

A Critique of Politics, Culture & Society

TIKKUN

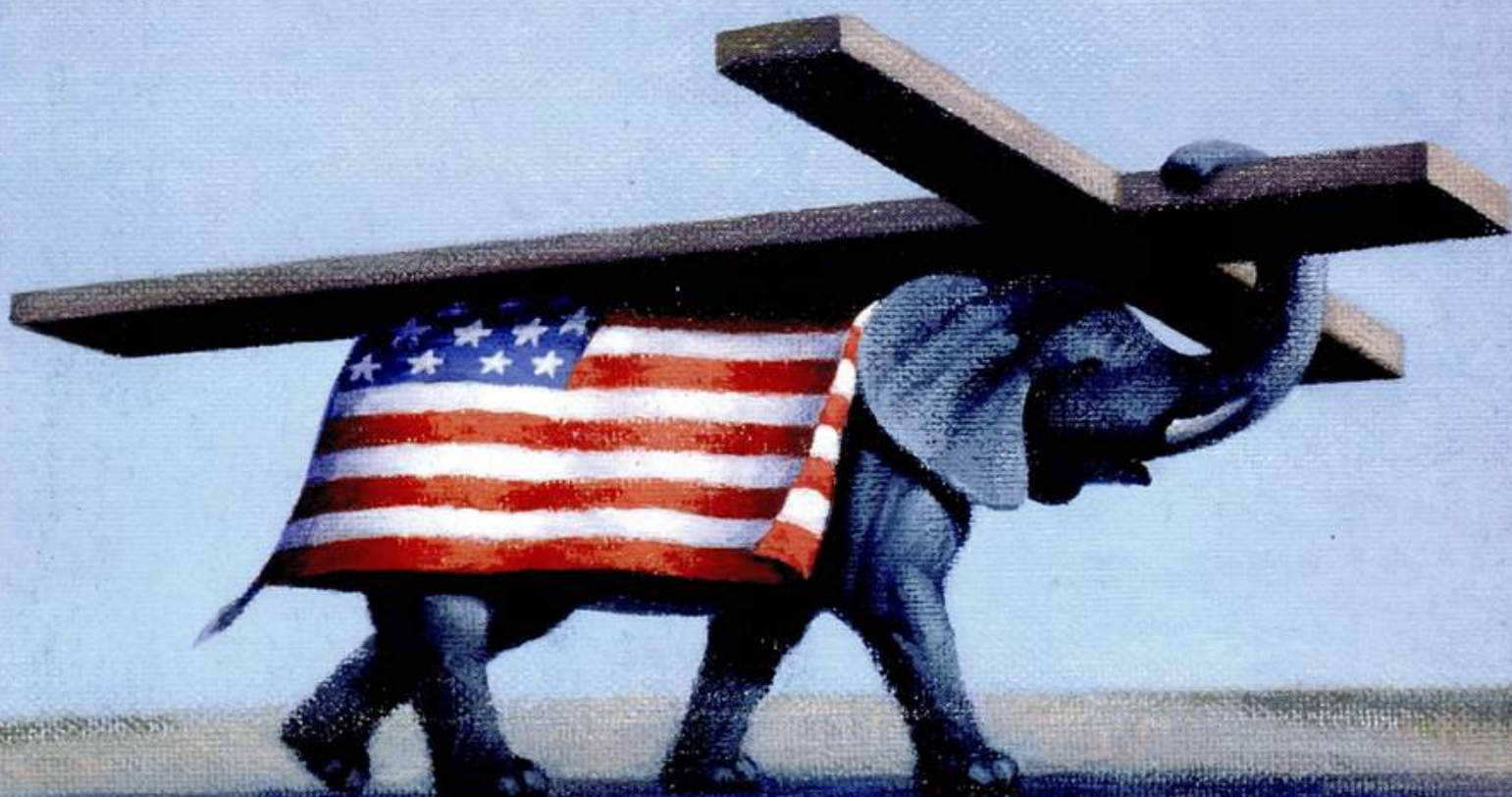
(te•kün) To mend, repair, and transform the world.

The End of the Melting Pot
Robert Pinsky's David
Learning to Love Sharon

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

THEOCRACY IN AMERICA

Hostile Takeover



\$5.95 U.S. \$7.95 Canada



Network of Spiritual Progressives Founding Conference II

VAN JONES | REBECCA SOLNIT | C. WELTON GADDY | RIANE EISLER
FRITJOF CAPRA | BYRON WILLIAMS | DAVID ROBINSON | JOHN DEAR

TO THE SEA AT CADIZ

Tonight the land wind,
the Terral, works into the face
of the waves, spilling them back
one after another until music—
a wordless humming—rises
toward a moon that barely is.
On the run from a war not his,
my father arrived in the autumn
of 1919 and found a moon
here, full and promising,
and the wind blasting the sea's
breath into his lungs. Did
he think he could redeem
the lost years, did he weigh
his chances only to find water
in one hand, salt in the other?
I know he never returned.
He swapped forged passports
with an American and began
a life flogging Kosher table goods
in the Tri-state territories, married,
fathered three sons and died
in his thirties. Now I'm here
to beg the air to calm down,
the waves to freeze, the moon
to settle into the black waters.
Why? So I can be heard
by someone? Thirty-five years ago
in the high Sierras I asked

the wind-filled mountain oaks
to hold their breath long enough
for my words to return to me
as answered prayers. Overhead
an indifferent winter sun went
on falling below the coastal peaks
while the earth turned toward
other obligations. I came
down slowly, in no way smarter
than before. If my father were
here now he'd laugh to learn
a son with twice his years and half
his wits retraced all the wrong
steps to this sea and this night.
A single gull—my totem tonight—
circles above, lost or impatient,
to tell me another morning's on
the way with its gaudy light shows,
its cool new winds from the west,
its dawn songs, rumbling dirges,
their lyrics in the old language
of water, salt, and battered breath.

—Philip Levine

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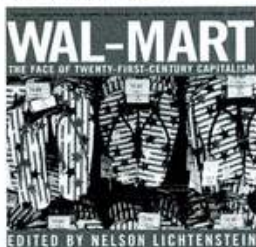
Sikkum

TIKKUN RECOMMENDS...

WAL-MART: THE FACE OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CAPITALISM

Edited by Nelson Lichtenstein, New Press, 2006

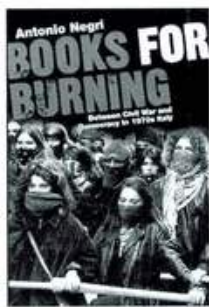
For many Americans, Wal-Mart has become as much a synonym for evil as Osama bin Laden is. Hostile to unions, notorious for its use (and abuse) of migrant workers, repeatedly cited for charging its staff exorbitant healthcare costs and systematically discriminating against its female employees, Wal-Mart is a corporate PR firm's worst nightmare. Yet, it is also the world's biggest corporation, and has had a tremendous impact on the global economy. Edited by eminent labor historian Nelson Lichtenstein, *Wal-Mart* is the widest-ranging collection of writings to date analyzing the political, cultural, and sociological significance of a firm that epitomizes twenty-first-century capitalism.



BOOKS FOR BURNING: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy

Antonio Negri, Verso, 2005

Empire, the brilliantly timed 2001 treatise on the possibilities for political liberation in the era of globalization, took the world by storm. Co-authored by imprisoned Italian philosopher Antonio Negri and Duke University's Michael Hardt, *Empire* decisively placed Negri in the international Left's canon of must-read theoreticians. Prior to *Empire*'s publication, however, Negri had already amassed a significant collection of original political writings. *Books for Burning* assembles the five controversial pamphlets on the new character of class struggle in the 1970s that the Italian government later used as a pretext to falsely brand Negri a terrorist and send him to jail.



CHAVEZ: An Interview with Hugo Chavez

Aleida Guevara, Ocean Press, 2005

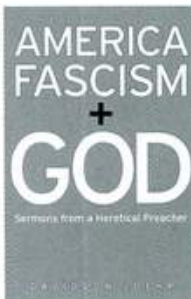
Pat Robertson's favorite Latin American political leader returns to the United States in this eye-opening series of interviews. Conducted by (who else?) Che Guevara's daughter, activist Aleida Guevara, *Chavez* transcends the usual in-group feel-good character of a movement publication by giving voice to Chavez's remarkably eclectic and consistent intellectual apparatus. A self-described "Bolivarian" revolutionary, the Venezuelan President comes across as something akin to a socialist philosopher king, casually invoking terms like neoliberalism while discussing everything from his life story and the collapse of the former USSR to the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.



AMERICA, FASCISM AND GOD: Sermons from a Heretical Preacher

Davidson Loehr, Chelsea Green, 2005

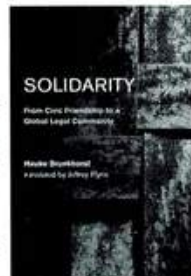
Some might say that we are living in a post-democratic age. Caught between the vice grips of an ever-expanding free market, resurgent corporatism, and religious fundamentalism, democratic politics have never appeared to be so on the defensive. Reading the results of the 2004 Presidential elections, Unitarian Minister Davidson Loehr concludes that the United States has deteriorated into a fascist state, because it is now ruled by a coalition of business, religious, and cultural conservatives making all of the classic goose-stepping moves. *America, Fascism and God* is an impassioned critique of this (old) new status quo, written by one of the South's leading religious progressives.



SOLIDARITY: From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community

Hauke Brunkhorst, MIT Press, 2005

One of the most frequent complaints about the contemporary Left is that it tends to leave discussions about the importance of community to social conservatives. The problem, however, is one of translation. Whenever progressives talk about a shared sense of belonging, they tend to cast it in political language, employing terms such as "solidarity" instead of "community." Examining the new protest movements that have arisen in response to globalization, German sociologist Horst Brunkhorst finds an emerging form of transnational community that could serve as the foundation for a new democratic international order. According to Jurgen Habermas, Brunkhorst not only explains that it's an absolute necessity, but makes it comprehensible as well.



JEWISH HIGH SOCIETY IN OLD REGIME BERLIN

Deborah Hertz, Syracuse University Press, 2005

The first paperback edition of Hertz's 1988 landmark study of German Jewry, *Jewish High Society*, does not disappoint. Focusing on the gatherings of Berlin's intellectual elite in Jewish salons between 1780 and 1806, Hertz provides a compelling portrait of the city's nascent multiculturalism during the Enlightenment. As Jews struggled for emancipation, salons proved to be the ideal space to symbolically rehearse social equality. Focusing specifically on the role that Jewish hostesses played in these events, Hertz emphasizes the underappreciated role that women played in advancing the civil rights of Germany's Jewish community during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.



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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

In Shai Ginsburg's review of *Atash*, [TIKKUN, November/December, 2005], he briefly notes that Abu Shukri moved his family from their little town in Israel to an abandoned army installation in a desolate valley. What was the scandal? Abu Shukri's daughter had become friendly with a young man visiting home before returning to his university studies. Some, perhaps jealous of her, had called her a "whore." Not unusual in a society in which medieval customs still demand the killing of a woman suspected of any sexual contact outside wedlock in order to save a family's honor. But this was Israel, not Saudi Arabia. Did her father have the guts to face off with those maligning his daughter because of an innocent friendship? He did not kill her, but [instead] chose to take himself and his entire family into perpetual exile.

We might say that Abu Shukri accepted the values of his society, but pleaded for commutation of the death sentence to exile because he loved his



child. The townfolk gave their tacit approval; otherwise his son could not go to school—whenever he manages to escape from tending the charcoal preparation under his father's watchful eye.

In his review, Ginsburg attempts to

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invoke the relationship between the Israeli army and political system and Israel's Arab citizens in the film's events, even though there is not a single encounter between any Israeli authorities and Abu Shukri. [Instead,] Ginsburg notes Israel's powerful presence—not in the West Bank or in Gaza, but in its own territory. What else should he expect? Given that powerful presence, are the authorities really unaware of Abu Shukri's illegal presence at the installation? In a country where water is metered carefully, can one really have a contractor installing an illegal waterline unobserved?

The truth may be that Israeli authorities [are] well-informed about Abu Shukri and his family; that they know the circumstances that make them squat in desolation for ten years; that they take pity on his situation and thus turn a blind eye to his illegal wood cutting and water stealing so as not to add to his misery. Surely Ginsburg is aware of that, but it is not (God forbid) mentioned in the movie. Then one couldn't blame Israel, even obliquely, could one?

After seeing *Atash* in Israel last June, my hope was that the film would be brought to the U.S.A. in order to show what kind of mentalities Israel remains up against amongst its own Arab citizens, fifty-seven years after the state's creation.

ALBERT A. FELDMANN
Seattle, Washington

Shai Ginsburg responds:

Thank you for your letter regarding my review of *Atash*. I read your comments with great interest. I am also extremely pleased that it is going to be released in the United States, even if at limited venues. I believe that this is a unique film that deals with issues of violence within families, as well as political violence, in an extraordinarily nuanced way.

It is not clear from the movie whether anyone actually threatened to kill Abu Shukri's daughter Jamila following her illicit affair, or whether the town people harassed her. It is, therefore, very difficult to evaluate and judge the behavior of the father. Does Abu Shukri withdraw his family from the village to protect his children? To escape harm? Because he cannot face the injury to his reputation? Or, because he himself is erotically attracted to his daughter and

wants to save her for himself—as a couple of scenes actually suggest? Unfortunately, the mentality that chases the family away from the village is not unique to Palestinian communities in Israel. It is shared by some Jewish-Israeli communities as well.

I agree with you (and stated so in my review) that there is no explicit encounter between the Palestinian characters and Israeli authorities. It is important to note, however, that the film never tells us whether the authorities are aware of the presence of Abu Shukri and his family in the military outpost. It seems, in fact, that the film is not interested in the authorities. Rather, the film focuses on the reaction of the Palestinian characters to the Israeli presence and to the fear (justified or not) that it instills in them. It should further be noted that *Atash* is explicit about the fact that the land on which the military outpost was constructed and which Abu Shukri and his family now occupy, once belonged to the Palestinian residents of the village, that it was confiscated from them, and that it was not returned even after the outpost was deserted.

In my review, I suggested that the marks of violence that scar the outpost and that mark the Israeli presence for Abu Shukri and his family not only make up the physical environment of Abu Shukri and his family, but also, therefore, mold their physical and mental lives as well.

I hope that these remarks clarify any misunderstandings about my review. Once again, thank you for your comments.

To the Editor:

I read TIKKUN's High Holiday Supplement [September/October, 2005], and Rabbi Lerner's prayer asking for forgiveness for the wars that the U.S. and Israel supports. My association with the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur is the Yom Kippur War. I served as a tank commander in the Golan Heights. For those not familiar, in October 1973, Syria and Egypt attacked Israeli forces in the occupied Golan and Sinai desert. In recent years I thought that I [had] ridden myself of this ghost. But it came back with the Iraq war.

Israel first took over the Golan Heights in the 1967 Six Day War. There was no Syrian aggression, although Israel claimed that the Syrians were

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shooting at Israeli villages, a myth that served as a pretext for war, but was later refuted by Moshe Dayan in his memoir: "We would send a tractor to plow some place of no value, in the demilitarized zone, knowing ahead of time that the Syrians would begin to shoot. If they did not start shooting, we would tell the tractor to keep going forward, until the Syrians in the end would get nervous and start shooting. And then we would start firing artillery, and later also the air force and this was the way it was."

Why did Israel want the Golan? The soil is excellent, especially for wine growing. By sitting on the Golan, Israel could control the local water resources.

At the time of the Yom Kippur War, Golda Meir was Israel's Prime Minister. She shared Bush's primitive, brutal mentality: that the opponent to your policy is your enemy, and your enemy are the Arabs. [Paving the way for the war,] Meir had rejected a peace offer by Egypt's President, Anwar Sadat. So, knowing well that Israelis only understand force, Egypt and Syria attacked us.

There is nothing special to tell about this superfluous conflict. All wars are alike. They killed us and we killed them. I hope that I didn't kill too many people, but I don't know. I just hit tanks, and I have no idea what happened inside. I didn't hate the Syrians. They were young and naive, like us. But I also hated Golda and the apathetic Israelis that didn't prevent the Yom Kippur War. About 4,000 Israelis soldiers died. Their deaths were glorified, and we were considered the saviors of Israel. [However,] this is all nonsense.

Throughout history, leaders have glorified wars and given them meaning. The Yom Kippur War was no exception. Israeli soldiers died for no noble cause, just like American soldiers are dying in Iraq today. As the *New York Times's* Bob Herbert put it: "You never want to say that brave troops in Iraq died for the mindless fantasies spun by a gang of inept politicians. But what else did they die for?"

