of these seven years, called the Great Tribulation, Jesus will return again, bind Satan and his hosts, and then establish his Messianic Kingdom here on Earth in a period called the Millennium.

There is much more to Darby's outline of history, but these few points can provide some background understanding of the rationale governing the politics of Christian Zionists.

First of all, given Darby's predictions about the "end times," it is easy to figure out why dispensationalists were so wildly excited in 1948 when the modern state of Israel was founded. To them, it was biblical prophesy unfolding before their eyes. One of their most popular spokespersons, author Hal Lindsey, contended in *The Late Great Planet Earth* that, with the founding of the state of Israel, the Rapture could not be more than forty years away. Needless to say, he has made a few revisions of his prediction since 1988.

II. No Christian Left Behind

Predictions like Lindsey's might be dismissed as ludicrous were it not for the fact that dispensationalism has become a very popular and influential stream of thought in American Christianity. Its influence comes largely through Darby's own *Scofield Reference Bible*—by far the most popular study Bible ever published—and the *Left Behind* Christian book series. The *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1906, remains popular because it provides extensive notes that interpret scripture in an easy-to-understand fashion for the lay reader. Most of those who read these notes do not realize that they are being indoctrinated with a very particular theology.

The more recent *Left Behind* series, written by religious-

right evangelist Tim La Haye and Jerry Jenkins, have spread the dispensationalist message to an even wider audience. These books have sold more than 60 million copies in the United States, and more than 700 million worldwide. To put this into perspective, the books have sold more copies than the complete works of Stephen King and John Grisham combined.

The *Left Behind* books are fascinating fictional reading. They tell the story of a small group of heroic people who live through struggles that accompany the chaos in the world that dispensationalists say will accompany the Second Coming of Christ. What the unsuspecting readers do not recognize is that in reading these exciting stories they are absorbing the theology of John Darby and are being indoctrinated with his prophesies about how human history will unfold and how it will end. The readers are led, in an entertaining manner, to think that what they read is in harmony with events foretold in the Bible, especially in the Book of Revelation.

Dispensationalism, however, is not merely popular among ordinary citizens; it has achieved an unprecedented influence today because many of its followers hold high positions in government. The Secretary of the Interior during the years of the Reagan administration, James Watt, was one of them. His expectation of the imminent Rapture became his rationale for exploiting natural resources with little thought of the future. Believing that the Rapture was at hand, he saw no reason to hold back on drilling for oil in national parks, eliminating environmental policies designed to protect the Earth's atmosphere, rivers, lakes, and oceans. Why worry about the kind of planet that our grandchildren will inherit if the days for planet Earth are severely limited?

President Ronald Reagan took the dispensationalist theology fed to him by televangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson very seriously, and believed that one of his responsibilities was to promote a military buildup so America (which he believed was on God's side) would be ready for the battle of Armageddon.

It is difficult to know just how much this dispensationalist eschatology has permeated the thinking of President George W. Bush. Religious leaders who espouse these beliefs, such as Falwell, Robertson, and Franklin Graham, are among his closest spiritual advisors. Bush's reference to certain nations as being an "Axis of Evil" has Elaine Pagels, a Religious Studies professor at Princeton, concerned about his use of religious language. She speculates that he, too, may have bought into Reagan's beliefs about the coming battle of Armageddon.

III. A Middle East Crusade

When political leaders believe that they have been called by God to destroy the evil nations, there can be terrible consequences. Leaders are never so destructive as

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The Air We Breathe...

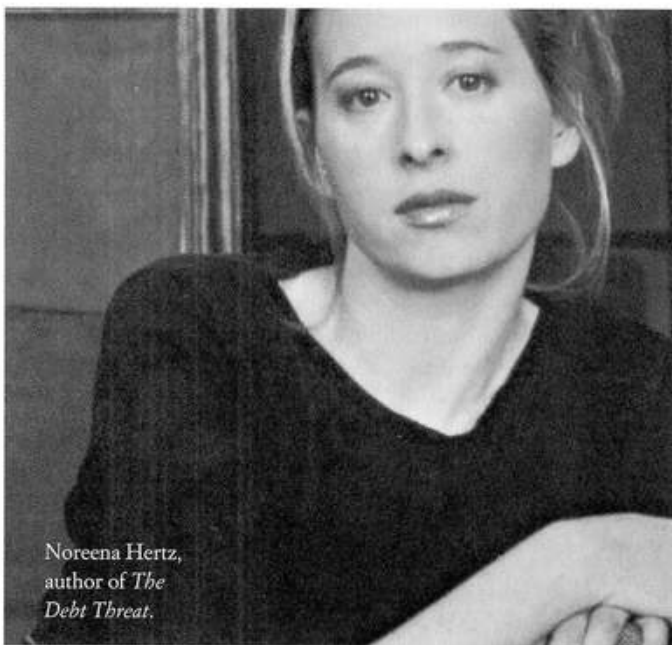
Noreena Hertz

There is yet more for us to fear. The burden that debt puts upon the developing world endangers us all in an even more fundamental way. It threatens the air we breathe, the food we eat, the survival of our species. It poses a threat to our very planet.

The world's fish stocks are facing collapse, great apes are facing extinction, toxic shrimps are being found in many waters. Sugar maple yields are falling, ocean levels are rising, coral reefs, rain forests and mangrove wetlands are disappearing. Insurance loss claims in America due to natural disasters are already spiraling out of control (claims between 1990 and 2000 were equal to those of the previous thirty years combined) and costs of global warming are expected to reach \$300 billion a year in coming decades. All this and much more can be linked to debt.

How so? First, in order to generate the requisite foreign exchange they need to service their debts, developing countries tend to exploit whatever natural resources they have. The more debts they have, the more they exploit. Clear links can be made, for example, between levels of debt and rates of deforestation. And deforestation is a key driver of global warming—25 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions are due to changes in land use, principally deforestation, most of which is taking place in the developing world—and global warming is a key driver of climate change.

At the same time, the opening up of forests and woodlands to industrial logging companies, a move increasingly favored in order to meet the privatization requirements of the IMF, itself creates serious problems. Since industrial loggers have moved in, hordes of people have been drawn to the hitherto inaccessible forests of Central and West Africa in search of work. In order to survive, these people are killing off pigs, elephants, chimpanzees, and gorillas at an unprecedented rate. If today's rates of slaughter persist, not



Noreena Hertz,
author of *The
Debt Threat*.

only will indigenous forest people no longer have a secure source of food, these species will be extinct within the next twenty years.

Second, countries devastated by debt simply cannot afford to act in an environmentally responsible way. They can't afford to replant their forests if they raze them, so the world loses its carbon sinks; they can't afford to put money into environmental preservation schemes when they are facing more immediate problems—health crises, unemployment, social unrest, etc. And so environmental degradation persists. There has been a 50 percent reduction in funds for environmental preservation in the Amazon, for example, since the 1980s, when structural adjustment programs were first put in place. And even if a country does have environmental protection legislation, it cannot afford to enforce it—the Democratic Republic of Congo has some of the most sophisticated environmental protections in the world but cannot find the money to pay the policemen to administer them. In the Philippines, where the government sold off all official vehicles in order to meet IMF-imposed budgetary constraints, you have the bizarre situation of forestry officials being forced to beg rides from the very loggers they are supposed to be controlling! The upshot? More exploitation, more environmental risk.

Excerpted from The Debt Threat. Printed by arrangement with Harper Collins Publishers, ©2004. All rights reserved. Noreena Hertz is the Associate Director for the Centre for International Business at Cambridge University. She is one of the world's leading experts on economic globalization, and her work has been published in the Washington Post, the New Statesman, the Observer and the Guardian. She holds an MBA from Wharton and a Ph.D. from Cambridge University.

Third, the pressure of servicing debt in poverty-stricken countries inspires short-termist behavior. The world's poorest countries—Ghana, Gambia, Honduras, Nicaragua—are selling off their fishing rights, for example, to fleets from the world's richest, in part to repay their debts. Never mind the fact that these rich countries have already overfished their own seas, and are clearly hell-bent on exporting their overfishing practices to new waters. Never mind that, as a consequence, the developing countries are seeing the livelihoods of their own local fishing communities being destroyed, unable to compete with big commercial fleets. And never mind the fact that if developing-world countries continue to sell off their fishing rights at the current rates, the world's entire fish stock will collapse. This isn't scaremongering. In the past fifty years, the world's mechanized fishing fleets have already managed to wipe out nine-tenths of the world's biggest and most economically important species of fish, including swordfish, cod, halibut, and tuna. Just think what could happen if such fleets are able to trawl unregulated in developing-world waters.

Fourth, loans are very often provided for clearly environmentally damaging projects. Remember the PoloNoreste Project in Brazil, the 930-mile road built through the Amazon, financed by the World Bank in order to create new rural settlements and ease urban congestion—which resulted in widespread deforestation, the dislocation of indigenous peoples, and the loss of many endangered species. More recently, we have seen mangrove wetlands, the saltwater equivalents of the rain forests, being destroyed in Thailand, Indonesia, Ecuador, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Ghana, Malawi, and elsewhere, as World Bank financed shrimp farms are built on these sites. Shrimp farms are now the primary cause of mangrove and wetland destruction in the tropics. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being lent by the World Bank for projects which, on top of contributing to global warming, not only are proving incapable of generating the foreign exchange they were supposed to create (which should, of course, have been obvious: with so many countries being lent money to set up such farms all at the same time, there was an immediate global glut of shrimps, and their price plummeted), but are also threatening local food security. In Asia, for example, over half the shrimp farms that were set up are, because of the glut, now abandoned, which has led to a significant drop in the availability of food, as land formerly used for crop growing now lies fallow. Having been salinated for the shrimps to flourish, it is now unsuitable for other use. Furthermore, the products are all too often toxic, as shrimp growers pump their products with chemicals so as to maximize yields. Thai, Pakistani, Vietnamese, and Indonesian prawns have all been found to contain traces of the cancer-causing antibiotic nitrofurantoin, and in 2002 several of Britain's leading food retailers were asked by the Food Standards Authority to withdraw various Asian prawns from their shelves because they contained not

only this illegal chemical but also pesticides deemed dangerous by the World Health Organization.

Export credit agencies are also guilty in this environmentally unsound lending equation. They are responsible, as we have seen, for financing most dams and thermal power plants in developing countries and several have done serious damage. The Rihand mega-power plant in India, for example, financed by export credits provided by Western governments so that their big corporations—in this case NEI and GEC—could profit, had to be cooled with water from the Rihand Lake, thus raising the lake's temperature and changing the ecology. The power plant was also fed with coal from the Singrauli strip mine, one of the last habitats for the Bengal tiger.

U.S. export credit agencies OPIC and Ex-Im are currently in litigation, charged with having provided over \$32 billion in loans and insurance over the past ten years for the building of oil fields and coal-fired power projects in developing countries. It is claimed by the cities of Boulder and Oakland—which in conjunction with Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace have brought the case to bear—that the loans will lead directly to climate change, and as a result will diminish U.S. drinking water supplies, increase the risk of salt water contamination in groundwater aquifers, overwhelm sewage systems, and aggravate respiratory illnesses. In the case of Oakland, climate change already puts its airport at risk: given that it was built on a former wetland at about ten feet above sea level, it is now susceptible to flooding from the extreme tides that accompany global warming.

And remember, the United States' export credit agencies are more environmentally sound than almost all of their counterparts! Of course, blaming the developing world for the destruction of the developed world's environment is in some ways pretty rich. If anything, the developed world owes an ecological debt to the developing world: carbon dioxide emissions from the rich world currently far exceed those from the poor. The commitment of the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, under which developed countries were supposed to reduce emissions, remains largely unfulfilled. Both America and Russia have refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. And frighteningly little change is expected on the emissions front, especially given that the United States alone accounts for 21 percent of total world emissions and that the Bush administration is hell-bent on downplaying the impact on global warming.

But by lending money for projects it knows are environmentally unsound, and by making poor countries deprioritize the environment and sell off their natural resources in order to meet IMF conditions, the rich world once again shoots itself in the foot. This is a case not of developed-world myopia, but of developed-world blindness.

The security threat we face, if we continue to ravage our environment at current rates, is going to make even Osama bin Laden look pretty tame. In a recent report, the Pentagon

announced that global warming is now a greater threat than terrorism. The latest scientific research predicts that water, dry land, and energy resources will become increasingly scarce and increasingly fought over within our lifetime; and that civil wars and regional conflicts will grow as tens of millions of people displaced by floods, droughts, cyclones, and rising sea levels will pour across borders and huddled refugee camps, leaving disease, misery, and anger in their wake. Millions are likely to starve as climate changes take hold; ill-configured World Bank funded monoculture projects and the depletion of the oceans are likely to cause the collapse of food production in countries that already have severely undernourished populations. Those who survive will find sustenance in their rage. Disease could spread, as rising temperatures are anticipated to lead to increased incidences of insect-borne illnesses such as malaria and dengue fever, illnesses against which our borders no longer provide barriers. Species after species are projected to become extinct—already 24 percent of mammals are threatened with extinction thanks to logging, forest clearing, and over-fishing practices: an extraordinary rate of extinction even compared with the ice ages. With each death, the number of possible medical cures drops, and our fragile and complex ecosystem will be further irreversibly damaged.

The Cree Indians warn that “after the last tree has been cut down; after the last river has been poisoned; after the

last fish has been caught, only then will you find that money cannot be eaten.” We are approaching that last tree, last river, last fish. The debt threat is real and it faces us now. Countries weighed down by unmanageable debt burdens are already sicker, poorer, more economically unstable, more politically volatile, more fractured than they would otherwise be. Their environments are more ravaged. Confidence in their leaders is already increasingly weakened as more and more people ask whether it is to them or their bankers that their loyalties lie.

And in this ever globalizing world of ours, what is “theirs” fast becomes “ours”—their sicknesses become our sicknesses, their despair our despair, their damage our damage, their dysfunctionality, the dysfunctionality of us all. We will never be able to build walls high enough to keep angry beggar armies out. No amount of “shock” or “awe” will be sufficient to dispel the ever growing hordes of the disgruntled and disenfranchised. Paper surgical masks will be unable to protect us from the spread of diseases that respect no borders. No number of herbicide-spraying sorties will stop poor, dispossessed farmers from growing drugs. Our environment will be irrevocably damaged by the environmentally damaging decisions taken by others many thousands of miles away. Our economies will be threatened by the game of chicken that Wall Street and the leaders of the developing world so often play. □

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Green Faith and the Recovery of Joy

Mary Grey

The summer of 2004 brought unusual human and ecological misery to the Western hemisphere, as hurricane after hurricane battered the Caribbean and the southern coast of the United States. Global warming is indisputably upon us. Responding to this threat with anger, fear, resignation, and near-despair has not created the international political will to take effective action. Where secular arguments have failed to motivate, however, a theological lens may succeed. Understanding our ecological situation through this lens may provide us with a new and radical level of hoping that, while it never takes the place of political campaigning, may yet renew its passion.

Ecological religion—or Green Faith—first emerged from a conviction that the deepest faith-sources of the Jewish and Christian traditions do not lead to a theology and ethics of domination, as it is so often presumed. Instead, for Green Faith, absolutely nothing is more fundamental than the conviction that the world is created and held in existence by God's love, compassion, and providence. This is a divine gift, granted to us by the grace of the Spirit of God. When we understand the world in this way, we can see that our religious faith traditions offer us imaginative, countercultural visions of peaceful and just living, inclusive of human and non-human life.

In order to embrace Green Faith, we will have to challenge the anthropocentric mindset that suggests that nature exists only to be controlled. We must repent for creating a culture that idolizes money, the lifestyle this culture brings, and the way it determines identity (or the lack of it). Critically reclaiming an ecologically inspiring heritage does not imply that our biblical ancestors were free from damaging dualisms that undervalued the material and sexual: even if their ecological footprint was many times lighter than ours, the temptations of greed, ambition, and misuse of land were all too overpowering. Time and again the suffering voice of the Creator is heard through the prophets, recalling the people to God's vision of shalom and justice. Can this voice be heard again? *O my people, what have I done to you? And what have you done to the earth?*

Mary Grey is the author of *The Outrageous Pursuit of Hope—Prophetic Dreams for the 21st Century* (2000) and *Sacred Longings: The Ecological Spirit and Global Culture* (2004).



The radical otherness of God's vision for creation appears in the words of the prophets. Isaiah connects the devastation of the land with human sin and responsibility. He, more than anyone, appeals to the people through his imaginative vision of a shalom that embraces the flourishing of people, land, and animals. Water springs up in the desert with a diversity of trees (Isa.39). Lion, lamb, panther, and kid feed together in this messianic vision of redeemed creation (Isa.11). Whether this means a vision solely for messianic times—a Jewish conviction—or is a compelling prophetic dream of what might be possible, it nonetheless calls us into something radically different than our severely limited human imaginings.

The Book of Job also gives us a radical Green cosmology. In the powers we human beings now have at our disposal—to destroy the world with nuclear bombs, to clone human beings and animals, to manipulate the genetic structures of the plant and animal world—we have taken God's role and challenged God's control of creation. Yet God's words to Job are clear:

Have you commanded the morning? (38:12)

Have you entered the storehouses of the snow? (38:22)

God's seemingly imperious tones recall humanity to a proper sense of humility and a place in the whole web of creation. This God gives new responsibilities in the current threatened situation of creation: a call to respect wildness and the needs of wild animals and not to hunt them to extinction. We must also hear the cries of the victims whose land has been turned to desert and robbed of tree cover

AP PHOTO/SAURABH DAS

because of the greedy policies of governments or corporations. Job's God calls from the whirlwind demanding that we respect the total ecology of place: ecological rather than exclusively economic objectives must be human priorities.

These biblical voices teach that we need to learn radical humility, a sense of responsibility, and an awareness of limits. The framework within which we live, we are told, is that of covenant, God's covenant with the whole of the cosmos. God will provide a sun that rises and sets, seasons that come and go—*unless we humans get in the way*. Green Faith tells us that rather than considering ourselves stewards of creation—a model that can still fuel our arrogance and anthropocentrism—we must see ourselves as responsible to fulfilling our covenantal relationship with Creation.

Humanity must approach God's creation with humility, but humility alone will not be enough to restore a ravaged Earth. What above all must be reclaimed through Green Faith is reverence and wonder at God's giftedness through creation. Hope will only be reborn today when human longings and dreams are radically different from the desires spawned by idolatry of money. What we must do to recover the genuine heart's desire and discover what humans really yearn for when the spin, the commercials, and the web of deceptions are unveiled, and their emptiness revealed for what it is?

Perhaps the most visionary and potentially transforming message that Green Faith can offer is that the process of restraining and reshaping our desires in a consumerist culture is actually about the recovery of joy. Joy at creation's birth, together with the great vision of the Feast of Life (Isa. 25) and the redeemed city where the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of nations (Rev. 22), are foundational images for creating hope.

Fortunately, it is the well-kept secret of Green Faith that such joy can be created through resistance. The truth is that communities of people who passionately love the earth and live out that passion are living more joyfully than the ordinary consumer, even if their chosen lifestyle seems austere. These are resistance communities, dancing to a different tune than the commercial one. These groups share the joy that can be discovered when we awaken to solidarity and friendship with circles beyond our immediate neighbors.

The way back to fulfilling our covenantal relationship and truly living in God's ecological household lies in sharing the concrete struggle of the world's poor. When we live their struggle to have access to life's most basic requirements—water, food, and shelter—we become “communities of austerity”—in solidarity with those for whom even austerity represents abundance.

And it is with these communities that hope is surprisingly and even outrageously discovered. For example, each year I travel to the desert state of Rajasthan in Northwest India, an area faced with frequent droughts, where the struggle is always for sheer survival. Women's daily drudgery—the

weary search for water and firewood, the sixteen hour day caring for household and children and working in the fields—is often combined with caste humiliation, domestic violence, and low status in the community. Yet somehow these women find hope and strength to sustain daily life. When festivals come they have not lost the capacity to rejoice through dancing, singing, and feasting on what the community manages to share, even in desperate conditions. Their faith-roots go deep—God is the source of life, of water, of providence, of hope despite all odds.

In this story of hope from the context of war-torn African Sudan, first told by John Vidal in *The Guardian* (September 22, 1998) this hope against all odds is revealed:

Acholdeng, a starving Dinka woman from the southern Sudan, walked with her baby son, Rial, for four days and three nights to reach an Oxfam feeding center. Once, she had had a husband, a cow, a field. But her husband died, the crops failed in the drought, and people were dying around her. She had no choice but to take the baby and set off for food, both of them creeping nearer to death. When they reached the center the baby was barely breathing due to diarrhea, anemia, hypothermia, and dehydration. Exhausted, mother and child curled up on a blanket and slept. She awoke and was given food, and then something amazing happened.

Even as babies were dying, one by one the mothers left their children on the mats and joined together in a circle. They started singing. They clapped. They moved back and forth, pounded the baked earth. Whistled and laughed. It was light in the darkness. Slowly Acholdeng hobbled over to join them, taking up the rhythms and the dance. In minutes, all those in the center—assistants, mothers who had been grieving, children and doctors—were dancing and singing. It was a great act of defiance against the rotten climate, the accursed war, the land that wouldn't produce, the armies, the cattle raiders, and all the troubles.

These beacons of hope and resistance, even where life does not appear to offer any, do not romanticize the intolerable situation that both these groups of women faced. But they point to the place where hope can be reborn—in conversion to the Earth, and to God's purposes, providence, and justice. What the women show us is that resistance is the secret of joy. This is a mystical hope with no obvious empirical “cash-value.” It is based on the deepest source of trust in the sacredness of life itself: being faithful to the work of daily sustenance enables the possibility of life's continuance. Longing for water, loving life, and trusting in God come together in a resting place where transformed human desires are satisfied and fulfilled in justice for vulnerable communities and the Earth's own economy. This is our yearning, our outrageous hope: that the Earth's woundedness be over and that we of all faiths, and none, know each other in a flowing world where our yearnings are realized in truth, peace and love. Only then will we awaken to a deeper yearning and know ourselves held and cherished by the desire of God. □

The Emerging Alliance of Religion and Ecology

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

The strong and vocal presence of the religious Right, with its emphasis on family values and sexual politics, and the virtual absence of any discussion of the environment in the recent U.S. elections, causes one to wonder how much importance religions place on the environment as a moral and spiritual issue. The reports keep pouring in that we are altering the climate and toxifying the air, water, and soil so that the health of humans and other species is at risk. The explosion of population in the twentieth century from 2 to 6 billion people and the subsequent devouring of resources are on a collision course. Furthermore, scientists are documenting that we are living in the midst of a sixth extinction period, with over 10,000 species lost each year, more than any time since the dinosaurs went extinct. Have the religious communities within the United States become so absorbed in their own survival and in the internecine wars surrounding family values that they are unaware of the magnitude of this destruction?

Those who are both religious and environmentally conscious might begin to wonder whether humans are indeed a viable, sustainable species. As the Greek Orthodox theologian John of Pergamon has written, this is not simply about creating a stewardship ethic where we are "managing" the Earth. Rather, this crisis challenges us to reformulate the way we understand our very nature as humans. Also, if we are willing to stand by and merely witness the withering of the Earth, haven't our religious sensibilities become deadened or at best severely attenuated?

This raises several questions: Why have religions been so late in responding to environmental issues? What are the obstacles to their full participation? Has concern for personal salvation or redemption out of this world become an obstacle to caring for Creation? Why has apocalyptic think-

ing come to interpret ecological collapse as a manifestation of the end time?

We need not deny the limits or the dark side of religion, but religions, as ancient shapers of culture, can make invaluable contributions to rethinking our current impasse. Religions have developed ethics for homicide, suicide, and genocide; now their challenge is to encompass biocide and ecocide. Moreover, the environment could be one of the most compelling concerns for robust inter-religious dialogue.

The common ground is the Earth itself, along with a shared belief in the sacredness of life. We have an enormous opportunity to cooperate and embrace life-giving not life-destroying human-Earth relations.

Scientists and policymakers are also recognizing the importance of religious and cultural values when discussing the environment. The series of articles that follow in future issues will document some of the significant thinking and embodied action that marks a

transition of religions into their ecological phase, taking place in North America and around the world. The monotheistic traditions of the West are finding their voices regarding the environment. They are joined by Hinduism and Jainism of South Asia, Confucianism and Daoism of East Asia, and Buddhism in both Asia and the West. Indigenous traditions of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Americas are likewise contributing their ancient wisdoms to the emerging discussions. All of these traditions are moving forward to find the language, symbols, and rituals for encouraging protection of bioregions and species. Religions are generating the energy needed for restoring the Earth through practices such as tree planting, coral reef preservation, and river clean up. In addition, they are beginning to bridge the gap between those concerned with social and economic justice and those working for a sustainable environment. Future articles will include reflections on Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism, Indigenous Traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from authors involved in the Harvard-based Forum on Religion and Ecology. (For further reading see Tucker's *Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase* (Open Court, 2003) and Tucker and Grim, *Worldviews and Ecology* (Orbis, 2001), and www.environment.harvard.edu/religion.) □

**A new
series on
sacred
ecology**

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, professors of religion at Bucknell University, are the coordinators of the Forum on Religion and Ecology based at Harvard. The Forum has organized conferences, published books, created an international web site, and identified over 100 religiously inspired grassroots environmental projects around the world.

Sephardic Literature: Unity and Dispersion

Ilan Stavans

“The Sephardic sensibility,” Abraham Joshua Heschel, the existential thinker responsible for *God in Search of Man* and other classics, states in an essay originally published in Germany in 1946 and translated into English in 1972, “is distinguished by a strict, logical orderliness... and stress[es] the elements Judaism has in common with the surrounding cultures, frequently overlooking its own specific, peculiar contributions. Often, the thinking is in a foreign pattern, endeavoring to compromise with the theories of the great thinkers, at times even an apologetic note is sounded.”

In attempting to understand what makes the Sephardim tick, one often comes across extravagant, Manichean statements such as these. In Heschel’s mind were luminaries such as Maimonides and Spinoza, i.e., stunning assemblers and commentators of homiletic information or else lucid thinkers whose use of the more geometric reduces the universe to algebraic forces. Indeed, he wrote as his doctoral dissertation a biography of Maimonides, in whom he recognizes a steep intellectual reach. But he was also disappointed with “the lack of passion, the absence of angst” in the oeuvre of the author of *The Guide for the Perplexed*, wondering why Maimonides didn’t share a bit of the to-be-or-not-to-be that defines Ashkenazic Jewishness.

That Heschel was infatuated, in a somewhat paternalistic fashion, with the people of Ashkenaz, as the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe for almost a millennium (from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries) are referred to, is no secret. A child of the post-Romantic movement and a pupil of the *Wissenschaft des Judentum* (he was born in Berlin in 1907, emigrated to the United States before World War II, was active during the Civil Rights era, taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and died in 1972), his infatuation was in the air he breathed. “A unique Jewish person

evolved [in Ashkenaz],” Heschel stated, “whose habits and taste are not in accordance with the classical canon of beauty, but who nevertheless possess a specific charm. He is like a page in an open book, static in its own lines and in the proportion of text and margin... The charm derives from the [person’s] inner richness, from the polarity of reason and feeling, of joy and sorrow.”

That polarity, in his view, isn’t part of the Sephardic experience. For Heschel the Sephardim are aristocratic. They don’t find complete self-fulfillment in their Jewishness. And the fact that they wrote their classics in languages such as Arabic, intelligible to a miniscule elite, was for him difficult to swallow. It is as if Sholem Aleichem had opted for Russian to deliver his masterpiece, *Tevye the Dairyman*. In his essay, issued in English a couple of years after his death, Heschel gets into muddier waters when talking about Sephardic literature per se. “[It] is like classical architecture,” he stated. Ashkenazic letters, in contrast, are “like a painting by Rembrandt, profound and full of mystery.” He adds: “The former prefers the harmony of a system; the latter, the tension of dialectic. The former is sustained by a balanced solemnity; the latter, by impulsive inspiration. Frequently, in Ashkenazic literature, the form is shattered by the overflow of feeling, by passion of thought, and explosive ecstasy. Sephardic literature is like a cultivated park; Ashkenazic, like an ancient forest. The former is like a story with a beginning and an end; the latter has a beginning, but turns frequently into a tale without end. The Sephardim, interested in preserving the spiritual heritage, classify and synthesize the material that has accumulated in the course of the centuries.”

Clearly, Heschel’s approach to the Sephardim is simplistic. It makes use of a hermeneutic technique of argumentation, propagated in the early twentieth century by Karl Popper, known for its use of “negative attributes.” The Sephardim are everything that the Ashkenazim are not. The folklore and tradition of the descendants of the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 appear to him as unfamiliar, foreign, and bizarre. They are also superficial. Unfortunately, this approach isn’t atypical. In fact, it is common practice. One stumbles upon manipulative appreciations such as these on an ongoing basis, not only among Ashkenazim but also—frequently and at times even apolo-

Excerpted from The Schocken Book of Modern Sephardic Literature, edited and with an introduction by Ilan Stavans. Copyright © 2005 by Ilan Stavans. To be published in January by Schocken Books, a division of Random House, Inc. Ilan Stavans is the Lewis-Sebring Professor at Amherst College. His most recent book is Spanglish: The Making of a New American Language (HarperCollins). He is currently editing The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature.

getically—among the Sephardim themselves, from the eighteenth century, the so-called Age of Enlightenment, onward.