Militarily speaking we [won the] Yom Kippur War; we killed more of them than they killed of us, and we "saved" the Golan. However, the only beneficiaries of our fight were the settlers that are still making a nice profit from the Occupation, just as the only beneficiaries from the Iraq war are the parasites and vultures that take advan-

Celebration of the trees

The new year of the trees
comes too early for any trees
here even to bud. Their bare
bones still scrape the sky.
Yet on mild days the sap rises.

And the sap is rising in the trunk
of the year, slowly, as in our
lives: days are perceptibly longer.
The light does not slant at noon
reddened through the pines.

In the creek, water laps
at the ceiling of ice. Finches
are growing their bright mating
plumage. The white wine
of winter mixes with the red

wine of spring. We eat what
fruits we can shipped from
South America, dried, sugared

—celebrating with the trees
what is moving within us.

Shall we care for the trees
fountaining from the earth?
Shall we respect the forests
or burn them for cropland,
clearcut them for profit?

We are sawing down the tree
of life, cutting into its green
vitals. We live like bad
parasites who kill their host
dying with her in ignorance.

Let us bless the trees we
still have bursting upwards
promising green caves of summer
red torrents of fall, now only
waking to stretch out their roots.

—Marge Piercy

tage of the worst deficiencies of human nature: conformity and fear, the parents of blind patriotism.

This is how I see it.

JOSHUA ASHENBERG
Acton, Massachusetts

Editor Replies:

A beautiful statement, Joshua. I'm extremely grateful that our High Holiday supplement inspired you to get in touch and share your story with us. I'm also in agreement with your analysis of the 1973 war. Based on the historical research available us today, there is enough information to conclude that the conflict might have been avoided. Let us continue to make Teshuvah for what happened as you do.

G'mar Chativah Tovah.

ERRATUM

When Israeli poet Dahlia Ravikovitch died last August, it was widely reported that she had committed suicide. In our November/December issue, Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld's article, "The Bell Jar Shatters," made this claim as well. It has since been established by autopsy that Ravikovitch died as a result of heart failure.

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Current Thinking

Evolution and Science Under Attack

Spiritual progressives can easily align with liberal secularists to oppose attempts to teach alternatives to the theory of evolution in science courses. The Religious Right's agenda is transparent: to reintroduce the biblical story of creation as an alternative scientific explanation of the universe. Happily, the School Board that tried to discredit evolution in Dover, Pennsylvania, did not get reelected, and there will certainly be popular challenges to the Kansas State Board of Education, which has sought to change the definition of science so that it is not limited to teaching natural explanations.

Science is a powerfully important intellectual and experimental enterprise, using observations and hypotheses that generate predictions, critical experiments, and empirical observation. It has made important contributions to the human race and ought not to be crippled by the need to please religious fundamentalists.

Yet there is another danger if progressives make the scientific account of evolution the only acceptable explanation of the origins of nature. Evolution is the only legitimate *scientific* narrative, but not the only acceptable account, because there are other ways to understand reality that science cannot reach.

In his new book, *The Left*



Hand of God: Taking Our Country Back from the Religious Right, TIKKUN's editor Rabbi Michael Lerner calls for support for the integrity of science, but challenges scientism, the view that all aspects of reality can be adequately described by empirical verification, and that everything else is myth.

A scientist need not be scientific—and many are not, recognizing that science has its own limitations. Science cannot provide answers to the meaning of life, its value and its beauty, nor can it account for human freedom or consciousness. There are dimensions to reality that are not the domain of reason.

When liberals respond to the ideological claims of the Religious Right with an unflappable faith in science as the only way to understand the world, they actually strengthen the claims of their opponents. To the extent that liberals seem to be saying that

the only things worth knowing are taught by science, they confirm the suspicions of many Americans that liberals are totally out of touch with the spiritual dimension of life, the very dimension that most people believe to be the most important aspect of their experience.

Spiritual progressives don't have to fall into this trap. We can affirm both science *and* the spiritual and/or religious experience of human beings, and not attempt to engage in crude reductionism or subordination of one to the other.

That's why Rabbi Lerner's book suggests another path on evolution: that we insist that alternatives not be taught in science courses, but instead be taught in mandatory courses on world religions and philosophy. In the context of such courses, the biblical creation story should be taught alongside the creation stories of Babylonia,

Egypt, Greece, Scandinavia, India, China, Africa, and Native American cultures, and they should be assessed in terms of how well they provide foundations for a framework of meaning to our lives.

Don't be surprised that many fundamentalists won't be satisfied with this solution, because underlying their demand that we teach an alternative to science is not a desire to provide students with the widest possible range of ideas by which they may understand their lives, but rather a desire to impose the exclusive claims of their faith. If liberals and progressives called for the teaching of a "world religions and philosophies of life" course, they would expose the true agenda of the Religious Right and separate them from an important source of their support: those who are hungry for a meaningful life and cannot find that in a world created by global capital.



Political Cinema

After John Kerry's defeat in the 2004 elections, some Democrats felt embarrassed at having so severely miscalculated, lashed out at Michael Moore, blaming their defeat on the extremism of his movie *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Their criticisms largely missed the mark. Most Americans now agree with the fundamental premise of Moore's film: that the Bush administration manipulated the events of 9/11 to justify the war in Iraq.

Despite the fact that *Fahrenheit 9/11* at times evinced a typically patronizing tone towards the irrationality of political conservatism, given the overwhelming box office success of the film, Michael Moore showed that current political topics could be critically dealt with in a tabloid-style

film format and generate an unanticipated mass audience.

We are just beginning to see the good consequences of what Moore pulled off: greater public attention to movies and videos that previously might have only been shown on a handful of college campuses and the usual outposts of counter-cultural life. Moreover, the smarts of the MoveOn outreach techniques have now been mastered so that even when a new movie doesn't break into mass-market theaters, by being made available as a DVD rental, it can nevertheless reach a mass market through thoughtful email outreach and good Internet-based publicity.

Here are a few recent films that deserve your attention:

Side Effects. Put together by former pharmaceutical sales rep Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau, this film depicts the ethical crisis that

faced by a young woman whose work for a drug company eventually requires marketing pharmaceuticals that she knows may have a high risk of causing damage or even death to some of their recipients. That crisis is balanced by the young woman's equally intense need to keep her finances afloat, and thus her need to keep her job. In a nuanced and honest depiction of how this played out in her own life, Slattery-Moschkau presents us with a very respectful account of the other side: the arguments that drug companies make about why they are doing a public service. That makes the anti-pharmaceutical company message all the more effective. Michael Moore please note!

Wal-Mart: the High Cost of Low Price was screened in thousands of alternative locations in mid November. Filmmaker Robert Greenwald also created *Out-Foxed: Ru-*

pert Murdoch's War on Journalism, The Book of Ruth, and a series of "undocumentaries" on America in the post-9/11 world. For TIKKUN readers the interpretation of Wal-Mart's impact—focused on union busting, immoral treatment of its workers, and its impact on undermining local businesses and creating a monoculture—are well known. But what takes this movie into a different realm is the integration of that political analysis with a sensitive introduction to the lives of working people whose lives have been made miserable by Wal-Mart.

Protocols of Zion by Marc Levin and Think Films, presents us with a tour of the world of anti-Semitism. This is a must for every progressive who imagines that Jews living in suburban comfort have nothing to worry about, and that all their concerns about lingering anti-Jewish racism are pure paranoia. We at TIKKUN have been sensitive to the way that charges of anti-Semitism are misused by the Jewish establishment to silence anyone with criticisms of the current policies of the State of Israel, and we ourselves have been subject to that kind of abuse. This movie will show you why concerns about anti-Semitism, while abused by apologists for the Occupation of the West Bank and by right-wing Jews, are more than legitimate—they are worrisome. □

The Many Facets of Conservatism

George Vradenburg

To progressive pundits, the withdrawal of Harriet Miers and nomination of Samuel Alito for associate justice of the Supreme Court represent the triumph of “conservatism.” In the progressive worldview, “conservatism” implies a monolithic social and religious fundamentalism at odds with fundamental constitutional rights. So, when these pundits label Judge Alito a “conservative,” they conjure up the image of a dangerous theocratic regime.

There are two crucial errors in this thinking. First, there is no monolithic conservative perspective; and, second, judicial conservatism is different from political conservatism and is itself a term of multiple meanings. The failure of progressives to understand the heterogeneity of American political and judicial conservatism and tendency to conflate the two terms are leading them to potentially major errors in analysis and prediction.

In the conservative world, there are libertarians, fiscal conservatives, and social and religious conservatives, among others.

Libertarian and fiscal conservatives both distrust government, but for different reasons. Libertarians tend to favor individual rights of choice in abortion, education, and gender orientation. Fiscal conservatives focus on the loss of liberty and waste associated with high taxes and extensive government involvement in the economy and society. Both favor a broad interpretation of constitutional rights to protect personal and property rights, and support strict anti-discrimination laws and a strong, independent judiciary to balance executive and legislative authority.

Social and religious conservatives emphasize the importance of strong families, religious institutions, and communities as the basis of a stable and resilient society. They oppose gay marriage and abortion rights, favor religious language and symbolism in the public discourse, and support neutral government funding of religious institutions performing social services.

Conservatism is, in sum, a heterogeneous, non-monolithic enterprise (not unlike progressivism!).

Thus, a political conservative might support a broad reading of constitutional rights of free speech, privacy, property, and gay rights—or a political conservative might support a denial of gay and abortion rights. Just calling someone a conservative is not a good predictor of where that person stands on those issues.

And political conservatism does not equate to judicial conservatism, a judicial philosophy favoring a limited role of the courts and deference to democratically elected institutions.

Both political liberals, such as Justice Felix Frankfurter, and political conservatives, such as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, can be judicial conservatives.

Moreover, judicial conservatives come in different flavors too. Some judicial conservatives are activists seeking the “original meaning” of the Constitution and ready to overrule major judicial precedents to achieve that goal. Other judicial conservatives are deferential to precedent even where they believe the precedent erroneous.

The failure to appreciate the heterogeneity of political and judicial conservatism has led to totally unexpected results. For example, several conservatives named to the Supreme Court—Chief Justice Earl Warren and Justices David Souter, Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy—confounded the presidents who nominated them because their decisions took a libertarian stance (Justice Kennedy on gay rights) or deferred to precedents they would have decided differently (Justice Souter on *Roe v. Wade*). In one of the more famous examples, Felix Frankfurter, a well-known political liberal, became the Court's most articulate judicial conservative after his appointment.

To predict how a conservative Judge Alito might approach his role as Supreme Court Justice Alito, one needs to know what kind of judicial philosophy he holds—libertarian or religious, activist or deferential.

Press reports of Judge Alito's views are ambiguous. On the one hand, his decisions have shown a strong belief in free speech and religion, a readiness to defer to Supreme Court precedent finding a Constitutional right of privacy and a rejection of the “original meaning” approach to constitutional interpretation—a judicial philosophy that might be labeled libertarian and deferential. On the other hand, his dissents have reflected a less-than-libertarian deference to governmental and corporate authority in matters of individual rights. We will no doubt learn more in the coming months.

It may well be that Judge Alito, sitting as he has in “lesser” courts, has not yet developed a fully-formed judicial philosophy.

The Supreme Court is a magical place—it has opened the finest of minds to new insights and perspectives. What we should be looking for is a fine mind, open to new ideas, and then allow a degree of deference to a democratically-elected President's choice—as the Republicans did with Justices Ginsberg and Breyer.

How will Justice Alito rule in the future on critical cases that come before him? We don't know, neither does the President, and that isn't bad. □

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of TIKKUN.

It's Party Time

Joel Schalit

If the joyous exclamations of Israeli journalists were any indication, the parting of the Red Sea could not have made a bigger splash. In the days immediately following the November 7 surprise victory of Histadrut leader Amir Peretz over party chair Shimon Peres in Israel's Labor primary, *Ha'aretz*, *Yediot Achronot*, and even the *Jerusalem Post* were awash in praise over the election of a 52-year old Moroccan-born Leftist to the head of Israel's second largest political party. Calling it everything from "a new dawn," and a "rebirth of Israeli democracy" to arguing that Peretz's ascension was the most significant event in Israeli politics since the 1977 elections (which swept Menachem Begin's Likud Party into power), the consensus was unanimous: for the first time in over a generation, Israelis could distinguish between Right and Left again. Or maybe even right and wrong.

Campaigning on a peace-and-social-justice platform so resolutely socialist that his candidacy appeared doomed to failure from the start, the amount of support Peretz garnered shocked Labor's Ashkenazi-dominated, ex-general ridden, business-friendly leadership. Because Peretz's platform promises everything from raising the minimum wage and returning to welfare-state policies to overcoming the ethnic divide between Middle Eastern and European Jews and arriving at a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians, his victory truly merits the attention the Israeli press

has accorded it. Both his ambitions and the support shown them suggest something truly utopian. To paraphrase the title of a November 14 article in *Ha'aretz*, Peretz could indeed be the harbinger of a new Israeli social order.

In order to truly appreciate the magnitude of such statements, it's important to remember the remarkable sense of ennui that Sharon's repeated victories over the course of the past years instilled in Israelis. One word sums it up: hopelessness. Having won two consecutive elections, Sharon defied everyone's expectations by holding on to power for nearly five years—a record, considering Israel's incomparably accelerated political time. During these years, Sharon decimated Israel's opposition parties and delegitimated the sole principle that united Israel's Left: its shared commitment to a policy of negotiated settlement with the Palestinians. Not only had Sharon achieved political supremacy, he'd secured ideological hegemony as well.

By the time the Disengagement was under way, an eviscerated Labor Party led by Shimon Peres was sitting in coalition with Sharon, giving him the support he needed to deal with the settlers and, however reluctantly, providing cover for former Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's neoliberal fiscal policies of drastically downsizing Israel's public sector and slashing social spending. Though Sharon could claim to have successfully executed the withdrawal, by October 2005, 9.1 percent of Israelis were unemployed, 1.3 million were living below the poverty line, 667 civilians had been killed by terrorist violence, and 303 IDF soldiers were dead as a result of his leadership.

As much as the Disengagement was

regarded as the breaking point between Sharon and Israel's extreme right, Peretz' election indicated that a similar fissure had taken place between the Prime Minister and the Left. This was inevitable. Whenever any state takes it upon itself to redraw its national boundaries as radically as Sharon did, it is bound to change more than just borders; its internal political makeup is destined to be revised as well.

If there is any positive lesson Zionism has to teach to us, it's that political sovereignty requires the stability and freedom of grounding. In the absence of such a guaranteed geography, anarchy will always reign. While the Israeli Right has historically thrived in such circumstances, its ability to govern is limited by the kinds of sacrifices it asks of Israel's population. Just as the casualty level incurred by Israel's eighteen-year occupation of Lebanon birthed the country's first peace movement and helped move Israel, however briefly, to the Left, all indications suggest a similar process at work during the fifth year of Sharon's rule.

How else are we to explain the sudden appeal of a political leader like Peretz, who talks about the crippling effects of neoliberalism and globalization on Israeli society in the same breath as the necessity of a negotiated solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict? How else are we to explain the possibility of a working-class Mizrahi Jew actually becoming Prime Minister? If Peretz never succeeds in doing anything more than increasing the number of Labor seats in the Knesset in March, one thing is for certain: His election not only helped bring down the second Sharon government, it's given us the possibility of believing that Israel has the potential for a just and decent future. □

Joel Schalit is managing editor of *TIKKUN*. He is currently hard at work on his third book for Akashic, *Israel vs. Utopia*, and enjoying the delights of Ableton's *Live 5* looping software.

Hostile Takeover: Theocracy in America

Michael Lerner

The confirmation hearings and debates about Judge Samuel Alito facing the United States in January underscore the immense power of the Religious Right. Fearful that Bush's nominee Harriet Miers was not sufficiently conservative, the Religious Right created a firestorm of protest that caused Miers to withdraw and forced the Bush Administration to produce a more ideologically appropriate nominee in the form of Alito, a jurist with extremist perspectives. Even if the Democrats succeed in developing the backbone to sustain a filibuster and block this particular nominee, the packing of the courts by reactionary legislators who share the agenda of the Religious Right has become the norm for the Bush White House and will continue for the next several years.

The growing power of the Religious Right requires more than the predictable array of "oy veys" and cries of despair.