* * *

To the degree that is possible, let me move away from this Manichean paradigm and, instead, ponder the Sephardic tradition, and specifically its literature, on its own terms—not as shadow but as light. The Hebrew term Sephardim (in singular, Sephardi) is used for descendants of Jews who lived in the Iberian Peninsula—Spain and Portugal—before the expulsion. But this view is mistaken in a number of ways. For instance, the Jews of Africa, Iraq, and Iran are often described as Sephardic but in fact have a unique history of their own. Once again, this confusion isn't new. The confusion is highlighted by the fact that early on the Sephardim from the Iberian Peninsula, so as to prove their authenticity, described themselves as *Sephardi tabor* ("pure Sephardi"). Even more problematic is the exclusion in Sephardic history of Jewish life in Spain prior to the expulsion. Are the Iberian communities from 900 CE onward not part of the same history? Is Sephardic life solely a litany of nostalgia, an impossible quest for *La España perdida*, the land of loss and the lost land, in spite of the fact that Spain "aborted" its Jewish population (in the quest for *La Reconquista*, it also expelled its Muslims) and, judging by its national culture, has nurtured little remorse over time?

The Sephardic condition is one of fracture and displacement. Obviously, these ingredients are what characterize Jewish history as a whole, but the dispersion from the Iberian Peninsula is a particularly dense branch of it, with multiple ramifications. In Mexico, where I was born and came of age in the 1970s, a similar response came from my Sephardic acquaintances: Spain, rather than being *en el corazón*—in the heart, as Pablo Neruda once said, is just a figment of yesteryears. Similarly, in *The Pillar of Salt*, a classic of Sephardic autobiography, Albert Memmi, chronicling his upbringing in the 1930s in Tunis—which, to some extent, is representative of the entire Levant, i.e., the eastern part of the Mediterranean, with its islands and the countries adjoining—defines the Sephardic condition:

"I am ill at ease in my own land and I know of no other," Memmi writes. "My culture is borrowed and I speak my mother tongue haltingly. I have neither religious beliefs nor tradition... To try to explain what I am, I would need an intelligent audience and much time. I am a Tunisian, but of French culture... I am Tunisian but Jewish, which means that I am politically and socially an outcast. I speak the language of the country with a particular accent and emotionally I have nothing in common with Muslims."

To cure his divided heart, Memmi doesn't reach out for Spain as a panacea—the Iberian past is too remote, too severed from his personal experience. Instead, he looks toward French culture as a ticket to salvation.

Spain isn't the only mistaken source of identity among

the Sephardim—a myth more than a reality. Historians Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, authors of *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th to 20th Centuries*, describe the historiography of Sephardim as "so rife with myths that it is tempting to wonder whether they emerged to provide palliatives to the gloomy 'lachrymose' episodes in Jewish history." They continue: "These myths have various origins but end in throwing a halo of shadow around the Sephardim. First, there is the foundation myth that the Jews had a sort of right to the Iberian land.... Then there is the myth which puts the number of expelled at the astronomical figure of 400,000, whereas recent estimates, erring on the other side, do not exceed 50,000.... And what is to be said of the famous myth of the Spanish 'Golden Age,' which certainly pleases everyone?" The expulsion was indeed a traumatic event, but it didn't come unannounced. In fact, the Papal decree that established the Holy Office of the Inquisitions in Aragon in 1238, and the increasing anti-Semitic—anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim—outbursts, paved the road. Before the trauma, conversion was already a mandate. It resulted in a duplicity that marked Hispanic civilization forever: a self at home, another in public. The age of *conversos* was thus established, and it coincided with the colonial enterprise. Scores of so-called New Christians traveled across the Atlantic Ocean in search of refuge from the Inquisition only to find an almost equally oppressive atmosphere on the other side. Some Sephardim did manage to survive in the Caribbean Basin, Brazil, and elsewhere. A handful eventually moved north, and in 1654 some of them founded and made roots in New Amsterdam, known to us as New York City.

Sephardic identity, then, is a hall of mirrors. In retrospect, it might be said that the millennial Sephardic journey, from the first settlements in the Iberian Peninsula between 200 BCE and 200 CE, to 1492 and on to a series of forked paths, is marked by a movement toward attrition, which then reverses its course, becoming centrifugal, ultimately exploding in multiple directions. The result is families that within the span of three to four generations found themselves to be agonizingly disjointed. Edmond Jabès, the Egyptian-born French philosopher, writes in his *Return to the Book* of one such family: his own. In fact, he discusses the disintegration as a form of death, at once concrete and symbolic. Nowhere is this fragmentation clearer than in the assorted sites where Jabès' relatives are buried. "In the cemetery of Bagneaux, department of the Seine, rests my mother," he writes. "In Old Cairo, in the cemetery of sand, my father. In Milano, in the dead marble city, my sister is buried. In Rome, where the dark [was] dug out of the ground to receive him, my brother lies. Four graves. Three countries. Does death know borders? One family. Two continents. Four cities. One language: of nothingness. One pain. Four glances in one. Four lives." □

Theological Growing Pains: A Personal Reflection

Or N. Rose

God becomes and disbecomes —Meister Eckhart

As a teacher in a rabbinical seminary, I have the privilege of engaging in ongoing theological conversation with my students and colleagues. While in certain respects our curriculum is similar to that of other graduate programs in Judaic studies, there is a conscious effort in our community to explore the kinds of personal religious questions that are considered taboo in the academy. It is precisely in these thornier discussions that I experience most deeply moments of genuine connection, moments that the great German Jewish thinker, Martin Buber, referred to as “I-Thou” experiences.

In the course of many such conversations, I have come to a deeper understanding of the delicate interplay of theology and biography, the complicated ways in which our beliefs about God and reality emerge out of the dynamic interaction of text, ritual, gender, class, race, and family. This may sound like an obvious point, but one could think otherwise reading the classic works of Jewish thought—Maimonides, Isaac Luria, or even Buber himself. Most theologians speak in elaborate detail about God and the world, while discussing very little about themselves or their religious development. Even the mystics in our tradition, those spiritual virtuosos who insist on the need to seek out the Divine in the midst of life, are reticent about speaking in the first person, sharing with us how they found or lost God, the influence of their parents, friends, and teachers, and what life is like for them between peak religious experiences.

It seems that most Jewish theologians consider their own biographies relatively unimportant, attempting to locate themselves within larger paradigms of Jewish experience—Exodus, Sinai, and the destruction of the Temple. While I certainly understand the power of linking one’s spiritual search to those of our ancestors, creating continuity across space and time, I also think it is important to examine carefully the ways in which the specificity of our lives serves as the ground for our beliefs. In fact, I would assert that the Bible’s narrative form—with all of its mundane detail about family and relationships—invites us not only to emulate fig-

ures like Abraham and Sarah, but also to recognize our own personal narratives as sacred texts.

It is in this spirit that I offer the following reflection on my own theological development. I do so with the hope that in reading this brief account, those who view theology as a worthwhile endeavor might be moved to engage in similar processes, continuing to clarify their beliefs, wishes, doubts, and fears in light of their unfolding life experiences. I also hope that others who have abandoned theological discourse might reconsider how such conversation can be useful in constructing meaning in their lives.

The God of My Childhood

Like many people I have met in religious contexts, I developed a powerful relationship with God as a child. Who was this God? “The man with the long white beard,” of course; a father figure who was my confidant, protector, and assurance; a God who was particularly important to me in moments of sadness, disappointment, and fear. I have no doubt that I was able to cultivate my belief in such a personal God, in part, because of the relative stability of my childhood. I did not have to ask where God was when a sibling died or when my parents divorced. Ironically, the most significant personal loss I have suffered to date is that of the God of my youth.

So what happened to this God? He certainly did not disappear overnight; it would be more accurate to say that he eroded slowly over time. It all began in yeshiva... (Yeshiva University [YU] that is), where, as an undergraduate living away from home for the first time, I began to wrestle with issues of Jewish observance. Raised in a progressive religious home, I now struggled to find my place in an Orthodox Jewish community. How observant did I want or need to be? Should I pray three times a day? Eat only in kosher restaurants? Bring my *tefilin* (phylacteries) with me when I slept over at my girlfriend’s apartment? How was I to distinguish among the cacophonous voices of my parents, teachers, self, and God?

Sinai—Event or Myth

In time, I came to understand that much of this struggle was not about the details of my religious practice, but about larger questions concerning the origin and nature of Jewish law. What was the basis for my practice? Did God

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care if I observed the do's and don'ts of *Shabbat* or, more importantly, if I had premarital sex? The most pressing question for me as a late adolescent was about the revelation at Sinai. I thought that if I could unravel the mystery of this hallowed event—whether or not God actually revealed the Torah to the Children of Israel in the wilderness—I could better understand my relationship to Jewish tradition.

With the encouragement of friends and family at Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary (located just three miles from YU, but worlds apart intellectually), I began reading not only the classic writings of rabbinic and medieval commentators on this subject, but also the works of such modern Jewish thinkers as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Abraham Joshua Heschel. I was particularly drawn to Heschel because of the beauty of his writing—the eloquence with which he described the religious life—and his unabashed expressions of love for God (the “G” word, unfortunately, was not used much at YU). When I learned of his work as a social activist, he became an instant hero—a spiritual renaissance man who wove together the threads of his religious life with integrity and grace.

For a time, I also found Heschel's approach to the Sinai question helpful. He claimed that God did, in fact, reveal the Torah to Israel as is claimed in the Bible. However, the moment human beings took hold of Torah, it necessarily lost its perfect divine form. Therefore, the text we have in our possession is not the Torah of God, but a noble human attempt at interpreting God's word. Nonetheless, Heschel also insisted that this is the closest approximation of God's will on earth, and therefore, it is incumbent upon Jews to heed its call and follow its rulings. This response allowed me, temporarily, to maintain a traditional basis for my religious practice without requiring of me a literal reading of the accounts of revelation in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

However, the more I was exposed to biblical criticism and the historical study of religion, the more I came to realize that Heschel's answer on this issue was not my own. Rather than attempting to preserve the truth of Sinai as an event, I came to see it, and the Bible as a whole, as myth—as the crystallization of generations of human spiritual search and/or encounter told in dramatic story form. Nonetheless, reading sacred texts through a mythic lens was painful and disorienting for me. I felt as if I was suddenly standing on shaky existential ground. If the Bible was not “true,” and the writings of the rabbis were equally fallible, on what basis could I justify my religious commitments?

Mordecai Kaplan: My Theology Undergoes Reconstruction

In my various attempts to reorganize my religious life, the writings of Mordecai Kaplan (a fellow graduate of the YU educational system) were helpful, although at first very jarring. Kaplan spoke unapologetically of Judaism as an evolving “civilization” that has grown and changed over the

centuries through its interaction with other cultures. He did not believe in the literal truth of the Bible nor did he feel that one was duty bound to live within a traditional Jewish legal framework. Rather, he asserted that individual Jewish communities should decide together how to organize their religious lives, giving *Halachah* (Jewish Law) “a vote, but not a veto.”

While Kaplan was certainly not the first radical theologian in Jewish history (Abraham has that distinction), he was a particularly important role model for me because he was a modern American man, who, like me, had spent significant time in an Orthodox environment and left that world, but remained deeply engaged in Jewish religious life. Rather than try and play clever exegetical games or offer up unconvincing apologetics, he spoke with brutal honesty, knowing that he risked being branded a heretic by the Jewish establishment (as he was by leaders of the Orthodox rabbinate, who publicly burned his *Sabbath Prayerbook* in 1945). If he could find his way religiously, than perhaps so could I.

While Kaplan's dynamic vision of Jewish life was very exciting to me, his understanding of God, which served as the foundation for his Reconstructionism, only intensified my questioning. For Kaplan, God was not a being—neither a father nor a mother—but an impersonal power. He argued that the world is an essentially hospitable realm for the development of human life—despite the realities of natural disasters and human evils—and God is the spiritual force (parallel to natural forces) that makes for meaning and fulfillment.

Reading Kaplan on God led me to a new level of self-awareness: I realized that my “Sinai crisis” was not actually about the authenticity of the biblical account of revelation or even about Jewish law for that matter; it was at root about the nature of God. Is God a personal being, an impersonal force, or a figment of my imagination? Were my conversations with God in childhood real or age-appropriate fantasy? What about my prayer life—those moments of intense seeking and longing? Am I communicating with an Other when I *daven* (pray), or simply crying out without a specific address?

Kabbalah: Mystery & Presence

I began exploring Kaplan's work at roughly the same time that I discovered the literature of Kabbalah. Although Kaplan prided himself on the rationality of his thought, it seemed to me that he shared something important in common with the mystics. While these pre-modern figures often spoke of God in personal terms, they also referred to God (or dimensions of the Godhead) as “breath,” “vitality,” and “presence.” I found the language of the kabbalists particularly attractive because, like Heschel (scion of a distinguished Hasidic family), they spoke in rich poetic terms (here, I am thinking especially of the book of the Zohar) about the religious life, drawing me in both intellectually and emotionally. I

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Hope, Failure, and Responsibility

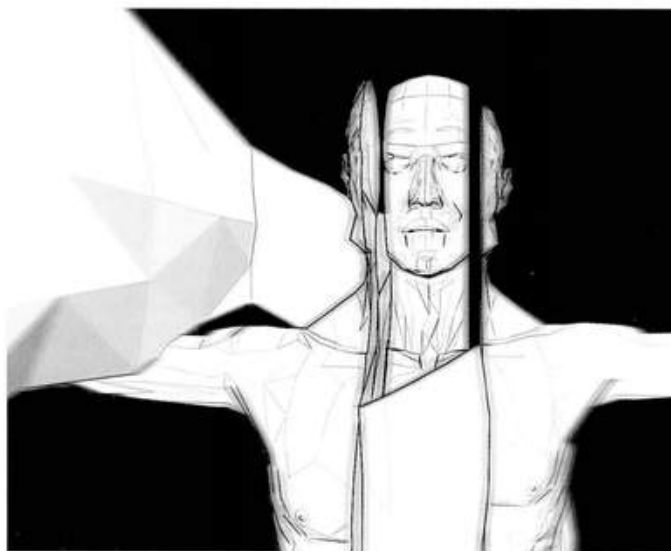
Andrew Samuels

Politics in many countries is broken; we urgently need new ideas and approaches. The actions of today's mainstream politicians leave many people in agony, with a sense of deep despair and disgust. The politicians lack integrity and imagination. Across the globe, in response to the challenge, a search is on to remodel politics by opening up a two-way street between inner realities and the political world. There's a balance to be found between understanding the secret politics of the inner world of emotional, personal, and family experiences, and understanding the secret psychology of pressing outer-world matters such as leadership, the economy, environmentalism, nationalism, and war.

It is certainly time to break some boundaries—the frontiers that we have been told exist between spirituality and politics, the inner world and the outer world, being and doing, and even what people still call “feminine” and “masculine” approaches to life. Working these forbidden zones, and doing it in the company of a growing number of people worldwide, shows that it is legitimate and necessary to reframe the relationship of the public and the private, the political and the personal, extraversion and introversion, politics and psychology—seeking a new connection between the fantasies of the political world and the politics of the fantasy world.

I have often seen a new hybrid language of psyche and politics emerge in my clinical work. One of my clients, an Italian banker of thirty-five, had a dream in which there was a powerful image of a beautiful mountain lake with deep, clear, crystalline water. The client's first association was that the lake was a symbol of his soul, or at least his potential to develop a deep, clear, soulful attitude to life. His next, and unexpected, association was to the pollution on the Adriatic coast of Italy, which had clogged up the coastal waters with algae and weeds. He began to explore the connections between “soul” and “pollution.” Can one's soul remain pure while there is pollution in one's home waters? How could the lake, mysterious and isolated, relate to the mass tourism economy being damaged by algae on the Adriatic?

He began to wonder: Who owns this lake? Who should



control access to such a scarce resource? Who is responsible for protecting the lake's beauty from pollution? From psychological issues, such as how his problems interfered with—polluted—his personal growth, he moved to political issues such as environmental despoliation and the degradation caused by mass tourism. He then moved back again from the political level to the internal one, and then again to politics. The dream played a part in the client's life choice to give up banking and return to Italy to get involved in Green politics.

Politics, the Inner Life and Ta'aruf

Yet many people who engage in exploration of their internal life turn away from politics as “dirty” or excessively conflict-ridden and violent. Political activists pour scorn on prayer, meditation and psychotherapy as ineffective, excessively introspective, self-indulgent, normative, and—in the case of therapy—only for the well-heeled. Each group feels it will lose its self-respect by adopting the concerns and practices of the other. It is time to challenge this wasteful inner/outer split so that we can tap into and synthesize the creative energies of both groups.

When it comes to those painful questions of conflict, I have found much of interest in Islamic approaches. I have been on a steep learning curve in relation to Islam as a result of participating in interfaith dialogue in connection with the conflict in the Middle East. In the Koran, we find the idea of *Ta'aruf*, which means “that you might come to know one

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another." The full verse says: "O Mankind, we have created of you male and female, and have made you peoples and tribes, that you might come to know one another (Surah 49:13)." I think this is a brilliant and inspiring take on diversity and conflict, giving a true *telos* (the Greek word for aim or goal) to it. The world is not homogeneous because if it were, we would have no need or impulse to know one another. Diversity may involve conflict, but conflict often masks the deepest desire to get in touch and communicate. Difference has been visited upon us by Allah for benevolent reasons: no diversity, no relationality.

Responsibility

What can we do, then, as analysts and as citizens? What is the scope and nature of our responsibility towards a suffering world? As a therapist, I suggest that we need to focus on an insidious and paradoxical problem: The human unconscious and the human soul are the sources of imagination, creativity, and hope, but they are also the sources of our difficulties. In its cruel and negative aspects, the unconscious resists improvement and change and contributes to the crisis. The unconscious is as destructive and in love with inequality and privilege as it is creative and in love with equality and justice. The very thing that gives us hope that solutions might be found is also the source of the problems that cry out for resolution.

The viewpoints advocated in *TIKKUN* might never be applied to political cultures nor make one iota of difference to the condition of the world. But before we pack up in despair and go home, let's recall that the official politicians and the governments of the world, with all possible resources at their disposal, have not done such a terrific job.

What is our responsibility, then? The English words "responsible" or "responsibility" come from the Latin root *spondere*, to pledge, and refer to being held to account, being morally responsible for one's actions and, interestingly, answerable to a criminal charge. If you are responsible for something then there's a perpetual sense that you are answering a charge, that something is "wrong." These etymological roots mean that responsibility can only ever be a relational business. One cannot really be responsible if there isn't another with whom or towards whom one is responsible.

People give themselves much too hard a task when it comes to responsibility. They lose sight of the very important psychological, spiritual and political notion of "good-enoughness." My preference is not to use psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott's term developmentally, limiting its use to the parent-child relationship. There is an exciting possibility of refreshing the spiritual and political vocabulary bound up with this analytical idea of good-enoughness. For example, there's the good-enough leader who admits that she or he will fail and sees their primary task in our risky world as the management of failure. Yes, they will fail their country—but they'll fail the country in the country's own way.

What about the good-enough citizen—a citizen who recognizes that one can do so little alone, but with other people can achieve much more? I suggest "responsible-enough" should be good-enough for most of us. This idea makes notions of personal responsibility more viable, more achievable. Being responsible-enough involves processes of self-forgiveness and self-acceptance. We cannot mend, repair, and transform the world if we are so hard on ourselves that we see ourselves only as permanently fractured. As Samuel Beckett put it: "No matter, try again, fail again, fail better." Let's also recall Rumi's words: "Failure is the key to the kingdom."

To alter our ideas about leaders also means altering our ideas about ourselves as citizens. A lot has been written recently about apathy and a loss of hope and belief in politics. But there is a sense in which the problem is too much passion, too many aspirations, a belief in perfect solutions—leading, inevitably, to disappointment and withdrawal. What looks like apathy is actually a pervasive sense of powerlessness, often coupled with intense self-criticism. Feeling that we cannot achieve everything we know needs to be done—we have neither the power nor the skills to solve the daunting problems of poverty, injustice, despoliation of the environment—we give up on politics and retreat into our private lives, leaving our political aspirations and values to slumber. This is where the insights of psychotherapy might be useful. If we can accept that political perfection is unattainable, if we ask of ourselves only that we be good-enough citizens (just as we can only hope for good-enough leaders), we may be freed from the sense of despair that paralyzes us at present, so that those political hopes and impulses can reawaken.

Depression, Anger, Politics

Finally, I want to comment on the huge rise in the incidence of depression in the United States in the past decade. I predict that the experience of the presidential election will boost the figures even more. Why? We know that at the heart of people's experience of depression lie feelings of guilt and self-reproach. But therapists regularly find that behind this guilt and self-reproach are rage, anger, and aggression. What triggers the hopelessness of depression is the unfounded fantasy that the anger a person feels has destroyed something or someone valuable, which in turn causes the guilt.

Our growing understanding that emotional and social experience are linked is very helpful here. After all, many groups in society have good reason to feel angry: poor people, members of sexual and ethnic minorities, those with health problems, parents faced with inadequate schools, workers in soul-destroying jobs, and citizens appalled at what we are doing to the environment. You don't even have to suffer directly to be angry at such collective problems, and the election has made many Americans very angry—and depressed—indeed. □

SPECIAL SECTION
Post-Election Review



**Now
What?**

After the Fall: Why America Needs a Spiritual Left

Michael Lerner

For years the Democrats have been telling themselves "it's the economy, stupid." Yet millions of middle-income Americans have voted against their economic interests to support Republicans who have tapped a deeper set of needs.

Democrats differ on the fix. The center/right activists of the Democratic Leadership Council warn that the Party needs to distance itself more from its economic populism, its anti-war discourse (what they call the George McGovern or Howard Dean wing of the party), and its identification with gays, feminists, and other cultural legacies of the 1960s. On the other hand, center/left activists like Robert Borosage of the mainstream progressive Campaign for America's Future and Katrina van den Heuvel, editor of the *Nation*, call for "big ideas" from progressives but actually have little more to offer than the recycled ideas that failed to catch primary voters when they were offered by Kucinich, Sharpton, and others.

Both conservatives and progressives in the Democratic Party continue to miss the point. To conservatives masquerading as Democrats we say: John Kerry is as conservative as the Democrats need to be. His militarism didn't win the militarists, his vision of chasing down and killing every terrorist didn't win him the votes of those most fearful about terror, his support for capitalist globalization didn't win the capitalists, his support for Ariel Sharon didn't win him the right-wing Jews, and his refusal to make the environment an issue in the televised debates didn't win him anything.

To progressive Democrats we say: do not reduce the "values" issue to a minority's objectionable support for homophobia, anti-abortion, and the evangelical attempt to impose one religious perspective on the rest of us. There is a real spiritual crisis in America. If you progressives would get over your ferocious anti-spiritual and anti-religious anger, you'd be able to discover what we knew from the moment we started TIKKUN more than eighteen years ago: that the spiritual crisis is rooted in the dynamics of capitalism and can only be healed by a fundamental transformation of the economy and political structures that govern our world.

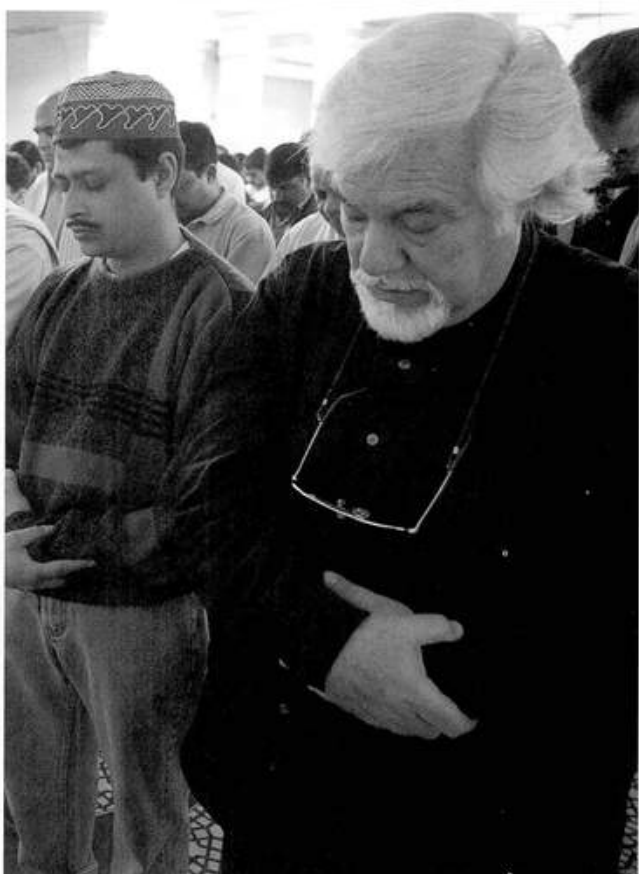
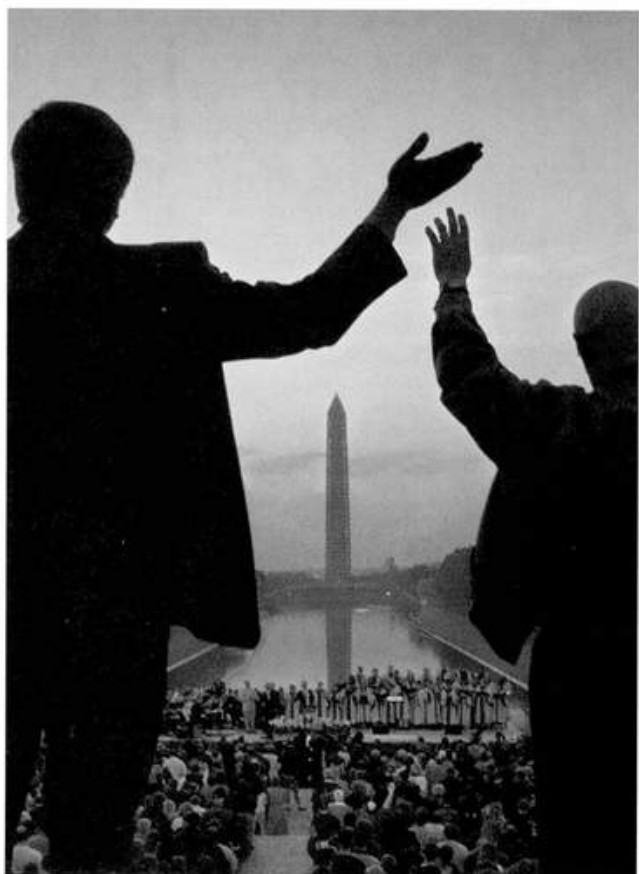
Rabbi Michael Lerner is the editor of TIKKUN, co-founder of the Tikkun Community, and spiritual leader of Beyt Tikkun synagogue.

The founders of TIKKUN discovered America's spiritual crisis in the course of our research at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health (ILMH). TIKKUN magazine, and more recently the Tikkun Community, were founded in order to communicate this central research finding of the ILMH: that Americans have what we call "meaning needs" that are just as important a determinant to their behavior as their material needs. People hunger for loving connection with others and recognition by the other of our uniqueness. We seek the opportunity to manifest ourselves in creative work and joyous play and a way to connect with a higher meaning for our lives than that which is offered by a society that tries to convince us that "he who has the most toys wins."

Tens of millions of Americans feel betrayed by a society that seems to place materialism and selfishness above moral values. They know that "looking out for number one" has become the common sense of our society. All day long they work in institutions governed by the competitive ethos of the capitalist market and internalize its instrumentalist and materialist worldview: that progress means accumulating more things and better ways to control the world, that the "bottom line" is to maximize money and power, that others are likely to take advantage and try to dominate you in their own desire to maximize their own advantage unless you do that first by dominating or effectively manipulating them first. These "lessons" are brought home into personal life, inevitably corrupting our relations with each other, replacing solidarity with self-interest, and leaving most people feeling deep despair about how much they can really count on other people.

The irony: most people in our society (and not just in the United States but wherever the ethos of the market predominates) hate this ethos and feel dirtied by the extent to which they participate in it. Most people desperately desire a way to build part of their lives upon a higher spiritual and ethical standard. Yet, because they have internalized the market consciousness as "reality," they have resigned themselves to living in a world in which this selfishness is the only "realistic" possibility.

This "realism" accounts for what seems to be the apparent hypocrisy in people who complain about selfishness and materialism and yet continue to live lives in which they are frantically consuming and advancing themselves in every



PAGE 33: ANN ELLIOTT CUTTING; THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AP/LEE CELANO, AP/ANN JOHANSSON, AP/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE, AP/AP/IED BETZ

way possible. It explains those who support candidates whose policies call for cuts in services to the needy: it is not that their desire for a more ethically coherent world is phony, but that they simultaneously hold a conflicting belief that this desire is "unrealistic" and that therefore it should only be expressed in church or synagogue, but not in economics or politics.

Many of these voters have found a "Politics of Meaning" in the political Right. In right-wing churches and synagogues, these voters are presented with a coherent worldview that speaks to their "meaning needs." And it's not just talk: most of these institutions offer their members a level of mutual caring that they rarely find in the rest of society. Through these institutions the Right provides voters with a sense of community that is offered to them nowhere else, a community that has as its central theme the idea that life has

nation to not allow the Right to impose their variant of religion on the rest of us under the guise of making America "a Christian nation," the liberal world has developed such a knee-jerk hostility to religion that it has both marginalized those many people on the Left who actually do have spiritual yearnings and simultaneously refused to acknowledge that many who move to the Right have legitimate complaints about the ethos of selfishness in American life. While happy to use the Black churches as staging grounds for mobilizing Democratic voters and happy to use religious leaders to provide appropriate biblical quotes to back whatever liberal program is currently being discussed, the Left has given a consistent message: leave your religious and spiritual ideas at the door when you participate with us in our public political campaigns.

We are *not* advocating that people on the Left should all

We are not advocating that people on the Left should all become religious or spiritual. What we are advocating for is a Left that is friendly not only to secularists and militant atheists, but also to people of faith who share a commitment to peace, social justice, and ecological sanity but who also believe that an even more powerful critique of this society can be rooted in challenging the way this society's capitalist marketplace fosters an ethos of selfishness and materialism.

value because it is connected to some higher meaning than one's success in the marketplace.