One reason that I've written my new book *The Left Hand of God: Taking Our Country Back from the Religious Right* (Harper San Francisco, February 7, 2006) and why the Tikkun Community is organizing a second gathering of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (at All Souls Church in Washington, D.C., May 17-20) is precisely because Americans need a coherent strategy to respond to the Right, not just analyses about how dangerous they are. This is a movement that is not just for people who believe in God or who are part of some religious community—it is equally inviting to those who are "spiritual but not religious" and who recognize that a progressive movement today needs a spiritual foundation if it is to take our country back from the Religious Right.

In his book *God's Politics*, Jim Wallis did an outstanding and politically important job of showing how far from the teachings of Jesus the Religious Right has wandered. Bill

Press' provocative book *How The Republicans Stole Christmas*, and Mark Lewis Taylor's *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right* have done a similarly impressive job of showing how dangerous the Religious Right has become for our civil liberties, our moral compass, and our democratic values. The Religious Right is a danger to American society and to those of us who are serious about God and religion and do not use either as a vehicle to promote militarist ideology.

Nothing could be more mistaken than the fantasies now growing in liberal circles that the Bush Administration is about to lose power, the Republican Party is in a process of dissolution, and the Religious Right will soon be isolated and relegated to the junk pile of failed movements. It is amazing to see how liberals and progressives, desperate about their own inability to come up with a strategy to counter conservatives, have now begun to clutch at straws to prove to themselves that the Right is about to disappear because of its own contradictions.

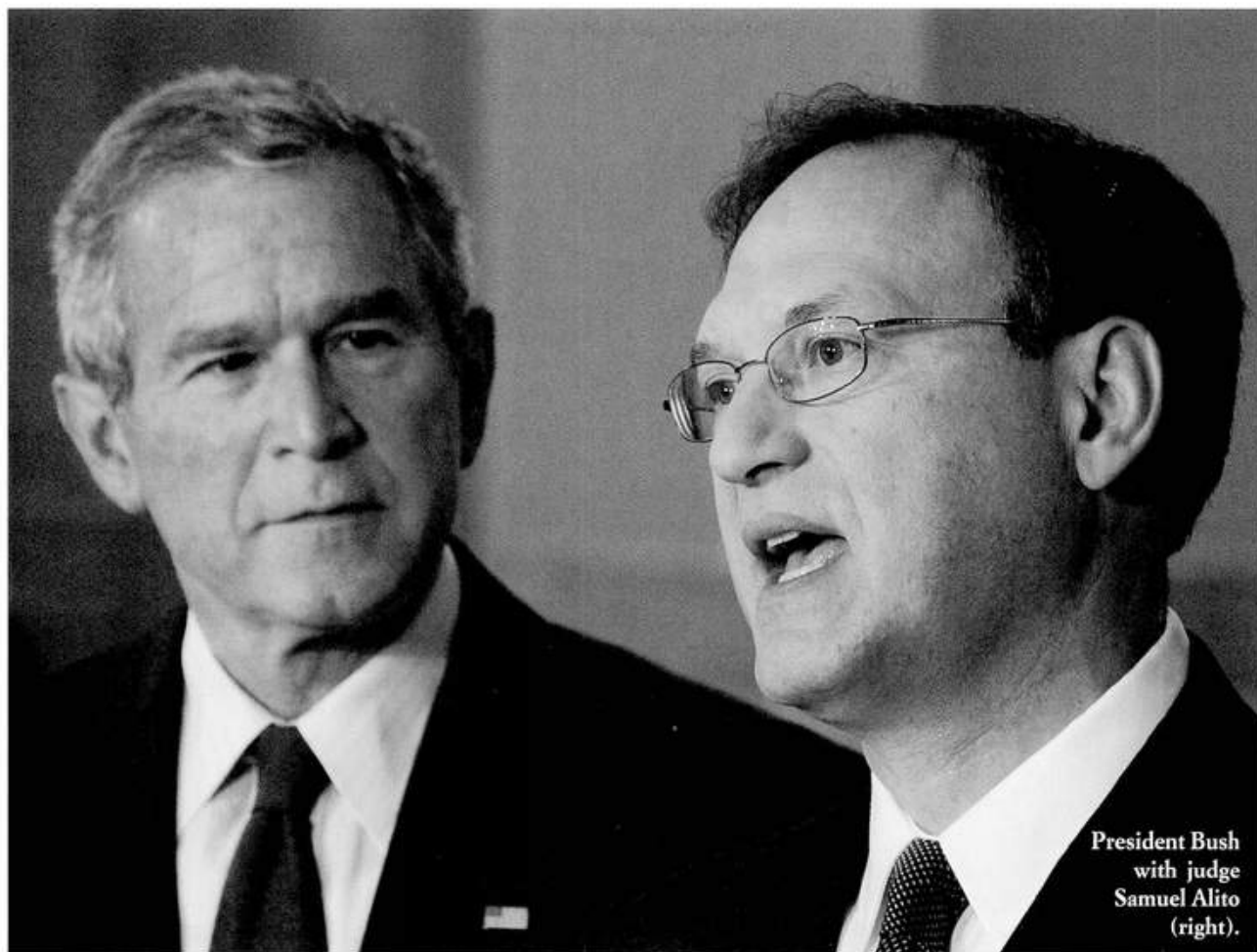
True enough, the Bush Administration is in considerable trouble. It has lost popular support. The air of invincibility it once held as a result of having reaped the benefits of being the "strong father figure" at the time of national calamity during 9/11 are now falling away. Bush's mismanagement of the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina, the indictment of Vice President Cheney's top aide Scooter Libby for lying in the Valerie Plame affair, and the continuing impact on confidence in Bush

You could make the difference in getting our message heard by millions of Americans.

If you buy *The Left Hand of God: Taking Our Country Back from the Religious Right* in the first two weeks of sale, between February 7 and February 19, you could put the book on the best seller list or close.

Here's why that makes the difference: The large chain stores put on their front tables only those books that they believe will sell large numbers. Those placements have to be bought by the publishers (it typically costs between \$10,000 and \$20,000 for a publisher to buy a space to place one book for one month on a front table in one of the major chains), but the chains won't even sell that space to books that they are not sure will make them lots of money. If the book is not on a front table, nobody sees it except those who went into the store with the intention of buying that particular book, and the chains stock 3-5 copies, so that when they are sold out, you can't buy the book even if you intended to. The only thing that changes that for the chains is if sales are very high in the first two weeks.

You can make the difference if you buy this book for yourself and for your friends, and convince other persons you know around the United States to buy it as well. Don't wait until later—the first two weeks are what counts. If you think you might want to create a study group around this book, the time to get copies is February 7 through 19. You can also order advance copies from Amazon.



President Bush
with judge
Samuel Alito
(right).

generated by American casualties in Iraq pushed Bush's popularity to the lowest in his presidency. In November 2005, a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll found that 57 percent of Americans believe that the President deliberately misled the country into invading Iraq, while only 33 percent believed the President to be honest.

The gubernatorial victories of Democrats Timothy Kaine in Virginia and Senator Jon Corzine in New Jersey, coupled with the defeat of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's four ballot initiatives that carefully took aim at the rights of union activists, government workers, and teachers, have led some liberals and progressives to imagine a dramatic liberal sweep of Congressional elections this coming November, when all of the House and one third of the Senate is up for reelection.

The Bush Administration may indeed have less legitimacy than it had before, though with three more years in office, let's not assume it's a lame duck yet. Moreover, the systematic and strategic way that Republicans reorganized Congressional districts so as to preserve their hold on Congress is likely to limit the impact in Congressional elections of the American majority's disillusionment with Bush. Democrats and Republicans

in the House have both supported measures to protect incumbents, and in the past three Congressional elections, at least 96 percent of incumbents won reelection. Writing in the *New York Times* on November 13, 2005, Robin Toner argued that at most there are thirty-six seats that might possibly be competitive in 2006 as compared to eighty-nine in the 1994 election, when Congress switched hands from the Democrats to the Republicans. While deepening disgust at Bush could effect what were perceived to be "safe" Republican districts, new computer technology made redistricting more sophisticated and email outreach to constituents has made incumbents more easily known by their constituents and more successful in raising large sums of money to spend on reelection campaigns that can often only be countered by a newcomer who is independently wealthy (and often favoring measures that will protect the class interests of those similarly situated).

But even if secular conservatives were driven from office the way that the Nixon Administration was, it is a fallacy to equate the power of the Religious Right with the power of any particular administration, even one as deeply enmeshed in fundamentalist religious assumptions as Bush and his allies



have been. The reality is that the Religious Right has shaped public discourse to such a powerful extent that its major assumptions about foreign and domestic policy are now mainstream—not just in the conservative press, but also in the dominant corners of the Democratic Party.

Even out of power, the Right has been far more effective than liberals in shaping public discourse. Though the Democratic majority in the House in the 1980s and early 90s thought the Republicans were little more than minor annoyances, the Republicans were actually building a powerful grassroots movement precisely because they had found enough points of common interest to effectively merge the secular and religious conservatives. Infused with the missionary zeal of the religious and the funding of the wealthy, this Right was able to take its ideas into the public arena.

During the same period when Democrats should have been extending their base, the Left avoided any form of intellectual clarity. Stung by the failure of Marxism in the first half of the twentieth century, the Left turned away from ideology to a mushy “everything goes” relativism. Remember the classic speech by Jesse Jackson in 1988 at the Democratic National Convention when he called for a new “quilt” that would

incorporate everyone together into the Democrats, but without any ideological coherence? How could a crazy quilt welcoming both doves and hawks attract people? What would anyone get from such a Democratic Party?

Instead of offering a real vision for the future, the Left segmented itself. Activists focused on shorter battles and particular interest groups, leading to infighting about who was more “politically correct.” The few left-wing intellectuals who refused the PC battles of the late 1980s developed a kind of ideology against ideology, a misunderstood postmodernism in which nothing and no one is prioritized and each one of us is “special.”

What American liberals and progressives have not adequately understood is the importance of ideas and their impact on politics. So they tend to concentrate on short-term struggles and leave the ideological sphere to conservatives. Conservatives understand the importance of fighting culture wars, and have managed to focus huge amounts of resources on the public development of ideas, fostering intellectual journals and alternative media, providing support for campus organizing and for programs designed to nurture young conservatives early in their careers, and foundations and think-tanks that can



Hurricane Katrina survivors shop for clothes and shoes at the former Sam's Club warehouse in Shreveport, La. Donated clothes, food, toiletries, toys, and bedding have been organized by the Salvation Army for hurricane refugees. Where the government stumbled, churches rushed in.

offered a worldview unlikely to dissolve in the face of international political developments. The Religious Right saw the evil in the world as ontological, built into the very structure of reality and humankind, a constant threat and temptation that could potentially subvert all of humanity. The world is filled with evil and distorted people, and life is fundamentally scary because people are likely to hurt us as they seek to dominate and control us unless we can dominate and control them first. The only reason that the world has not been destroyed by all this evil is the re-

straining power of God's will. God is a judgmental power figure whose parental authority is used to punish the evil and reward the good, and it is God, not human beings, who must make those determinations and rectify a perverted world. That rectification will only happen, though, when Jesus returns to the planet—the Second Coming—and proceeds to judge all beings, condemn those who have not believed in him, and reward those who have.

As I explain in my new book, this vision of God as a punishing father has been present in many different religious traditions. I call it the vision of a "Right Hand of God," based in part on various biblical passages that identify God's right hand as the hand of power and domination. And I contrast this with a very different way of seeing God in the Bible, a way that emphasizes a more motherly, compassionate, caring, and love-oriented God that I call the "Left Hand of God." Both ways of seeing God are there in the Bible, because both visions of reality have been part of human experience for thousands of years, so when people encounter the spiritual reality of the universe, they bring with them their own conceptual categories and interpret their experience through the language and worldviews that they already hold.

If the world is fundamentally frightening and those who do not share one's own religious beliefs are not to be trusted and are doomed to suffer, the task of converting them and spreading one's own gospel (good news about the path to salvation that has been revealed) becomes a central moral imperative. One cannot expect a government constructed by human beings who are not already saved by belief in Jesus to find appropriate ways to solve the world's problems. In that case, the less government the better, and the political task is to withdraw energy and power from government and transfer them to religious communities that can combine social services with teachings about the right path to salvation. Those who do enter the political arena must strive to dismantle governmental programs that do not embody Christian values, and use state resources primarily to defend us from evil

continue the work of applying fundamental principles to specific political and economic circumstances.

Secular conservatives have long advocated for the freedom of the marketplace to solve all problems if unrestrained by government. It was an idea that had been repudiated by most Americans when that freedom produced global economic depression and wars. In the post-World War II period, American conservatives modified their stance dramatically, supporting government intervention on behalf of corporate power around the world, and expanded government spending on military-related production, while retaining their libertarian stance when it came to state protections for poor and middle-income people. This was not a very persuasive approach, and depended upon their ability to sell the country the notion that there was some evil other (communism) that was so imminent a threat that we would have to suspend the fear of government programs for the sake of preparing for war. Imagine how difficult it would be to maintain that line once the Soviet Union itself began to unravel and its alleged military strength was shown to be immensely exaggerated.

No wonder, then, that secular conservatives needed to embrace the Religious Right. The new religious conservatism

EDITORIAL

Others around the world and in our own country (hence, continued support for security spending).

This picture of the world is unlikely to appeal to many TIKKUN readers, but it forms the background of much of the Religious Right's political activity, and it offers people a framework to understand the realities of the world in which they live. In my new book, I show that the millions of people who are attracted to the Religious Right are not originally attracted because of this worldview, but rather because their lives in capitalist society feel empty and purposeless, and that they hunger for some framework of meaning that can connect them to a higher purpose. They are sick and tired of a world based on competition, materialism, and selfishness. And they hear these issues being addressed by the Religious Right. They find in these religious communities people who act in very caring ways towards others who have bought into the religious worldview. Buying in seems a small price to pay for the nurturing and sense of meaning and purpose that these communities provide. And once they buy in, they get a worldview that helps explain much of what is happening in the larger world.

Instead of blaming the absence of values and the prevalence of narcissism and materialism on the dynamics of the marketplace, Americans are taught by the Religious Right that the problem is a militant secular Left that has, in the name of its extremist interpretations of the separation clause of the Constitution, denuded the public square of all values.

A poll commissioned by the Anti-Defamation League in November 2005 (at the very time when most Americans were expressing disaffection from George Bush) indicated that 64 percent of Americans think religion is under attack (57 percent think Christianity is being assaulted) and 56 percent think creationism should be taught in schools. In addition, 64 percent think religious symbols such as the Ten Commandments should be displayed in public buildings, and almost half think the courts have gone too far in removing religion from American life. Those numbers rise steeply for those who attend church once a week or who describe themselves as evangelicals.

Liberals see this as the vanguard of a movement that wants to impose Christianity on the entire population, and that is true for at least some on the Religious Right. But this really misses what is so plausible in the Religious Right's account and hence what gives it mass appeal: the actual experience people have of feeling surrounded by selfishness and materi-



Phil Burrell, director of Citizens for Community Values, speaks to more than 500 pastors and religious leaders in Mason, Ohio. It was the first of six meetings scheduled to discuss religion's role in politics.

alism, and their sense that the only people addressing that problem and coming up with solutions (however inadequate) are social and political conservatives. The liberals to whom they are exposed may be willing to

opportunisticly throw in a biblical quote or use the word "God," but they don't seem to understand that there is an actual spiritual crisis afflicting American society, and that life feels very scary to many people, who then respond to pseudo-solutions like posting the Ten Commandments on public buildings or teaching religion in schools. It's not hard to understand why this fearful worldview gets accepted. First of all, it corresponds in important ways to the reality of the world as currently constructed. The capitalist marketplace really does generate endless struggle between human beings and does in fact encourage people to seek dominance, control, and manipulation of each other. In daily life, then, the picture of reality painted by the Right gets confirmed in the experiences many people have in their own world of work. Second, there is no alternative worldview contending with this one. There is no spiritually grounded vision of the world being taught by liberals and progressives. The Left Hand of God is rarely articulated, has few institutions committed to promoting it, and has no political force ready to champion it.

AP PHOTO/AL BEHRMAN

I don't mean that one has to have an explicitly God-centered alternative to the Religious Right. *The Left Hand of God* promotes a view of the universe that emphasizes the possibility (not inevitability) of building a world with a New Bottom Line based on love, compassion, generosity, awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation, ecological sensitivity, social justice, peace, and nonviolence.

It is a deep mistake to think that winning political power in the short run is the only path to building long-term support for a liberal worldview. As much as I want to see an end to the war in Iraq and the war against poor and middle income persons being waged by the current Administration, I do not believe that putting the other party in power is sufficient to fundamentally change the current dominance of the Religious Right in shaping public discourse and assumptions.