It's easy to see how this hunger gets manipulated in ways that liberals find offensive and contradictory. The frantic attempts to preserve family by denying gays the right to get married; the support for policies that accelerate the destruction of the environment and do nothing to encourage respect for God's creation; the intense focus on preserving the powerless fetus and a culture of life without a concomitant commitment to medical research (e.g., stem cell research or research on HIV/AIDS); the claim to care about others while denying them a living wage and an ecologically sustainable environment—all this is rightly perceived by liberals as a level of inconsistency that makes them dismiss as hypocrites the voters who have been moving to the Right.

Yet liberals, trapped in a long-standing disdain for religion and tone-deaf to the spiritual needs that underlie the move to the Right, have been unable to engage these voters in a serious dialogue. Justly angry at the way that some religious communities have been mired in authoritarianism, racism, sexism, and homophobia, correct in their determi-

become religious or spiritual. What we are advocating for is a Left that is friendly not only to secularists and militant atheists, but also to people of faith who share a commitment to peace, social justice, and ecological sanity. We advocate for a Left which believes that the most powerful critique of this society must be rooted in challenging the way this society's capitalist marketplace fosters an ethos of selfishness and materialism.

A progressive politics of meaning does *not* require that one believe in a Supreme Being, much less the specific God that has been taught in orthodox versions of Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. But it does require a recognition that many people want more from their lives than an accumulation of comforts, pleasures, and material goodies. We want more than power, more than fame, more than sexual conquest—we actually want to connect our lives to something of transcendent importance the value of which will continue beyond our own individual life. Counter to the empiricist and scientific reductionism that sometimes gets confused with "rational thought," the Politics of Meaning insists that not everything real or important can be quantified or verified

through sense-data. The deepest human desires—the desires for loving connection, for transcendent meaning to life, and for justice and peace (not just for ourselves but for others)—are rooted in what we call a spiritual conception of the world.

In talking to this hunger for meaning, we should *not* follow the path of those fundamentalists and evangelicals who want to bring their prayers into schools, teach creationism, criminalize abortion and gay relationships, and restrict access to information on birth control. We are not trying to develop a politics that can speak to those who believe that when Jesus returns he will facilitate the dispersal to a fiery hell of Jews, Muslims, and anyone else who hasn't become an appropriate variant of Christian, nor those who think that the Bible requires believers to condemn gays (that is certainly not said in the Hebrew Bible), nor those who think that true Christians should welcome and support wars on non-believers, nor those who want to use governmental institutions to impose their particular variant of religion on everyone else, nor those who think that the Torah gives divine sanction to holding onto the West Bank without regard to the suffering that so doing causes to the Palestinian people.

Our voices instead should be directed to the soft periphery around those “muscular Christians” and “settler Jews”—tens of millions of Americans who feel more recognized when their spiritual aspirations are explicitly addressed, but whose deepest moral insights are actually not fully expressed in the “let the poor and powerless fend for themselves” policy implications of the Right. Many of these people are sick and tired of what they perceive is the liberals’ pretense that the public arena is “values neutral,” when they know very well that our entire culture—movies, television, even the bottom line of the world of work—encourages a devaluation of other people through a competitive ethos, selfishness, materialism, and a sexuality used to exploit rather than to express loving commitment. Ironically, these values of the marketplace are blamed on the liberal world, because our frantic (and legitimate) attempt to prevent any specific religion from becoming the official religion of the country (the real point of the First Amendment) has too often slipped into an (illegitimate) attempt to keep values out of public discourse. Yet, our attempt to exclude any talk of values only disempowers us in the fight against the values that are already there, enshrined in the alleged neutrality of the capitalist marketplace, and empowers the Christian Right.

The Right has been able to use this legitimate concern as a wedge against First Amendment separation of church and state—seeking to bring a Christian fundamentalism into the public sphere as the best way to combat the current moral pathology that reigns there. If we want to protect ourselves from those who seek to make this a “Christian” country explicitly committed to a fundamentalist reading of

Christianity, we should not fall into the liberal trap of demanding that values and spiritual sensitivity be kept out of public discourse for fear of the slippery slope to religion.

You can't fight wrong values with a demand for no values. Instead, TIKKUN's Politics of Meaning proposes a universal spirituality and values not tied to any particular religion but foundational to all religions—recognizing that taking seriously the demand for a New Bottom Line of love, caring, generosity, gratitude, open-heartedness, kindness, sexuality based in mutual respect, and celebration of the sacred in other human beings and in nature could actually lead to a social transformation far more humane, rational, and ecologically sensitive than anything likely to be produced by the current secular Left of the Democrats, the Greens, or the extremes.

Imagine if John Kerry had been able to counter George W. Bush by insisting that a serious religious person would never turn his back on the suffering of the poor, that the Bible's injunction to love one's neighbor required us to provide health care for all, and that the New Testament's command to “turn the other cheek” should give us a predisposition against responding to violence with violence.

Imagine a Democratic Party that could talk about the strength that comes from love and generosity and would apply that to foreign policy and homeland security. Such a Democratic Party would embrace TIKKUN's call for a Global Marshall Plan in which the United States would lead all the advanced industrial societies in dedicating 5 percent of our GNP for each of the next twenty years to eliminate global poverty, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care, and to rebuild the economic infrastructure of the entire globe in ways that would be both ecologically sustainable and socially just.

Imagine a Democratic Party that could talk of a New Bottom Line, so that American institutions would be judged efficient, rational, and productive not only to the extent that they maximize money and power, but also to the extent that they maximize people's capacities to be loving and caring, ethically and ecologically sensitive, and capable of responding to the universe with awe and wonder.

Imagine a Democratic Party that could call for schools to teach gratitude, generosity, caring for others, and celebration of the wonders that daily surround us!

Such a Democratic Party, continuing to embrace its agenda for economic fairness and multicultural inclusiveness, would have won in 2004 and can win in the future.

When we make this argument for a spiritual Left we usually get a response something like this: You are just being naïve about what attracts people to the Right's religions. You don't understand how very committed people are to _____ (and then they fill in the blank here, often with some policy or approach that proves that people who vote on the political Right are very bad or very stupid—so the blank might be filled in with words like “hating others,”



"domination over people who are weaker than they are," "militarism," "ultra-nationalism," "patriarchy," "racism," or other similarly unattractive attitudes).

Instead of asking how to appeal to what's good in the American people, many on the Left find it far easier to blame the American people. When I first encountered this way of talking in the aftermath of the victory of the Reaganites in the 1980s, I thought that I was simply hearing a defensiveness on the part of the Left, a desire to avoid looking at where they had been ineffective themselves. But I've come to recognize that these attitudes are based on two key elements in the liberal world that are deep within the liberal culture: 1. anger or tone-deafness to spiritual and religious concerns; and 2. contempt for those with whom we disagree.

The anger is understandable. Many people have had bad experiences in religious communities that were in fact authoritarian, ultra-nationalist, sexist, racist, or homophobic. When they hear us talking about spiritual or religious values, they automatically go back to their own experience, remembering how contradictory it felt to them to hear religious language being used as a cover for hateful policies. Yet this response is unnuanced, lumping all religion together under one reactionary banner. It fails to acknowledge that there are many other religious people who have been at the heart of the Civil Rights and peace movements, and who

have been there precisely because of their own understanding of the loving parts of their religious heritage.

I'm not sure it is really possible to heal the deep antagonism on the Left toward religion, spirituality, and the language of love, generosity, open-heartedness, and kindness to others. It's not that Lefties disagree with these values, but that their deep distrust of the American people makes them certain that the moment we introduce into public life programs based on values like love, caring, generosity, et cetera that cannot be "objectively" defined, measured, and subject to scientific verification—and thus protected from the merely "subjective"—that we open the door to the public sphere being dominated by the hateful forces that are just waiting to reemerge in everyone and which already shape major strands in contemporary Christian fundamentalism. And herein lies what may be the ultimate self-defeating psychology of the Left: its inability to imagine that if we fought for our most visionary politics that we could eventually win the American majority to our side. This fear that Americans can be more easily manipulated into hate than won to a program of love and generosity guarantees that the Left will continue to project an elitism that most people find offensive.

If the Democrats and the Greens can't change their culture in these ways, and the Republicans can't move beyond their commitment to the wealthy and the corporate elites,

AP/BEBETO MATTHEWS

we may need a new political party that focuses not only on social change, but also on developing our own personal ethics and responsibility for how we treat each other, encouraging our own inner spiritual development, and our own psychological healing from the distortions in us that are an inevitable part of growing up in a patriarchal, competitive, narcissistic, and materialist world.

Such a spiritual political party would follow a progressive middle path, transcending the old Left/Right dichotomy, incorporating right-wing openness to a spiritual discourse and concern with personal ethics (however imperfectly they may live up to that concern) with left-wing sensitivities to peace, social justice, civil liberties, ecological consciousness, and a caution against allowing any one religion to become the established way to be an American. That kind of a spiri-

Spiritual Activism that will take place in Berkeley, California this coming summer (details in the next issue of *TIKKUN*).

In the end, our commitment is fundamental to the well-being of the world and its peoples, and not to the electoral victories of any given political party.

The first step to repairing the political world in which we live is to openly oppose the cynical realism that leads people to believe a better world is not possible.

Most people want to live in a different world, but most are very skeptical that such a world is possible. They have been so deeply indoctrinated into a depressive belief that no one else will ever respond to the vision of the good to which they themselves resonate, they have become so deeply committed to the alleged truth that everyone else is either too stupid or too evil to ever transcend the materialism and self-

TIKKUN's Spiritual Politics is firmly committed to science, rational thought, tolerance, separation of church and state, privacy protected from state intervention, and opposition to any attempts to criminalize abortion or discriminate against gays—and equally committed to spiritual values that cannot be measured or validated by science or empirical verification.

tual movement must firmly remain committed to science, rational thought, tolerance, separation of church and state, and privacy protected from state intervention, and at the same time be firmly committed to these spiritual values that have been foundational not only to religious communities but also to the secular liberation struggles of the past two hundred years: love and compassionate caring for each other, generosity, open-heartedness, pleasure, joyous celebration for all the goodness that surrounds us, kindness, nonviolence, and awe at the grandeur of all that is.

It's premature to think that anyone could create such a party today. Those of us who identify as the Spiritual Left lack the financial resources, access to media, and, hence, popular support to make any party like that a serious contender. But it's not premature to bring together the people who would wish that there was a movement with this kind of worldview and dedicate our energies in the next twenty years to building the foundation for a society in which this kind of vision would win. That kind of Spiritual Left could function both within all the existing political parties, and outside and independent of all of them—refusing to subordinate a principled vision to the short-term goal of winning power. As a step in creating this kind of movement, we are organizing a five-day national Interfaith gathering on

ishness that governs this society, that they effectively remain cheerleaders for the very cynical realism that they simultaneously despise. It is this duality in people, the desire for spiritual transcendence and the despair about its possibility in the case of "the Other," that presents the central challenge for a Politics of Meaning. Undermining that depressive resignation will take incredible levels of creativity, psychological sensitivity, spiritual awareness, and political courage.

For those of us who still believe that the social energy field which has been moving toward despair can reverse its direction and move toward radical hope (see our Nov/Dec 2004 issue for more on that), the central challenge is to develop and implement the strategies that can overcome cynical realism among those who have become addicted to it on both the Left and the Right. At *TIKKUN*, and particularly in the Tikkun Community, we have taken up this challenge. We refuse to give in to despair. We invite you to join us in healing and transforming the planet. □

To join the Tikkun Community or find out more about it, go to www.tikkun.org or call us between 9 and 5 PST at (510) 644-1200.

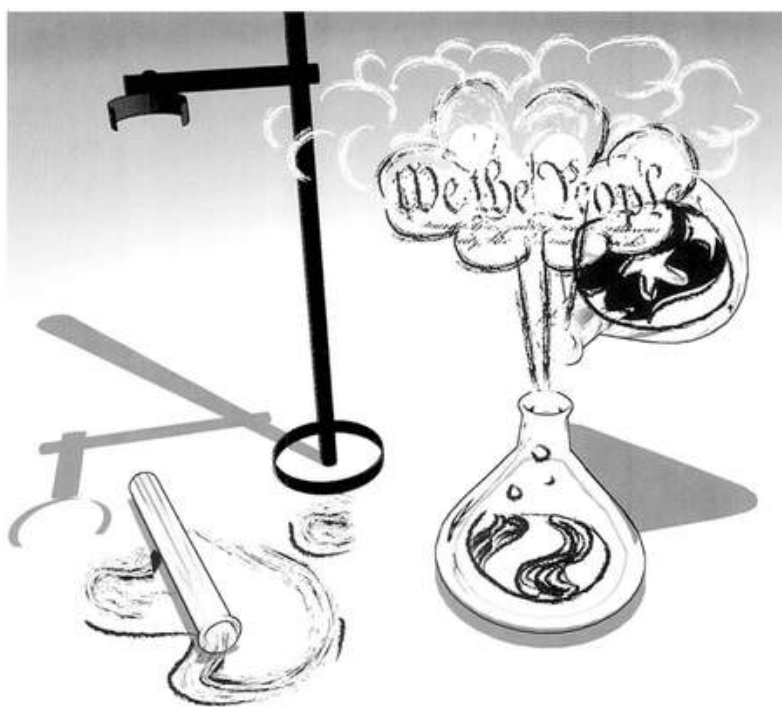
Renewing the American Experiment

David C. Korten

Despite the outcome of the recent election, the real political divide in America is not between liberals and conservatives, who in fact share a great many core values. The real political contest in America is between those of us committed to a politics based on principle and the common good and those who pursue a politics of individual greed and power. It is between those of us who represent the real political mainstream and truly want to solve the problems that beset us all and those at the extreme political fringe whose primary agenda is advancing their personal power. Call those of us on the side of the American Experiment progressives—progressive conservatives and progressive liberals—for although we may have our differences, we share a commitment to advancing the Experiment's progressive goals of creating a society governed by ordinary people and dedicated to the ideals of liberty, justice, and opportunity for all.

The power of the extremists comes not from their numbers, which are relatively small, but from their ability to control the stories by which we answer three basic questions: How will we prosper? What will make us secure? And how will we find meaning? These are increasingly serious questions for a great many Americans.

By controlling these stories, the power seekers have defined and limited America's political discourse. "How will we prosper?" is reduced to "What will you do to promote economic growth and reduce my taxes?" "What will make us secure?" is reduced to "What will you do to protect me from evil people?" "And how will we find meaning?" is reduced to "Will your policies please my jealous



and wrathful God?" Progressive politicians thus find themselves unwittingly reduced to a debate framed by the worldview of those who believe in a system of elite rule.

Let's look at each of the elitist stories in turn.

The Elitist Prosperity Story

The elitist economic agenda centers on increasing economic growth and stock prices through market deregulation, rolling back social and environmental protections, opening economic borders to the free flow of goods and money, privatizing public services and assets, reducing taxes for the wealthy, weakening anti-trust enforcement, assaulting the rights of union members, and dismantling social safety nets. Each element of this agenda serves an exclusive elite interest, yet the story crafted to justify the agenda is so convincing in the simple logic of its claim to benefit us all that it is often tacitly embraced even by those most harmed by it.

The elitist prosperity story that lends a sense of legitimacy to the elitist agenda goes like this:

Economic growth, which expands the pie of wealth for all, depends on investment. Since the poor have no money

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ALEXANDR VLADIMIRSKIY

to invest, a wealthy investor class is essential to prosperity. The greater the return to the investor class, the faster the economy grows and the faster the lives of all improve. Inequality is thus essential to prosperity.

The private sector creates wealth and through the market rewards each individual in direct proportion to their contribution.

Government, by contrast, creates poverty and distorts the allocation of rewards. Through regulation and taxes, it kills the incentive of the rich to invest. By reducing investment, it reduces the availability of living-wage jobs. By offering welfare programs for the poor, it destroys their incentive to work and become productive members of society.

Therefore the key to achieving prosperity and ending poverty is to free the private sector from the dead, regulatory hand of government. Eliminate taxes on the investor class. Eliminate the disincentive of public welfare programs. And eliminate government to the extent possible by transferring public assets and services to more efficient private management.

The free market will then put people to work, eliminate poverty, get money in people's pockets, create the wealth necessary to protect the environment, and provide people with better services at a cheaper price. The rich may get richer, but so do the poor, so it works for everyone.

That, in a nutshell, is the elitist prosperity story repeated endlessly in the corporate media. Once the story is spelled out in these terms, we can easily see that it has serious moral and intellectual flaws. For one thing, it assumes that prosperity is defined solely by goods and services available for purchase in the market place. It takes no account of many of the essentials of a healthy life, such as clean air and water, trust, job security, safe neighborhoods, well-maintained streets, loving homes, and much else that is beyond the means of markets to provide.

Many things economists count as positive contributions to economic growth actually devalue the quality of our lives—for example, sales of tobacco, weapons, and violent video games to children, the fees of divorce lawyers who specialize in breaking up families, costs of security guards and devices, food contaminated with pesticide residues, and the costs of treating the cancers these and other toxins cause.

The claim that unregulated markets allocate wealth in direct proportion to individual contribution neglects the obvious reality that many fortunes began with a large inheritance or were acquired all or in part through fraud and deception, monopoly power, corporate welfare, preferential tax breaks, usury, financial speculation, market manipulation, and/or exploitation of workers and the environment.

To work efficiently, markets require rules impartially administered by government to assure honest dealing, limit monopoly power, place the costs of pollution on the polluter, secure the health and safety of workers, maintain a liv-

ing wage, and in general counter the unregulated market's bias for financial values over life values, short-term private profits over the public good, inequality over equality, and rich people over poor people. As confirmed in daily reports of financial fraud and other forms of corporate crime, an unregulated market is an invitation to criminal exploitation.

The actual consequence of the deregulation of markets and trade is not to free markets but to free predatory transnational corporations to acquire and abuse monopoly power in order to manage trade and markets to their exclusive financial advantage.

The self-serving claim that inequality—even extreme inequality—is beneficial to society ignores the obvious reality that free markets (a code term for unregulated markets) respond only to money. The more unequal the distribution of money, the more the economy directs its attention to providing the super rich with obscenely extravagant luxuries such as multiple trophy vacation homes and private jet airplanes and neglects even the most basic needs of the poor. As the devastation spreads, institutional legitimacy erodes and the anger and desperation of the disaffected create a growing security threat for all. These are moral issues.

Elitist Security Story

The security doctrine of the power seekers centers on using the police and military powers of the state to protect the rights of private property and the established order of elite privilege from those who challenge its legitimacy.

George W. Bush took the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, as his call from God to commit the United States to a perpetual war against evil as manifest in terrorism. He has embellished the basic elitist security story with a messianic edge and made it a defining framework of national policy, his presidency, and his self-concept. The elitist security story, according to Bush, goes something like this:

The peace, security, and prosperity of America and its people are threatened by the forces of evil as manifest in criminals, terrorists who hate us for our freedoms, the rogue regimes who support terrorist networks, and others who seek to undermine the established order. We must defend the American people and the world by whatever means necessary in a perpetual war against these evils.

Internationally, war is the natural state of humankind. Peace and order prevail only when imposed by the military power of a righteous empire. Because we are a righteous and powerful nation, it is the responsibility of America to use our military might to eliminate the evil rulers who oppose us, harbor terrorists, and threaten us with weapons of mass destruction. We will eliminate these evil rulers and liberate their people by bringing them free markets and democratic regimes that share our values. Those who are not with us in our war are presumed to support the terrorists and must be dealt with accordingly.

Similarly, domestic criminals must be imprisoned or exe-

cuted to protect the good and righteous and to serve as an example to others. America's crime rate is falling as its prison population grows, demonstrating that jailing criminal elements works.

Perhaps this story's most serious flaw is its focus on terrorists and criminals as our primary security threat to the exclusion of what are in fact far greater threats—in particular the threats of financial breakdown, environmental collapse, and a disintegrating social and moral fabric.

The elite security story equates dissent with terrorism and implicitly brands both as evil in order to justify the suppression of all forms of dissent and thus to protect the status quo.

Furthermore, the elitist security story calls for waging wars against whole nations in the name of fighting terrorism. Terrorists, however, work in invisible networks that extend throughout the territories of virtually every state in the world. The 9/11 terrorists trained in the state of Florida, were financed by the state of Saudi Arabia, and were led from caves in Afghanistan by a man too powerful for Afghanistan's weak government to control. So we ignored Florida and Saudi Arabia and invaded Afghanistan and destroyed its government. Unfortunately, the guilty party—Osama Bin Laden—escaped. So we responded by invading Iraq, a country with a weak military and lots of oil, which occupies a pivotal geographic position in the Middle East but had nothing to do with 9/11. By any definition, Saddam Hussein is an evil man and the world is the better for his being in prison, but he posed no credible threat to us.

Terrorism is more like a crime than like a war. George W.'s embrace of the war metaphor is carefully chosen to make it more acceptable for him to assume dictatorial powers as commander in chief and dismiss his critics as disloyal. Furthermore, he has declared the war, and therefore his power, to be perpetual.

Devastating whole nations and killing tens of thousands of innocent people to apprehend individual criminals is neither moral nor wise and worsens the very conditions of helplessness and rage that motivate the terrorist impulse. *Terrorists hate us not for the freedom bestowed on our people by democratic institutions, but rather because we frequently use the freedom our economic and military power gives us to arbitrarily oppress and humiliate other nations and peoples.* Bringing terrorists to justice requires international cooperation between nations working together in the spirit of trust and respect, but our nation's arrogant and unilateral war posture actively undermines this.

Domestically, we are filling our prisons with minor drug offenders at great public expense. Offering little or no support for rehabilitation, our prisons function as schools for crime, creating a recipe for soaring future crime rates as those who have served their time are released.

If public safety and well-being were truly the security goal of the elitist power seekers, they would give high prior-

ity to eliminating the deeper social and economic causes of criminality, rehabilitating and preparing those convicted of crimes for useful roles in society on their release, and prosecuting the criminal activities of high-level corporate and public officials.

Elitist Morality Stories

In the realm of morality and meaning, the power seekers find support for their doctrine of elite rule in two quite different stories. One is a sacred story based on a misreading of biblical scripture; the other is a secular story based on a misreading of evolutionary science. According to the sacred story of the power seekers, nothing happens in Creation except by the will of God, who created the world in six days, gave his creation to man in return for strict obedience to his will, and in his infinite righteous judgment favors the obedient with wealth and power. Great wealth and power are thus a mark of the pure and righteous; poverty and suffering a mark of impurity and disobedience. It is therefore both the due and the responsibility of those God has identified as the righteous to pass judgment on others and to make and enforce the rules that others must follow in the market place, politics, and relations among nations. Those who obey are rewarded with eternal salvation. Meaning is found in obedience.

Although the tellers of this story profess to be Christian and lay claim to biblical authority, the story itself dishonors the life and teaching of Jesus, who chose a life of poverty, taught that the poor enjoy God's special blessing, and urged compassion for all people.

Secular power seekers find meaning and moral legitimacy for elite rule in the story of social Darwinism. According to this story, progress comes through a competitive struggle in which the fit triumph, the unfit perish, and the species grows stronger. As with other species, so it is for humans. The victors prove their worth by virtue of their victory and have every right to claim their rightful rewards without guilt or concern for those who perish in the struggle. It is victory in the struggle that gives life meaning.

This story has long been used by social Darwinists to justify not only ruthless competition but also all manner of racism and classism. It ignores substantial biological evidence that life is a fundamentally cooperative enterprise in which the species that survive over the long term are those that find their place of service to the whole.

Creating Alternative Stories

Each of the power-seeker stories embodies a theory of how things work that speaks to deep emotional needs and converges on a clear bottom line of support for elite privilege. These stories have become so established in media and academic discourse that they have become the conventional wisdom that frames and limits our political discourse.

It is not enough merely to point out the flawed and ethically challenged assumptions of an established story. A story that embodies a flawed theory can be challenged successfully only by a more compelling story. Herein lies an important challenge for progressive movements.

Those of us committed to causes that advance the ideals of the American Experiment focus much of our energy on critiquing and resisting elitist stories and agendas and alleviating the damage to the groups of greatest interest to us. From time to time, some of us join together in ever-shifting tactical alliances—most often to resist a particular elitist initiative.

Although justice, peace, and a healthy environment are scarcely special interests, our fragmented and piecemeal articulation of our many causes makes it all too easy for the elitists to portray us as a divided collection of special interests lacking a coherent and pragmatic alternative to their more comprehensive agenda. Little, if any, of our energy is devoted to articulating stories that communicate positive,

instrument of policy. Our *domestic* security story calls for greater attention to protecting the rights of the accused, constraining the police, making life better for those serving time, reducing sentences, and closing prisons. It seems we have little to offer by way of comfort to those who fear for their lives and those of their families. It should be no surprise that the elitist security story carries the day.

It is especially significant that the power seekers ultimately ground both their economic and security stories in a story of the sacred. From the beginning of time, we humans have looked to sacred stories for meaning, moral guidance, and understanding of creation's deep mysteries. Except for the Civil Rights movement, progressive movements have generally been self-consciously secular, carefully avoiding discussion of the sacred. We are thus left by default with a dehumanizing scientific story devoid of meaning or inspiration that speaks of a world in which only the material is real, life is an accidental outcome of complexity, and consciousness is an illusion.

Except for the Civil Rights movement, progressive movements have been self-consciously secular, carefully avoiding discussion of the sacred.

holistic theories of prosperity, security, and meaning. We thus concede the initiative, the national story, and political power to the modern bearers of the royalist torch. Furthermore, a quick look at what our fragmented causes and stories communicate when placed within the prevailing frame of the power-seeker stories makes it easy to see why we are at a serious disadvantage.

The power seekers offer a prosperity story that promises ever-growing material prosperity for all and spells out a clear plan in which, by their telling, everyone wins. They reframe the progressive agenda to sound like a call to tax those who are productive to provide welfare for those too lazy to get a job, to take jobs from white males to give them to women and people of color, and to reduce our standard of living to save exotic species most people have never seen and wouldn't recognize if they did. No matter how truthful our claim that elitist policies actually destroy wealth and take from the poor to give to the rich, the elitist story will carry the day until we are able to counter it consistently and convincingly with a coherent prosperity story that communicates a compelling theory of wealth-creation based on engaging the talents of every person in productive contribution.

The power seekers offer a security story that promises to impose peace and order on a demonstrably unruly world populated by dangerous criminals, political extremists, and religious fanatics intent on violence and other evil deeds. By contrast, the progressive *international* security story centers on unilateral disarmament and the rejection of war as an

Yet I am struck by the fact that nearly every progressive leader of my acquaintance acts from a deep sense of spiritual connection. It is time to give voice to the spiritual foundations of our work through stories that celebrate the unifying spiritual intelligence that is the ground of all being.

If we are to gain a place for progressive voices in the national political discourse and build a values-based mainstream alliance of principled conservatives and principled liberals committed to the progress of the American Experiment, we must get serious about crafting credible progressive stories that express our values, answer critical questions, enlarge and redefine the terms of the debate, express our vision of the human possible, and evoke a new sense of national purpose.

We need prosperity stories that spell out a practical path to creating wealth and jobs for all within a framework of economic justice and environmental sustainability. We need security stories that address the reality of criminal elements, rogue states, and the need for a sense of safety within a framework of commitment to civil liberties for all and cooperation among the world's peoples and nations. And we need sacred stories that address our need for meaning, moral guidance, and understanding of the infinite within a framework of mutual responsibility. All must be stories that invite the imagination to soar in its search for an ever-expanding vision of human possibility. Stories such as those of the power seekers that demean and diminish the human spirit cannot compete with the stories of creative human possibility that are ours to tell. □

When Jesus Votes

Roger Friedland

Jesus is everywhere about me here in Rome. His pierced body hangs on the bar walls, suffers at sidewalk corners with flickering lights and fresh flowers. There are also nearly or actually naked women plastered everywhere. Living here as a Fulbright scholar in the shadow of the Holy See, America looks Italian—not the naked women, but the memory of those decades after World War II when Catholic priests informed their Italian parishioners that they would be denied the sacraments if they voted for a candidate from the Communist Party. We just saw American bishops and Evangelical pastors make a similar move with the candidacy of Kerry. The Democrat was a devil.

There are Italian lessons for us Americans who believe that the pursuit of a more perfect union requires social justice, who are terrified that the moral preoccupations of the Republicans' religious base doom the Democrats to remain forever in the political wilderness. Remember that it was under the long reign of the Christian Democrats, a Catholic, anti-communist party that ruled Italy for most of the post-World-War-II Cold War era, that the Italians legalized both abortion and divorce in the face of determined opposition by the clergy. Today, however, the majority of practicing Catholics here are probably on the Left, not the Right. For example, Romano Prodi, the former Christian Democrat who went on to head the center-left Ulivo coalition, Italy's first left-wing government, is an observant Catholic. Not a few of these Italian Catholic leftists are opposed to abortion, to homosexuality, and indeed to stem cell research. There are three lessons here: first, that religiosity and commitment to social justice can coincide; second, that people who support religious Christian parties are willing to promote views of their own that negate the theological commitments of the clergy; and third, that support for material redistribution, or economic justice, need not coin-



cide with support for cultural change. Understanding each of these elements will be critical if the Democrats are to ever regain the reins of state.

To the secular Left here, America stupefies. A few nights ago I met an Italian television journalist just back from Kabul, Afghanistan, where she had been impressed by the thousands of burkah-clad women proudly making their way to the ballot box. She applauded what American might had achieved here. But how, she asked, was it possible that Americans would nearly impeach President Clinton for lying about his private sex life, while American voters barely blinked when President Bush apparently lied, and in public, about a war in which as many as 100,000 innocent civilians died in Iraq? When she had been young, she told me, and divorce had been illegal in Italy, she had envied America's personal freedom. Now, she confessed, there was no longer anything to envy.

How to explain that for Americans the personal, and particularly the personal life of the President, is profoundly political? Americans want to identify with the man who represents them. In this election, George W. Bush's very weaknesses were his strength—a recovered alcoholic, a man whose businesses had failed, a guy who got Cs in college, who couldn't pronounce polysyllabic words and knew

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almost nothing about the rest of the world. He was one of us—an average American who can't locate Copenhagen on the map, and who drank or smoked or ate too much, at least when things got rough. The President has had to struggle with sin.

In this regard, despite his sexual violation of the Oval Office, President Clinton has more in common with George W. Bush than with John Kerry, even though all three went to Yale. Clinton was an abandoned child who suffered his stepfather's battering of his mother. He ate cheeseburgers and French fries—and off other people's plates. John Kerry spoke French, was too smart and too stiff, married a foreign woman who wore pantsuits, refused to go to the hairdresser, and was so obviously powerful he wouldn't talk about it. He was definitely not one of the guys. Somehow his very strengths—a confident war hero who had the temerity to face off the American administration against a mistaken war—became a liability.

Bush was among the fallen and had been redeemed through a Methodist men's Bible Study group. He believed. In this he was much more similar to Osama Bin-Laden than either of the Democratic opponents. Both men—Bush and Bin-Laden, Christian and Muslim—were dissolute sons of wealthy men who had made their money, directly or indirectly, off oil. The early pictures of Bin-Laden lolling about in Beirut and Europe suggest a vitiated son of wealth who liked to get high and get laid. Both men had fathers apparently impossible to follow; both fell afoul of a world where money had little meaning. Both of them found God, were redeemed, and went straight. Both made their way as political warriors playing on a global stage, surpassing their fathers in fame and import.

Bush won his second term as president because sex matters in America. Neither class nor education had much impact on whether voters chose the Republican or Democratic candidate. True, the poorer you are, the more likely you were to vote Democrat. But only the poorest voted overwhelmingly for Kerry. Some claim that the politics of fear are undoing democracy, producing a desire for protection beyond reason or evidence. But fear of terrorism did not help the Bush candidacy very much. Worry about terrorism didn't influence whether voters went Democrat or Republican. True, the fifth of the electorate who thought that terrorism was the most important issue voted overwhelmingly for Bush. However, the CNN exit polls also indicate that those who were most frightened were more likely to vote for Kerry than Bush (56 percent vs. 44 percent).

What mattered was not physical fear but sexual desire. Our sex has become political and religious, the one through the other. In this election the Republicans counted on God and family. Voters who identify themselves as religious and who are married members of nuclear families voted overwhelmingly for Bush. The 42 percent of voters who attend

religious services at least weekly voted around 60–40 for Bush, while the 43 percent who never go or at most once or twice a year voted in a similarly lopsided way for Kerry. The Democrats drew disproportionately from those who are unmarried and outside of traditional families, from women who work, and from voters who do not identify religiously. Fifty-nine percent of those who are married with children voted for Bush.

These two dimensions—God and family—are intimately related. Men and women turn to religious communities in order to sustain their families, to find, and more importantly, to keep mates, to raise children in environments without drugs or precocious sexuality. They turn to religion to have value independent of, and indeed superior to, that promised either by material goods or the transient sexual attractiveness of their bodies. They turn to religion to keep their and their partner's lusts in check, to surround themselves with people who care as they do and will keep watch when they are not able to. They turn to God, as George Bush did, to shun alcohol and drugs. God works.

What we are witnessing is a struggle between two kinds of politics undergirded by two visions not simply about what is most important, but about what we are. On the one side are those who understand society as composed of abstract individuals, individuals with rights and preferences. Sexual expression and abortion are civil rights like any other. In this politics, the major issues are equalities of opportunity and a rough justice in terms of the satisfaction of basic material needs. Life is a biological fact, not a metaphysical one. The axes of these politics involve contests around the distribution of material things. These rational politics of justice failed to carry a majority.

On the other side are those who understand society as composed of families held together by the bonds of love and faith, fierce loyalties, and expectations of respect. Outside these bonds, individuals are bereft and prey to their natural lusts and savagery. Families are not abstract, but fleshy, passionate, irrational organisms that hinge on respect for parents, care for children, the reciprocal differences binding men and women, and the disciplined regulation of their sexuality.

In this other politics, the major issue is the safeguarding of the value of life, not as organism, but as God's creation. Sources of social problems are not sociological but moral, about whether one knows and can resist evil. In this worldview, value, like sovereignty, hinges on faith, on divine sources that guarantee both social order and sovereign power. Hostility to homosexual marriage, to abortion, indeed to embryonic stem cell research derives from this desire to sustain the centrality of the traditional family, the sanctity of life, the naturalness of gender, the primacy of the patriarch, and the disciplining of sexuality within the family in a world run amok—one of commodified sexuality, missing fathers (if not parents), licentiousness and profanity,

fearful and abandoned women, and lonely and angry men. These irrational politics of love put President Bush into the White House for another four years.

In this context, reason and facts—the tools of political war in an Enlightenment world—won't work. In these politics, it is not individual rationality that is central, but faith, belief, right living, and character. You don't have to know, but you must believe. In his victory speech, South Dakota Senator-elect Thune told us three times that he, like other Americans, had prayed with his family in order to decide whether to run once again against Democratic minority leader Tom Daschle. He made it clear that his was a Christian decision and that he was a Christian choice. That Bush couldn't remember facts, that he lost the debates, that his supporters continue to believe that there was a clear anti-terrorist warrant for the war in Iraq when there wasn't, didn't matter. What mattered was that Bush believes; he stands firm, even if his supporters don't always agree with him. Bush declared in an interview,

I could not be governor, if I did not believe in a divine plan that supersedes all human plans. Politics is a fickle business. Polls change. Today's friend is tomorrow's adversary. People lavish praise and attention. Many times it is genuine; sometimes it is not. Yet I build my life on a foundation that will not shift. My faith frees me. Frees me to put the problem of the moment in proper perspective. Frees me to make decisions that others might not like. Frees me to try to do the right thing, even though it may not poll well...

The irony is that the war with politicized religion outside America has become the war inside, too. The Enlightenment world of reason, interest, and contract is moving under our feet. In order to win, we must first understand, the same thing required of us as we confront the Islamic radicals around the world. It is no good, and analytically wrong, to claim that this is not religion but the use of religion for political purposes. The conservative Right's grounding of its politics in the synoptic Gospels is no less legitimate than the foundation of radical Islam in the Koran. Indeed it represents the same kind of populist reading of the texts that galvanized the Protestant Reformation, which the Vatican claimed was not really Christianity. To denigrate the religiosity of these political actors is both an analytic and a political mistake.

Some, including Michael Lerner, argue that we should not go after Evangelical voters. That is an error, even if we take into consideration that Protestants will soon be an American minority. According to Wade Clark Roof and Nathalie Caron's "Shifting Boundaries: Religion in the United States" (in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture*) 30 to 40 percent of Americans are born-again Evangelicals. One of the sources of Democratic defeat is that religious voters in its traditional constituencies voted Republican, most notably over 40 percent of the

Hispanic voters. This was decisive in places like Florida. But this cuts both ways. For example, a large percentage—one third of those who support the right to abortion voted for President Bush, not Kerry. But 21 percent of Evangelical voters also put their check marks for Kerry, not Bush, a big drop from the past two elections. Even fundamentalist Christians are not rock-solid political conservatives. Michael Hout and Andrew Greeley's article in the *New York Times* (September 1, 2004) reveals that only 40 percent of Americans who believe in the literal truth of the Bible describe themselves as politically conservative. And lower-income conservative Protestants are much more likely than affluent ones to vote Democrat, just like every other religious group.

Remember that the Baptist, born-again Jimmy Carter was elected in 1976 because of the overwhelming support of Evangelical voters and then abandoned by large numbers of them, not because of a foreign policy organized around human rights, but because they discovered just how liberal he was on issues of abortion and homosexuality. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, to which Carter belongs, was founded in opposition to the Southern Baptist Convention with its emphasis on Biblical inerrancy, its expulsion of homosexuals, its aggressive attempt to convert Jews and Muslims. This is not to say that the hundreds of churches in this more liberal Baptist network don't think homosexuality is not a sin: they do. Nor will they sanctify same-sex marriages. They just also happen to believe in freedom of conscience, in "soul freedom."

There is play in this situation because, as the Italian example indicates, economic and cultural conservatism do not necessarily coincide. This presents both an opportunity and a vexing choice in any strategy for a Democratic victory. It is no good insisting on the separation of religion and state in a country where the overwhelming majority of voters identify religiously and understand their religious values to have political relevance. The point is to connect those religious sources with our own political vision.

We have a proud history on which to draw. Politicized religion has played a transformative, progressive role in the history of the United States. The American Revolution was prepared by the first "Great Awakening" in the United States, in which populist preachers crisscrossed the country, bringing Christians of different nations, classes, colonies, and even races into concert, based not on reading well but on an ecstatic, visceral, common faith. The struggle for the abolition of slavery was made possible by the religiously inspired daring of Unitarians, who not only agitated against slavery but sometimes risked their lives to escort African Americans to freedom. The Civil Rights movement grew out of devout black Baptist churches in which the Hebrews' flight from Pharaoh was a prophetic tale.

Can the Democrats re-take America's religious heartland? That hinges on connecting religion with a progressive

agenda. And that will require a transformation of American Christianity, a reaching out to those religious men and women who understand justice, tolerance, and anti-colonialism as central to Jesus' public mission. American Christians have a history, one that is not over. If they did not feel reviled and dismissed as obscurantist no-nothings, they might respond to a spiritual politics from the progressive side. They know their Bibles.

The elements for a reversal are there. Bush has put together a coalition of religious conservatives and the monied elite. Yet, if one looks at the texts that animate American Christians, one sees a deep distrust, and indeed, hostility to international capitalism. The *Left Behind* series is the single most popular book series in America, probably in American history. It details the Rapture, the moment that Christ brings up the saved to Heaven, leaving behind those who are likely damned. It celebrates love, true love, the kind of love between a man and a woman, they argue, that can only be had through religious faith. But it also warns of the powers of international finance, of monies out of control, powers that provide the wordly vehicle for the anti-Christ. That second moment contains a rich populist vein that, while vulnerable to anti-Semitism, is also a potential source to critique a country whose sovereignty is being compromised by the international economic forces to which the Republicans would deliver us. The South Dakotan populism that defeated the Jaguar-driving Daschle distrusts big money.

And finally there is the issue of family values. We can tie their agenda to ours. There is, after all, accumulating evidence that abortion has been rising under President Bush because low wages and the absence of affordable health care make it too economically painful to bring a baby to term. But we likely have hard choices to make in order to capture those who are economically progressive but culturally conservative. In Florida, the same Christian voters who voted for Bush and passed an initiative requiring girls to get parental consent before doctors could give them abortions also passed a dollar-per-hour increase in the minimum wage by 72 percent to 28 percent! They may be patriarchal, but it is precisely because Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians value the sanctity of the family that they support better wages and are open to policies that buffer the family against the vicissitudes of the market. At a spiritual level, conservative Christians believe in a radical equality. Although these particular Christians are often exclusionary, their doctrine states that a soul has no market price and salvation is open to all equally.

Can or should we divide the labor, electing a President who is economically progressive but more culturally conservative, relying on Congressional victories to protect abortion and advance civil rights for gays and lesbians? Perhaps the price is too high. Perhaps we can educate our countrymen to the dignity of sexual difference in the same

way that we educated them about racial difference. That a majority of voters support either marriage or civil union for same-sex couples is already a considerable achievement. But perhaps not, and then we must decide the price of our virtues. American religionists Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini argue in "The Evangelical Vote" (*New York Times*, September 1, 2004) that we should get the state out of the marriage business altogether, for it is, in fact, a governmental regulation of religion. That option has much to recommend it.

But I suspect for most religious Americans, these issues that they can touch stand in for those they can't. What animates them is how to live good, moral lives—abortion and homosexuality to them are symptoms, not causes. In order to reach our fellow citizens, we must meet them where they are.

I speak as a child of the 1960s, who arrived to visit U.C. Berkeley on the second day of the Free Speech Movement and knew he wouldn't want to be any place else—who smoked, inhaled, who watched the light dance on the water and gloried in the flesh. As a fifty-seven-year-old father of two daughters, I want to suggest it is we who must humble ourselves, must look into our own lives, must admit the dire, unanticipated consequences of the sexual revolution we ushered in. We must examine our frustrated desires to sustain families over time, our fears about the eroticized, loveless world our children seem to be entering, one in which the anti-feminist counterrevolution is coursing to a horrible victory.

The politicization of abortion and same-sex marriage are manifestations of something deeper on our opponents' side, something about which, we, too, are concerned. Certainly daycare services, a decent wage, government support for health insurance, and housing support will help sustain good families. These are certainly ways into the Republican base. But we all know it is not enough. We know that popular culture, our culture, reflects a world of which we are in some sense ashamed, a world of dubious habitability. Our world, John Kerry and Bill Clinton's world, was a free erotic world, but one that yearned for peace and spoke of love. Pleasure was a political answer to repression and war. The world to which it later gave rise—of hooking up, booty and botox, anorexia and binge drinking—is Babylon. So is the hypercompetition in which our children prepare for college, as if for war.

The Evangelicals are right. They and their ilk will not listen to us until we hear the beating of our own hearts. Our solution will not be theirs, but a recognition of the commonality of our desires will make it possible for us to engage them and to convince just enough of them that the implication of Jesus' declaration that "the first shall be last and the last first" is a vote for a progressive Democrat.

Jesus may again triumph at the American ballot box. And we can pray for that. □

Creating a New Prophetic Agenda

Arthur Waskow

One major factor in the election results of 2004 was "retro-religion"—people seeking a return to the imagined stability of the pre-modern religious past. Yet that is only one response to the worldwide earthquake in economics, politics, technology, and sexuality that has been stirred by the hyper-modern last half century. Another authentic response has been the emergence of a progressive religious and spiritual movement that, while critical of some major aspects of modernity, is ready to venture forward in hope, not flee backward in fear.

So far, the retro-religious impulse has won greater support than the impulse for more inclusive religious renewal. Why? One reason has been the walled-off attitude of many secular liberals and progressives and some religious progressives to the possibility of a serious, progressive religious movement. Here are two examples:

—One minister's co-worker was astonished that a clergyman could strongly affirm a woman's right to choose.

—I was one of the four clergyfolk of four different traditions who spoke in a TV ad broadcast by Al-Jazeera to the Arab world denouncing the use of torture by the U.S. military in Iraq. When a draft of the ad was first shown to me, not a word in it came from religious language. It was I who insisted on saying that torture is "sinful."

We religious progressives often hide our light under a bushel. Indeed, we have rarely shared our light with those with whom we share many critiques of modernity.

We have not made clear that we, too, believe that sexuality is sacred. We have rarely drawn our sexual teaching from the Song of Songs, and as a result have let ourselves be misunderstood as drawing it from the *Playboy* philosophy.

We have not made clear to religious conservatives or to secular liberals that a society does not need to choose between personal responsibility and social responsibility: that an authentic religious outlook must affirm both.

What we need is a new prophetic agenda to shape a new context within which political parties operate. Imagine creating one national and fifty state "Councils for a New Prophetic Agenda," made up of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and First Nations sages—say thirty-six people each, four times our constitutional Supreme Court. They would come together every alternate month in



Washington and in state capitals, keeping in close relation to religious communities and congregations.

Imagine they then joined in prayerful study of religious texts on one of a series of specific public issues—perhaps global scorching, overwork, the Federal budget, war, terrorism, abortion, same-sex and different-sex marriage, Social Security, health care, mercury poisoning, greed, over-consumption, or tax policy.

They would issue majority and minority opinions on these issues, citing religious texts from the past and religious experience from the present. Issue by issue, month by month, they would recommend to the American people a "Yardstick of the Spirit" (the prophet Amos called it "God's Plumb-line") to use when assessing policy proposals from any and all political parties.

The Council would not pretend to "own" God, just as no religious tradition "owns" God. Hence, it would be able to absorb and present minority views, treating them as honorable and worthy of public consideration. It could also absorb groups and individuals who may share a broad progressive religious agenda but have distinctive minority views on some issues.

The Council for a New Prophetic Agenda would also serve as a grassroots resource, preparing material for congregational religious study: guides for adult education in congregations, exploration by teens, and sermons by clergy and other leaders. During major election campaigns, they would publicize their views on key issues. Such a process could create the context in which a Dennis Kucinich, a Barack Obama, a Ruth Messinger, a Barbara Lee could actually create a winning national constituency.

Our country needs a New Prophetic Agenda. Let us shed our shame at being archaically religious—and provide one. □

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The Fear of Gay Marriage

Peter Gabel

It's not who ya love
It's do ya love.

—Michael Franti, Spearhead

“**E**very minute they continue, those ceremonies are destroying my relationship with my wife.” These words, spoken by one of the men who filed suit to stop San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom from issuing marriage licenses to gays and lesbians earlier this year, provide great insight into the psychodynamics underlying the 2004 presidential election. For moral values like the belief in the sanctity of traditional marriage “between one man and one woman” are not abstract beliefs that rattle around in one’s head; they are rather powerfully rooted in the desire for human connection, and in the sense-memories that we all have of how we have previously lived out this connection in our sensual lives. When a plaintiff watching gays and lesbians get married on television claims that they are destroying his relationship with his wife, he is telling a truth about his experience—namely, that what he is watching makes him feel he is losing a sense of being connected to another person, that he is hemorrhaging, that he believes that the integrity of his own social existence is somehow being threatened and compromised.

Let me put my own moral values on the table: I think he’s crazy. He is living in fear that the blessing of erotic love between two persons other than himself can destroy the sense-memory that he has of the possibility of this erotic love for himself. But seen in a wider social context, his craziness may be eminently sane. For if the world around him is profoundly alienated; if he is living in a social environment characterized by mutual distance, detachment, and disconnection; if he is enveloped by deadening routines at work and media images at home that seem to be artificial (commercials), or relentlessly self-mocking (sitcoms), or hostile (MTV), or devoid of meaning (the interchangeable void of “the news”), then he rightly clings to what sense-memories he does have of actually being *with* someone, of not being alone.

This is not to say he actually has this experience in a complete way with his actual wife. If he did, it is very unlikely, and perhaps inconceivable, that he would want to deny this experience to someone else. It is rather that erotic expression as the realization of his longing for social connection is

encoded in his memory from early infancy as the sensual holding that he experienced with a mothering one, and that this memory has been elaborated in later years through the whole of his relationship with women, including his wife. The later experience, perhaps supported by the fellow-feeling of the church group and by the positive erotic charge emitted by the evangelical preacher, sustains and is fused with the earlier enfolding experience, the initial laying down of heterosexual safety. In an alienated world in which people feel mainly alone and constantly threatened with an even more devastating isolation, they understandably cling to whatever sense-memories of erotic connection they have, and they guard these memories themselves against the threat of loss that surrounds them.

Indeed one of the problems with heterosexual marriage as an institution is precisely that it sacralizes the separation of the erotic couple from the wider community—it channels the flow of deeply bonding social energy into one single path and thus may contribute to blocking that flow outward toward those whom we encounter everywhere else around us. This isn’t to say that people should not hold public ceremonies to affirm their love for one another before and within the whole community. It’s rather to say that the embrace of church/state-sponsored marriage to do so is embracing a social institution whose ceremony of vows, sealed with a kiss, does in fact carry with it an erotic history that has separated the couple from the wider community. In Christopher Lasch’s famous phrase, the family becomes a “haven in a heartless world,” but the world is heartless in part because of the separation of loving energy from it and the pooling up of that energy within the haven itself. In such circumstances, the haven cannot really be a haven any more than one can really chew on an impacted tooth. The erotic isolation of the family may be a cause of domestic violence, but it remains rational for people to cling to it for dear life if the alternative is the panic of a more devastating isolation.

So we must have compassion for those who come out to vote for their own social sanity, even as we throw all the weight of our being in a completely different direction, the direction of an opening up of desire in which we can all affirm and love one another as manifestations of G-d’s energy. What we must find a way to do, and what we must encourage liberal/left leaders post-John Kerry who are trying to speak for all of us in public space to do, is to extend ourselves toward the Other in a way that recognizes and affirms his/her deepest longings, that says, “Yes, I feel this

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too. It's right to feel it. It's not terrifying to feel it. Nothing will be destroyed if you feel it. And here is how we are going to *realize* this divine and common longing in our flesh-and-blood social existence." I'm not speaking here about non-monogamy! I'm speaking about, say, universal health care, but universal health care as expressive of our devotion to each other's well-being and our deep concern for one another's families, and not a dully articulated, emptied-of-meaning slogan thrown into a laundry list of other slogans and rattled out in a stump speech or in a party platform. It means calling for universal health care as an expression of actually caring for each other's health, rather than simply advocating for a third-party to insure each other's bodies.

The Democrats lost because they still, after thirty years of looking, cannot find their erotic voice—the voice that they once had as compassionate and caring spokespersons for the New Deal and as morally compelling advocates for the Civil Rights movement. But the way for us to help the Democrats or any other political group that can help to move us forward is not to wait for them to awaken to the spiritual and erotic dimensions of politics but to do what we can to awaken to that dimension in ourselves. For insofar as politics is a preverbal erotic energy flow that sparks social hope and out of that energy finds the words for evoking our common aspirations for a life-affirming moral community,

the social ground and origin for such a politics just has to begin within ourselves, in a "parallel universe" that is independent of the artificial role-playing and pseudo-humanity that comprise so much of mainstream public life. Let us take the opportunity of this thoroughgoing electoral defeat to pull back out of the "what will the Democrats do next?" mentality and into a search for our own most authentic moral convictions that aim for our highest ideals. It is by confirming these authentic ideals in each other, through group experiences like participation in Tikkun Community chapters or in our synagogues, union halls, and other spiritual-political activities located outside the official realms of blocked connection (the corporation, the state, and the media, with the family as a swing space, although no space is ever completely blocked) that we are likely to find each other in a confirming and life-enhancing way and transmit to each other the social confidence that always precedes the outflow of what we call social movement.

And it is the radiation of this energy outward from its own center, from our own center, that will influence candidates, legislators, judges, the political parties. For these public actors, as for the evangelicals who think that their own social well-being requires the banning of others' social well-being, it is the radiance of confident love turned outward that will eventually heal the fear of love. □

Interview with Doug Henwood

If anyone defines “progressive” in economic journalism, it’s Doug Henwood. The editor of the *Left Business Observer*, a contributing editor to the *Nation*, and the author of the best-selling expose of post-Cold War American capitalism, *Wall Street* (Verso, 1997) and most recently *After the New Economy* (New Press, 2002), Henwood is America’s leading literary critic of the free market. Joel Schalit spoke with him about the future of the American economy under the second Bush administration.

JS: You’ve analyzed the state of the American economy as it’s been mismanaged by the Bush administration over the last four years—where do you see them going in the next four years?

DH: Well, I think what they would really like to do—if they can get away with it—is privatize as much of Social Security as they can. Privatize as much of Medicare as they can. Recast the tax system to more or less eliminate taxes on capital and to make labor pay the full load. Cut back any kind of civilized domestic spending, and drill for oil. Pretty simple system, and very ambitious. Far more ambitious than anything that Reagan ever conceived of. And I’m afraid that the public will either be too confused to know what’s going on or that the Bush administration will be able to move so quickly, with a relatively large majority of Congress, that they’ll be able to accomplish a large part of it. They know they’ve got to move in a hurry, so it’s urgent we be prepared to resist.

JS: How can people resist these initiatives?

DH: Well, just looking at the exit polls, there is an enormous gap between the policy and the procedures that people favor and who they vote for. Something like a third of the people who support legal abortion voted for Bush. Florida and Nevada passed minimum wage increases, yet Bush [who has been against such increases] carried those states. Ninety percent of the American public says that they believe in a major role for the UN and that they are for co-operating with allies—but Bush won.

So, given that, I think people don’t necessarily vote with their higher cerebral functions; they vote with their ids. And what Bush represented to these id-voters was toughness, resoluteness, single-mindedness, the rejection of uncertainty—the traditional values of an old world that never really existed. Actual policies took a back seat. But we can hope that when the actual policies come forth, it might be easier to recruit some opponents.

JS: In your view, did the Democrats have an alternative economic vision to that of the Republicans that could have benefited the country or at least have been superior to the economic philosophy of the Bush administration?

DH: They did have some decent proposals—individual ones that never really aggregated into a vision. Kerry had some good things to say on the minimum wage, on labor legislation, and on the environment. The health insurance proposal wasn’t great, but it was a step in the right direction. But the Democrats just aren’t as good at using short declarative sentences to create excitement as the Republicans.

JS: How do you respond to those pundits who said okay, it’s time to replace the Clinton/James Carvell motto, “It’s the economy, stupid” with “It’s culture, stupid” or, as a columnist in the *Guardian* said over the weekend, “It’s religion, stupid”?

DH: I think there’s something to Tom Frank’s argument that the Democrats paid a price for not having a strong economic message, leaving a big space for the Republicans to drive their values truck into. But still, the argument that economic populism could somehow trump the so-called “values message” ducks some serious issues. More than a third of the electorate consists of white, born-again Protestants. While not all are right wing, they voted overwhelmingly for Bush. The power of religion in American political life has to be challenged in itself. I don’t buy the argument that “we” have to say God more often. There’s too much God in our politics already—it’s part of the problem.

JS: You can justifiably come to the public sphere with religious commitments. The question is, how and when do you recognize that there might be truth-claims that might conflict with those made by your faith?

DH: I was just looking at some Gallup polls. Nearly half of Americans believe in the literal six-day Genesis creation story. Just 12 percent believe in evolution. Seventy percent believe in Satan. These are frightening numbers. I know we’re swimming upstream, trying to challenge a couple of hundred years of Protestantism-saturated American history, but if we want this country to be a more civilized place, the power of these doctrines has to be challenged.

JS: It’s almost medieval. As an economist, do you find that the ability to galvanize such a strong religious-oriented vote for right-wing political ends is symptomatic of the contin-

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ued decline in earnings that Americans have faced over the last four years?

DH: The job market has been terrible for the last few years, but the people *with* jobs enjoyed real wage increases until sometime last year. While the average real wage fell from 1973 to 1995, it rose throughout the late 1990s boom and into the early part of the new millennium. So if we're going to talk about the economic contribution to cultural conservatism, I think it's more about all that's solid melting into air—the sense that the world has gotten too fast and too complicated for people to grasp it. There's also an anxiety about outsiders—nothing new in American life, for sure, but one accentuated by that vague word “globalization.” So many people in the heartland are frightened of terrorism when they're extremely unlikely to be attacked—and they voted for Bush, while the people who live in places like New York that are likely targets for dirty bombs or anthrax attacks voted for Kerry. That is extremely interesting. While terrorism is certainly a real thing, it's also a category that people can hang their xenophobia on.

JS: I have two specific questions related to the Bush administration's alleged philosophy of prosperity. Many progressives have suspected that the Republicans were nostalgic for the old warfare-state because, in the past, wars have reignited American productivity. Yet, it hasn't worked out that way this time, since whatever boosts in defense spending that have transpired over the last few years do not seem to have led to any corresponding prosperity. Similarly, if Iraq was a “war for oil,” it sure hasn't resulted in a lessening of fuel prices. How do you read that?

DH: Well, I think the military is different from what it used to be. Military spending used to be concentrated on old-style generic industrial goods—from boots to tanks—that required long production lines and lots of labor. Now it's mostly high-tech equipment and research and development, neither of which is very labor intensive.

Just before the war, Rupert Murdoch said he thought conquering Iraq would bring the price of oil to twenty dollars a barrel, but now it's more than twice that. And while there are lots of reasons for the spike in oil prices—like relentless demand growth from China meeting a lack of new production—some of the rise is the direct result of political anxieties inspired by the Iraq war. This is one of many ways in which the Iraq adventure hasn't turned out as planned.

JS: So the economic benefits that we once assumed would accompany or be the product of American seizure of the Persian Gulf's natural resources have simply not happened.

DH: Well, not yet. Who knows what could happen several years down the road. But I've never fully understood the lust

to control the oil-producing regions. People like Chomsky say it can provide strategic leverage over Europe, Japan, and China, but what does it mean to exercise that control? In a giant, complex world market, you can't shut off a tap in Kirkuk and specify that supplies will dry up in Kyoto or Shanghai. It'd be much more efficient to blockade the targets.

JS: Assuming you were a rather wise member of the Bush administration and knew all this in advance, then why would you have supported the Iraq war—is it simply an ideological war that has the advantage of allowing the Bush administration to create a new domestic order, or do you think the Bush administration really honestly believes that the purpose is to democratize the Middle East?

DH: You know, I just don't know at this point. I suspect that, at some level, some of the Bush people really believe their rhetoric about spreading democracy, while others are just driven by a cynical lust for power. Maybe some people believe both things. Some of the neocons complained that the relative peace and prosperity of the 1990s made us corrupt and lazy, and we needed a good dose of military discipline. Corey Robin, author of a new book on the history of fear as a political idea, argues that the neocons are actually romantics on some level. But in any case, I don't think you can find too much economic rationality behind the decision to invade Iraq.

JS: Is there any creative economic thinking going on within the greater Left in North America at this point, or in Europe—do you see anything?

DH: No, not much.

JS: Yeah, I haven't seen anything either.

DH: Yeah, it looks pretty bad. The only thing is that there are a lot of people who are really pissed off.