Even if the Republican Party were to lose control of Congress in 2006 and suffer the loss of the presidency in 2008, the Religious Right will remain a powerful force in American politics, shaping not only the politics of the Republicans but also much of the discourse that is poured out by our elected Democrats.

It would be nice to wish that reality away, as Alan Ehrenhalt, sometimes an insightful commentator and executive editor of *Governing* magazine, did in a *New York Times* op-ed (November 13, 2005). Ehrenhalt refers to the "sprawling, wobbly tent" of the Republican Party in which "libertarians, Christian moralists and suburban business owners all pretend to have similar goals" but do not. He contrasts this with a Democratic Party in which, "on the issues that Democrats care about most these days—abortion, the role of religion, the war in Iraq—there aren't that many dissenters. The dissenters have left." I'd like to have some of what Ehrenhalt was smoking when he penned those lines, but they bear no relationship to the deep splits in the Democratic Party on these issues.

I can tell you where the Republican Party nominee for President will stand on the war in Iraq in 2008. "Finish the job that was correct from the start," he will say, but can you tell me whether the Democratic nominee voted for or against the war's original authorizations or continuing funding for that war? I can tell you that the Republican party's nominee will favor international agreements to expedite the globalization of American enterprise and corporate power, but can you tell me whether the Democratic nominee will be for or against those policies? I can tell you that the Republican nominee will have supported George Bush's nominations of two of the

most conservative appointments made in decades to the Supreme Court, but can you tell me whether the Democratic nominee will have vigorously supported a filibuster against those nominees?

Yet even those questions really miss the deeper level on which there is fundamental harmony between the assumptions of many Democrats and most Republicans. When the Republicans tell us that the world is a scary place and that we must respond to a war on terror by escalating military involvements, the Democrats rarely challenge this assessment. The leading Democratic candidates for President in 2008 have been calling for increasing troop levels in Iraq or sending more coalition forces to fight in Afghanistan. These are disagreements on details, not on the substantive vision of how to create a peaceful world. When the Republicans tell us that the

best economic interests of all Americans will be served by creating a world that is safe for American corporations, what kind of coherent alternative will Democrats offer except a litany of specific instances in which that has not been the case? If the debate between the two sides is simply about how much help the government should give those most disadvantaged, it really ends up having little appeal for anyone beyond the technocrats. The key thing the Democrats are missing here is any alternative vision of an economy that would not produce negative consequences for so many people.

Without that alternative, the Religious Right's perspective seems quite plausible: "let's not rely exclusively on government to alleviate the suffering of the disadvantaged or

the victims of the marketplace—let's mobilize community groups to engage in direct interventions to help people locally. And what could be a better institution to do that than the already existing churches?" they argue.

Moreover, the value of churches as a source of intervention on behalf of those who are disadvantaged has another very strong argument on its behalf. Since the heyday of the New Deal, the Left has championed an interventionist state, but has restricted its interventions to materialist assumptions: what people need is "objective caring" in the form of money, food stamps, rent subsidies, mortgage assistance, etc. We at TIKKUN remain strong supporters of this "objective caring" because we believe that any real love expressed between human beings must include the love of caring for each other's bodies and creating material well-being.

But what has been absent from the liberal program has been "subjective caring": helping people feel that they are

It is a mistake to think that winning political power is the only path to building long-term support for a liberal worldview. It will not fundamentally change the current dominance of the Religious Right in shaping public discourse and assumptions.

part of a society in which people actually do care about them, that they are not just anonymous cogs in a big machine that periodically spews out some financial benefits to keep the system from overheating. And this is precisely what the churches offer but the state does not.

What liberals continue to miss is that human beings have other kinds of needs, for example a need to be valued, to be cared for, to be loved, to be recognized, and to feel that their life has some meaning and purpose and is not just a means to someone else's needs. We call these spiritual needs. Their fulfillment cannot be easily measured by objective evidence or quantitative research. So, during the heyday of the American welfare state, Democrats built government programs that gave no value to "subjective caring," and government workers were penalized if they were so inefficient as to take time to actually show personal concern about the people who were receiving "objective caring."

Government officials have tended to shy away from anything "subjective" and to deal only with those aspects of reality that are hard-nosed and quantifiable. Is it any wonder, then, that social programs feel technocratic, bureaucratic, manipulative, controlling, and unsympathetic?

"Well," you might say, "I don't really need my unemployment insurance clerk to love me nor my automobile registration office to make me feel personally welcomed." But before being too complacent about that, how about your government employed doctor, social worker, or the person offering programs to help people beat drug or alcohol addictions? How about the prison guards or the nurses at government-run hospitals and rehabilitation centers? What about teachers and daycare workers? What happens when you have a system that says it doesn't care about "caring" or that "caring" is "too subjective a category" is that people start to have very harsh experiences with their government services that eventually lead them to feel alienated from "objective" service providers, i.e., the state.

It is precisely at this point that the case for de-funding government starts to win appeal. Having experienced little in the way of real caring from those government workers that they encountered, many citizens grow angry at the thought that they are paying these people's salaries and then getting back little more than disinterest or "attitude."

That might be only a minor consideration if people felt that the programs that they were paying for actually had some real impact in improving the situation of those less fortunate. But capitulating to the discourse and assumptions of the Right, the Democrats long ago gave up on full employment, ending all poverty, rebuilding all cities, and reversing climate

change and global warming, and instead have settled for the status quo. So people pay taxes and the problems don't go away, and then they feel that maybe it would make just as much sense to not pay the taxes at all since they settle nothing.

"Yes, but then if you de-fund government, who will take care of those who are still suffering?"

"We will," responds the Religious Right, "and you will too if instead of just sitting back and hoping for more government programs, you instead join us in our inner city ministries to the poor and the homeless, which is what our churches are actually doing." Nor is this an empty boast—the truth is that many churches actively reach out to the needy, though at a level far lower than what is actually needed.

But what's most important is that the churches take caring seriously. They value caring—and that means that many people experience themselves as being taken care of by them.

And, yes, that does have salutary impact on the efficacy of some social programs. Interventions performed in these contexts can have far greater healing impact than interventions in which the "professional" delivering the services has learned that the primary concern is to prove that they have respected the boundaries.

This caring comes from a worldview that exists in the religious world and has particular resonance

within the Religious Right: we care for those who share our worldview. Now for me this is particularly insidious, because it creates a group of insiders and outsiders, and the outsiders are frequently demeaned. Being Jewish, I'm part of one of the groups that historically has most frequently been identified as "outsiders" and hence most frequently been the butt of anger and hostility from Christian insiders.

No wonder, then, that Jews became leading advocates for the secularization of society that seemed possible after the American and French revolutions. Jews imagined that a secular society would be the safest place for us, because within it there would be neither Christian nor Jew but only Frenchmen, English, Germans, Americans, and so forth.

Imagine our surprise, then, when anti-Semitism returned in full force at the end of the nineteenth century and became a major ingredient in twentieth-century nationalisms in Europe. For many Jews, the upsurge of anti-Semitism in capitalist societies was proof that Jews could never be safe in Christian states (which led some to a general anti-religious Marxism wherein all religious differences would be abolished, and others to a Zionism that preached the need for Jews to have their own state to defend ourselves from the inevitable return of Jew-hatred). But for most, the path was to

What liberals continue to miss is that human beings have a need to be valued, to be cared for, to be loved, to be recognized, and to feel that their life has some meaning and purpose.

work harder to separate church and state, and to keep all these contentious issues out of the public arena, where they could only lead in a fascistic direction.

None of these responses ever really sought to ask what legitimate needs were being spoken to by the racist nationalisms that had emerged. If they had, they could have quickly seen that people were hungry for caring and for some sense of being valued independent of how well they did in the competitive marketplace. When Jews were put down for their intelligence, it was not just some inherent anti-intellectualism or unstoppable quasi-genetic racism against Jews that was being expressed. Rather, it was the desire of people for the recognition and caring that was being denied them in every part of their lives in a competitive market system. People wanted to and still want to feel valued. The free market gives that to some who are successful, but denies it to many who are not so victorious in the ongoing struggle of all against all.

There was nothing "rational" about right-wing movements manipulating the anger people have at not being recognized or valued and scapegoating Jews, African Americans, gays and lesbians, liberals, activist judges, secular humanists, or whoever else becomes their next target. Right-wing commentator Bill O'Reilly, who in 2004 claimed that liberals were undermining Christmas, recently tried to make all San Franciscans another target, and we may yet see neo-fascist forces again returning to anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred.

Liberals mistakenly assume that if only the Right were to go away, everything would be fine. But that's not true. People experience pain in their lives because of the ways in which society is organized, not because of the Religious Right. The Religious Right acts in ways that use and manipulate pain, and for that it needs to be challenged. But the challenge will get nowhere if it doesn't simultaneously recognize these "meaning" or "spiritual" needs.

That's why the "keep values out of the public sphere" approach of many secular liberals is such a non-starter. The public sphere is saturated with the competitive materialistic values of the society. Institutions are judged to be efficient if they produce money or power. There's nothing neutral or objective about that criterion of productivity—it is itself a substantive worldview that is built into the normal operations of daily life, reinforced by an educational system that teaches children to compete to get ahead so that they can get the right jobs and earn enough money to be "successful."

Is it any wonder that people who want different values start to question the worth of our public institutions and seek to de-fund them, or to send their children to private schools and get the government to supply funding in the form of vouchers, or to support candidates who call for lower taxes? They want a different kind of world in which there is far more caring, and far more value given to cooperation and love and appreciation of nature and community.

It is these aspirations that the Religious Right manages to take advantage of by offering a particular version of caring

that is available only to those who buy into their ideological framework and accept their narrow and often morally insensitive version of Christianity or Judaism, Islam or Hinduism.

You can't answer such people by simply repeating the old liberal mantras about the need for separation of church and state. Although I totally support separation of the state from the imposition of any particular religious tradition or belief in God, I also know that liberals have not only separated church from state but also separated spiritual wisdom, caring, and love from state. This has been inappropriate and has backfired decisively.

What is needed instead is a substantive vision of the world we want to see. It must be visionary, must articulate both a foreign policy and a policy for the economy, and must explain what it is about human life that makes this vision likely to work.

Unfortunately, the most that we are going to hear from the Democrats in 2006 is a repackaging of the series of disconnected reforms that they've been promoting for decades—a noble but limited attempt to provide their version of the Contract with America that Republican House Minority Leader Newt Gingrich proposed in 1994, and which was credited with giving them unity and shared purpose. The program will focus on education, health care, renewable energy sources, and transportation. I'll support it totally. But it will be a far cry from providing an alternative worldview to that of the Republicans, though its priorities are certainly a huge advance over those of the Bush Administration. What it will lack is any coherent explanation of the world or vision about what the Democrats are for, and will once again provide a laundry list (though in this case probably a mercifully short list) of items without a coherent unifying message that could compete with that of the Religious Right.

I hope you'll get a chance to study their program carefully and compare it point for point with The Spiritual Covenant with America that is the second half of my book *The Left Hand of God*. What you'll see is not just differences in substance but also, and most importantly, the difference between a politics that is rooted in a spiritual vision and one that is not. And as I emphasize throughout the book, a progressive spiritual vision is held by many people who are "spiritual but not religious," who do not accept any traditional religious or theocentric worldview.

At the conference on Spiritual Activism in July (some of whose speakers are highlighted in this issue of TIKKUN) we began a process of defining an alternative voice in American politics. Jim Wallis spoke from his experience in the Christian Evangelical community, and others represented not only the array of Christian voices, but also Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu voices as well as many "spiritual but not religious" thinkers. We hope to continue this process at our May gathering, which will focus on bringing the Spiritual Covenant with America into greater national attention. I hope that you'll join us there. □

Spirit Matters

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: In this new section of *TIKKUN* we will feature selections from forthcoming books, articles, and talks that raise significant spiritual, religious, or social theory issues that connect to the *TIKKUN* project of healing and transformation of the world. Authors or publishers who seek to have their work included in this section must send us the material for consideration at least three months prior to the cover date of the issue of *TIKKUN* in which they'd like to be included, and this date must be prior to the actual publication of the book.

Absolute Love

BY JOHN WELWOOD

If the pure essence of love is like the sun in a cloudless sky, this clear and luminous light shines through relationships most brightly in beginnings and endings. When your baby is first born, you feel so graced by the arrival of such an adorable being that you respond to it totally, without reserve, demand, or judgment. Or when you first fall in love, you are so surprised and delighted by the sheer beauty of this person's presence that it blows your heart wide open. For a while the bright sunlight of all-embracing love pours through full strength, and you may melt into bliss. Similarly, when a friend or loved one is dying, all your quibbles with that person fall away. You simply appreciate the other just for who he or she is, just for having been here with you in this world for a little while. Pure, unconditional love shines through when people put themselves—their own demands and agendas—aside and completely open to one another. Absolute love is not something that we have to—or that we even can—concoct or fabricate. It is what comes through us naturally when we fully open up—to another person, to ourselves, or to life. In relation to another, it manifests as selfless caring. In relation to ourselves, it shows up as

inner confidence and self-acceptance that warms us from within. And in relation to life, it manifests as a sense of well-being, appreciation, and *joie de vivre*. Absolute Love. When we experience this kind of openness and warmth coming from another, it provides essential nourishment: it helps us experience our own warmth and openness, allowing us to recognize the beauty and goodness at the core of our nature. The light of unconditional love awakens the dormant seed potentials of the soul, helping them ripen, blossom, and bear fruit, allowing us to bring forth the unique gifts that are ours to offer in this life. Receiving pure love, caring, and recognition from another confers a great blessing: It affirms us in being who we are, allowing us to say yes to ourselves. When two people see and appreciate each other as they are, they share a moment of I-Thou recognition, as Martin Buber would call it. Buber sees this as providing a certain kind of essential confirmation: it helps us know and feel that we are. What feels most affirming is not just to feel loved but to feel loved as we are. *As we are* means in our very being. Absolute love is the love of being. Deeper than all our personality traits, pain, or confusion, our being is the dynamic open presence that we essentially are. It is what we experience when we feel settled, grounded, and connected with our-

selves. When rooted in this basic ground of presence, love flows freely through us, and we can more readily open up to others. When two people meet in this quality of open presence, they share a perfect moment of absolute love. However—and this is an essential point—the human personality is not the source of absolute love. Rather, its light shines through us, from what lies altogether beyond us, the ultimate source of all. We are the channels through which this radiance flows. Yet in flowing through us, it also finds a home within us, taking up residence as our heart-essence. We have a natural affinity for this perfect food that is also our deepest essence, our life's blood. That is why every baby instinctively reaches out for it from the moment of birth. We cannot help wanting our own nature. When the value and beauty of our existence is recognized, this allows us to relax, let down, and settle into ourselves. In relaxing, we open. And this opening makes us transparent to the life flowing through us, like a fresh breeze that enters a room as soon as the windows are raised. This brings a sense of well-being, as well as genuine power, which D. H. Lawrence defines as "life rushing into us." Martin Buber sees the moment of I-Thou connection as the shedding of an old, protective sheath, like a butterfly's emergence from its chrysalis. In tasting pure, unconditional love, we experience that it's good to be ourselves, good to be alive, and this makes us want to spread our wings and soar. This influx of aliveness coursing through us feels blissful.

In this way, experiencing unconditional love allows us to rest in ourselves and the blissful flow of our aliveness. As Brother David Steindl-Rast describes this deep connectedness: "We simply know for a moment that all belongs to us because we belong to all."

This is the one of the great gifts of

human love, this entry it provides into something even greater than human relatedness. In helping us connect with the radiant aliveness within us, it reveals our essential beauty and power, where we are one with life itself because we are fully transparent to life. When life belongs to you and you belong to life, this sets you free from hunger and fear. You experience the essential dignity and nobility of your existence, which does not depend on anyone else's approval or validation. In this deep sense of union with life, you realize you are not wounded, have never been wounded, and cannot be wounded.

This is the bottom line of human existence: absolute love helps us connect with who we really are. That is why it is indispensable.

Yet even though the human heart is a channel through which great love streams into this world, this heart channel is usually clogged with debris—fearful, defensive patterns that have developed out of not knowing we are truly loved. As a result, love's natural openness, which we can taste in brief, blissful moments of pure connection with another person, rarely permeates our relationships completely. Indeed, the more two people open to each other, the more this wide openness also brings to the surface all the obstacles to it: their deepest, darkest wounds, their desperation and mistrust, and their rawest emotional trigger-points. Just as the sun's warmth causes clouds to arise, by prompting the earth to release its moisture, so love's pure openness activates the thick clouds of our emotional wounding, the tight places where we are shut down, where we live in fear and resist love.

There is good reason why this happens: before we can become a clear channel through which love can freely flow, the ways we are wounded must come to the surface and be exposed.

Love as a healing power can operate only on what presents itself to be healed. As long as our wounding remains hidden, it can only fester.

This, then, is relative love: the sunlight of absolute love as it becomes filtered through the clouds of our conditioned personality and its defensive patterns—fearfulness, distrust, reactivity, dishonesty, aggression, and distorted perception. Like a partly cloudy sky, relative love is incomplete, inconstant, and imperfect. It is a continual play of light and shadow. The full radiance of absolute love can only sparkle through in fleeting moments...

Our yearning for perfect love and perfect union does have its place and its own beauty. Arising out of an intuitive knowing of the perfection that lies within the heart, it points toward something beyond what ordinary mortals can usually provide.

We yearn to heal our separation from life, from God, from our own heart. When understood correctly, this longing can inspire us to reach beyond

ourselves, give ourselves wholeheartedly, or turn toward the life of the spirit. It is a key, as we shall see, that opens the doorway through which absolute love can enter fully into us. We invariably fall into trouble, however, when we transfer this longing onto another person.

That is why it's important to distinguish between absolute and relative love—so we don't go around seeking perfect love from imperfect situations. Although intimate connections can provide dazzling flashes of absolute oneness, we simply cannot count on them for that. The only reliable source of perfect love is that which is perfect—the open, awake heart at the core of being. This alone allows us to know perfect union, where all belongs to us because we belong to all. Expecting this from relationships only sets us up to feel betrayed, disheartened, or aggrieved.

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The Secret Message of Jesus

BY BRIAN D. MCLAREN

The message of Jesus is not what most Christians assume it to be: information on how to go to heaven after you die. Instead, it is a radical message about the possibility of a new social and spiritual order available and possible here and now, evoked in the pregnant yet elusive phrase *kingdom of God*. If this is the case, why do so few see it? Why is it taking so many of us so long to "get it"? There are reasons to believe that this kind of reading simply *could not have arisen* previously. Those reasons do not include any arrogant or naive notions that we in the twenty-first century are

somehow better or smarter or more enlightened than our sisters and brothers from times past. But they do include considerations like the following:

The First-Century Church: Separating from Jewish Roots

First, early in church history (by the end of the second century, for sure), the Christian faith took a fateful turn. It went from being a Jewish sect, committed to maintaining complete continuity with historic Judaism, to becoming a Gentile religion with persistent anti-Semitic tendencies. It pains me to say this, but any church historian must

admit this is the case. That anti-Semitism tended to blind Christians from the uniquely Jewish dimensions of the story of Jesus and of his teaching—the very dimensions that have enriched our story. Perhaps then, the anti-Semitism all too common in church history prohibited readers from understanding Jesus's secret message because it is a radically Jewish message. Anti-Semitism would also lead to disinterest in and ignorance of the first-century setting in which Jesus lived and taught. That ignorance would make this kind of understanding unlikely if not impossible. (It may be too much to hope that this reappraisal of Jesus and his message by Christians like myself could make possible new common ground for Jewish-Christian dialogue. Realistic or not, this is my hope.)

The Second- and Third-Century Church: Engaging Greek Philosophy

Second, the church's early divorce from Jewish roots was accompanied by a corresponding love affair with Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy—especially in the Neoplatonic stream in which many early Christian thinkers were immersed—was more interested in universal concepts than particulars, more focused on timeless truths than timely ones. This mind-set would predispose readers of the Gospels to interpret Jesus's message in light of timeless abstractions and miss the historically particular references to contemporary political realities and social movements.¹

Contrast the flood of man-hours spent by the church debating esoteric theological/philosophical issues with the comparative trickle of attention paid to understanding and applying Jesus's kingdom ethics; the difference is staggering—and in light of our exploration here, heartbreaking. Some might argue that the esoteric arguments were necessary; otherwise, Christian theology would have lost its doctrinal integrity and become a subset of some other ideology. But if it did indeed suc-

ceed in saving its doctrinal integrity, one wonders if it lost its ethical integrity in the process, and one wonders what profit there is in saving the former while losing the latter.

The Fourth-Century Church: Fusing Church and Empire

Third, in the early fourth century, Christianity was embraced by the emperor Constantine (whether sincerely or manipulatively for political expediency, we can only speculate). After its divorce from Judaism and affair with neoplatonic philosophy, Christianity now entered a lasting marriage with Constantine's empire. Now as the official religion of the Roman Empire, how could it read the teachings of Jesus as being critical of the empire? No wonder the scholars of the church would drift into "safer" abstract readings that didn't question the status quo—since they now were so thoroughly affiliated and deeply wedded to the very "principalities and powers" that Jesus and his apostles said the kingdom of God had come to overturn.

No doubt there were certain advantages—and perhaps even inevitabilities—to this liaison of church and empire. Taking into account all of the historical dynamics, it's hard to imagine other better storylines that any of us could have created without unintended negative consequences of their own; it's hard to imagine what we could have done differently, even knowing what we know. But the fact remains that much was lost through this unhappy marriage.

The Middle Ages: Converting People by Force

Fourth, as we have seen, with this alliance between church and empire came an endorsement of the use of violence in the service of the kingdom of God. It's hard to imagine getting anything right about Jesus's secret message when the church itself concluded that heretics could be justly tortured using many of the most horrific methods ever invented—evisceration,

stripping of the skin, burning, and the like. Add to this tragedy the repeated incursions of violent "barbarians"—Huns, Goths, Vikings, and so on—along with repeated wars with Muslims, and it's clear that the church was so desperately fighting for survival that it was unlikely to consider alternative understandings of Jesus's teachings even if they were proposed. In fact, it's easy to imagine how alternative understandings proposed in wartime would be equated with treason. And since literacy during these dark times was rare, there wouldn't be a surplus of scholars with time on their hands to explore out-of-the-box understandings of the message of Jesus.

After the Reformation: Forming a New Civil Religion

Fifth, after the Middle Ages, when Protestants broke with the Western church, most new segments of the church simply created new alliances with the secular state, so that instead of one Holy Roman Empire, we had many church-state liaisons. Christendom in these contexts metamorphosed into various new forms of civil religion, each a willing servant of nationalism. Considering Jesus' words about the impossibility of serving two masters, none of these options would prove compatible with the secret message of Jesus. In these contexts, proclaiming the secret message of Jesus as we have considered it here would not only be judged unorthodox; it would also be condemned as unpatriotic—and therefore largely unthinkable. (Some readers may have felt this very objection as they read these words, because civil religion is still alive and well in many quarters.)

The Twentieth Century: Discovering Ancient Documents

A sixth important factor: it wasn't until recent decades that new documents from the ancient world were discovered and translated, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. These documents have given us more and more insight into the religious, political, and social

times in which Jesus lived. Without those documents and the scholarship surrounding them, it was too easy to assume that conventional understandings had taken everything into account and left no room for rethinking. Meanwhile, there have been several intensifications of the “quest for the historical Jesus” in recent centuries. True, these quests too often created a Jesus cast more or less in the image of those doing the scholarship: a rationalist Jesus, a romantic Jesus, and so on. It takes time for bad or biased scholarship to be sorted out from good and for the slices of good scholarship to be in some way integrated with one another—and most importantly, with the biblical text itself. This process is ongoing and suggests that the vision of Jesus’ message we’ve considered here will need continuing revision in the years to come.

The Twenty-First Century: Learning from Our Mistakes

Seventh, until recent decades, the Christian church may not have acknowledged enough mistakes to do any serious self-examination. (No doubt it had made plenty of mistakes, but it had not acknowledged very many.) During the period of colonization, the Western church in both its Protestant and Catholic forms was energized by an expanding sense of mission (mission too often hybridized, sadly, with colonization itself). Like a team in the middle of a winning season or a rock band ascending to superstardom, a religion expanding in partnership with colonization does not find itself in a highly reflective mode, especially about the injustices associated with colonization itself.

But when failures mount and when some failures rise to the level of scandals and atrocities (the conquest and genocide of First Nations, the global slave trade, American slavery and segregation and South African apartheid, environmental degradation, two world wars, the Holocaust, the death toll of Japanese noncombatants when the U.S. dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima

and Nagasaki, pedophilia scandals, and so on), organizations tend to become more reflective. Declining numbers can have a similar effect. “What went wrong?” becomes “What’s wrong with us?”, which in turn can lead to “What’s wrong with our message?” Pride goes before a fall, and perhaps proud organizations need a fall before they are open to repentance or rethinking.

The “Time-Release Capsule” of the New Testament

There’s at least one more reason that must be considered in answer to the question we’re considering here: every religion *including Christianity* can become an opponent to the secret message of Jesus. A leader in the Bruderhof Communities, Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842–1919), understood this danger: “Nothing is more dangerous to the advancement of God’s kingdom than religion. But this is what Christianity has become. Do you not know it is possible to kill Christ with such Christianity?”

The great Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard offered a similarly provocative diagnosis:

The matter is quite simple. The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand we are obliged to act accordingly. Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. My God, you will say, if I do that my whole life will be ruined. How would I ever get on in the world?

Herein lies the real place of Christian scholarship. Christian scholarship is the Church’s prodigious invention to defend itself against the Bible, to ensure that we can continue to be good Christians without the Bible coming too close. Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes, it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament.

A Christian like myself can’t help but read Blumhardt’s and Kierkegaard’s words with a feeling of bitter shame—and with immense gratitude for the New Testament! As Walter Wink has said, “Nevertheless, the story was there for all to read in the Gospels, and it continues to work, like a time-release capsule.”

What was true for Jesus’ contemporaries—that they could miss the kingdom while those from “east and west and north and south” would come in and enjoy the feast—could certainly be true for adherents to the Christian religion today. Wouldn’t it be fascinating if thousands of Muslims, alienated with where fundamentalists and extremists have taken their religion, began to “take their places at the feast,” discovering the secret message of Jesus in ways that many Christians have not? Could it be that Jesus, always recognized as one of the greatest prophets of Islam, could in some way be rediscovered to save Islam from its dangerous dark side? Similarly, wouldn’t there be a certain ironic justice if Jesus’s own kinsmen, the Jewish people, led the way in understanding and practicing the core teaching of one of their own prophets who has too often been hijacked by other interests or ideologies? Or if Buddhists, New Agers, and even former atheists and agnostics came “from east and west and north and south” and began to enjoy the feast of the kingdom in ways that those bearing the name *Christian* have not? Of course, because we have the “time-release capsule” of the New Testament, there is always hope that we Christians will not be the last to rediscover the truth that could change everything. Perhaps the blandly moralistic traditionalism of some of our churches and the angry, fearful, militant arrogance of others have become sufficiently distasteful that we are closer to a rediscovery than we might realize. □

Excerpted from The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything, by Brian D. McLaren (Nashville: W Publishing, April 2006).

A Spiritual Dimension for Business

Ben Cohen and Mal Warwick

Perhaps you run a business of your own. For years, you've been working impossible hours, neglecting family, friends, and the activities you really enjoy.

Maybe you're convinced that a business shouldn't have to treat customers and employees as expendable, ignore the needs of the community where it's located, or pollute the air and water.

Or maybe you've been working for a company that's making use of few if any of your talents. You're a cog in someone else's machine, and you don't get the respect you deserve. Yet you've plugged away, year after year.

Questions about the purpose of life and the meaning of work are certainly not unique to people in business. But they take special shape in the business world. The circumstances that so often lead people in business to wonder about life's meaning are themselves special.

For one thing, business is commonly regarded in our time as a way to pursue the accumulation of money, pure and simple. Loud voices in the business establishment, in academia, and in government insist that it's so. Sometimes they go much further, asserting that making profits is the only legitimate purpose of business.

This view gained prominence in the twentieth century. In a typical business, it is now often felt that life is life and business is business. Whether you're an employee, a manager, or an owner, you're expected to draw a sharp line between the two. And if you exercise authority over others—as a supervisor, manager, executive, or owner—the prevailing logic of business implies that you must reinforce this schizophrenic mindset by requiring it of those who work for you.

Nonsense.

Why does business have to be exclusively about making money? Who says so, anyway?

Why can't work be pleasant and rewarding? Why can't it be fun? Indeed, why can't we be passionate about our work, not just every once in a rare while, but most of the time?

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Why can't business seek to make positive contributions to society—even if that rules out the least-cost option in a particular decision?

Why can't employees be treated with genuine fairness and respect?

Why can't companies contribute to the health of the communities where they do business? In fact, why can't business help narrow the inequities in our economy rather than increase them?

Why can't business recognize that the resources of our planet are limited, and that unending growth will lead only to catastrophe for the entire human race?

In fact, there are hundreds of businesses that are based on the belief that a company can answer some or all of these questions in the affirmative.

Most Americans believe there is a spiritual dimension to their lives as individuals. When a group of people get together as a business, does that spiritual dimension simply disappear? We think not. The spiritual law of "as you give, you shall receive . . . as you sow, so shall you reap" can work just as well in business as in a person's life. Take ShoreBank, for example.

ShoreBank: The Little Bank that Could

Founded in 1973, ShoreBank (www.shorebankcorp.com) is the nation's first and leading community development and environmental bank. With headquarters in Chicago, it has banking operations in Detroit, MI; Cleveland, OH; Ilwaco, WA; and Portland, OR. ShoreBank invests in people and communities to create economic equity and a healthy environment. The firm considers itself a triple bottom line company that equally values profitability, community development, and conservation.

"Our job is to free the energies and resources of our customers," says Jean Pogge, senior vice president of mission-based deposits. Most of those customers are low-to-moderate income members of African-American communities. The bank's home base is twenty minutes south of Chicago, in a community that experienced neglect and the migration of residents and jobs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. "The area was red-lined. There weren't any loans being made here at all," says Pogge. ShoreBank purchased the failing local bank in 1973 and turned it around in eighteen months.

"We've proven that when you understand particular areas and needs, you become the bank of choice," says Joel Freehling, manager of triple bottom line innovations at ShoreBank. "By focusing on lending to individuals, small

businesses, and mission-based organizations in distressed neighborhoods, we're in a position to forge new development opportunities that catalyze positive social change and build strong, vibrant communities."

ShoreBank provides loans to those who wish to revitalize neglected houses or multi-family buildings, or build on abandoned lots. It also lends to nonprofits with capital needs, including churches, civic-oriented organizations, and neighborhood groups. "Due to the destructive nature of the racial change process in the late 1960s, the South Shore community of Chicago would probably have ended up as just another blighted neighborhood with abandoned lots if ShoreBank had not shown confidence in the future of the community by making loans to those who in the past had been denied access to credit," says Pogge. "Now, it's a vibrant, mixed-income community of choice—a place where people are choosing to live and work."

Promoting conservation and environmental improvement is an integral part of ShoreBank's work, accomplished both through its intrinsic efforts to support local people in restoring neighborhoods, and through the incentives it provides residents to incorporate energy-saving elements into their renovations. ShoreBank provides free energy-efficiency evaluations to help loan recipients understand how to reduce utility expenses and improve the comfort of their homes, and offers an Energy Star®-qualified refrigerator from Sears for those who invest in more than \$2,000 worth of energy-efficiency work. "We're hoping to create converts to the energy conservation movement," says Pogge.

"For us, community development, profitability, and conservation are compatible," she adds. "We believe that trying to do both makes us better at both. As we increase community development or conservation output, we make more money."

Since its inception ShoreBank has infused more than \$2 billion in communities across the Midwest that have helped finance the purchase and renovation of more than 49,000 affordable housing residences and create more than 10,000 new jobs for local residents. Despite being mission-driven, ShoreBank's performance continues to exceed that of its peers among commercial banks with assets between one and five billion dollars. In 2004, the bank did \$311 million in new community development loans and \$150 million in new conservation loans. That same year, the bank's losses were one-half of 1 percent. Those are exceptional figures.

The company also requires every employee to understand and implement the "triple bottom line" concept. Each person has performance goals relating to financial performance, community development, conservation, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction.

For example, folks who run the bank's statement processing division met their conservation goals by sending an email out to colleagues soliciting used cell phones and donating them to women's shelters. A customer service representative started a printer-cartridge recycling program for the entire bank. This

year, with the squeeze on margins in the banking industry, employees were asked to come up with cost-saving ideas. Employees responded with an idea to cut back on paper usage.