JS: Do you think that the Left that mobilized around questions of corporate globalization and the environment and that first reared its head in Seattle has a future?

DH: Yes, but there are some real organizational and ideological issues that have to be confronted. The movement can't go on in this freewheeling, agenda-less way forever. We've got to figure out what we're for, how to articulate it in sharp, declarative sentences, and how to begin to match the organizational prowess of the Christian Right. That's a pretty tall order, but we've got to prove ourselves up to it. The stakes are very high. □

For more information on Doug Henwood's work, visit the Left Business Observer at www.lbo.com

Rethinking the Foundations of the Next Progressive Vision: Confronting the Central Challenge of Wealth

Gar Alperovitz

Now that the dust has settled on the 2004 election, it is important to stand back and confront some deeper questions about where we might be going over the next decade and beyond. Pendulums have a way of swinging in history—especially if social and economic pain increases. Conservatives may have power today, but this is hardly the end of history. The Civil Rights, feminist, environmental, and anti-Vietnam War movements were quietly brewing beneath the surface in the dark days of the 1960s before they exploded into public awareness. There is no reason to believe our own time in history is without such promise as well.

Some things are obvious, and, indeed, have become conventional wisdom among progressives: We need to sharpen and better frame our message, devote increased attention to grass-roots organizing, expand upon the fund-raising successes of the last two years, and find ways to clarify and deepen the moral and spiritual basis of a meaningful politics. If we are ever to deal successfully with the great social and economic issues facing the nation, however, it is increasingly clear that progressives will have to rethink some fundamental assumptions at the very core of the political economic system—especially those concerning control of the nation's extraordinary wealth.

Fortunately, though few have noticed, a profound rethinking process is well underway. Moreover, just below the radar of conventional media concerns, there are also signs—particularly at the state and local level—of related practical and political developments which are likely to take us beyond the dead-ends facing many traditional progressive political strategies.

At the heart of virtually all serious visions of the good society is the simple idea that a nation's wealth should benefit all its people. The great progressive visions of the past varied in the way that they suggested this be achieved, but the principle was always clear: Socialism, for instance, held

that the state should own and control wealth on behalf of the people. "Guild socialism" held that the workers—the vast majority of society—should own and control wealth (usually by owning their own enterprises). Of especially great interest were Jewish thinkers like theologian Martin Buber who urged that "communities" should own and control wealth: They and their followers produced what for many decades was a vibrant practical illustration of the principle in action: the kibbutz.

In the West the once great progressive traditions largely abandoned the principle of wealth ownership by "large publics" (states) or "small publics" (workers, communities, etcetera). Instead, they accepted the idea that wealth should mainly be owned by individuals—and that the common good should be achieved through redistributive public programs. Americans came to call the resulting welfare state paradigm "liberalism" and Europeans called it "social democracy"—an overarching approach based on private wealth ownership plus "taxing and spending."

That the traditional paradigm is now failing is evidenced by the difficulties facing a wide range of progressive policies and by the growing fiscal crisis. Nor are the massive cut-backs simply a product of the Bush era: Top income tax rates have been radically reduced over the post-World-War-II era—from 91 percent in the Eisenhower, Kennedy and early Johnson period to 35 percent now. Corporations that paid 35 percent of the federal tax bill in 1945 paid only 7.4 percent last year.

The extraordinary decline of unions from 35.5 percent of the labor force in the 1950s to a current 8 percent in the private sector has only added to the difficulties facing traditional progressive political strategies—and to the problems created by globalization, on the one hand, and Republican exploitation of race in the "southern strategy," on the other.

Paralleling the decline in the overarching trends has been the massive concentration of income. The top 1 percent now garners for itself more income than the entire bottom 100 million Americans. Almost one-third of all African American children are now being raised in poverty. In African American female-headed households the figure for children under six is a chilling 54 percent.

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Even more stark is the concentration of wealth. Leaving aside home and auto ownership, the top 1 percent of wealth holders now owns just under 50 percent of all capital available for economic investment. A mere 0.2 percent at the very top made more money on stock and bond sales in the most recent study than everyone else in America. (These are nationwide estimates; median African American financial wealth is a mere 3 percent of white financial wealth.)

The long trends and medieval income and wealth patterns have helped generate a fundamental reconsideration of traditional tax and spend strategic assumptions. One group of those involved in the rethinking process has come to urge a modern version of workers owning wealth. Writers here range from radical economist Samuel Bowles to former Chief Counsel of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee Jeff Gates. Bowles and others emphasize the efficiency gains that occur when workers have an ownership stake. "The political potential in this area became obvious to me," Gates recalls, "when, over the span of a two-week period... I was asked to provide speech material for both Republican Senator Jesse Helms and Democratic Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson."

Other groups, like that working with African American economist Jessica Gordon Nembhard and Curtis Haynes Jr., have built on the ideas of W.E.B. DuBois to urge a renewal of neighborhood cooperative wealth ownership as an answer to the economic difficulties of the central city. Here the core idea of "community" has become a primary theme.

An interesting and varied group of thinkers has gone much further and developed nationwide forms of ownership—but in a manner that also respects the market. The late Nobel laureate economist James Meade proposed investment of large-scale capital through a public trust similar to the agencies which now commonly manage the investment of public pension funds. In his proposal the "beneficial ownership" of capital would be passed on to the public in the form of a "social dividend," distributed free of tax to every citizen.

A related, more radical idea is the "coupon socialism" proposal of Yale economist John Roemer. Again, the public would accumulate capital through a variety of means. Then every adult would receive an equal endowment of voucher-like "coupons"—non-transferable dollars—which would entitle the bearer to purchase corporate stock through a new form of mutual fund. The resulting profits again would be distributed to the investors (i.e., to all adults) thereby providing a new income stream from the now widely distributed public ownership of capital.

The late Louis Kelso, a conservative investment banker, proposed a related, individualist way to achieve widespread public wealth ownership. Kelso realized that one of the main reasons his rich clients were able to multiply their ownership of stocks and bonds was that their existing wealth provided them with collateral that allowed them to borrow money for further investment. They could also hire

experts to manage the investments. If the poor had access to collateral and experts, Kelso reasoned, why could they not also make money by investing borrowed funds?

Kelso proposed that a new Capital Diffusion Insurance Corporation (CDIC) be established to guarantee loans so as to allow individuals to buy a diversified and professionally managed portfolio of stocks. The portfolio would remain in escrow until dividends repaid the loan, at which time the individual would take full ownership, thereby gaining a "second income" with the help of the government-backed or collateralized ownership of capital.

Still another proposal is that of political economist Leland Stauber. In this case, again the market would also provide investment discipline. However, municipal governments instead of individuals would receive income flows from the investments and use the revenues to support public services.

Such ideas may seem utopian to some. However, just below the surface of public attention, an important on-the-ground developmental process has been quietly underway, which suggests the various wealth-related ideas are much closer to real world possibilities than many imagine. For instance, though few have noted the fact, there are already some 11,000 significantly employee-owned firms operating in communities throughout the United States.

Most of these firms are organized as Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), a corporate form which allows important tax benefits. The number of ESOP-style firms increased from 1,600 in 1975 to 4,000 in 1980, to 8,080 in 1990 and, as noted, to roughly 11,000 now. The number of worker-owners involved rose, correspondingly, from a mere 248,000 in 1975 to roughly 8.8 million now—a number greater than the membership of private sector unions in the United States.

A form of wealth ownership designed to benefit the "small public" of the neighborhood is the non-profit entity called the Community Development Corporation (CDC). Here the main thrust is housing development and ownership in low-income neighborhoods. Some CDCs also own supermarkets, and some—like New Communities Corporation in Newark—employ large numbers of inner city residents in enterprises which funnel profits back into community services. CDCs have grown from a handful thirty-five years ago to an estimated 3500 to 4000 (and possibly many more), and can now be found in every part of the nation.

Another strategy through which wealth is directly put to work on behalf of the local public involves municipally owned enterprises. A decade ago David Osborne and Ted Gaebler devoted a chapter of their classic book, *Reinventing Government*, to the emergence of new forms of municipal businesses. As they observed: "Pressed hard by the tax revolts of the 1970s and 1980s and the fiscal crisis of the early 1990s, entrepreneurial governments are increasingly... searching for nontax revenues."



Once more, though the media has largely missed this story as well, many cities—under both Republican and Democratic mayors—now engage in real estate development and directly own and lease profitable property instead of helping developers and then trying to tax back the benefits. Publicly owned hotels are also common (big chains are more than happy to sign management contracts to handle day-to-day administration). In Glasgow, Kentucky the municipally owned utility offers residents electricity, cable, telephone services, and high speed Internet access—all at costs lower than private competitors. Tacoma, Washington's broadband network Click! also offers individuals and private companies Internet and cable service, as does Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Perhaps the most significant public wealth efforts are at the state level. Public pension funds now commonly put capital to work on behalf of state housing and job creation. The California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) has been a leader in demanding greater corporate accountability. Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA), which manages pension investments for state employees and teachers, has aggressively invested in numerous state industries, in some cases also using its assets to help worker-owned firms.

An even more interesting use of wealth on behalf of the public—one which echoes themes of some of the most far-reaching new ideas—is that of the Alaska Permanent Fund.

A significant portion of revenues from oil development is allocated to the Fund for further investment. Earnings provide annual dividends to residents of the state. In 2000, a high payout year, each individual state resident as a matter of right received dividends of just under \$2000 (i.e., almost \$10,000 for a couple with three children).

It is worth noting that inequality in Alaska is among the lowest of any state, and—unlike every other state and the nation as a whole—Alaska registered a decline rather than a rise in inequality during the 1980s and 1990s. Recent research suggests that Permanent Fund operations played a central role in producing the gains.

Directly converging with the various public-benefitting wealth-owning efforts is a quietly growing revolution in how traditional tax strategies are conceived and targeted. At the beginning of the Bush era few Democrats wanted to risk proposing tax increases—despite the fact that, once in office, the Administration quickly pushed through \$1.35 trillion in tax cuts largely favoring the rich, thereby squandering a massive surplus and limiting all future public programs. One of the first to urge a new approach was Gene Sperling, Bill Clinton's politically sophisticated former economic adviser.

Sperling urged holding off "full repeal of the estate tax, and the second and third stage of the [Bush] tax cut for those in the top 2 percent"—so that funds could be made available to close at least half the Social Security deficit. The proposal would save more than \$1 trillion and would insure that 98 percent of Americans would still "get their full tax cut."

For a while only liberals like the late Paul Wellstone and Ted Kennedy put forward proposals aimed at taxing the top 2 percent, but soon even centrist Democrats like Joseph Lieberman offered sharply targeted proposals focused on the top elites. By the fall of 2003 virtually every Democratic Presidential candidate had proposed one or another variation on the same general theme—including, of course, John Kerry.

A refocusing of tax policy is also well underway at the state level in various parts of the country. Californians approved Prop 63 in November, an initiative that taxes those making over \$1 million to provide funds for mental health services. This past year New Jersey approved taxes on those making over \$500,000 to provide offsets to regressive property taxes. Even the conservative Virginia Republican Senate last year voted for increased taxes on those making over \$100,000 and \$150,000.

Almost certainly, populist strategies like these, which target the top 2–3 percent elite and benefit the vast 97–8 percent majority will increase in number and force. One reason is that they allow progressives to achieve their goals without attacking and alienating the middle-income suburbs.

Equally important is that they point to a major new development in American life. The super-elite—the people Paul Krugman, Kevin Phillips and others have termed the

new "plutocracy"—increasingly live in a very, very different world from most Americans, and in a radically different culture. It is a world where homes cost \$5–10 million and where \$5,000 grills, \$14,000 Hermes Kelly handbags, \$17,500 Patek Philippe wristwatches, and \$100,000 luxury automobiles are commonplace. As we have come to learn, the world of the new plutocracy is also a world of routine white-collar corruption.

Above all, the world of the super-elites is a world in which wealth ownership has become extremely concentrated—far more so than is commonly understood. Although many Americans own small amounts of stock, the ownership of wealth—particularly financial wealth—is now overwhelmingly concentrated at the top. We have noted that a mere 1 percent owns almost 50 percent of America's main financial assets. A similarly tiny 1 percent group owns 68 percent of unincorporated business assets. An only slightly larger elite group—the top 5 percent—owns just under 70 percent of financial wealth and more than 80 percent of unincorporated business assets.

"The rich have always been different from you and me," Krugman observes, "but they are far more different now than they were not long ago—indeed, they are as different now as they were when F. Scott Fitzgerald made his famous remark." Political scientist Alan Wolfe adds: "There are really only two classes in America now: the top 2 percent and everybody else."

An even more radical shift in taxation strategy is also slowly gaining ground: the direct taxation of wealth itself, not simply income. Yale law professors Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott have proposed a 2 percent tax on wealth—and Ackerman has documented the Constitutional basis for such an approach. Another law professor, Leon Friedman, has proposed a 1 percent tax on wealth owned by the top 1 percent. Kevin Phillips and Jeff Gates (among many others) have urged that wealth taxation be put on the American agenda. Robert Kuttner adds that a wealth tax is, "by definition, the most progressive way to raise revenue, since it hits only the very pinnacle of the income distribution." A large group of multi-millionaires has launched a campaign opposing elimination of taxes on inherited wealth—paid only by the top 2 percent—as "bad for our democracy, our economy, and our society...." Even Donald Trump has proposed a one time 14.25 percent net-worth tax on Americans with more than \$10 million in assets.

Most European nations have long levied general taxes on wealth. Economist Edward Wolff suggests that America follow suit with a wealth tax based on the current modest Swiss effort—an approach which involves marginal rates between 0.05 percent and 0.3 percent, after exempting the first \$100,000. Wealth taxation rates in ten other European countries are much higher—often between 1 and 3 percent—and would generate much larger revenues if applied here.

Taxation of wealth, of course, has long been central to

the American tax system for the kind of wealth most Americans own—their home. Taxation of real estate, moreover, is based upon the value of the asset in general, not the value of an individual's equity: An owner of a \$200,000 home will be taxed on the full value of the asset, even if her actual ownership position (with a mortgage debt of, say, \$190,000) is only one-twentieth this amount.

Broader wealth taxation of the kind increasingly being discussed—a "property tax on wealth"—would likely exempt home ownership and middle class levels of other assets, and focus primarily on large-order elite concentrations.

What is striking is the political convergence of these major trends: On the one hand, the development of a myriad of politically viable wealth ownership efforts which benefit small and large publics. On the other, new tax policies which target those at the very, very top who in fact currently own the lion's share of wealth. Taken together with the new thinking, the skeletal outlines of a potentially highly important long-term paradigm seem clearly to be emerging.

Most of the new on-the-ground developments—and virtually all the new "direct" wealth-related efforts around the country—are occurring at the state and local level. This truth underscores a critical matter of perspective for those concerned with longer term progressive renewal: In any empire, power is always concentrated and most difficult to challenge at the center. Where power commonly builds over time is at the periphery—where the pain is greatest. At the national level, in fact, there is every reason to believe that things are likely to get worse before they get better. It is at the state and local level—the "laboratories of democracy"—that much of the foundational work for later national application will inevitably be done.

There are many things which a serious movement for change must affirm—from the environment to wide-ranging civil rights, from the war to civil liberties, from social policy to spiritual renewal. In most areas, progressives have long been clear about what needs to be done, and they have gained moral and political strength from their clarity. The emerging new work suggests we may also be on the verge of developing a coherent vision of how to augment and perhaps ultimately move beyond traditional strategies for dealing with the huge economic imbalances at the very core of the American political-economic system.

Any serious strategy must "walk on two legs." Wherever feasible we need to embrace traditional progressive strategies to achieve whatever can be achieved by such means. At the same time, we need to take up the challenge suggested by the wealth-related rethinking and on-the-ground development work.

There have been several large-order political realignments in American history from before the Civil War to beyond the New Deal. If we are able to confront the central challenge of wealth, our next realignment could well become the most important—and the most meaningful. □

Beyond the Alienated Left

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser and Joel Schalit

With the defeat of John Kerry, it has become commonplace for pundits left and right to make the two following observations: first, that Republicans won the election based on their emphasis on cultural values; second, that the Democrats lost because they lacked an ideology that could have subsumed Republican discourses about morality into a more progressive political language about America. While both observations have a basis in truth, neither of them adequately explains why conservatives won the election and the so-called liberal/Left lost out.

The Republicans won because they spent over a quarter of a century on political education and grassroots organizing in the form of evangelical cultural outreach. While the Democrats argued legislation, the Republicans built faith communities. Within these communities, they worked to create Christian versions of every institutional and cultural interest of Americans, from faith-based charter schools to faith-based welfare to faith-based rock 'n' roll.

In organizations like the Promise Keepers, the mega-churches, and the anti-abortion movement, middle Americans found a secure, comfortable bulwark against postmodernity. In a world that seemed increasingly uncertain, they found spiritual leaders who insisted that the Christian path was straight, narrow, and clear. In a world in which everything seemed relative, they could rely on their neighbors to show up at church. Above all, they were reassured that they would not need to negotiate contemporary society alone.

The role this gradual cultural creation of community played cannot be underestimated in this election. American society is increasingly atomized. The economy of the United States is now consumer- rather than manufacturer-driven. Unlike manufacturing, where each must work with another as a team, in a service economy, I am best off when I am on my own, protecting my own interests, with no one responsible for me except myself.

We buy into this economy, even as we long for more connection. The cellphone symbolizes our alienated state. We value the cellphone precisely because it bridges the void between ourselves and those with whom we desire to share

our life experience. In a world to which we feel little relation, the cellphone becomes a lifeline, connecting us to sources of personal meaning. Yet as we rely increasingly on the cellphone, we are drawn ever farther from the world in which we actually travel. We no longer see the barrista serving us coffee, the driver in the car crossing the road.

The Left has embraced this kind of alienated lifestyle. We have prized the virtual, the simulacrum, the situation. We feel proud of our sophisticated ability to change, chameleon-like, with circumstance. Lovers of information technology, we cherish the flexibility of the globalized service economy, which for those who can surf its tides can bring a feeling of freedom and control. Even as we protest global capital, we embrace the culture that capital creates. Indeed, we rely on global capital's disdain for extra-economic social narratives

in order to frame our response to it. In short, it is the Left, not the Right, which supports the status quo from which most ordinary Americans feel disenfranchised.

The best response to alienation is community. The Republicans caught American's discontent with postmodernity and responded with faith-based

communities. These communities tell their members that they are not alone. They offer actual people to whom the individual can turn and actual places to which the individual can go.

If the Left is to gain any traction in American politics, we must reject the alienated position of postmodernity. We must, as Jürgen Habermas suggests, focus on rebuilding an authentic civil society marked by real communicative acts between members. We must reclaim ideology, understanding that attempts to tell one coherent story, even if fictional, also have the effect of actually creating bonds between people willing to follow the story line.

Most importantly, we must move out of the realm of theory altogether and begin, as our opposites on the Right have done so successfully, to create facts on the ground. Moveon.org and other groups were a good start, but these were still largely virtual communities. Virtual communities are not enough. We must re-value grassroots community work like joining the parent association at school, engaging in public gardening projects, working on prison reform. We must then create a framework in which these separate projects are all understood as part of a bigger story, the story of *tikkun olam*, of making the world a better place. □

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quit a club, a religion (one can convert), a country (one can take out another citizenship and go live elsewhere), and even a gender (given current medical science), but how do you resign from a people into which you were born? Repulsed by the actions of their Church, some French Catholics are said to have written a letter to the Pope asking for a de-baptismal certificate. A precedent? But whom would I write to? And what would I ask for? Well, I have decided to write to TIKKUN and to ask for nothing other than a hearing.

From what I've said so far, it would be easy for some to dismiss me as a self-hating Jew, but that would be a mistake. If anything, I am a self-loving Jew, but the Jew I love in me is the diaspora Jew, the Jew that was blessed for 2,000 years by having no country to call his/her own. That this was accompanied by many cruel disadvantages is well known, but it had one crowning advantage that towered over all the rest. By being an outsider in every country and belonging to the family of outsiders throughout the world, Jews on the whole suffered less from the small-minded prejudices that disfigure all forms of nationalism. If you couldn't be a full and equal citizen of the country in which you lived, you could be a citizen of the world, or at least begin to think of yourself as such, even before the concepts existed that would help to clarify what this meant. I'm not saying that this is how most diaspora Jews actually thought, but some did—Spinoza, Marx, Freud, and Einstein being among the best known—and the opportunity as well as the inclination for others to do so came from the very rejection they all experienced in the countries in which they lived. Even the widespread treatment of Jews as somehow less than human provoked a universalist response. Jews argued when they could and quietly reflected when open argument was impossible that as children of the same God, they shared a common humanity with their oppressors and that this should take precedence over everything else. The anti-Semitic charge, then, that Jews have always and everywhere been cosmopolitan and insufficiently patriotic had at least this much truth to it.

Not many Jews today, of course, take this position. In a 1990 interview with Rochelle Furstenberg in the *Jerusalem Report*, Britain's most famous intellectual and Zionist, Isaiah Berlin, recounted a conversation he had with the French philosopher Alexander Kojève, who is reported as saying, "You're a Jew. The Jewish people probably have the most interesting history of any people that ever lived. And now you want to be Albania?" Berlin's reply was, "Yes, we do. For our purposes, for Jews, Albania is a step forward." This was a surprising answer from a culturally sophisticated liberal, an atheist, someone who claimed never to have experienced any anti-Semitism in England and who wrote extensively about nationalism and its perils. What overrode all such considerations for Berlin was the human need to belong, which he understood as belonging not just to a group but to a particular place. Without their own country,

Jews had suffered all manner of oppression as well as the pervasive longing that accompanies any extended exile. Berlin was fond of repeating that all he wanted for Jews is that they be allowed to be a "normal people" with a homeland, just like the others. Yes, just like the Albanians.

The two questions that remain to be asked, however, are (1) whether the natural drive to belong to something that served as Berlin's main premise could be satisfied by something other than a national state, and (2) whether in becoming like Albania (even Greater Albania) Jews have been forced to give up something that was even more valuable in the Judaism of the Diaspora. If it is true—and I am ready to admit it is—that our mental and emotional health requires a strong bond with other people, there is no reason to believe that only national groups which occupy their own land can satisfy this need. There are racial, religious, gender, cultural, political, and class groups without special ties to one country that might do as well. Blacks, Catholics, gays, Freemasons, and class conscious workers are but a few populations that have found ways to satisfy this need to belong without confining themselves to national borders. Membership in our common species offers still another path to this same goal. Given the range of possibilities, which group(s) we "join" or take as our primary identity will depend largely on what is available in the time and place in which we live, how such groups resolve (or promise to resolve) our most pressing problems, and on how we are socialized into viewing these different groups.

As for what was lost in acquiring a homeland, it is important to recognize that Zionism is a form of nationalism like any other, and nationalism—as even sympathetic observers like Albert Einstein were forced to recognize—always has its price. While every Jew knows that Einstein was offered the presidency of the newly independent Jewish state, few understand why he turned it down. In contrast to Berlin, who wanted Jews to become a "normal" people like the others, Einstein wrote, "My awareness of the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a Jewish state with borders, an army, and a measure of temporal power, no matter how modest. I am afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain—especially from the development of a narrow nationalism within our own ranks, against which we have already had to fight strongly, even without a Jewish state" (from "Our Debt to Zionism" in *Ideas and Opinions*). Who can doubt that Einstein was right to worry?

Like all nationalisms, Zionism is also based on an exaggerated sense of superiority as applied to members of the ingroup and a feeling of indifference, bordering on contempt, for members of other groups. Jews entered world history with an extreme act of chutzpah (for which a new word had to be invented) in which they posed one just God who created everyone, and then, for reasons best known to him, chose the Jews to be his special people (why Christians and Muslims so happily accept their inferior status in this

arrangement I'll never understand). But what the Zionists have done is carry this original act of chutzpah over to God's commandments. Where Jews once believed they were chosen to receive God's laws for all humanity, Zionists seem to believe that they were chosen to break them whenever they interfere with the national interest. What room does this leave for a belief in the inherent equality of all human beings?

Admittedly, the ancient Hebrews not only received the laws from God but also, supposedly, the promise of a particular piece of land. The latter, however, was always linked to the Jews' obedience to these laws, of which the most important—given the number of times God refers to it—is the prohibition against idolatry. While the Jews have not built any idols of God, their record on idolatry—perhaps in part the result of the restraint shown in representing God—has probably been worse than that of their neighbors. For well over 3,000 years, Judaism has fought a largely losing fight against idolatry with the Temple in Jerusalem, the scrolls of the Torah, and the land of Israel coming to embody and gradually to replace the relations with God and the corresponding ethical precepts that they were supposed to represent. But only in Zionism, the current version of this land-idolatry, have these precepts been sacrificed altogether. This modern version of the Golden Calf has saved Moses the trouble of smashing the Ten Commandments by doing it for him. That many of today's Zionists don't believe in the God of their fathers simply makes it easier for them to turn Eretz Israel into a new God. The idolatry stands. Only now God's laws can be written by a committee without sully their nationalist content with any universalist pretensions. If such extreme nationalism is normal—which makes Spinoza, Marx, Freud, and Einstein thoroughly abnormal—then, I guess, Berlin finally got his normal people.

The organic tie that Zionism, as is typical with nationalist movements, takes for granted between its people and their territory is also bathed in the kind of mysticism that renders any rational discussion of their situation impossible. This is as true for religious Zionists, who actually believe that God made a real-estate deal with their ancestors, as it is for secular Zionists, who conveniently forget the 2,000 years of the Jewish Diaspora in staking their "legal" claim to the land (only to recall the Jews' suffering in the Diaspora when the discussion shifts to their moral claim to it). What room does this leave for dealing in a humane and rational way with the problems of life in the twenty-first century? With both morality and reason tailored to serve tribal needs first—and last—the chamber of horrors that Zionism has constructed for the Palestinian people was only a matter of time in coming. Could this be what the ancient Hebrew prophets had in mind when they predicted that the Jewish people would become "a light unto the nations"? Certainly not, nor was it something that Jews themselves could possibly have imagined during the period of the Diaspora, when probably no people attached a greater value to human equality and human reason

than the Jews. Einstein could even claim that the most important characteristic of Judaism was its commitment to "the democratic ideal of social justice, coupled with the ideal of mutual aid and tolerance among all men" without anyone laughing at him. Now, even God would have to laugh...or cry.

If the Diaspora, for all its material inadequacies, left the Jews on a kind of pedestal, morally speaking, why did they come down from it? They came down when the pedestal broke. The conditions that underlay Jewish life in the Diaspora began to come apart with the progress of capitalism, democracy, and the Enlightenment long before the Holocaust, which only delivered the final blow. As odd as this may sound for something that lasted almost 2,000 years, diaspora Judaism was and could only be a period of transition. Emerging out of biblical Judaism, diaspora Judaism was constructed from the start on a contradiction between nostalgia for the country that was lost and a forward looking, if often hesitant and partial, commitment to the people and places where Jews came to live. The one looked backward to the tribe and the land they once called their own, and the other looked out upon the whole species and the entire world into which the Jews, more than any other people, had spread. For the longest time, the ties that bound different peoples and places to each other—culturally, religiously, commercially (much of that by Jews)—was loose at best, so that the possibility of taking their new situation to its logical conclusion and declaring themselves citizens of the world is something of which most Jews could not even conceive. Still, their attitude toward the rest of humanity, if not yet their actions, made Jews increasingly suspect to the more rooted peoples among whom they lived, who never ceased to condemn Jews for their "cosmopolitanism" (a swear word, it seems, to virtually everybody but Jews). Then, with the multiple reconfigurations of the globe associated with capitalism, the Enlightenment, democracy, and finally socialism, more Jews could recognize that they were indeed citizens of the world and became free to declare so publicly.

But the same social and economic turmoil, with its new opportunities for advancement and frightening rise in anti-Semitism, that led many Jews to exchange their prime identity in the tribe for one in the human species, led other Jews to reject their evolving cosmopolitanism in favor of a renewed nationalist project. It is no coincidence that so many Jews became either socialists or Zionists at the end of the nineteenth and in the early part of the twentieth century. Where no change in the condition of the Jewish people had seemed possible earlier, now two alternatives emerged and vied with each other for popular support. The one sought to do away with the oppression of Jews by doing away with all oppressions, and the other sought the same end by removing the Jews to a supposedly safe haven in Palestine. The same processes that gave rise to these two alternatives brought the gradual and then rapid disintegration of diaspora Judaism. Though most Jews today live outside Israel in

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what is still called the Diaspora, the great majority belong to either the socialist or, increasingly, Zionist camps (including the weak versions of each), and what remains will probably be drawn into one or the other of these two camps in the near future. Diaspora Judaism, as it existed for almost 2,000 years, has practically ceased to exist. It has divided along the lines of its major contradiction into a socialism that is concerned with the well-being of humanity and a nationalism that is only interested in the well-being of the Jewish people and their reconquest of Israel. Since Judaism has always tried to synthesize these irreconcilable projects, their definitive separation—forget the artfully packaged nostalgia that finds its way into the media—can be viewed as the end of Judaism itself. Perhaps all that is left are ex-Jews who call themselves socialists or communists and ex-Jews who call themselves Zionists (the secular/religious divide among the latter has little relevance for my purposes).

If neither socialists who reject the nationalist and religious aspects of diaspora Judaism nor Zionists who reject its universal and humanist dimensions (and often its religious aspects as well) are Jews, then the real debate is over which tradition has retained the best of their common Jewish heritage. Despite their constant chatter about Jews, I would maintain that it is Zionism that has less in common with Judaism. It is not by breaking the limbs of Palestinian youth that the Jewish sages of the past predicted our people would “become a light unto the nations.” In Israel today, where *tsadik* (righteous person) and *mensch* (decent one) apply only to a few who are spat on by the great majority of the population, and “chutzpah” has come to mean the defense of the indefensible, there is little to remind us of the moral core of a once-noble tradition.