"Anybody interested in combining their financial and social bottom line must have a long-term perspective and stay the course," says Freehling. "It requires patience and diligence, and it takes more work. People have to be committed. It's harder to do business like this because markets are not set up to make it easy. For example, we were trying to decide what kind of de-icer to put out in front of our building. We knew we could go to the local hardware store and buy it off the shelf, but if you are really concerned about the environment and the community, then you have to take more steps and do more research on what the most appropriate product is."

"It's important to create networks," he continues, "because a lot of these types of solutions come from trying different products. There are not a lot of places where you can go and ask, 'What did you find that worked well, was cost-effective, and socially and environmentally friendly?'"

Pogge adds, "To be a triple bottom line company, you really have to make all three bottom lines equal. It's not an add-on. Corporate giving is not business. The social values have to be core to your operations. We do community development and conservation loans, and we make money doing it."

For ShoreBank, then, values came first. They still do.

Five Fundamentals

Values-driven businesses like ShoreBank are based on five fundamental premises:

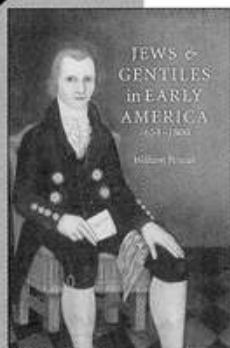
Employees work more productively and pay more attention to a company's profitability when they're working for something they believe in, are treated with respect, are well-paid, and receive a share of the profits. They also tend to feel better if the owner or top managers aren't making out like bandits by comparison.

Customers are more loyal and willing to forgive errors when a company's dedication to quality products and services is obvious and when they deal with highly motivated employees—especially when employees are allowed to take the initiative to apologize and make things right.

Consumers often show a strong preference to do business with companies that demonstrate a commitment to their community and to the environment—and are sometimes disinclined to patronize those who don't. Values alignment between a company and its customers builds loyalty. Customers are less apt to buy from a competitor that will give them a break on price.

Your business will be better prepared for the future and more likely to survive its inevitable disruptions if you build stronger relationships today with your employees, your customers, your suppliers, and your community. And the planet we share will be more likely to survive the ravages of the human race if you do everything in your power to lighten your footprint on the environment. In other words, to use the contemporary jargon, your business will be more *sustainable*.

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Jews and Gentiles in Early America

1654–1800

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"Pencak has once again pushed the boundaries of debate in original and constructive ways."
—Edith Gelles,
Stanford University

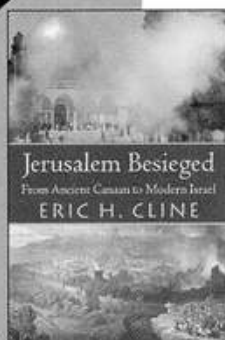
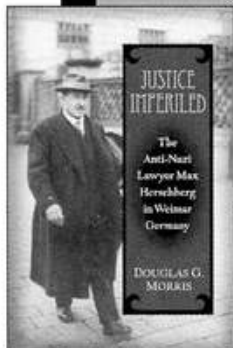
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You—as the company's owner or manager—will live a less stressful and more fulfilling life if you look on your employees, customers, suppliers, and the community as partners rather than adversaries.

No doubt you can point to many exceptions to each of these statements. Highly profitable sweatshops where employees are coerced into working hard. Companies that manage to sell defective products year after year. Customers who return again and again to businesses with a well-known history of exploiting their employees, destroying communities, or polluting the air and water. There's no denying that today's business climate, with its single-minded focus on profits, encourages bad behavior of all sorts. Increasingly, though, companies that rush after short-term gains to the exclusion of all other considerations are having a hard time. From the biggest businesses to the smallest, they're learning that the expectations of employ-

Businesses are learning that the expectations of employees, consumers, and communities alike are evolving. Business as usual doesn't work so well anymore.

ees, consumers, and communities alike are evolving. Business as usual doesn't work so well anymore.

Nor is it the case that socially responsible business practices increase costs and reduce profits. A prize-winning 2004 "meta-study" by Marc Orlitzky, Frank Schmidt, and Sara Rynes examined fifty-two studies on the relationship between corporate financial performance and corporate social performance across industries (Sage Publications, 2003). They found a positive, statistically significant correlation between the two. Investment advisory firms such as Innovest, a company that evaluates securities for mutual funds, pension funds, and other big investors, have reached similar conclusions in recent years. Socially responsible policies and practices are good for business—and well-informed investors are waking up to this reality.

Values-driven business isn't the answer to the world's ills. But it's a start. Without question, the balance of power on the planet today lies in the hands of business. Corporations rival governments in wealth, influence and power. If a values-driven approach can begin to redirect this vast power toward more constructive ends than the simple accumulation of wealth, the human race and planet Earth will have a fighting chance. □

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The Junk Science of Abortion–Breast Cancer Syndrome

Diana Dukhanova

Even as pro-choice advocates seem stuck in an endless limbo of outdated language and desperate appeasement strategies, the anti-choice faction has gained strength by being willing to refocus its language and rhetoric. There is no better example of the anti-choice faction's remarkable adaptability than its adoption of the pseudoscience of Abortion–Breast Cancer Syndrome (ABC).

You may have heard of ABC Syndrome, but you can only understand its full absurdity by listening to those who peddle the theory: "Breast cancer is a disease embraced by feminists in the 1980s as their cause, and perhaps rightly so," announced the ABC Coalition in a June 17 press release, one of its weekly missives. "After all, the feminists' anti-childbearing lifestyle is largely responsible for high rates of female breast cancer in developed nations. Feminists encouraged women to delay the birth of a first child, to leave their homes, focus on careers and have smaller families." In other words, feminism has caused breast cancer.

The pseudo-science of ABC Syndrome is part of a fundamental shift in rhetoric by the anti-abortion lobby as it casts about for support in the post-Roe years. Early on, the anti-abortion lobby framed its argument around the moral chaos it claimed would ensue if the "wages of sin" (unwanted children) could be disposed of. Anti-abortion proponents argued that without the shame of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and single motherhood, sexual license—and women's liberation from traditional roles—would become the rule of the day.

When the majority of the American public failed to panic at the notion that women might choose personal convenience over what was convenient for their husbands and children, the then-burgeoning Religious Right took up the cause of "life" in the 1980s. The anti-abortion lobby labeled the destruction of the fetus—at any stage of development—as wanton infanticide. This approach struck a chord, inspiring the pro-life ranks to grow with advocates certain that criminalizing abortion was not about containing female sexuality

but rather about preventing murder. Opposing abortion was no longer about Bible-thumping, chastity, and the gift of a fertile womb. It was now a human rights movement.

But alas, even the pro-life rhetoric did not work quite well enough. Not only did the goal of a federal ban on abortion seem as unreachable as ever, women were still aborting in record numbers. While pro-life sentiment could now appear compassionate, and seemingly progressive women and youth could unite in opposition to the murder of babies, even some of those who picketed clinics apparently had seen the inside of their operating rooms. Pro-choice activists and clinicians were soon triumphantly waving copious and meticulously collected statistics from the Alan Guttmacher Institute (2002) that showed that women who identified as religious Catholics or Protestants were getting abortions in numbers even higher than their secular sisters. Something was not right. Even at the risk of eternal damnation for promiscuity and murder, women were still terminating their pregnancies. So in 1996 the movement rolled out the fear factor, attempting to link abortion to the most ominous threat in women's health today: breast cancer.

Developed by Joel Brind, a biochemist who founded the misleadingly named Breast Cancer Prevention Institute, the "Abortion–Breast Cancer" link is based on the widely refuted theory that interrupting a first-trimester abortion causes breast cells not only to differentiate—a normal occurrence as pregnant women's bodies prepare for lactation—but to become cancerous. Several large studies have been unable to find such a causal relationship between abortion and breast cancer. For example, a thirty-year Swedish study based on a national medical registry (rather than interviews, which can lead to bias) found no link. Likewise, the largest study ever undertaken on the issue, conducted in Denmark and published in 1997, analyzed the histories of 1.5 million women with no proof of a link. More recently, in January 2000, an issue of *Epidemiology* published a study once again stating that women who have had an induced abortion are at no more of a risk for breast cancer than those who have not.

At one point, Brind's influence was wide enough to temporarily force the National Cancer Institute in 2002 to publish information on its website stating that research on ABC Syndrome was inconclusive; it took a gathering of 100 experts organized by the National Cancer Institute to

Diana Dukhanova investigated ABC Syndrome while a research fellow at Political Research Associates, a progressive think tank studying the Right. An immigrant from Russia, she is a twenty-two-year-old senior at Hampshire College.

debunk him. The National Cancer Institute and American Cancer Society both now agree that no link between breast cancer and abortion exists. (For more references, see www.fwhc.org.)

While groundless, ABC Syndrome effectively supports many pro-lifers' belief that women who abort are selfish creatures unconcerned with the state of their own souls and unafraid of the sin of murder—in short, that they are reachable only through an appeal to self-preservation. At the same time, and brilliantly from a rhetorical point of view, ABC Syndrome allows the pro-life movement to claim as its own what had been one of the driving forces of the otherwise catatonic feminist movement in the 1990s—the fight against breast cancer. No sooner had women taken relative control of the fight against the disease that relentlessly killed their sisters, mothers, daughters, and friends than the “Right to Life” movement redefined the fight as an ideological conspiracy of radical feminists concealing a vital piece of information from their sisters in order to continue their beloved practice of killing babies.

And they've had an impact. The states of Texas, Kansas, and Minnesota now require healthcare providers to inform women about breast cancer risks before performing the abortion, even though mainstream medicine has disproven any such risk. The Coalition on Abortion and Breast Cancer went after breast cancer organizations such as the Komen Foundation for not publicizing the link. In fact, Michigan's Thomas More Law Center filed a lawsuit against Planned Parenthood in 2001 (since dismissed) demanding they inform women of a possible link. Ironically, these same pro-information activists support so-called “conscience clauses,” which would allow a nurse or a pharmacist to refuse information about, or dispensation of, emergency contraception to a rape victim.

In its shameless use of bad science to discourage the “sin” that comes from “bad” sexuality, the Abortion–Breast Cancer link is the “hairy palm” of the Right-to-Life movement. Well into the twentieth century, doctors, ministers, and armchair moralists preached against the medical dangers of masturbation, suggesting that it would cause hair to grow on the masturbator's palms. While the health threats were eventually proven to be bogus—merely a pseudo-scientific basis justifying a fear of sexuality—their legacy has, for many, continued to cast a shadow of guilt and fear over solo sexual experimentation. Similarly, the ABC link is the final frontier of the pro-life movement's mainstream expansion, with its engineers hoping to discourage individual abortions through fear of disease while co-opting the feminist-oriented fight against breast cancer for the anti-abortion faction.

The socio-political construction of the link has been particularly sly, combining manipulated medical research with hackneyed anti-feminist stereotypes made fresh again. Groups promoting the link, such as the ABC Coalition, paint the “concealment” of the link as further proof that pro-choice

really is pro-abortion, with man- and baby-hating feminists encouraging the procedure as a technique of liberation. At the same time, the charge of concealment feeds conveniently into the claim that pro-choice is about money—“the abortion mills”—and that the breast cancer fundraising establishment, in partnership with “mills” like Planned Parenthood, benefits handsomely from suppressing information about ABC and actively contributing to the growth of the disease. Here, for example, is the conclusion of the ABC Coalition's June 17 press release:

It was in the 1980s that feminist business women developed their breast cancer fundraising businesses. They told the press that breast cancer was uniquely their issue....Today, feminists who lead the cancer fundraising industry fiercely defend their religious sacrament of abortion against any efforts to recognize it as a risk factor. It matters not that they are destroying the future for millions of young people around the world who are contemplating abortions.

As part of a larger picture, ABC Syndrome represents the largest, most well-funded push for a social leap backwards in recent history. Even those who oppose abortion for religious reasons must find awkward this courtship between pseudoscience and fundamentalist religious sentiment—the same type of alliance which was once characterized by selling doctor-supported chastity devices and promoting the consumption of corn flakes to avoid the “proven risk” of blindness. Groups like the Focus on the Family Physician Research Council, the Christian Medical and Dental Association, Pro-Life OBGYN, and other anti-abortion, anti-contraception groups not only widely disseminate their research but also lobby on the Hill. Under the benevolent eyes of the Bush administration, their efforts challenging sound scientific research on women's health and reproduction are gaining traction.

The pro-choice movement may have comprehensive, diversified studies, respect for women's agency, and common sense, but unless it combats this unholy alliance of pseudoscience and fundamentalism it will lose ground. Perhaps most important, the pro-choice movement must learn how to gain the kind of rhetorical flexibility the pro-life movement has shown, without negating its own values. In short, if the pro-choice movement is going to succeed in protecting women's rights, it will have to fight this rhetorical battle as well. □

Sources: “Research and Destroy: How the religious right promotes its own ‘experts’ to combat mainstream science,” by Chris Mooney, *Washington Monthly*, Oct 2004; “Facts in Brief: Induced Abortion in the United States,” Alan Guttmacher Institute, May 18, 2005, taken from Jones RK, Darroch JE and Henshaw SK, “Patterns in the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions in 2000-2001,” *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2002, 34(5):226-235.

Hollywood: How the Religious Right is Reshaping the Movie Industry

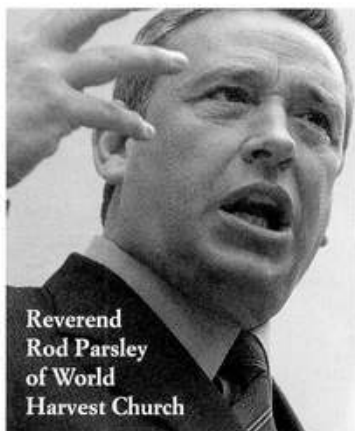
Terri Murray

In November, Sony Pictures released *Left Behind: World at War*, its first major DVD aimed at the Christian market. With a production budget of almost \$10 million, *World at War* is a hybrid of action-adventure and Christian evangelism. Americans are snatching up copies of the film from Wal-Mart, Costco, and other big-box retailers. Some 3,200 churches have already screened the film as part of a grassroots publicity campaign.

The *Left Behind* movies are adaptations of the books by Reverend Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, which have sold more than 62 million copies. *World at War* is the third installment in the series. The books are inspired by LaHaye's interpretation of the book of Revelation. Some evangelical readers believe they give a true glimpse of the events of the so-called end-times, when true believers will be "raptured" and everyone else will be left behind to suffer seven years of tribulation. *Glorious Appearing*, the latest installment in the *Left Behind* book series, describes a Christ who wreaks terrible vengeance on non-believers upon his final return to earth. "The term 'non-believers' refers to all people, including Christians, who don't share LaHaye's ideology," says Joan Boaker of Theocracywatch.org.

LaHaye's ideology, despite its ring of crackpot extremism, is no fringe doctrine in America. His are the core beliefs of a movement called Christian Reconstruction. Also referred to as "Dominion Theology" or "Dominionism," Reconstructionism sets much of the political agenda for conservative Christian political activism in the United States. Sociologist Sara Diamond describes dominion theology as a political mandate for Christians to "gradually occupy all secular institutions until Christ returns."

Religious activism per se is a healthy sign that believers have the courage of their convictions. Religion encourages a sense of social responsibility, which in itself is a noble sentiment. But



Reverend
Rod Parsley
of World
Harvest Church

religion can provide the rationale and motivation for any political end, from liberalism to fascism. Reconstructionism is only suspect because it aims to eliminate religious freedom, pluralism, and democratic forms of government. Its doctrine ignores the fact that all beliefs require believers, and that genuine believers are personally convinced, not politically coerced.

The Christian Reconstruction movement was founded by the late Rousas Rushdoony, whose goal was to replace the U.S. Constitution with the harsh legal code of the Old Testament. Rush-

doony authored some thirty books, including *The Independent Republic*, in which he wrote, "Christianity and Democracy are inevitably enemies."

In Ohio, Reverend Rod Parsley of World Harvest Church recently told his congregation that, "Americans must be 'Christocrats'—citizens of both their country and the Kingdom of God. And that is not a democracy; that is a theocracy. That means God is in control, and you are not."

Left Behind author Tim LaHaye was the co-founder and first president of the ultra-secretive Council for National Policy, a far-right organization whose list of members reads like a Who's Who of Republican Reconstructionists. Among them are such notables as Rushdoony, Pat Robertson, Oliver North, Paul Weyrich, Phyllis Schlafly, and Gary North (Rushdoony's son-in-law). In 1982 Gary North wrote, "We must use the doctrine of religious liberty ... until we train up a generation of people who know that there is no religious neutrality, no neutral law, no neutral education, and no neutral civil government. Then they will get busy constructing a Bible-based social, political and religious order which finally denies the religious liberty of the enemies of God."