When I was growing up, my Yiddish-speaking mother would often try to correct some aberrant behavior on my part by warning that it was a “*shandeh fur die goyim*” (that I would be shaming not only me and my family but all Jews in front of the gentiles). What I want to cry out loudest in front of all the crimes of Zionism and all those who try to defend them is that what they are doing is a *shandeh fur die goyim*. They themselves, the big cheeses and the small fry, are all a *shandeh fur die goyim*. (Ma, I remember.) Socialist and ex-Jew that I am, I guess I still have too much respect and love for the Jewish tradition I left behind to want the world to view it in the same way as they rightly view and condemn what the ex-Jews who call themselves Zionists are doing in its name. And if changing my status from ex-Jew (current) to non-Jew (projected) stirs even ten good people (God’s *minyan*) into action against the Zionist hijacking of the Jewish label, then this is a sacrifice I am ready to make.

To those who wonder why the resignation of an atheist communist from the Jewish people might bother some Jews, I would just point out that the greatest sin a Jew can commit—I was taught this from all sides—is to take leave of his people (usually by converting to another faith). A family will

often respond by sitting *shivah* over the offending member (treating him or her as dead). The deep shame and anger that many Jews feel when this happens is hard to explain, but it probably has something to do with the intense quality of the social bond that unites all Jews—originally, no doubt, the result of being God’s chosen but also of sharing and surviving so many centuries of oppression. While a Christian relates to God as an individual, the Jew’s relation to God has always passed through his connection to the chosen people, a people that God also holds collectively responsible for the failures of each of its members. Operating with such an incentive, Jews could never allow themselves the luxury of indifference when it came to the life choices of their co-religionists. With a little Jewish education, this inner connection becomes so ingrained that even some atheist and communist Jews may experience the defection of a Jew from the people as losing a limb from their own body. Certainly, my continuing identification as a Jew, as some kind of a Jew, while lacking any of the attributes of a believer, helps explain why I felt an overpowering need to resign when “Jew” came to mean something I could not accept (or ignore). And the same organic tie may help explain why some Jews, including those of whom I am most critical and who might be expected to rejoice at my resignation, may get so upset by the form that my criticism has taken.

Here I am, almost at the end of my letter of resignation, and I haven’t discussed the Holocaust. For many Zionists that would be enough to reject what I have to say. In my defense, I would like to share a story that Joe Murphy, former Vice Chancellor of the City University of New York, used to tell about his Jewish mother. “Joe,” he has her saying, “there are two kinds of Jews. One kind has reacted to the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust by vowing that they will do anything to make sure it doesn’t happen to our people again. While the other kind of Jews took as their lesson from the same terrible event that they must do whatever they can to make sure it doesn’t happen again to any people anywhere. Joe,” she went on, “I want you to promise me that you will always be the second kind of Jew.” He did, and he was.

The first kind of Jew, most of whom are Zionists and therefore in my language really “ex-Jews,” have gone so far as to unashamedly transform the Holocaust itself into a club with which to bash any critic who has the temerity to question what they are doing to the Palestinians, supposedly in self-defense. (See Norman Finkelstein’s *The Holocaust Industry*.) Any criticism of Zionism, no matter how mild and justified, is equated with anti-Semitism, where anti-Semitism has become a shorthand for people who bear some responsibility for the Holocaust and are really hoping for another one. This is a heavy charge, and it has proved very effective in silencing many potential critics. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the striking revival of media interest in the Holocaust comes at a time when Zionism is in greatest need of such a protective cloak (shroud?). In the

process, the worst human-rights violation in history is being cynically misused to rationalize one of the worst human-rights violations of our time. Joe Murphy's mother would expect the second kind of Jews to be the first to point this out and condemn it.

That leaves the question of safety. Zionists insist that by creating their own state, they have improved the safety of Jews not only in Israel but everywhere. Unfortunately, Israel's abominable treatment of the Palestinians, together with its "Wieselian" hypocrisy and increasingly arrogant rebuffs to the world community, have created more real anti-Semitism not only in the Arab countries but throughout the world than has probably ever existed. At the moment, Zionists feel secure against the inevitable repercussions of their policies by virtue of the shield thrown over them by their American allies. To the amazement of the entire world, except, it appears, most Americans, Zionism's success in cornering American political support has been nothing less than extraordinary. As far as the conflict in the Holy Land is concerned, Americans could just as well dispense with choosing between Democrats and Republicans and vote directly for Sharon. Orthodox Jews, as we know, hire a non-Jew (or *shabbes goy*) to turn the lights on for them on the Sabbath. Israel, too, has many things that it cannot do for itself, and it has managed to acquire the U.S. government as its *shabbes goy*, and this one even pays the electric bills. If this isn't a miracle right up there with God's parting of the Red Sea, then we need to learn how it happened, and we don't really know, not yet, not in any detail.

Any good explanation, of course, would have to trace the relations between the Israeli government, the Zionist lobby (in its various dimensions), Christian Fundamentalists (who believe that the second coming of Jesus won't take place until all Jews are gathered in Israel), both American political parties, Jewish voters, and the interests of the American capitalist class in political and economic expansion. For as influential as Israel has been in determining American foreign policy in the Middle East, it couldn't have succeeded so well unless its interests overlapped to a considerable degree with the imperial designs of our ruling class. As regards the Zionist component in this relation, the key step was probably taken by the Israeli government in 1977, when Begin and Likud came to power and decided to forge closer links to the Christian Fundamentalists in the United States (70 million strong) in order to help them become a more effective political lobby and one for whom Zionist goals came first. Netanyahu, on the Israeli side, and Jerry Falwell (who received the prestigious Jabotinsky Prize and... a private jet from Israel), on the American side, were particularly active in developing this alliance, according to Donald Wagner's *Christian Century* article "Evangelicals and Israel." The Bush II Administration offers but the most recent evidence of how well this strategy has worked. Should the Democrats oust the Republicans from office, whether in this still unfinished elec-

tion or the next one, our government's support for Israel would not diminish in the least, because the Zionist lobby—in this case, with the aid of the Jewish vote, most of which goes to the Democrats—is even more influential in Kerry's party.

This special relationship to Israel is unlikely to remain stable, however, since the foundations on which it stands are being rapidly eroded. To begin with, the majority of the American people, as shown by every poll, have never been as pro-Zionist as their government(s), and such positive feelings as do exist have been seriously strained by Israel's inhuman response to the intifada. If it was possible to view Israel in its wars with the Arab world as a little David standing up to a mighty Goliath, its army's brutal repression of a virtually unarmed Palestinian people has turned this analogy upside down, so that Israel now looks like the bullying Goliath. With new killings, new woundings, new humiliations, more destruction of homes, more thefts of land and water, and now the building of an apartheid wall taking place every day (often on TV), Israel's policies also call into question the official story of Israel as victim of the same kind of terrorists who bombed New York (hence, deserving our sympathy and help) rather than as a major instigator of Muslim violence around the world. In addition, the growing unpopularity of the Iraq war (an unending war that should never have begun), for which Israel and its strongest supporters inside the U.S. government were, at a minimum, among the loudest cheerleaders, is also spilling over to American attitudes toward Israel. Finally, the increasing insecurity of Middle East oil supplies, with its effects on prices and profits throughout the economy—due to the wars but also to Israel's escalating barbarity towards an Arab people (with which the United States is unavoidably identified)—has begun to drive a wedge between Israel and American capitalist interests. Before long—if it hasn't happened already—an important section of America's capitalist ruling class will start demanding that the U.S. government adopt a new approach toward Israel. When the mass of the American public finally wakes up to the enormous and still growing costs in blood and money of serving as Israel's *shabbes goy*—coming as they do at a time of steep budget cuts for all kinds of popular government programs—the surge of anti-Semitism could threaten the security of Jews and all kinds of ex-Jews everywhere.

Anti-Semitism is often understood as an irrational hatred of Jews not for anything they believe or do, but for who they are. This is incorrect, because there are reasons. They just happen to be bad ones, either because they are false (like Jews using the blood of gentile children to make matzot for Passover), or exaggerated, or ancient, or irrelevant, or—if they apply at all (like Jews being rich, etc.)—they apply to only a few people. This is why hating all Jews is not only irrational but unjust, and, as we know, the results have often been murderous. With this history, every Jew as well as every humane and fair-minded non-Jew must oppose the rise of anti-Semitism with all their might. That this history, as

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painful as it is, does not give Jews any right to commit their own crimes should be evident, and it is monstrous whenever Jewish criminals respond to their accusers with charges of anti-Semitism, even if, as in the case of Zionists, they believe their crimes serve the interests of the Jewish people, and even if they have managed—another miracle?—to get the third edition of *Webster's International Dictionary* to define anti-Zionism as a form of “anti-Semitism.” In claiming an equation between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, of course, Zionists run the danger of having people accept the logic of their position but not the use to which they put it. According to this logic, one must be both anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic or neither. The assumption is that faced with this choice, most of their honest critics will simply pack up their tents and go home. But given Zionism's worsening record in Palestine, the choice could go the other way. That is, some opponents of Zionism who are convinced by the logic put forward here and nothing else might now embrace anti-Semitism as well. Rather than making fewer anti-Zionists, this approach is probably making more anti-Semites. The conclusion can only be that as an insurance policy against future pogroms, Israel is not only worthless but downright dangerous to the health of those who have put their faith and money into it.

At this point, if not earlier, many readers of this journal will fault me for appearing to treat Zionists as if they are all alike. I am aware, of course, of the many differences in the Zionist camp and am full of admiration for the courageous efforts by more progressive and humane Zionists in Meretz, Peace Now, and The Tikkun Community, among other groups, to oppose the Israeli establishment. They cannot be exempted from my analysis, however—and it's not just because their reforms seemed doomed to failure, since they share at least some of the basic assumptions on which Zionism (in both its Likud and Labor Party versions) is based. Setting up a state in which only Jews were to be full citizens, setting it up in a land already inhabited by millions of non-Jews, seeking to respond to anti-Semitism in the world by a display of Jewish might, seeking to make Jews everywhere feel safer because they now had a country to run away to (should the need arise), and seeking to rationalize all this through a combination of religious myth and the experience of the Holocaust—all this lies at the heart of Zionism, but it is also the logic inherent in these views that has brought us to the present impasse. And I don't see how it could have been otherwise. The occasions where it appears the history of Israel might have taken another turn are but face-saving chimeras. Further, it is only by rejecting these views root and branch that we can see Zionism and the situation it has brought about for what they really are and begin to orient ourselves ideologically and politically accordingly.

For example, ideologically, there is no longer a need to accept that Israel presents us with a clash of two rights, as some moderate and even socialist Zionists have put it. There

is one right, and the Zionists, who are the invaders and the oppressors, are in the wrong. Only the assumptions that underlie the Zionist project have kept some people from recognizing this. It also means that we cannot regard the violence perpetrated by the Zionist government against Arabs and by Arabs against Jews in Israel today in the same manner. Certainly, I can and do deeply regret all the killing and destruction that is taking place, and I sympathize and suffer more than I can say with the victims and their loved ones on both sides. Only Israel, however, its government, and its supporters, deserve to be condemned, and not just because they've made use of planes and tanks and have killed far more innocent people. Of greater relevance here is the fact that it is the Israeli government that has the monopoly of power in the country, and it is the government that has created the rules of this grisly game in which the Palestinians are forced to participate under horrid conditions. They, and only they, can change these rules and conditions at any time and therefore must be held responsible for keeping them as they are. They are the real terrorists, and not the poor souls who have been driven so crazy by their escalating oppression and accompanying humiliation that they are willing to use their own bodies as weapons. State terror and not individual terror is the main problem everyone who would like to bring an end to this conflict must confront, and that needs to be reflected in our tactics. Sharon is right in at least one respect: Arafat was irrelevant. So too, perhaps unfortunately, are the rest of the Palestinians when it comes to arriving at a stable peace. Instead of charging the Palestinians with some responsibility for the conflict and diffusing whatever effect we might have, all attention should go to putting pressure, all forms of pressure, on Israel.

Politically, this means avoiding any association with this rogue state whatsoever (as we did with South Africa earlier), boycotting it economically and otherwise (keeping it out of the Olympics, for example), bringing pressure on our politicians to stop all U.S. aid (private as well as public) to Israel, supporting various sanctions (including trade sanctions) against it, calling for the strongest possible resolutions at the U.N. and in all other available forums denouncing Zionist human-rights abuses, and, of course, confronting head-on the Zionist lobby that would oppose all this. Similar steps should be taken in Europe and elsewhere, but, given America's power in the world in general and in Israel in particular, it is in our country that the fate of the Palestinian people—and ultimately that of Judaism and what's left of the Jewish people—will be decided. While isolating Israel in the ways I have suggested would undoubtedly hurt those inside its borders who are working to change their government's policies, it would also help them by raising the costs of these policies to unacceptable levels. What is clear is that for Jews whose conscience does not stop at their bloodline, silence, moderation, and balance are no longer options, if they ever were. Oppressive regimes, after all, have seldom

needed more than passive and qualified support to carry out their business. Along with the growing number of Jews who openly defend Israel's inhuman behavior, these often well-meaning Jews also feed the anti-Semitic stereotype that all Jews are complicit in the crimes of Zionism and so deserve the hatred that these crimes evoke. Isn't this what most Jews thought about the passivity of the so-called "good" Germans during the Nazi period? How much did their passivity, at a time when taking any action was far more dangerous than it is for us now, contribute to the hostility so many Jews felt toward all Germans? An all-out struggle against Zionism by Jews, therefore, is also the most effective way to fight against real anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, if Zionism is indeed a particularly virulent form of nationalism and, increasingly, of racism and if Israel is acting toward its captive minority in ways that resemble more and more how the Nazis treated their Jews, then we must also say so. For obvious reasons, the Zionists are very sensitive about being compared to the Nazis (not so sensitive that it has restrained them in their actions but enough to bellow "unfair" and to charge "anti-Semitism" when it happens). Yet, the facts on the ground, when not obscured by one or another Zionist rationalization, show that the Zionists are the worst anti-Semites in the world today, oppressing a Semitic people as no nation has done since the Nazis. No, the Zionists are not yet quite as bad as the Nazis, not yet, but isn't the world witnessing a creeping ethnic cleansing against the Palestinians at this very moment? If Zionists (and their supporters) find this comparison unduly insulting and unjust, they have only to stop what they are doing (and supporting), but I fear that the logic of their position will only drive them to committing (and supporting) even greater atrocities in the future, including genocide—another Nazi specialty—than they have up to now. What, if anything, has such Zionism got to do with traditional Jewish values?

As far as I'm concerned, the comedian Lenny Bruce provided the only good answer to this question when he said, "Dig, I'm Jewish. Count Basie's Jewish. Ray Charles is Jewish. Eddie Cantor is goyish... Marine Corps—heavy goyish... If you live in New York or any other big city, you're Jewish. If you live in Butte, Montana, you're going to be goyish even if you're Jewish... Kool-Aid is goyish. Evaporated milk is goyish even if Jews invented it... Pumpnickel is Jewish and, as you know, white bread is very goyish.... Negroes are all Jews... Irishmen who have rejected their religion are Jewish... Baton twirling is very goyish" (*Lenny Bruce: Let the Buyer Beware*).

To this I would only add, "Noam Chomsky, Mordechai Vanunu, and Edward Said are Jewish. Elie Wiesel is goyish. So, too, all Jewish neo-cons. Socialism and communism are Jewish. Sharon and Zionism are very goyish." And, who knows, if this reading of Judaism were to take hold, I may one day apply for readmission to the Jewish people. □

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transitory pleasures, power over others, and worthy causes. If they form a light unto the nations, it is a dim and unrecognized one. Natan Sharansky, after his recent disastrous tour of North American colleges and universities, complained that at best 10 percent of the Jewish population on campuses shows signs of affiliation, support, and action, and not just regarding Israel. This is the most educated segment of the Jewish population (though not necessarily the most Jewishly educated). Their disinterest and disaffection reflect the sentiment of the Jewish population as a whole, the pro-Israel leaning of most Jewish institutions notwithstanding.

Though you wish to deny it, your letter can be understood best in terms of psychology. If Israel were indeed the problem, you would be renouncing your ostensible right of return, for instance. Some 200 Jews from outside of Israel did exactly this. They sent a letter informing the Israeli embassy in New York that they renounce their legal right to Israeli citizenship (www.jewsrenounce.org). Their effort creatively sent the message that they will not condone Israeli mistreatment and exclusion of Palestinians in the name of their right of return. Neither do you call merely for a boycott of military suppliers to Israel. No, you quit the Jewish people! Despite your hatred of Zionism, you've accepted the maximalist Zionist argument that all Jews "belong" to Israel. All Jews are, in your understanding, somehow responsible for Israeli behavior despite their lack of voting rights and other official political mechanisms. So if the state of Israel strays from being a light unto the nations, you feel compelled to quit the Jewish people! But this logic is laughable. The whole problem with this light-unto-the-nations thing is precisely that if this is all one has, then when things fall short, one has nothing left and runs off in disgust. The mature religious Jew sees that when her people fail to live up to Judaism's (or God's) beautifully high standards, there is nothing to do but try and try again (and who was more critical of Jewish behavior than God?). Jewish imperfection is par for the course. But only someone who has already lost his capacity to care about improving Jewish behavior runs away from the task. (The criticism of enemies can be dismissed because it comes without love or care.)

Your notion that Jewish powerlessness made or makes Jews more moral reeks of unfounded romanticism. I look forward to reading your open letter to the Kurds in which you tell them they will lose their moral high ground if they establish their own country and that they would be better off continuing to live under oppression in Turkey and Syria (we'll see what awaits them in the new Iraq). You can also inform the Tibetans that their recent involuntary diaspora is actually a blessing in disguise. Do you really think the xenophobia and racist denigration of non-Jews widespread among diaspora Jews is acceptable just because Jews were underdogs?

Jews did and do have a right to Israel. Jews have no less

right to that land than any other people has to any other piece of land. In fact, we have more. Whether you like it or not, whether you find it silly or “mystical,” pious Jews have for 2,000 years prayed for their return to that land and made individual and collective efforts to return to it well into the nineteenth century, before organized and institutional Zionism arose. Contrary to your beliefs, Zionism did not invent this claim. Despite the often minuscule numbers, Jews have maintained a continuous presence in Israel/Palestine since 70 CE. Meron Benvenisti, for example, writes about having relatives in Jerusalem since the sixteenth century. By any objective measure, Jews have more rights to Israel than the radical Protestants had and have to North American territories and certainly more right than other Protestants had to lands in the south of Africa, although both latter “manifest destinies” were propped up by historically unsupported retrojected prophecies. If all nationalisms are false, then Jewish nationalism is less false than many others. You also seem to accept the Zionist argument that outside of Israel there is no Jewish existence. How else could your protest take the form of handing in your Jewishness because of what Israel does?

If all nationalisms are false, where is your public resignation of your United States citizenship? If you really hated nationalism and its violence you would resign from the nation to which you belong, the United States, and not from a nebulous collective “people” known as Jews. The United States, especially with its current (and now, alas, continuing) policy of preemptive short-sightedness—economic, military, environmental, religious—poses an infinitely greater danger to the world than Israel. If you honestly cared about colonialism and its effects, you would vacate your residence in the New York area (or wherever) to the peoples who lived here until quite recently. Your remaining makes you complicit in one of the world’s worst land thefts, most nearly successful genocides, and continuing neo-colonialist oppressions. Have I missed your activism and public appeals urging the United States to dismantle the Bureau of Indian Affairs or return even some native lands or to pay back the billions of dollars that our own courts agree was cheated away from various native peoples? Your resignation from the Jewish people surely marks a perverse way of confessing that you are more of a Jew than an “American.”

Your stance seems remarkably selective. Why is Jewish nationalism bad but Palestinian nationalism acceptable? How many centuries does it take to turn unjust colonial violence into legitimate possession for you, as when the Arabian Muslims and then Ottomans took Palestine by force? Today’s Palestinian resistance frequently kills and injures noncombatant individuals as a main goal in the name of a particular and exclusive collective and for the sake of a particular piece of land. Why is that better than the Jewish nationalism against which it fights? You no doubt accept all the anti-Israel resolutions of the UN, but somehow cannot accept the UN decision to try to resolve the Israeli-Arab

conflict by dividing the land in question between two compelling rights.

Your logic is not just fallacious but absurd and dangerous. For you to agree with Israel’s most implacable enemies that all Jews in the world are complicit in Israel’s behavior and are therefore legitimate targets for “resistance” is sickening on several counts. In your view everything becomes legitimate “resistance” and everyone must be equal in capacity to influence the political system—both mistaken notions. Yes, perhaps on some level all Germans were responsible for Nazi behavior, but this does not distinguish at all between high-ranking Nazi officials, Luftwaffe pilots, wives of professors, or uneducated street vendors. I refuse to be told that punching an unsuspecting French Jewish woman in the face has anything to do with Middle East politics. I refuse to accept that allowing, even encouraging, riots against Jews in Muslim countries, confiscating their property, and pressuring them to immigrate had anything to do with concern for the plight of Palestinians. I refuse to accept that purposefully blowing up as many noncombatants as possible has anything to do with a struggle for the liberation of a people. Doesn’t the instrumental violence of so-called anti-colonial resistance darken the Palestinians’ being a light unto the nations? But perhaps you don’t care whether anyone but Jews live up to such a difficult standard.

Your take on anti-Semitism is similarly problematic. Discourse regarding Jews is so overdetermined by centuries of Christian—and now Muslim—anti-Judaism and anti-Jewishness that it is doubtful that a “normal” discussion can even be had on the kinds of complex and sensitive issues you raise (your letter is a case in point). Even if one agrees that Israel has committed and commits terrible human-rights violations, do you really think your suggested all-out, all-fronts campaign would produce a sane politics limited to achieving a just and balanced solution? If one gives you the benefit of the doubt and believes that your rhetoric is not just rhetorical, you may want Jews/Israelis to live holy lives as a light unto the nations, but much of the Arab/Muslim world, much of the Left, and all of the remaining (neo)Nazis would like to see no Israel at all, perhaps no Jews at all. In some sense, ignoring anti-Jewish screeds and acts may be the best policy, but it certainly has not made them cease.

Both Israelis and Palestinians are wrong in this conflict. Yet you and the campaign you envision blame only one side. But Palestinians are wrong because they did not and do not have exclusive rights to this land, even if they were living there. This difference between Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians and the conflicts of the United States and South Africa is critical. Israel alone of the three faced unjustified opposition from the beginning. The Palestinians did not exist in any significant political or institutional sense before Zionism “created” them, before other Arab polities built them up in order to oppose the increasingly inevitable Zionist presence. Far more importantly, every Arab and/or Muslim

polity in the region refused to recognize a Jewish right to settle in Israel/Palestine, much less the formation of a Jewish polity there. Jews were acceptable to the Muslim world as long as they remained second-class citizens, in conditions not always better than those confronting Jews in Europe.

The notion that Israel is conducting genocide against the Palestinians is a libel, false and hysterical. Use of the term debases the true genocides waged in the past (and present). Though some Palestinians who fled during and after 1948 were forced to do so by Israel, many were encouraged by Arab leaders who declared war on Israel to escape from the conflict in the expectation that a swift victory would follow. Though it feels cold to speak in this way, the number of Palestinian deaths in the most recent intifada come to somewhat over 3,000, injuries to around 20,000. Israeli border police who abuse Palestinians are arrested and tried (though no doubt not in all cases and often without satisfactory resolution). What kind of genocide is this?!? One might talk justifiably about the purposeful creation of a Palestinian underclass for labor purposes or ethnic cleansing in the sense of pressuring Palestinians to abandon their lands (both reprehensible policies), but there is no genocide here and there never has been. Use of this term is an irresponsible rhetorical ploy.

There is no such thing as an "internationalist" or a "member of the human community" in the sense that you mean. No matter how much one wants to believe so, one simply cannot belong to, identify with, affiliate with, or fight for everything and everybody. Inevitably one must make choices, even if only subconsciously or unwillingly. The internationalism of Marxism was historically proven to be merely theoretical, at best, and usually far more nefarious when it came to actual peoples and cultures. And where will you go, Professor Ollman, to belong to a pure collective? Your belief that other forms of affiliation exist free of violence strikes me as deluded.

I would argue, indeed, that in this day and age Marxian cosmopolitanism has become capitalist globalization. Even if unwittingly, the urban sophisticate is complicit in causing human-rights abuses (usually hidden) for the sake of cheap consumer goods and in destroying ecosystems (a lack of concern shared by both "free-market" and centralized economic systems). Cosmopolitans consume without end regardless of the social costs, absorb exotic cultures often to death, and toy with cultural symbols that don't belong to them. Cities worldwide seduce rural workers into a glittering web of poverty, landlessness, and alienation. The kind of escape from nationalism you envision is illusory; you are always already complicit in violence unless you get off the grid, reduce your footprint, and withdraw from consumer culture. But I don't hear you urging such things here. The kind of internationalism that I support and find realistic entails a balance: How can one love one's own culture without hating those of others, and how can one love one's own

people without denigrating others? How do we escape binaristic thinking? You have not yet done so, as you can only think of the Other's culture by debasing your own.

I agree that nationalism and nation-states can produce many horrendous problems. But for peoples that are bound together or wish to be bound together there are few options available. Gays are not a people and do not share and have never shared a common geographic origin. African Americans constitute an unwilling minority forged first in foreign lands (like Jews). Their many attempts, individual and collective, to return to a homeland of one kind or another met with ambiguous success (often because they had grown too different from the "kin" to whom they returned and often because the "kin" to whom they returned were the same people who had sold them into slavery to begin with), yet there are numerous towns and regions throughout the Americas of historically African American sovereignty, due precisely to their desire for autonomy and self-rule. Jews tried diaspora living, Professor Ollman, and it just didn't work so well all the time. Why do you think your mother ended up in Milwaukee?

I fully share your love for diaspora yiddishkeit, but why should you impose that path on all Jews? You and I may feel secure as Jews here and now, but given Jewish history in the last few centuries (most of which had nothing to do with violence generated by the existence and policies of a Jewish state), that may well be pretty short-sighted. Does this mean that Jews must live in Israel and Israel alone? Absolutely not! Must all Jews support Israel? Absolutely not! You know this already. Must there be a Jewish state? In theory, no, depending on one's perspective, but that is very different than wrenching an existing state out of existence, as you propose. Your resignation from the Jewish people merely reveals your anger at your people because they don't all agree with you (though many do, passionately, actively and quite publicly). Join the club.

If Zionism is not Jewish, is antithetical to Jewishness, all the more reason for you to fight it as a Jew! Why can't you be an anti-Zionist Jew?! It works for many others. Instead, you hand victory to the Zionists, saying that they are correct in asserting that one cannot be a Jew if one is not a Zionist. You've accepted the ideological victory proclaimed by Zionism despite your hatred of it. Your politics seem as fundamentalist as religion, which you claim to have left behind. Yes, the notion of a people is complex and often compromising. Such is life. Maturity means achieving a certain degree of ego separation, recognizing that the flaws of other members of one's group—whether Israelis, Jews, or U.S. citizens—are not yours, nor are their beliefs or politics. When Nelson Mandela left prison after twenty-seven years, he was asked how he survived and emerged with such a positive outlook. He answered that he never demonized his enemy. How much more important not to demonize your own people. □

A MIDDLE EAST UNION

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formal peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt, while Syria has indicated its desire to end the conflict, in which case Lebanon would fall into place. Then there are its diplomatic and economic relations with Morocco, Tunisia, and potentially even Libya; economic relations with the Gulf States; and extremely close ties (including military) with Turkey. Israel also has long-standing relations with the Kurds of Iraq and, with the visit of an Iraqi cabinet minister to Israel in September, prospects of formal relations with Iraq as well. To all of these, add relations with Muslim countries from Nigeria through Kazakhstan to Indonesia.

The major obstacle to a regional confederation appears to be the process of entering into a just peace with the Palestinians. This long-suffering group may lack political, economic, and military power, but does possess one great source of leverage: its role as gatekeeper. Once the Palestinians signal to the wider Arab and Muslim worlds that they have resolved their differences with Israel and that the time has come for normalization, Israeli integration into the region can begin, as can the process of reconciliation with the Arab and Muslim peoples. It is the first stage that constitutes the real "hump" to be overcome; the emergence of a Middle East confederation, even a union eventually, would follow almost as a matter of course.

In all this it is Israel that bears the brunt of responsibility. Palestinian failures aside, it is Israel that is the strong party, Israel that is the occupying power, Israel that seeks hegemony and control of the entire country. There is no symmetry here, not of power and not of responsibility under international law. The passing of the Arafat era promises new opportunities. The strengthening of Sharon and Bush, both strong adherents of the realpolitik of military might, domination, and American Empire, should concern everyone seeking a world based on universal human rights, inclusivity, international law, equality, and development. The prospect of an Occupation actually winning, of an entire people being literally imprisoned, of a new apartheid emerging—all done in the name of Jews everywhere—makes the Israeli-Palestinian issue a preeminently Jewish as well as global one. I would hope that the organized Jewish community will eventually join with leaders of the Palestinian Diaspora to advance the cause of a just and sustainable peace for both peoples. No less than the soul of our people is at stake.