Given the unholy financial alliances between America's largest voting machine companies and Reconstructionist organizations, one could be forgiven for suspecting a theocratic conspiracy. Sister companies Diebold and Election Systems & Software (ES&S) together tabulate an estimated 80 percent of the American vote and have dominated the national transition to electronic voting equipment, paid for by

Terri Murray holds a BFA from New York University and a Master of Theology from the University of London. She is managing director of Blacksheep DV Productions and head of Film Studies at Hampstead College of Fine Arts in London.

federal funding. The two companies stem from a single pair of brothers, Bob and Todd Urosevich, who oversaw the development of the equipment's software, the source code of which is private property, and as such is not open to public inspection. American citizens are literally trusting vote tabulation to private Republican firms.

As if that weren't enough reason for alarm, the capital for the Urosevich brothers' business venture can be traced back to right-wing ideologues William and Robert Ahmanson, members of the Chalcedon Institute, a far-right organization that journalist John Sugg describes as "the Holy See for Reconstruction." The Ahmansons bought a 68 percent stake in American Information Services (AIS) back in 1984. In 1997, AIS purchased Business Records Corp. (BRC), formerly Texas-based election company Cronus Industries, to become Election Systems and Software. One of the BRC owners was Carolyn Hunt of the right-wing Hunt oil family, which supplied much of the original funding for the Council for National Policy.

The Christian Reconstruction movement has exploited all means of expanding its base, not all of which are as irregular as forming alliances with voting machine companies. The movement has become more media-savvy than ever. Coral Ridge Ministries in Ft. Lauderdale Florida is a \$37 million-a-year enterprise, with a TV-and-radio audience of 3 million. At its helm is Reverend D. James Kennedy, who tells his congregation that it is time to reclaim America, not soul by soul, but election by election. "Our job is to reclaim America for Christ, whatever the cost," says Kennedy. "As the vice regents of God, we are to exercise Godly dominion and influence over our neighborhoods, our schools, our government, our literature and arts, our sports arenas, our entertainment media, our news media, our scientific endeavours—in short, over every aspect and institution of human society."

And so far, Dominionists appear to be achieving their aim. The Religious Right substantially dominates the Republican party in at least ten (and perhaps as many as thirty) of the fifty states, according to Chip Berlet of Political Research Associates. At the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) annual convention in Orange County, California, Frank Wright, the group's new president, claimed that 130 members of the House of Representatives are now "born again."

The NRB association comprises some 1,600 Christian radio and television broadcasters, with an estimated audience of 141 million. One seminar at the convention was entitled "Finding God in Hollywood."

Politician Pat Robertson has used his Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) to recruit followers and pursue political goals that include making "Christian values" a part of our government.

Robertson and evangelist Jerry Falwell have expressed their belief that the right-wing religious coalition could amass enough votes to run the country. Although the Falwell-Robertson political vision is not shared by the entire evangelical community, it has guided the direction of the NRB.

According to its brochure, "Programs to Change the World," CBN planned a global evangelization program via multinational broadcasting. "This is not just another skirmish with the enemy," the brochure proclaims. "This is a major confrontation, perhaps one of the last, great, strategic battles on earth for the souls and minds of men."

The Christian Right couldn't have picked a better time to make their foray into the entertainment industry. Americans seem to have a voracious appetite for Biblical drama. Born-again Catholic Anne Rice has just released her dramatic version of *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*. The book's opening scene involves a seven-year-old Jesus awakening to his powers by accidentally killing a playground bully, then raising him from the dead. With such a cinematic opening, Rice may be "casting Christ as the new Harry Potter, or the next Neo from the Matrix," said Chris Ayers of the *London Times*. Rice is hoping that Mel Gibson will turn it into a prequel to *The Passion of the Christ*. And why wouldn't he? Gibson, a hardline Catholic himself, hit paydirt in 2004 with *The Passion of the Christ*. Produced by a secular company, the film took more than \$300 million in its first four weeks, making it number eighteen in a list of best-selling films of all time, despite claims by Jewish groups that the film was anti-Semitic.

Hyde Park Entertainment and Newman/Tooley Films have announced plans to make a film adaptation of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, with a release date for sometime in 2007. The plot will follow Lucifer's failed rebellion in heaven and Adam and Eve's subsequent fall from grace.

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is still selling by the truckload, and the film adaptation is set to open sometime in May, 2006. When filming began at Lincoln Cathedral in England, Tom Hanks was confronted by protestors, including nuns. The film's producers were forced by religious leaders to make a \$180,000 "donation" in order to film at the Cathedral. Sony Pictures, which is distributing the film, has hired experts on marketing to Christian families, in preparation for the controversy the film's backers expect upon its release. Disney has also hired experts in Christian PR to assist on *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Following the phenomenal success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* last year, Hollywood studios have grown keenly aware of the power of Christian conservatives and have often altered images and dialogue in current movies to suit them. If the studio executives seem a bit too obliging, it is not because of any secret loyalty to Christian conservatives. It is because Hollywood always chooses mammon over God.

For better or worse, Hollywood producers have a long history of tailoring their product to the sensibilities of Christian pressure groups. The power of the motion picture to appeal to broad sections of the population, as well as the belief in its peculiar power to influence morals, social outlook, and behavior, has made the movies a key site of cultural power struggles from as far back as 1909. That year, the National Board of Film Review, a self-regulating body, was set up to

continued on page 61

The End of Public Space: Israel's New Shopping Malls

Micha Odenheimer

Shopping malls, I've always found, are difficult places to think—even to think about shopping malls. Is it the buzz in your ears coming from the "mall radio" and PA system? Or the windowless symmetry of the malls, designed so that there is no easy way to know what city you are in or even where the gate you need to find in order to reach your car is located? "What we are trying to do in malls," says Gila, director of marketing for the Bus Station Mall in Jerusalem, "is to create a disconnection, to make a bubble into which people can escape and detach from everything else."

From everything, that is, except shopping. "Actually, it is forbidden to do anything in here that is not connected with buying—looking at the merchandise, paying, having the experience of receiving your goods," Gila continues. "The funny thing is that the public doesn't grasp that the mall is not a public place. For example, if you are tired, it is forbidden to sit down. Soldiers on their way to or from their base sometimes sit down here on the floor. We don't allow them to—we get them up. And if someone is passing out fliers or soliciting donations without our explicit permission, we throw them out."

Witnessing just such an incident several years ago is what started me thinking about the meaning of shopping malls. I was having coffee in Kanyon Hadar, a relatively modest and pleasant Jerusalem shopping mall, when two polite and well-scrubbed high-school students collecting money for a well-known Israeli organization that helps autistic children approached me. It was National Autism Day, they told me. But before I could reach into my pocket, a security guard had appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, and was ordering the teenagers to leave. "But why?" I wanted to know. "This mall is a privately owned area," I was told. "You can't have it both ways," I argued, waving my hand to indicate the hundreds of people meandering through the mall.



"You can't buy an area, open it up to the public, move the life that used to be on the street inside, and then call it private when it suits your purposes."

My somewhat clumsy argument made little impression on the security guard, but I later learned that the United States Supreme Court, in 1946, had more eloquently expressed the

idea I was struggling to articulate. The case involved the right of free speech and expression in the business district of a "company town" where workers were housed by their bosses. "The more an owner, for his advantage, opens up his property for use by the public in general," the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, "the more do his rights become circumscribed by the statutory and constitutional rights of those who use it." In 1968, the Supreme Court ruled that a privately owned shopping mall was the "functional equivalent" of the business district in a company town, and that malls too should be considered public places when considering questions of free speech.

Later U.S. Supreme Court decisions, made after the composition of the court had become more conservative, diminished the impact of the earlier decisions. In 1980, a group of university students sued a California shopping mall for preventing them from handing out pamphlets and signing people on to a petition. The Court ruled that the federal Constitution did not protect the right of free speech in private malls—but that the California Constitution, whose free speech clause is more broadly worded, did. The students were allowed to continue their petition drive within the mall. In California, and five other states, free speech is thus guaranteed within shopping malls. New York is not one of these states. In March 2003, during the weeks before the Iraq war began, Stephen Downs and his son were arrested in a shopping mall in Albany, New York, after they refused to take off tee shirts that had anti-war slogans printed on them.

And what about Israel? The directors of shopping centers I spoke to were uniformly convinced that citizens had no rights—other than the right to shop—within the mall. In fact, I was told, within the bubble of the mall, where surveillance cameras and security guards abound, rights usually monopolized by

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the government and its police force have somehow been transmitted, as if by a special laying on of hands, to the mall's management. "We have the right to detain people until the police come, if they cause trouble," said Moshe Rosenblum, who is director general of Herzliya's sparkling Kanyon Sheva Kochavim, as well as of two malls in Canada, and a leading advocate for malls in negotiations with the government. "And we have the right to search people, not just when they enter, but at any time. We have two people on our security staff who have been trained and given authorization by the police to execute searches. And of course, people do not have the right to strike, to give out pamphlets, or to use a megaphone. In general, in the mall, enforcement of the law is more immediate and more ubiquitous than on the street." Lawyers from the Aguda Le' Zechuyot HaEzrach (Association for the Rights of Citizens) said they were unaware of any cases in which citizens had challenged the restriction of their rights within shopping malls.

But why does all of this matter? After all, no one is forcing people to walk into a mall, and they can leave anytime they please—as long, of course, as they have not been detained.

And yet it matters a great deal. The midrash in Bamidbar Rabbah tells us that the Torah could only have been given in the wilderness, because the wilderness, like the Torah, is "befer," and belongs to no one. By the same token, democracy, whether Ancient Athenian, French, or American, as well as virtually every modern struggle for the expansion of human rights, could only have been conceived in cities, where there are crowded streets and public spaces in which people can gather and ideas can be debated and spread. From time immemorial, the material and the spiritual, the economic and the cultural, have met in the marketplace, in an area thickened with people of all kinds, brought together by the web of public commerce. From Mishnaic times onwards, the Torah has been read in public and the Rabbinic Bet Din has met on Mondays and Thursdays because those were the traditional market days. In *The Case for Democracy*, Israel b'Aliyah leader, MK Natan Scharansky, says that the acid test of whether a society is a totalitarian fear society or a democratic free society is in the quality of freedom to be found in the town square. Can you express your criticism of the government in it without fear of arrest or physical harm?

But what if there is no town square? All over the country, since the first successful mall, the Ayalon, was built in Ramat Gan in 1985, the downtown area of Israeli cities—the place where the life of the town, its cultural and political heartbeat, are situated—has suffered, often grievously, because of the introduction of the mall. According to Moshe Rosenblum, 32 percent of all retail commercial transactions, excluding the sale of cars and real estate, take place in one of Israel's 200 or so malls. If one excludes food buying, the largest percentage of sales in a typical family budget, and an area of retail dominated by free standing supermarkets, these statistics indicate that a large majority of buying in Israel now takes place in malls. No wonder that the degradation and downgrading of

the downtowns of every large city in Israel (including Tel Aviv, Beersheva, Jerusalem, and Haifa) have coincided with the rise of the malls.

The situation is even more severe in smaller cities, where the local mall, or even worse, a gigantic "Power Center" built outside the city on agricultural lands, has largely destroyed the main street, which gave every town its unique character and its sense of community. The vision of those in the business of developing and managing malls is of a future in which just about all commercial enterprises are located within the controlled environment of the mall. "You will still need places other than the mall," says Rosenblum, without irony. "For entertainment, cafés, restaurants. Like in the Marina in Herzliya. You can't have all the entertainment in the mall."

The mall is the new equivalent of the "matnas" (community center), according to R, who wishes to be anonymous because she is still working in the mall industry. After being involved in the management of malls for the past ten years, R has become increasingly aware of the destructive possibilities of mall culture. "People come here to meet each other, to be with other people. But, it is a 'mantas' reduced to one possible activity."

"I kept trying to come up with ideas to connect the mall to the community," says Elana Ber, an artist who was in charge of decoration for the Nes Ziona Mall for seven years. "I wanted, for example, to create a corner where pictures painted by Nes Ziona children would be displayed. But that idea was nixed in the end." Elena points to a corner of the mall, just past the food court in which we are sitting, and exclaims, "I keep thinking about how I might dress up a corner like that, make it beautiful and pleasant for the people that come through here. I keep forgetting that the owners think of the mall only as a device for making money."

But at least the malls are good for business, we might say—and that is no small thing. Air conditioned, impervious to rain or sun, well-lit, shiny clean, safe, with ample parking, open from morning until late evening, malls provide a perfect environment for shopping. In the mall, shopping merges into entertainment—how else to explain the huge crowds that surge into the malls on Thursday and Saturday nights? And yet, on second glance, it is possible to say that the malls have been good for only one kind of business and bad—even fatal—for every other kind.

Chain stores are the one kind of business that malls cultivate, empower, and spread. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of the stores in Israeli malls are part of a chain. "The chain stores grew out of the malls!" Rosenbloom tells me excitedly, reveling for a moment in the power of malls. "When Kanyon Ayalon began in 1985, how many chain stores were there in Israel? Elite, Steimatsky, Ata? Now you can hardly count them. The malls gave them the power!"

To understand why malls and chain stores are fused together in a lovers' embrace, you first have to know how

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Learning to Love Sharon

Anshel Pfeffer

Israel's most influential journalist, Nahum Barnea, wasn't satisfied by reckoning with just the past twelve months. In his October 3, 2005 Rosh Hashanah column in *Yediot Ahronot*, "The Man Who Was Hated Twice," Barnea tried to answer the main question of Israeli politics over the last five years: How had Ariel Sharon—the man that former Prime Minister Menachem Begin was reluctant to appoint Defense Minister out of fear that he might "encircle the Prime Minister's office with tanks," the man who, since the Lebanon debacle, had become both a hated local figure and an international pariah—suddenly become the most powerful and popular prime minister in Israel's history since David Ben-Gurion?

Barnea quoted from a pamphlet published in 1983 dedicated to chronicling Sharon's crimes: "There is a need for a movement to stop Ariel Sharon, a movement that will be based on both doves and hawks. Likud and Labor, religious and secular ... a movement against unthinking and unchecked military adventurism, in favor of democracy. If it won't be set up now, it might be too late." Those were, of course, Barnea's own words. And he admits, "I am not sure what the verdict is today. Should I be proud of them or ashamed?" Barnea was tacitly admitting that for the last two years, up through the immediate aftermath of Disengagement, the Israeli media served as cheerleaders for Sharon and his policies.

In order to understand how far the Israeli media has traveled, you only have to look at Gadi Bloom and Nir Hefetz's *The Shepherd*, the first biography of Sharon in over twenty years. Published in September 2005, *The Shepherd* features an endearing cover photo of Grandfather Arik holding a goat, (a pose reminiscent of Ben-Gurion) and describes Sharon as the father of the nation, who has tirelessly labored for sixty years in the service of the state, and who, even if he made a few missteps, always did so in service of the right cause.

Now compare this volume with its most immediate predecessor, the 1985 book *Doesn't Stop at Red*, by *Ha'aretz* correspondent Uzi Benziman, published in English two years later with the title *An Israeli Caesar*. Written after Sharon had been forced to resign in the wake of the Kahan commission's findings regarding his responsibility for the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Beirut—massacres in which over 2,000 Palestinian civilians were killed—*Doesn't Stop* featured a

threatening photo of Sharon shouting on its cover, portraying the former defense minister as a dangerous, power-hungry, potential dictator.

For the first time in his political career, in September 2005, Sharon addressed the United Nations General Assembly. It was a victory tour for the prime minister. After successfully completing the pullback from Gaza, he now greeted dozens of world leaders who were eager to meet the former leper. During his stay in New York, Sharon conducted a briefing for Israeli reporters at his hotel. Accustomed to entering rooms packed with hostile journalists primed for battle, this time Sharon knew that he owned the room. He sat down, and slowly started to take off his jacket and roll up his sleeves. When he was comfortable, the prime minister looked indulgently around the room.

"Well, how are you all?" he asked, and began an hour of jocular conversation that commenced with one veteran diplomatic correspondent asking Sharon, "How was your meeting with (Pakistani President) Musharraf's wife?" and concluded with Sharon making a couple of jokes at the expense of his Likud rival, Benjamin Netanyahu, all dutifully written down by reporters. Effortlessly, Sharon had the entire group of cynical and seasoned hacks, the A-Team of Israeli journalism, eating out of his hand, vying with each other over witticisms, eager to bask in the Prime Minister's glory.