The Israeli public, battered, scared, caught in a lose-lose situation but convinced by their leaders that there *is* no political solution to the conflict, has taken itself out of the equation. It is passive, waiting for outside intervention to resolve things. That leaves us—the Israeli peace movement, our partner Palestinian peace-seekers, Diaspora Jews, and other members of the international civil society—to join together to defeat occupation and displacement, just as we defeated apartheid. As the old saying goes: When the people lead, the leaders follow. □

CHRISTIAN ZIONISM

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when they make war under the banner of religion. War becomes a holy crusade and those who try to make peace are considered the enemies of God. This certainly is how the *Left Behind* books present the United Nations, which LaHaye and Jenkins describe as an instrument the anti-Christ uses to try to frustrate the will of God.

Is it any wonder, then, that President Bush received strong endorsements for brushing off the concerns of UN leaders on the eve of the war in Iraq? The war in Iraq was, according to dispensationalists, the beginning of the struggles leading up to the Rapture and Armageddon. They almost reveled in the news of the war, pointing to it as evidence that their interpretation of scripture was being lived out in current events.

Perhaps the most dangerous influence of dispensationalism is found in the molding of American policies toward Israel and the Palestinians. Christian Zionists have become a major barrier, if not *the* major barrier, to peace in the Middle East. Yossi Alfer, Israel Director of the American Jewish Committee, said on CBS's *60 Minutes*, "God, save us from these people." Alfer realizes that behind their apparent support for Israel, Christian Zionists have set forth a scenario for the future that not only leaves little room for a negotiated peace with Arabs, but that in the end predicts destruction for those Jews who do not convert to Christianity.

In Washington, Christian Zionists have pressured politicians into minimizing the rights of Palestinians while yielding to expansionist policies of the Sharon government. They claim that, according to their reading of scripture, the Holy Land was promised to the Jews, and Jews alone should possess the land. The stakes for the dispensationalists are high, since in their theology the end of days cannot occur until Jews become the "sole occupiers" of the land of Israel.

What is particularly frightening is that Genesis 15:18, in which this promise of the land of Israel is made to Abraham, declares that the people of Israel should occupy all the land from the Euphrates River to the Nile. This obviously suggests that Israel should expand its borders to encompass major parts of Lebanon, Syria, parts of Iraq, part of Saudi Arabia, and part of Egypt. Is the war in Iraq actually part of a dispensationalist program? Are dispensationalists in government essentially trying to drive Arab peoples out of this entire territory so that Israel might enjoy what was promised to Abraham? These questions are not as crazy as you might think: one televangelist, John Hagee, believes that the war of the end times has already begun.

IV. Christian Zionists and Anti-Semitism

As should be evident, Jewish people should not too readily interpret all of the Christian Zionist support for Israel as evidence of a sudden vanishing of anti-Semitism among Christians. The reality is that the commitment of

Christian Zionists to the state of Israel comes primarily from their understanding of end-times prophecies. Israel is viewed mainly as a means to creating the conditions that will lead up to the Rapture.

In anticipation of the need to have 144,000 converted Jews to carry on evangelistic work during the seven years of the Great Tribulation, they have made Jews into a special target of their proselytizing. As an Evangelical Christian myself, I am desirous of proclaiming the Christian gospel to all nations, in accord with Christ's command. But, when certain Evangelicals focus on the Jews as *the* primary group to be evangelized, as the Southern Baptists have done, it is easy to understand why many Jews get the nervous feeling that these Christians are "out to get them." Declarations by certain Christian Zionists to go after Jews with the gospel have created some tensions between Jews and Christians, with some Jewish leaders contending that these evangelistic efforts are a form of genocide that is aimed at obliterating Judaism.

Another cause of Jewish cynicism toward Christian Zionists comes from the fact that dispensationalists are convinced that all those Jews who do not convert to Christianity will be destroyed upon Christ's Second Coming. Gershom Gorenberg, a prominent Jewish author, was correct when he told *60 Minutes* that these Christian Zionists, "don't love real Jewish people. They love us as characters in their story, in their play, and that's not who we are . . . If you listen to the drama that they are describing, essentially, it's a five-act play in which the Jews disappear in the fourth act."

Those of us Evangelical Christians who have not been swept into the Darby fold must not be considered anti-Zionist. Overwhelmingly and intensely, we support the right of Israel to exist within secure borders. We want to do all we can to ensure safety for the citizens of Israel, so that mothers do not have to worry about what might happen to their children when these boys and girls go off to school. This is one of the main reasons we want to challenge Christian Zionists with their dispensationalist theology.

We believe that the scenario proposed by these apostles of John Darby in the end will set Jews against Arabs, generate a war with Islam (which is now what they predict Armageddon will be all about) and even lead to the destruction of Israel. As opposed to the dispensationalists, who imagine a bloody world in which very few are saved, mainstream Christian Evangelicals believe in a God who loves Palestinians every bit as much as He loves Jews—and this is why we want justice for those people, too. We pray for a two-state solution to the crisis in the Holy Land.

I believe that George W. Bush wants a peaceful solution to Israel/Palestine, I believe most Jews want that solution, and I believe that even Sharon wants that solution. We must not allow Christian Zionists to stand in the way of the peace for which the rest of us so desperately yearn. The time has come to educate ourselves about their agenda and to stop them. □

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also deeply appreciated the mystics' respect for mystery—their insistence that even as they sought to develop complex theological systems, God would, in one way or another, always transcend their thoughts and imaginings.

Reading both Kaplan and the Kabbalah, I was simultaneously attracted to this more abstract language and terrified by the suggestion that God might not be a person. Viewing God as an impersonal force is particularly persuasive in light of the horrific violence and destruction of the twentieth century. On the other hand, this impersonal Divine Force is not the God of the Hebrew Bible or of Jewish liturgy—"the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob"; the God who is "in search of man" (Heschel); the God who comforted me as a child. Having struggled with this question for several years now, the current focus of my theological reflection is about teleology. Now that I live much of my life within a pantheistic framework, experiencing God as an impersonal reality, is it still possible to speak of life as having an ultimate purpose? If God is not the traditional Creator-figure, but a creative force, does this force act with consciousness, will, or desire? Is our existence part of a larger, cosmic design or is it the result of the random collision of galactic matter? Are my I-Thou experiences—at prayer, in nature, or with friends and family—"signals of transcendence" (as the sociologist Peter Berger calls them) or moments that I spiritualize through my religious eyes?

Why I Continue to Theologize

There are, of course, no answers to these questions, however they continue to occupy my thoughts. I choose to live most of my life "as if"—believing that despite my fragmented vision of reality, there is a "meaning beyond mystery" (Heschel). And sometimes—particularly when praying—I even catch a glimpse of the God of my childhood. But there are also many moments of doubt, moments in which I feel the skeptical presence of figures like Nietzsche and Camus taking hold of me, demanding that I grow up and finally put God aside so that I can get on with the business of life—a life that only I can make meaningful in a cold and unfeeling universe.

What keeps me engaged in theological conversation is my visceral sense that it serves as an important context in which to explore the big questions of life. In fact, to me it feels like the ultimate context for this exploration—the widest possible lens through which to refract questions of meaning. My God-wrestling is not simply about the presence or absence of a divine being, but also about the reasons for my existence and how I am to live my life. For me, these two levels of inquiry cannot be divorced.

While I would certainly welcome answers, I do not expect them any time soon. As a student of mysticism, I am learning to live in the questions, holding life's great paradoxes, knowing that as I continue to grow, God will grow with me. □

Philosophy for the Future?

Charlie Bertsch

- *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Penguin Press, 2004.
- *Time For Revolution*, by Antonio Negri. Continuum, 2003.

“Timing is crucial,” begins the final paragraph of *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s sequel to their improbably successful *Empire*. Their statement refers to politics, but it applies just as well to reading. *Multitude* seems like a different book today than it did before the recent election in the United States. Passages that read like a sign of imminent political orgasm in October now seem directed at a more distant climax. “The creation of the multitude, its innovation in networks, and its decision-making ability in common makes democracy possible for the first time today,” now seems to be not a prediction of the Democrats’ ride to victory on a wave of Internet activism in 2004, but a promise that all that energy will eventually reach shore. Someday we will get the break we’ve been waiting for, but we need to stay in the deep water a while longer.

That’s the message *Multitude* holds for the depressed and disillusioned, not only in the United States but wherever American policy dominates everyday life. As progressives worldwide face four more years of the Bush Doctrine, they must rationalize their de-

spair down to a manageable size. So they remind themselves of the insight they had been suppressing during the last weeks of the 2004 campaign. While a John Kerry victory would have been nice, any ecstasy would have been forced, if not outright fake. “When does the moment of rupture come?” Although we once might have been tempted to answer, “November 3rd” a more sober reading of *Multitude* makes it abundantly clear that meaningful change is unlikely to be achieved at the ballot box. “The representative is thus, on the one hand, a servant of the represented and, on the other, dedicated to the unity and effectiveness of the sovereign will.” This tension cannot be sustained forever. In the end, representatives must work for the state against their constituents. “In the final analysis only the one can rule. Democracy requires a radical innovation and a new science.”

As *Empire* already indicated, Hardt and Negri lay the foundation for this innovation with the concept of the “multitude,” which they sharply distinguish from traditional means of defining political constituencies such as “classes,” “masses,” or, most broadly, “the people.” Whereas “the people is one,” the multitude, by contrast, “is not unified but remains plural and multiple. This is why, according to the dominant tradition of political philosophy, the people can rule as a sovereign power and the multitude cannot.” Unlike a long line of thinkers in that dominant tradition, however, Hardt and Negri do not regard the multitude’s inability to generate unity as a sign of

weakness. Rather, they question the premise that the body politic must be ruled at all. Instead of presuming that a singular entity, such as the state, makes plural subjects do its bidding, they propose a model in which the distinction between active and passive disappears. “Every sovereign power, in other words, necessarily forms a political body of which there is a head that commands, limbs that obey, and organs that function together to support the ruler. The concept of the multitude challenges this accepted truth of sovereignty. The multitude, although it remains multiple and internally different, is able to act in common and thus rule itself.” Hardt and Negri make this point repeatedly throughout *Multitude*, taking care to distinguish between the illusory self-rule that comes when people cede their power to representatives and the real self-rule that will accompany the abolition of government as we know it. “Rather than a political body with one that commands and others that obey, the multitude is living flesh that rules itself.”

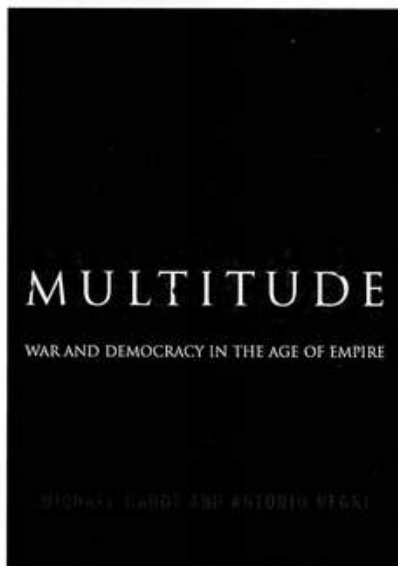
Although Hardt and Negri retain the metaphor of the body politic, they cut off not only its head but other extremities that might take the head’s place as ruler. What is left, significantly, is mere “flesh.” People who have had the time and inclination to read a lot of post-structuralist theory will see an affinity between this idea and the figure of the “body without organs” that runs throughout Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s landmark *Anti-Oedipus*. Given Antonio Negri’s close association with those thinkers—he co-authored *Communists Like Us* with Guattari—the similarity is surely no accident. Although a wide variety of leftist thinkers have talked about the

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"multitude," most notably Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci, the strangeness of the image of "living flesh that rules itself" derives from the aftermath of May 1968, when thinkers were trying to figure out where the movement had gone wrong without reverting to the "right" way of doing things. It was a time of intellectual experimentation as intense as its sexual counterpart. And its legacy has been under ferocious attack ever since.

Maybe this explains why *Multitude* leaves the idea of "living flesh" distressingly abstract. Although Hardt and Negri extend the metaphor at several junctures in their argument, they don't really flesh it out. In fact, the more territory they make it cover, the more transparent it becomes. At the beginning of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Bilbo Baggins explains that his unnaturally long life has left him feeling like butter spread over too much toast. The same could be said of *Multitude's* key metaphor. "We should regard this common social being as a new flesh, amorphous flesh that as yet forms no body. The important question at this point is what kind of body will these singularities form?" Hardt and Negri present two possibilities: it will either be "enlisted in the global



armies at the service of capital," or demonstrate "the power to transform ourselves through historical action and create a new world." But you never get a palpable sense that either sort of body will do the things bodies do—like eat, run, shit, or fuck. Because the earthiness of the body plays such an important role in *Anti-Oedipus*, its absence in *Multitude* seems like an example of ideological closure (in other words, structuring an argument so that only certain conclusions are possible).

More broadly, the relative fleshlessness of the book's "living flesh" under-

scores its principal weakness. Although *Multitude* depends heavily on a few key metaphors, Hardt and Negri rarely push them far enough to provoke readers into making connections between the language of politics and the politics of language. "The organs of the political body are really primarily economic divisions, and thus a critique of political economy is necessary to understand the body's anatomy." The language of this sentence, like so many in *Multitude*, fits seamlessly into the very tradition with which the book seeks to break. It's one thing to argue that "the global political body is not merely a national body grown over-large. It has a new physiology." Making that newness come alive is a task of a different order.

Imagine if, following the inspiration of *Anti-Oedipus*, Hardt and Negri had used passages from literature to reinforce their theoretical points. The concept of "living flesh," for example, becomes a great deal more compelling when illustrated with the famous sketch about the talking asshole in William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*:

Nothing did any good and the asshole said to him: 'It's you who will shut up in the end. Not me. Because we don't need you around here any

more. I can talk and eat and shit.' After that he began waking up in the morning with a transparent jelly like a tadpole's tail all over his mouth. This jelly was what the scientists call un-D.T., Undifferentiated Tissue, which can grow into any kind of flesh on the human body."

The passage is revolting. But there's a reason why that word is the twin of "revolution." Had Hardt and Negri taken the risk, they could have made this point and then moved on to a discussion of stem-cell research, which played such an important role in the recent elections in the United States precisely because so many Americans fear the possibilities latent in "living flesh."

The abstractness of *Multitude* also deprives us of a chance to understand where its authors are coming from. Because the metaphors they do use have been purified to the point where geographic and cultural markers are imperceptible, readers are discouraged from identifying with them as individuals. And that, in turn, has the effect of making their forceful first-person plural seem like an eraser of singularities. Their "we," in short, ends up sounding a lot like the "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union" of the Constitution. To be fair, much of the blame for this perception rests with the nature of Hardt and Negri's co-authorship. Because the two men are separated by so many factors—age, national origin, institutional affiliation—they are always writing across a divide that renders the personal an afterthought.

This is one reason why Negri's *Time for Revolution*, translated into English last year, provides an important counterpoint to *Multitude*. In the introduction to the essay "Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo: Nine Lessons To Myself," he writes, "When I came out of prison ('came out' so to speak, because this story is never ending and hundreds of comrades from the 1970s are still in prison and in exile); when I began once again to frequent (only in the daytime) friends and society (because at

night I see only my prison comrades), I did not want to publish this manuscript." The confession fleshes out the difficult theorizing to follow in a way that an empty rhetorical "we" never could. It demonstrates with brutal efficiency that Negri has paid a steep price for his ideas and reminds us, as part of the bargain, how many other people have paid the highest price of all for theirs. This is a particularly important lesson for readers in the United States, where the state's war on dissent in the 1960s and 1970s was less dramatic than in Europe and where theory was largely an academic matter. Understanding that Negri's intellectual project cost him his freedom makes readers more likely to finish sentences like, "My intention in these lessons is to develop a philosophy of praxis, a materialism of praxis, by insisting on: the dimension of temporality as the ontological fabric of materialism; the affirmative power of being; and the subjectification of becoming."

In addition to facilitating readers' identification with the first-person plural of *Multitude*, Negri's *Time for Revolution* demonstrates the seriousness of philosophical purpose common to both books. Formulations that remain on a largely unquestioned, abstract plane in *Multitude* receive a real workout in *Time for Revolution*. This is especially clear in the book's final section, "Multitudo: Politics," which covers the same territory as Hardt and Negri's volume, but at a much lower altitude. "The articulation that brings together society and State in modernity, cannot be either severed or realized differently. But the postmodern multitude can make it explode by affirming a commonality that does not bow to any equation of sovereignty, exposing it rather to the immeasurability of time." Following Negri's argument here requires considerably more discipline than reading *Multitude*, which is not exactly a summertime beach-blanket novel itself. But readers who have the time to read him slowly will reap ample rewards for their labors. In particular,

Time for Revolution brings out the role that time plays in *Multitude*. "The multitude produces life by taking out an option on the to-come. It is not Power but the constituent power of the multitude that creates the common existence of the world." The dream of true self-rule is predicated on the promise of this "constituent power." Like the potential energy in a rock perched on the edge of a cliff, it cannot be harnessed. And that is precisely the source of its promise. Once the rock falls, its power is gone. So long as it remains at liberty to fall, however, anything is possible.

There is a distinct theological dimension to both *Time for Revolution* and *Multitude*. If the coming of revolution is always projected into the future of the to-come, the present can never be a source of true satisfaction. Perfection, the has-come, becomes another word for death. To keep hope alive, the "living flesh" of the multitude must not rest. Although this conception of time makes intuitive sense—nature isn't static—it can seem distinctly frustrating for anyone interested in making the world a better place. After all, what's the point of trying to build a new political order if it will reproduce the problems of its predecessor? Then again, apathy represents a troubling "perfection" of its own. The person who concludes that it's not worth the effort to act reinforces the status quo as surely as the person who acts to defend it. The challenge, from Hardt and Negri's perspective, is to inspire perpetual restlessness.

At one point in *Time for Revolution*, Negri provides a short list of imperatives for the multitude to bear in mind: "Do not obey, that is be free; do not kill, that is generate; do not exploit, that is constitute the common." Significantly, he does not seem concerned by the apparent paradox of suggesting that people obey an injunction not to obey. There can only be one reason for this: disobedience must be the breeding ground for political good. "In the biopolitical postmodern, 'doing politics' means first of all to resist and

rebel." Negri's favored metaphor for this work is exodus. Our task is to leave the security of order behind. "It is not political representation that can construct the common telos within the multitude, on the contrary, it can only be constructed by taking leave of representation and all the representative institutions in order to install itself in the new common temporalities." But this flight to disorder still produces something. In taking leave we construct "common machines through which men and women stretch out beyond the edge of time." Significantly, it is in making a more accessible version of this point that Hardt and Negri deploy *Multitude's* most compelling metaphor. Following a discussion of open-source programming, they note that it, "does not lead to confusion and wasted energy. It actually works. One approach to understanding the democracy of the multitude, then, is as an open-source society, that is, a society whose source code is revealed so that we can all work collaboratively to solve its bugs and create new, better social programs."

For someone who struggles through a book of *Multitude's* complexity, the implications of this particular metaphor may disappoint. It seems perverse for Hardt and Negri to have ranged so widely through the history of political theory only to trumpet the revolutionary potential of Linux. And yet, as anticlimactic as that conclusion sounds, it is true to the spirit of their theory. Despite all the effort corporations and governments have expended on policing the Internet, it remains a resolutely "headless" commons, where every attempt at imposing order is rapidly undermined by the will to disobey. The open-source community is on the leading edge of all that restlessness. Whether it will prove a viable model for political resistance in an era of retrenchment remains to be seen. But there is more justification for believing in the promise of an open-source society than one that closes the political process behind a curtain of secrecy. □

The Star of Ljubljana

Joe Lockard

■ *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, by Slavoj Zizek. Verso, 2004.

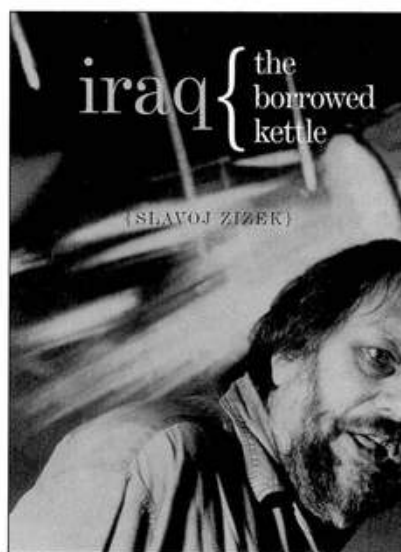
Social theorist Slavoj Zizek has been riding a wave of popularity that might appear difficult to explain. A leading exponent of a psychoanalytic school of thought known as Lacanianism, Zizek has most recently come out in support of reviving the work of Lenin as an intellectual counter-force to global capitalism. Say what? Together with a prose style so dense reading sometimes slows to one page-an-hour, it all should be enough to sink Zizek into permanent obscurity as a mad Slovenian scribbler. And yet, he is the subject of laudatory feature articles in periodicals like the *New Yorker*.

Zizek's star keeps rising over Ljubljana for good reason. Since the collapse of the former Yugoslavia in the early '90s, Zizek has found a way to offer the Euro-American Left a level of

political introspection unavailable in theory-resistant comrades such as Noam Chomsky. A synthesis of psychoanalysis and Marxism constitute the intellectual parameters of his work. Concerned with such subjects as achieving psychological autonomy under capitalism (1993's *Tarrying with the Negative*) and exploring the progressive political potential of Christianity (2000's *The Fragile Absolute*) Zizek has repeatedly confronted current political events as a public philosopher. Thus, it should come as no surprise that he would find much to dissect in the Bush administration's rationalization for the Iraq war.

Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle takes its title from a famous Freudian joke about the logic of inconsistent assertions that prove what they deny. In pointing out that the Bush administration's politics around Iraq are based on denying that its asserted rationales for going to war against Saddam Hussein were ever asserted, Zizek is unchallengeable in suggesting that it is the logic of dreams that should be under discussion. Yet when nearly 70 percent of Americans believe that Saddam Hussein was involved together with al-Qaeda in the September 11 attacks, this is no longer the territory of dream analysis. It is the same American cultural ignorance that does not distinguish between Arab cultures, just as many do not distinguish Chinese from Japanese because they are all "Asians." There is little point in debate: perhaps the better question becomes when do we raise to a reasonable level the legal standard defining idiocy?

This is where the political invocation of moralism becomes a concern—especially the moralistic character of American politics, and how morality is



used for ideological purposes. According to Žižek, “The problem of its [politics] new moral vigor is not just that morality is manipulatively exploited, but that it is directly mobilized; the problem with its appeal to democracy is not that it is simply hypocrisy and external manipulation, but that it directly mobilizes and relies on ‘sincere’ democratic aspirations.” Morality under the Bush administration is not morality in the sense of social fair play; rather, invoking morality has become a politicized mode of illegitimate desire-fulfillment, an expression of Christian evangelical lust for possession of the American body politic. U.S. government domestic surveillance programs, such as the Neighborhood Watch Program, Operation TIPS, and “sneak and peek” searches authorized by the Justice Department, are futile expressions of disciplinary desire over the body public more than effective counter-terror operations.

Žižek argues that these gradual restrictions on civil liberties in the United States are symptoms of an underlying malaise, in which pressures imposed by capitalism are causing the disintegration of the traditional family unit, thus generating a right-wing morality crusade. But this is a campaign that openly emphasizes that only certain privileged classes and nations should have a voice in defining morality and human rights, and the Iraq War is the leading example of the creation of a New Right Order. Anti-globalist politics and international opinion and law—such as Kofi Annan’s condemnation of the war as “illegal,” America’s rejection of International Criminal Court jurisdiction, and self-exemption from the Geneva Conventions—are both excluded from this vision of morality. One response to the attempted imposition of global U.S. market economics, with its moral order, on other countries, as Žižek points out, is the straightforward rejection of “Screw you, Uncle Sam!” Žižek’s response is clearly different.

The Bush administration’s increas-

ingly reactionary distortion of both morality and human rights begs for a radical redefinition of these subjects. Žižek’s contribution in this direction lies in his insistence that such a goal will not be obtained through a liberal invocation of democracy, but rather through the forceful pursuit of democ-

racy as *process*. Žižek’s attraction to Leninism is in the end the attraction of a teacher who wants to employ knowledge and authority to ignite a democratic revolution. If *Iraq: The Broken Kettle* is any indication, Žižek is laying an excellent foundation for this to happen.

—Joe Lockard

Capsule Reviews

- *The European Dream: How Europe’s Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, by Jeremy Rifkin. Penguin, 2004.

Quality of life. Deep play. Sustainability. These ideas are the opposite of “bigger, faster, more,” and represent a mode of life and work posited by critic Jeremy Rifkin in *The European Dream*. Rifkin argues that in our increasingly global world, the American Dream that dominated the twentieth century is becoming outdated. In this “dream,” Americans equate success with individual achievement and accumulation of wealth, and our nation-state’s government is structured accordingly to protect property rights, autonomy, and our specific idea of freedom. Europe already practices a more humane version of capitalism that recognizes that market forces may be unfair, and so need to be balanced toward the common good. And after the formation of the EU, individual nations have ceded some power in exchange for a forward-reaching vision of an economy that will fully serve and support the populace. Europeans “work to live” and Americans “live to work,” and this is deeply rooted in our collective values (secular vs. religious, cosmopolitan vs. patriotic, interdepen-

dent vs. independent). And it is evident that despite shorter work weeks, mandated vacation and maternity leave, and more flexible scheduling, European productivity is rising while America is experiencing a decline.

Rifkin avoids any glorification of Europe, which would be as stereotypically American as our Euro-bashing, and does not denigrate the American worldview either. Rather, he looks at the historical basis of our differences and speculates on the implications of both. In a dichotomous study like Rifkin’s, there can be a tendency toward generalization, especially when it comes to defining what each “mentality” is, but



As corporations gain influence over government while the middle and working classes are demonstrably downwardly mobile, the fall of the American Dream may be inevitable.

the underpinnings of the divergent views on property, efficiency, and privacy are illuminating. Enlightenment ideals were fostered in Europe, but here, combined with the Reformation theology and Utilitarian beliefs of our founders, the New World became a testing ground for pure, unabashed capitalism, which has gone largely unchallenged in U.S. history. But as corporations gain influence over government while the middle and working classes are demonstrably downwardly mobile, the fall of the American Dream may be inevitable. Rifkin acknowledges that there are many factors that may inhibit the European Dream's success, including increasing tension over immigration, low fertility rates, an aging population, and a less optimistic view than their American counterparts. Overall, though, he hopes that this more open view of politics, one that takes civil society into account equally with government and commerce, could bring in a new age of empathy.

—Katje Richstatter

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- *Scream Queens of the Dead Sea*, by Gilad Elbom. Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004.
-

We live in a world that presupposes that the average Israeli is interested in Middle Eastern politics. What if, in fact, he or she was more interested in heavy metal?

That would be Gilad Elbom, the author of *Scream Queens of the Dead Sea*, which is simultaneously a fictionalization of Elbom's post-IDF job at a mental institution and a pastiche of pop culture references as varied as the

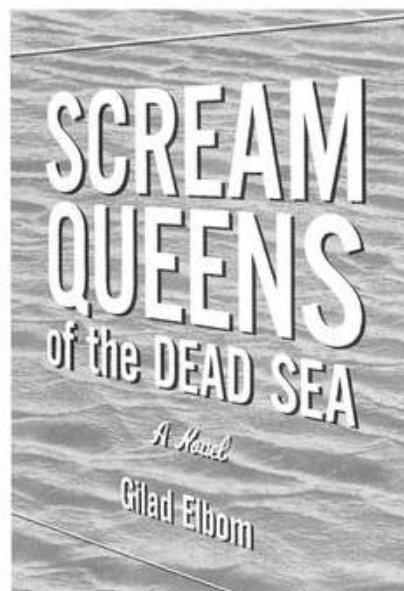
movie *Chasing Amy*, the lyrics of the most recent Cradle of Filth album, and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Using a mental institution as a metaphor for the real world is hardly a new idea. Shakespeare used a variation on this theme in both *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*. Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and its 1975 movie adaptation set a new bar for such stories in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Elbom's weaving of his story around his asylum gig isn't entirely divorced from the reality of Middle East politics.

From the typology of his characters (Elbom's patients include an Arab assassin, a *Falasha* [Ethiopian Jew] immigrant, a man named Ashkenazi, Abe Goldmil who writes pornographic poetry to a fictionalized inamorata, and Uriah Einhorn who used to be paid to sleep until his dreams became too boring), to small toss-offs such as the hitchhiker whose story-with-no-ending Elbom tells. "They wouldn't like that," Elbom says in the novel, when told, "Tell them it doesn't end."

The *matzav* (the Israel/Palestine conflict) infiltrates the novel in less predictable, albeit far more ordinary, ways—relief that a traffic jam is related to an ordinary car accident; or identifying the seriousness of sirens based on how many there are; or calculating the time to leave for work based on whether the daily disaster has already occurred, thereby rendering it safe to go out.

But go out to what? Perhaps that's what's so endearing about *Scream Queens'* obsession with cultural references. The fact that the novel's protagonist—and author—can revel in them in order to make sense of the insanity he confronts, both at work and just be-



cause he is an Israeli, gives the reader a sense that there is indeed reasonable life on the so-called other side. Elbom offers some hope not just for an end to the *matsav*, but for a conclusion to the general insanity of Israeli life, for which Elbom's lunatic asylum serves as such an apt metaphor.

—Cynthia Hoffman

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- *God Willing*, by David Domke. Pluto Press, 2004.
-

In his prologue to *The Prince*, Machiavelli diplomatically uses a metaphor to explain his intimate knowledge of the Italian ruler. As a landscape painter should ascend a hill to have a better view of the valley, conversely, an ordinary man may have a better view of power from his own lowly position. With the Republican administration ushered into office in 2000 on a five-to-four Supreme Court vote, however, such delicacy falls on tin ears; and it is difficult for an author not to convey the impression of being on the hilltop looking down in awe over a corrupt village.

David Domke's *God Willing*, while trying to project a calm, scholarly confidence, needlessly suffers from this an-

BOOK REVIEW

guished moral vertigo. Domke's thesis, however, could keep a rational citizen up at night. The Bush administration, he argues, capitalized on September 11 to establish a new civil religion: "political fundamentalism," the merging of politics with the language and theocratic governing techniques of Christian fundamentalism.

Here's how this happened: First, having an "enemy" allowed the codding of America with a binary mode of thinking generally associated with ignorance or infantilism: good or evil, freedom or fear, with us or against us—patriots or *quibblers*. Second, the Bush administration was allowed to speak the language of urgency, tapping into the apocalyptic suspicion that the *time* is at hand. Third, neo-conservative doctrine had a Puritan gospel (of Liberty) to bring to the nations. Fourth, an insistence on "unity" stifled dissent throughout America—i.e., only through the Son (Me) can you get to the Father (Freedom). Finally, Domke explains how American newsmakers benefited from this crisis mentality, and why they were averse to penetrating it—and this he calls an *echoing press*.

While Domke restates these same

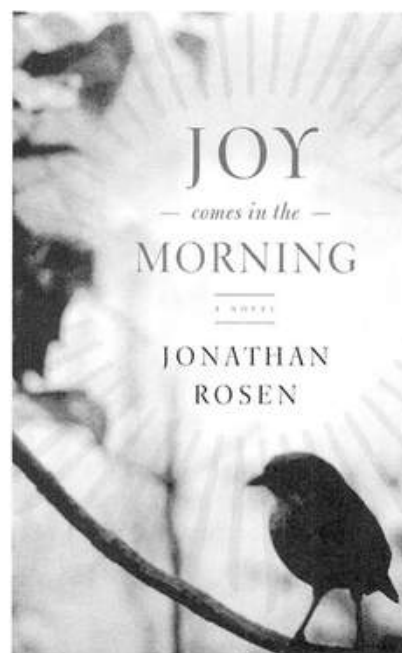
basic points repeatedly, he might have focused on the shrewd neocon secularists behind Bush's curtains. To confuse a front man's delusional persona with his underlying political machine is to fall prey to the same paranoid thinking Domke rightly exposes. After all, religious fundamentalism is a subset of authoritarianism, not the other way around. Meanwhile, "Unity of Message," which Domke portrays as Bush's tactical strength, will be revealed over time, I believe, as his fatal flaw. As Machiavelli warns in his chapter on flatterers, the Prince must not frighten his wise counselors from speaking their mind or he will be deluded and stumble.

—Chaim Bertman

■ *Joy Comes in the Morning*, by Jonathan Rosen. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

Jonathan Rosen's follow-up to his exquisitely lyrical *The Talmud and the Internet* is filled with memorable lines. The title is from Psalm 30, and the book quotes many passages from Torah, Talmud, and Jewish liturgy. But there is also a lovely quote from Philo: "Be kind to those you meet, for everyone is fighting a great battle"—a good line to remember following November's election, and one that might serve as the novel's motto.

Beginning with a failed suicide attempt, *Joy Comes in the Morning* is a love story populated by a web of seekers. It includes a heterosexual romance with ups and downs that keep the plot going, but there's also family love, love of friends, love of strangers, same-sex love, love of Jewish tradition, and love of God, none of which runs smoothly. Rosen's main characters are Henry, whose family died in the Holocaust and who has suffered a debilitating stroke; his weary photographer wife Helen; his commitment-shy science writer son Lev, who at the novel's opening has abandoned his fiancée at

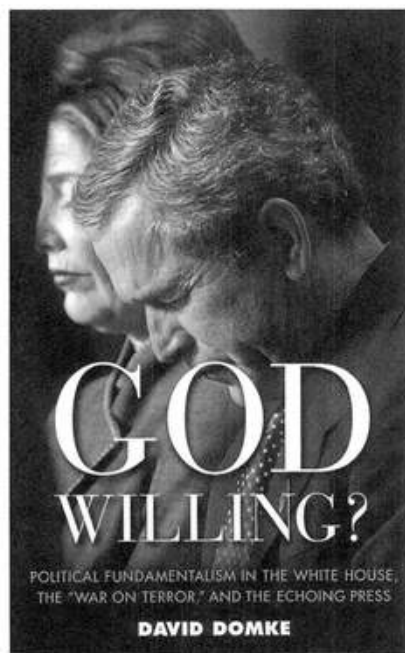


the altar; Lev's paranoid schizophrenic friend Neil; and Rosen's most engaging character, Deborah.

A Reform rabbi with a lovely voice and an equally lovely body and soul, Deborah lays tefillin, keeps kosher, visits the sick, counsels the perplexed, prays ardently, and needs a man. I was initially suspicious of Deborah's sweetness, but her dance with faith and its failures is convincing, especially since Rosen lets her be foul-mouthed on occasion; of a colleague she remarks grumpily that she'd be a better rabbi if her ass wasn't so big. On another occasion she says rabbis are like strippers, baring their religious selves in public. During a conversation with a woman who is furious at god, Deborah tells herself that rabbinical work is like working for a boss that everyone hates.

Mending (mostly Jewish) souls is Rosen's theme, not mending the world of history and politics. The novel takes place in 2000, before the present Intifada. In passing, Henry thinks of Israel both as the miraculous nation and as repellently macho, but this is not a motif Rosen pursues. If he chooses in the future to pursue it, with his skills, he might write a novel that is not just good, but great.

—Alicia Ostriker



Redemption When We Need It Most

Paul Buble

Tony Kushner is well on his way, these days, to becoming one of the great figures in the history of the American dramatic stage. As Broadway continues to fall on hard times with ever-fewer new major productions and more revivals or adaptations (like the morphing of Mel Brooks' *The Producers* into an extravaganza musical), serious dramatic artists are increasingly rare. Kushner is simply our best since Eugene O'Neill or Clifford Odets, with some of the qualities of each—modernism and social commitment rolled up together. All that said, *Angels in America*, which appeared last year as a mini-series adaptation on HBO, is likely to remain Kushner's apex as a popular artist for a long time.

The reasons are not mysterious. This year's Emmys gave more to *Angels* than any mini-series in television history. It bears, in my mind, only three precursors in the medium: *You Are There* (1953-1956), the first "quality" dramatic weekly show on television and one which managed to pose extraordinary questions during the McCarthy Era; *M*A*S*H* (1972-1983), the anti-war classic; and *Roots* (1976), the most incredible dose of African American history ever seen in English language media and the most watched mini-series ever... until *Angels*.

Angels in America is, of course, about death, with a chilling mixture of humor and despair that at some points would be extraordinarily hard to watch if we weren't so completely absorbed in it. Perhaps only the AIDS epidemic—itsself seen by many artists as a re-



fraction of the Holocaust, notwithstanding hateful propaganda about another slaughter of innocents—could have inspired such poignancy.

Angels succeeds in part through its star villain: Roy Cohn, Jewish godfather of McCarthyism (played unforgettably by Al Pacino, an actor born to play in *The Godfather*) and of today's neoconservatism. Kushner pricks those neocons when he brings in Ethel Rosenberg, played by Meryl Streep. Ethel has become almost mythic for neocon writers in journals like *Commentary*, the *New Criterion*, and the *Weekly Standard*, who have endlessly insisted that every Communist bears responsibility for the acts of all Communists, and that Jewish Communists have been traitors two or three times over: to the Deity, America and Jewry. When Kushner puts Ethel at the bed-

side of Cohn, dying of AIDS, we can see the real proportions better.

In what is arguably the most conservative moment of U.S. history since the extermination-minded slaughter of Indian tribes by arrogant slaveholder-president Andrew Jackson, Kushner has thrown not a grenade but a flock of white doves into the room. He won't let hate win. No wonder the television triumph of *Angels* prompted outraged and outrageous attacks in the *New Republic*, that snob's paradise. But Kushner won't let anyone off the hook either—not even the Deity, seen in Gnostic fashion as MIA, who is guilty of failing to protect the innocent.

How heretical can Kushner get? As heretical as any playwright in history (or pre-history, because the "disappointing God" plot happens to be as old as our species). How concrete can he get? Right down to gender struggles, which were for a playwright of the 1980s everything that class struggles were for counterparts like Odets a half-century earlier. Gender, like class, moves the plot. But the characters, the crucial ones, are still Jews. That's something to think about in the continuing wake of a bitterly disappointing election, with results cheered as righteous redemption by right-wing evangelicals and their neoconservative partners, and mourned by the rest of us as a grand hoax. The brilliance of director Mike Nichols (restraining, for once, his own oversized ego), the wonder of the gutsy and glittering performances, the audacity of the production in its six-hour length and special effects—these might momentarily prompt us to forget, for a moment, the fertile mind of the playwright and his magnificent capacity for formulating a troubled but real redemption. □

Paul Buble's most recent work is *From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: Jews in American Popular Culture*. He co-edited, with Nicole Schulman, *Wobblies: A Graphic History*, to appear in the *IWW's* centennial year, 2005.

Making the News

Megan Shaw Prelinger

■ *Control Room*, DVD Edition, Directed by Jehane Noujaim. Lion's Gate Home Entertainment, 2004

Arabic-language news network Al-Jazeera has been a hotly contested entity since it first began broadcasting in 1996. Now reaching over 40 million viewers, this Qatar-based and government-funded broadcaster now rivals CNN and the BBC as one of the most influential television news outlets in the world. Due to the attacks of September 11 and the increasingly strained relations between the United States and the Arab world, Al-Jazeera's status has come under scrutiny—more so in the United States than anywhere else. Famously derided by George W. Bush as “the mouthpiece of Osama bin Laden,” Al-Jazeera has come to be regarded as a distinctly partisan source for news coverage because of its critical treatment of both the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the occupation of Iraq.

“The message of Al-Jazeera is education: to educate the Arab masses about democracy and respect for other opinions. Free debate, no taboos, to shake up these rigid societies.” So says Samir Khader, a senior producer at Al-Jazeera who yearns to send his children to America so they can exchange the “the Arab nightmare for the American dream.”

Khader's idealism about Al-Jazeera's role in the Arab world sets the tone for *Control Room*. Under his production direction, Al-Jazeera hosts world leaders and analysts from all over. In the

supplemental narrative track on the recently released DVD version of the documentary, the film's Egyptian-American director, Jehane Noujaim, points out that while Al-Jazeera is reviled in the West, in the Arab world it is held in similar discontent as a “mouthpiece of Zionism” because it occasionally hosts Israeli leaders and commentators as guests.

Noujaim believes that Al-Jazeera is more powerful than any single Middle Eastern head of state and credits it with changing the nature of political dialogue in the Arab world. That helps explain why the channel has been banned in ten Arab nations, although its banning does not seem to have lessened its impact on peoples' lives. Satellite television has brought the outside world to even the most remote Bedouins, and for the Arab world to have its own independent media channel has awakened many people to a range of ideas and perspectives that had no other point of entry.

This is not to say that Al-Jazeera's news reporting is without any political agenda. But as this film deftly illustrates, telling the story of world events always involves production in the broadest sense of the word. *Control Room* creates a scenario where conflicting interpretations of the war in Iraq directly intersect. Within this setting, the filmmakers give spokespeople from Al-Jazeera and from the U.S. Marines the opportunity to engage one another in a rare dialogue about their respective representations of the conflict. In doing so, *Control Room* allows its audience to form their own independent judgments

about the relationship between journalism and politics. Al-Jazeera's bias is clearly at issue, but so is that of the U.S. military's Central Command.

Thus, some of the revelations in *Control Room* will be surprising to American audiences. In one scene, as Al-Jazeera producer Hassan Ibrahim—one of the documentary's pivotal characters—runs into a BBC reporter who recognizes him from England and asks him where he works now. “Al-Jazeera,” he replies. “Of course,” says the British journalist. “Why ‘Of course’?” Ibrahim asks. “Because everyone who works for the BBC eventually ends up working for Al-Jazeera.”

That Al-Jazeera employees speak English to one another on the job is another in the series of surprises in the movie that, had they been staged or inserted into a drama, would have seemed impossible. Instead, because *Control Room* is a documentary-*verité* of the most natural and relaxed kind, the contradictions that arise convince viewers of their truth-value in a subtly subcutaneous fashion. And because the film is artfully edited and its story compellingly told, the viewer's shift in consciousness seems inevitable.

One of the film's central characters is American Marine Captain Josh Rushing, the Press Officer at the Coalition Central Command (CentCom), the media headquarters of which are fifteen miles from the Al-Jazeera production facility in Doha. In some of the most evocative scenes in the movie, Rushing has a heart-to-heart conversation with Hassan Ibrahim about Arab and American mutual misunderstanding. Ibrahim, whose wife, Cathy Green, has lived in Jerusalem and speaks Hebrew, articulates to Rushing that when Arabs see American-made

Megan Shaw Prelinger is a writer and wildlife rehabilitator in San Francisco. She is a partner in the Prelinger Archives, and moonlights as an outsider librarian. Her projects are online at www.prelinger.net.

helicopters employed by Israelis against Palestinians, that conflict is elided with the current American invasion of Iraq. Rushing, playing the role of the well-intentioned but under-informed American, graciously, if not easily, adjusts his worldview to accommodate this information.

Rushing isn't playing a fictitious role. The verité camera captures him in the process of arriving, step by step, at a new and broader consciousness of the Arab perspective on the entire American-Iraq war and its many contingencies. Noujaim's many interviews with him make this transition palpable and believable. Most importantly, Rushing's process of self-education is portrayed as worthy of respect, and he is taken seriously throughout the film as his perspective changes. In his commentary on the DVD audio track, Rushing makes clear that he might not have been so self-revelatory had he realized that the film would receive such wide exposure. When the film was released, he was put under a gag order by the military that prohibited him from talking about the movie until he was discharged from the service.

Throughout the film, Ibrahim, Khader, and Rushing each grapple with the core issue of *Control Room*: the role that the media plays in constructing public experience of the war. For each of them, their role in shaping the media representation of the conflict is constantly in play with their own personal process of coming to terms with it. Rushing is the character who changes the most over the course of the movie. Because he is the one with whom most American viewers will identify, the series of ethical and political revelations that he unfolds configure our viewing response to the movie. This guarantees that *Control Room* will move American audiences through a potent range of ideas about Al-Jazeera, war, and state propaganda.

Control Room also demonstrates how reporting can drive experience, even in war. For example, the fact that an Al-Jazeera reporter, Tarek Ayyoub,

was killed moments after being on camera increases the profile of his killing and magnifies its intensity for his co-workers and for the Iraqi public. Later, in response to a challenge by Ibrahim, Rushing defends the U.S. bombing of Baghdad, pointing out that the United States' devastation of the Iraqi capital is minimal compared to the Anglo-American carpet-bombing of European cities during the Second World War. But Ibrahim makes it clear to him that since Vietnam, the presence of news media in the battlefield has changed the ethical parameters by which combat is judged.

The episode of Rushing's career that began in *Control Room* has continued to evolve beyond the end of the film. After it was released, Rushing was repeatedly asked by the U.S. media to comment on it, though the Marines refused to allow him to do so. In an interview on NPR's *Fresh Air* in October, Rushing explained that he felt that the Marines' organizational

inability to process the complexity of his situation rendered them unable to act in a positive way on the opportunities it presented. Now Rushing is a vocal advocate for Al-Jazeera, and feels very strongly that the United States should take it more seriously and not block Al-Jazeera from access to information. He ultimately felt that the Marines' inadequate response to *Control Room* reflected poorly on them as an organization, and, although he had been a lifelong military man, he quit.

Rushing's resignation from the military marks an "end" to the *Control Room* that can't be seen in the movie. However, it stands as a remarkable vindication of Al-Jazeera's ability to serve as a window to the truth at a time when American media has never been more subject to government control. Along with *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Control Room* stands out as a crucial testimony to the fact that there are media-makers in the West who are resisting this trend. □



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Radical Jewish Culture: John Zorn's Tzadik Label

Ron Nachmann

Throughout his twenty-five-year career as a musician, producer and owner of the esteemed Tzadik record label, New York saxophonist and composer John Zorn has forged a hugely eclectic and uncompromising canon of music. Working with a global network of musicians to fold aspects of world music, cartoon soundtracks, and hardcore punk into an aesthetic based on the compositional freedom of jazz, Zorn has made his greatest contribution to Jewish music by questioning everything we think we know about it. What exactly *is* Jewish music? Is it klezmer, pop, or *musique concrète*? Is it music simply made by Jews, or is there an intrinsically Jewish musical aesthetic?

Radical Jewish Culture (RJC), a series of over 100 releases by artists selected by Zorn for Tzadik, both asks and answers these questions with each release. Yes, it's klezmer, but in keeping with the purest spirit of that music, it ignores boundaries in the purest spirit of that music—which itself blends gypsy music, Eastern European folk, and American jazz, among other influences. Listen to clarinetist David Krakauer's daring RJC album *Klezmer Madness*, and you hear tradition expanded in the most imaginative of ways.

Yes, it's also simply music made by Jews. The RJC series itself contains a sub-series of tribute albums called Great Jewish Music. Those albums mostly spotlight popular songwriters



like American pop icon Burt Bacharach, French chanteur Serge Gainsbourg, and English glam-rocker Marc Bolan (of T. Rex) (whose Jewish identity has been largely invisible) with covers of their songs by Tzadik artists and other associated Jewish avant-garde and punk musicians.

And yes, Zorn seems to say that there exists an intrinsically Jewish musical aesthetic, one that above all values confrontation, risk, and diversity. Zorn fleshed out the RJC agenda in 1993 with his own provocatively themed album *Kristallnacht*, named after the night of Nazi attacks on German Jews in 1938 that catalyzed

the Final Solution. Alongside the album's dogged, jazz-rooted avant-klezmer stood the terrifying twelve-minute piece "Never Again," a sound interpretation of Kristallnacht itself. Building on both incidental human sounds (Jewish liturgical singing, a solitary bell ringing) and the overwhelming white noise created by layered recordings of screams and broken glass, Zorn viscerally represents a moment of Jewish life being swallowed up by terror.

Over the last decade, RJC has proven a hugely eclectic series, encompassing everything from the compelling noise of ritual percussionist Z'ev, the Cuban-Jewish jazz of Roberto Rodriguez, the Jewish reggae of David Gould, and the Sephardic and Arabic

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folk textures of Pharoah's Daughter.

RJC also includes releases by Zorn's dynamic avant-klezmer quartet, Masada, which he surrounds with references to an uncompromising and iconoclastic sense of Judaism. Each album in the Masada series is dedicated to Asher Ginsburg, also known as Achad Ha'am, the early twentieth-century cultural Zionist who broke from mainstream Zionism. Masada's music, which injects klezmer's richness with a bold, free-jazz spirit, typifies the depth of RJC's musical ideology.

Radical Jewish Culture's daring and direct sense of sonic eclecticism reflects the kind of cultural trait that compelled Arthur Hertzberg to call the Jews "sophisticated bedouins." In fact, in *Jews: The Essence and Character of a People*, Hertzberg summarizes what might be the RJC manifesto: "Tidy categories that may work for other people do not fit the profile of the Jews—that is what makes us so interesting, and so unsettling to others."

Zorn has given various personal reasons for gradually embracing Jewish themes in his work, including his experience of anti-Semitism while traveling in Germany, the death of his father, and his realization that most of his musician friends are Jewish. But the effects of that embrace are equally important. By sincerely absorbing cultural Judaism into his life and work as a respected, radical jazz explorer in the post-punk era, Zorn has inspired a generation of Jewish postmodern culture workers to consider what Jewish music and, by extension, Jewish life means to them.

Can the politically progressive Jewish community as a whole take a daring cue from Zorn as his music carries our culture into the heart of the twenty-first century? Like most of the questions that Zorn's work raises, that question's tough—but not half as tough as Zorn's resolve to keep pushing himself and his fellow musicians forward as creators of gutsy, inspired Jewish music.

Capsule Reviews

■ *The Kathmandu Sessions*, by Danny Ben-Israel. Locust Music, 2004.

It's safe to say that by the time Tel Aviv-raised Danny Ben-Israel returned to Israel in 1969 from a journey through Europe, he had a definite direction in mind: out there. A former house musician for the Israel Defense Forces, Ben-Israel unpacked his experiences with sex, drugs, and communal living, assembled a band featuring guitarist Shlomo Mizrahi (known as "the Israeli Jimi Hendrix"), and recorded *Chantari'sh* 3 1/4, Israel's first psychedelic protest album.

The Kathmandu Sessions is a collection of the English-language songs that Ben-Israel recorded following *Chantari'sh*, tracks that didn't see the light of day before the small American label that was set to release them went belly-up. As such, they represent a stunning historical document of the Israeli hippie scene.

With all their sound effects and funky rhythms, these sessions reflect the joyous hunger for freedom that characterizes great primitive psychedelia. Album-opener "Kathmandu," was inspired by tales about the availability of free hash in the Nepalese capital. It's an extended, Doors-like journey with wonderfully quaint moments, such as Ben-Israel ordering the band to "freak out" and Mizrahi plucking out "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in the middle of the groove. Such playfulness resonates in the freeform sound exploration "Seagulls"—all whoop-flutes and lines from "My Yiddishe Mama."

But not all is groovy. Recorded by Ben-Israel on his own two years later, *Kathmandu's* last track roots itself in the bitter prescience of its title: "The Hippies of Today are the Assholes of Tomorrow." A mournful thirteen-minute jam centered around Ben-



Israel's spoken word observations that "the righteous of today are the bigots of tomorrow," "Hippies..." seems absolutely prophetic in hindsight, considering the influx of American Jewish hippies to the settler movement during the early 70s.

As his last name suggests, Ben-Israel is indeed a son of Israel circa 1970: an illuminated, acid-jagged kid wandering through the psyche of an ancient-modern state that's only slightly older than him—a country sorting through its own secular and religious mythologies, headily caught up in its own newly realized military potency and grappling with what it means to have become an occupying power. Think of *Kathmandu Sessions* as the poignant audio diary of an artist who not only sought to go "out there" but—both musically and sociopolitically—simply wanted out. —RN

■ *Trust Not Those In Whom Without Some Touch of Madness*, by Thalia Zedek. Thrill Jockey, 2004.

Since Biblical times, Jews have been expert at singing *kinot*, or dirges. Indeed, some scholars point to the somewhat mournful tone of "Hatikvah," Israel's national anthem, as indicative of Jewish affinity for melancholy music. Modern North-

American Jewish singer/songwriters like Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, and Leonard Cohen have expanded on the tendency, crooning bleak, existential tales to an empire stuck in party mode. Add to that list underground rock veteran Thalia Zedek, whose third solo album, *Trust Not Those in Whom Without Some Touch of Madness*, proves her a top innovator of the sad song.

While Zedek—the daughter of central European immigrants—publicly cites punk godmother Patti Smith as her primary inspiration, her connections with her forebears run deeper than just covering some of their songs on her previous albums. On *Madness*, as in her previous solo work, the singer/guitarist channels Dylan with her nasal, androgynous voice, Cohen with her longing lyrics and dolorous waltz rhythms, and Reed's Velvet Underground with the predominant violin and occasional bursts of noise.

But *Madness* also finds Zedek confidently synthesizing those elements into her own unique craft. Before going solo, Zedek fronted widely respected Boston and New York underground bands like Uzi, Live Skull, and Come. Each of them provided morose and often jarring instrumentation behind Zedek's passionate vocals and vulnerable lyrics, which reflected the turmoil of her relationship and substance abuse problems. Now, following a 2001 debut, *Been Here and Gone*, that saw her wander between torch songs, folk, blues, and rock, *Madness* settles Zedek and her

trio into yearning folk-rock waltzes.

Although Zedek's lyrics don't explicitly invoke death, they brim with loss and leaving, whether it's a girlfriend leaving her in the bluesy "Bus Stop," or her leaving a metaphorical sibling in the spiritualized "Brother." But all is not emptiness—Zedek also sings of angels, sirens, even a marching band, among other signs of life and possibility. "Though you've got a soul/can it breathe on its own?" she queries in "Bone," after pleading, "Try to find/your special hand in the darkness" in "Evil Hand." As her brothers Bob, Leonard, and Lou have before her, Zedek seeks redemption and reaches ever closer to it with this sublime set of poignant pieces.

■ *Ein Shalom*, Yom Tsahov.
Miklataklitim (Israel), 2004.

Despite Israel's lamentable political situation, its multifaceted underground music scene seems to be exploding—especially its electronic music milieu. Humming just under the monotonous thumping of Israel's famously hedonistic techno-trance scene has been a growing group of small, digitally oriented labels and artists that share more adventurous and substantive tastes. One of those labels, the Jerusalem-based Miklataklitim, has released Yom Tsahov's *Ein Shalom*, one of many Israeli electronica albums that subtly reflects how far the country's future-music scene has come.

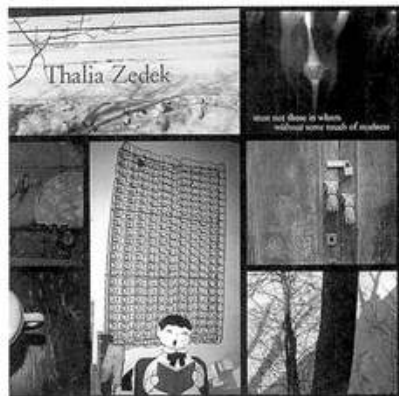
Comprising producer/Miklataklitim founder Alon Liebman and singer Avigail Gelehrter, Yom Tsahov have managed to inject an essentialized politics into their sound without pounding the listener over the head with any explicit dogma. Liebman's artist profile on the Miklataklitim website may variously describe him as an "anarchist" and "hard line critic," but there are no teeth-gnashing rants against the government on this release—just an



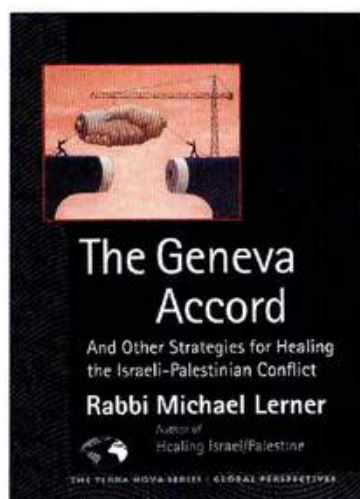
intimate, human reflection of a society in seemingly perpetual angst.

As straightforwardly as its title translates, *Ein Shalom* (No Peace) offers moments both quietly reflective and sonically confrontational. The short, album-opening title track is simply made up of Gelehrter's wordless vocals, which Liebman digitally distorts and overdubs onto itself, creating a poignant foundation for the soundscapes that he later offers up as accompaniment. Throughout the album, those arrangements range from desolate plucked acoustic and electric guitar notes to clanging metal percussion, along with chugging dub-style percussion and crunching electronic echo loops.

On their own, Yom Tsahov's loose and sophisticated song structures are compelling enough, and measure up to much of what the rest of the Western world's electronic music scenes have to offer. But, of course, it is context that makes this material truly soar. According to Liebman's liner notes, *Ein Shalom* is shot through with field recordings, including sounds from the separation wall area in Jerusalem, and the existential musings of an unidentified male in Hebrew. While these features don't stand out in a classically agitprop sense, they do create a quietly disturbed and heartbroken atmosphere—a place that cries for hope amidst the despair. Along with the rest of Miklataklitim's catalogue of releases, *Ein Shalom* is available in its entirety for free download at www.miklataklitim.com. —RN



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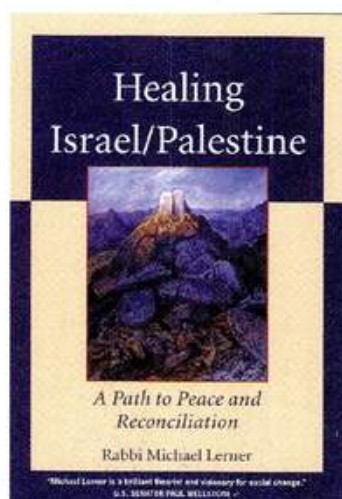


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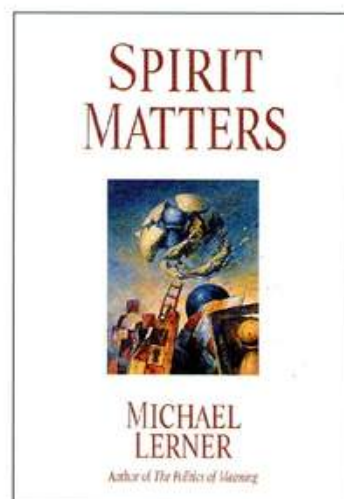


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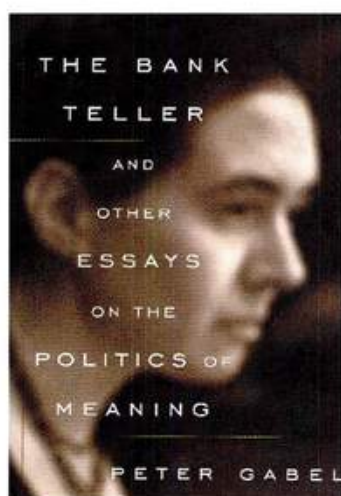


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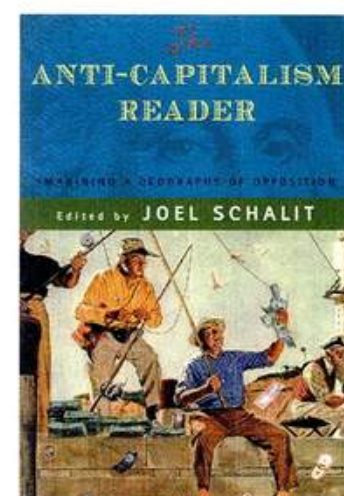
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