How did Sharon affect this sex change in the local media, suddenly transformed from an aggressive tomcat into a cuddly Persian lapcat? When did the war-mongering, trouble-making extremist become a responsible statesman? There is a lot to be said about the shallowness of a fickle press and the changing of tune and taste in accordance to public whim. But at least in this case, there are a number of special factors that came together to create the metamorphosis of the Sharon image.

The first of course is the disengagement process. The Israeli media was almost overwhelmingly in favor of the pullback, even before it knew all the details of the plan. The response was almost identical to that of the Oslo Agreement a decade earlier, when the Israeli press uncritically accepted the arrangement. The reason for this near consensus is clear. From an Israeli point of view, the local media is left-of-center. In Israel, this broadly means that the majority of journalists are in favor of a territorial compromise with the Palestinians. (Of course, the unilateral nature of the Disengagement invited criticism from the Left, in Israel and abroad, but that

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debate never got off the ground in Israel's mainstream media.) Sharon's opponents from the Right, the settler movement and his critics within the Likud were quick to accuse the formerly critical press of supplying Sharon with a media umbrella.

The timing of the Disengagement's unveiling, when the police investigation into Sharon's and his son's financial dealings was intensifying, caused one Knesset member to state, "the depth of the pullback equals the extent of the investigation." Certainly, it gave rise to the claim that the press were cooperating in Sharon's desperate attempt to buy off the supposedly left-leaning legal establishment at the settler's expense. Most journalists dismissed these charges, answering with a degree of justification that the suspicions of corruption were widely covered in the media. Indeed, some of them were discovered first by reporters, and the decision by Attorney General Meni Mazuz not to indict Sharon attracted a good deal of criticism in the press. But at least two very prominent journalists admitted that they were cutting Sharon some slack.

Eight months before the Disengagement, at a symposium in Jerusalem, Amnon Abromovitch, the veteran commentator of *Channel 2 News* said, "Sharon is the only one who can carry out the Disengagement, so I think he should be protected like an etrog, in a closed box with cotton wool.... He was the founder of the settlements and if, towards the end of his days, he has a change of heart and is willing to dismantle them, in my opinion he should be protected not only from the political flags but also from the legal ones."

Abromovitch was roundly criticized by many colleagues for his frank admission, including those who were also in favor of disengagement. But according to David Landau, the Editor-In-Chief of *Ha'aretz*, Israel's left-wing daily newspaper, Abromovitch fairly accurately described the conduct of at least part of the Israeli media. In a feature that appeared in the *Columbia Journalism Review* after the Disengagement, Landau admitted that "Sharon's peccadilloes" had to "go by the board when compared to what moral and ethical benefits we can achieve with disengagement...I subjugate, consciously—it's not that I'm doing it in an unconscious or careless way—I consciously have subjugated those values to the overriding advantage I see for Israel's democracy."

Whether the Israeli media actually "forgave" Sharon any of his financial wrongdoings "in return" for pulling out of the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria is still debatable. During the year of the Disengagement, further details of corruption continued to appear, albeit at a much slower rate than in the previous years, yet none of them were career threatening. Still subject to inquiry are serious new findings about Sharon's financial affairs that may have been quashed by the press during this time. In all likelihood, such questions will never be conclusively answered. What is clear, though, is that Sharon's financial affairs aside, the Israeli media wholeheartedly enlisted in the Disengagement cause. Though Sharon's opponents on the Right were given

a full hearing, they were often portrayed as dangerous fanatical elements, and not subject to serious analysis.

A little historical perspective is important here. The popularity that Sharon has been enjoying for the last couple of years isn't entirely new. He might have been the most vilified figure in Israeli politics for nearly two decades, but it is important to recall that for many years Sharon was considered a national hero. Beginning in the early 1950s, when Sharon's mythological Unit 101 was still a military secret, he was a minor legend. It was not until the mid-Seventies that, during the disillusionment which befell the country after 1973's Yom Kippur War, the straight-speaking general came to be widely seen as one of the few leaders to have not lost his head during the conflict, and the chant "Arik, Melech Israel" ("Arik, King of Israel") became incredibly popular. In fact, during the war, Israel's Labor-dominated political and military leadership was so worried about the near-idolatrous press Sharon was receiving for encircling Egypt's Third Army and crossing the Suez Canal that, at the height of battle, they diverted as many reporters away from Sharon's advance headquarters in the Sinai as possible.

Sharon abruptly lost his popularity in 1982, when the press turned on him following his conduct of the Lebanon war as Defense Minister. However, Sharon and his close circle of friend and advisors, (dubbed "the farm forum" after Sharon's ranch in southern Israel) always believed that the drubbed warrior would one day regain his hero status. In 2000, it seemed that the time had come. Over the course of the previous five years, Israel had experienced two prime ministers from a younger generation, Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak. Both quickly disappointed their constituencies and lost public support; that was when Sharon, at that point no more than a caretaker leader of the Likud Party, began to sense his chance.

With Yitzhak Rabin dead, Yitzhak Shamir deep in retirement, and Shimon Peres proven incapable of ever winning an election, Sharon was suddenly perceived as the last responsible grown-up on Israel's political scene. Still, his coterie of advisors knew it would be an uphill struggle. They began their process of rehabilitating Sharon by pursuing a dual strategy of changing the Israeli public's impression of the man and transforming Sharon's public behavior. Sharon was sold to the public as the grandfather of the nation. Voters were reminded of his battlefield credentials, and in more recent campaign footage, he was shown on his farm with his grandchildren, the embarrassing intervening years conveniently airbrushed over.

Sharon was so eager to become Prime Minister that for the first time he allowed himself to be managed by his press advisors. Gone was the feisty interviewee who could always be relied upon by news producers to stir up controversy in the studio. For the first time, Sharon wasn't giving interviews where he might get swept away, or put uncomfortably on the spot by an embarrassing question. And in all of his public appearances, Sharon stuck to his talking points. His landslide

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Making Room for SPIRIT

When Henry Ford invented the assembly line in 1913, he made it possible for low-skilled workers to get good pay while producing cheaper cars. The only downside was that workers had to perform the same repetitive tasks day after day.

What Antonio Gramsci called “Fordism” first lay bare an ongoing dilemma for modernity. Increasing efficiency and productivity meant that we would have to segment and compartmentalize our lives. Today, few of us in the developed world work in factories, but we are cut off from ourselves in so many other ways. Sitting at desks most of the day, we only experience the physicality of our bodies at the gym; time with friends becomes a scheduled event rather than a casual occurrence; we eat prepackaged food, often while racing to swallow the last bite before our next appointment; we save our encounters with God for one morning a week, if at all.

To achieve the material measure of a “good” life, we have denied ourselves the immaterial sustenance that makes a life worth living.

In the 1930s, workers protested the conditions at factories like Ford’s. They joined unions and demanded that they be treated like people, not machines. Today, people are once again rising up against a life that does not seem worth living. Materialism is not enough. We want a life that matters. Across the globe, people are demanding a return to a life infused with spirit.

How do we make room for spirit in modern America?

The Religious Right seems to have the answer. They call for the integration of spirituality into everyday life, from how

we conduct our personal business to how our government conducts our country’s business. And they practice what they preach. Go to their websites and you will find they are as concerned about getting families together for family dinners and saying grace at meals as they are about choosing the next justice for the Supreme Court. Indeed, at points, they sound no different than the Religious Left.

Yet there is a difference between the Religious Right and the Religious or Spiritual Left. The Religious Right rose out of a fear that the traditional family was under attack. Women’s rights, abortion rights, gay rights, and the growing independence of teenagers all seemed destined to overturn (and, to be fair, were designed to overturn) the traditional patriarchal family. Why focus on the family? The Religious Right’s focus on the family comes directly out of a late-nineteenth-century ideology that was a forerunner to Fordism.

In this nineteenth-century worldview, men were free to go out into the world, making deals and focusing solely on material profit, because women remained at home tending to the family’s moral and spiritual

development. In short, materialism and spirituality were compartmentalized—materialism belonged outside of the home, spirituality within it; materialism was the province of men, spirituality the province of women. Women were put on a pedestal as the carriers of family virtue, but in exchange had to agree to give up any power within the material world, including control over their own bodies.

This is the world to which the Religious Right would like to return. The world of men—that is, the world of business—

Who Said This?

“We are driven by the belief that people of faith have a right and a responsibility to be involved in the world around them. That involvement includes community, social and political action”

Answer: Christian Coalition of America

SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM

should be free of regulation, a free market that functions without regard to morality or values. The world of women—that is, the world of the family and home—must be shielded, protected, and defined by a set of rigid values.

Ironically, the Religious Right's answer to the extreme segmentation and compartmentalization of modern life is... more of the same. They want to replace our feeling that none of the parts of our life fit together with a tightly scripted division between work and home, men and women, materialism and spirit.

The Spiritual Left proposes a different approach. We seek to *integrate* the spiritual elements that have been segmented out into private life and weekend religion, bringing love, generosity and awe back into the world of work and into our daily lives. We want a spirituality that will empower women and

men equally. We want to reconstruct our political, social, and economic institutions on the basis of a New Bottom Line that values spirit, develops a purpose-oriented life, and rewards us for building loving community and serving the common good.

The pieces we have assembled here, drawn from the first Spiritual Activism conference of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (an arm of Tikkun), offer a flavor of the thinking of this new Spiritual Left. For more information on the Network, read the update on page 48 of this issue and go to our website at www.tikkun.org. Stayed tuned for more to come.

JO ELLEN GREEN KAISER
Senior Editor, TIKKUN

Van Jones

Why are you here? Why were you born? Some of you have always been a little bit different. You've been special, you've been sensitive, even as a child you couldn't stand it. You couldn't stand the pain in the house. You couldn't stand the pain in the neighborhood. You couldn't see even one person in school get bullied or mistreated. Why were you born? You had cousins who could watch horror movies on TV and laugh; you'd have to get out of the room.

Why were you born?

There is a reason that people like you, people like me, and millions of people around the world who feel like we do are coming into the world in greater numbers. If you go to the elementary and nursery schools now, these children that are being born are more like us. They're very wise. They're very sensitive. They cry easily. They tell the truth when they're not supposed to, just like you all.

Something is happening in the world. A lot of options are being eliminated.

Global warming, the energy crunch, wars, bombings and the right-wing military-petroleum complex that's grabbing Washington, D.C. are ruining the country and burying the Constitution. The choices for the human family are becoming very clear. We are going to experience either a great extinction or a great rebirth, a great renewal, or a great redemption.

The people at this conference (NSP 2005) are people who've been preparing themselves. You didn't know for

what, but you were questing. You go to workshops, retreats, even late at night online, you've been preparing yourself for something. And what you've been preparing yourself for is now. I am here to tell you that you have succeeded. I'm here to tell you that you did it. You made it. You are here, now, when the world needs you. Your heart is a muscle. And you stretched it out. I want to thank you for pushing through. I want to thank you for coming back again and again, because you are needed now.

All the hardcore political activists, all the Marxists, the

Do we have room

Maoists, and the Trotskyites, the anarchists, and the left social democrats—all of them are in therapy now. Am I wrong? They're getting some help! They're getting some healing! They're buying self-help books.

Clearly, there's something happening, and it's in that convergence of spiritual people becoming active and active people becoming spiritual that the hope of humanity now rests. The world is swinging around the spiritual politics people. You've always been political, and you've always been spiritual. Sometimes you're hiding the political part, sometime you hiding the spiritual part, but you are both.

This country—our struggle and political movement—is not waiting for someone to come with a critique. Do you know that? Dr. Martin Luther King didn't get famous giving a speech called "I have a Complaint." The country is waiting

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for a movement that can inspire it and not just critique it. That's why this will not be a series of debates. It's going to be a series of deeds. Because when you base a movement on debates, you have division from the beginning. But when you have the deeds, the labels don't matter.

We don't have to go tell the secular Left about what they missed, what they didn't understand. We don't have to tell them that they picked up the wrong candidate. You know they did.

We forget sometimes that the people who poured their blood out on the ground in this country to turn an apartheid regime into a struggling, fledgling democracy, the so-called civil rights workers, when they went to face the dogs, when they went to face the fire hoses, when they sat shivering in cold jail cells, soaked in blood; when they faced lynch mobs, when they saw their children shot down in the street, they didn't march out of laundromats, they didn't march out of high school gymnasiums, they didn't march out of sports arenas or malls. They marched out of church houses. And they were singing church songs. And they were praising an old Nazarean carpenter named Jesus Christ. That was a great moment for people of faith.

But it was a great moment for progressive Leftists, too; it was a great moment for red states and blue states and it was a great moment for humanity, not because of the debate, but because the deed was right. When Fannie Lou Hamer stood up in 1964 in Atlantic City after she had been locked out of the Democratic National Convention, despite the fact that the freedom workers had put three children—two Jews and a black—in the ground, dead, for freedom and justice, she went to the great hall of democracy and they slammed the door in her face. Hamer then turned to face the camera, and the words from her mouth were not words of the secular Left.

trafficking in human bodies. The correctional corporations of America are traded on the stock exchange, turning the Dow Jones into a high tech slave auction in American today. Let my people go. Let's not descend into cheap posturing and tell people that they're wrong. Let's do the right thing.

There's a deep mythological and theological construct that undergirds the present dysfunction of the Left. We are enacting over and over again, as progressives, a myth called David and Goliath. We are not wrong for adopting it. It foregrounds the courage and willingness we need to stand in opposition even against great odds, the possibility of miraculous, unpredictable, glorious outcomes. But there's a shadow side of this myth that has infected the entire Left. A politics of confrontation, a politics of accusation, a politics that requires that we always be small and marginal and victims, and that there be some Other that we hurl an accusation against and make wrong, even if it's in our own coalition, even if it's in our own organization, even if it's in our own family. There's got to be some big, mean, bad, wrong person that's really wrong. I'm innocent and they're wrong, and I'm going to resolve it by confronting them and speaking my truth to power.

Sometimes, I think we like being little. I think we're used to it. I think it's a comfort zone. I think we're addicted to victim status. In the car after the rally or the meeting or the conference, we say to each other something like, "Damn that Michael Lerner. I went up to him and I had something to tell him, and after fifteen or twenty minutes, he walked away from me. I think I'll stay up all night, write a long email about what's wrong with him and send it to all my friends. That'll fix America."

We need a new myth. We need a new theology of resistance. We need a new theology of liberation rooted in another part of the book. Might I humbly suggest Noah and his wife.

for Spirit within ourselves?

The words that left her mouth did not invoke the Constitution, Marxism, or anything. The words that left her mouth weren't even words. They were a song. She said, "Let my people go. Go tell it on the mountain. Go tell it on the mountain. Go tell it on the mountain to let my people go. Let my people go." And the atheists wept alongside the Christians, alongside the Jews, alongside the Muslims.

And we must still say that to America: "Let my people go." Two million locked up, one million black, most of them young men, smoking the same dope you smoke, doing the same drugs that white folks do, but treated like animals and brutalized. It's the right deed for this movement to take now: to stand in solidarity with those people living on the slave ships on dry land called prisons.

The powerful are trafficking in human flesh today. They're

Why Noah? Because there is a crisis coming, and it's bigger than me, it's bigger than you, and it's bigger than Goliath. There's a crisis coming and we need to be preparing ourselves and our community to survive, to thrive, to prosper through this coming age of extinctions. We are at the end of a cheap energy bubble now. There are going to be more wars, more bombings, more distress. There's got to be some sane place, there's got to be an ark. It's got to be able to accommodate diversity on a massive scale.

My sister Carol Lee Flinders mentioned that stealth spiritualists are emerging among us. There's one in particular I stand in awe of. I'd be wrong not to give testimony to this brother in Watts, Aqeela Sherrills, who used to be a gang member. He used to do all the things that you hear about, but he is the architect of the truce between the Bloods and the

Crips in Los Angeles. Aqeela is the foremost practitioner, based on his deeds, of a new politics of peace. You talk about the peace movement and everybody wants to look over at Washington, D.C., but we need a peace movement in the streets of America. Aqeela is the one taking a step forward, taking a stand, willing to do it.

Aqeela's seventeen-year-old son, who he managed to steer and guide through all of the pitfalls, and who had just enrolled as a full-time college student, was standing on a street corner, outside of a house party, waiting for the bus to come home and see his daddy. But before he left, he was shot down in the street, his blood pouring down into the gutter. By the time Aqeela got word, his son was dead. And because of the kind of man that Aqeela is and has been, he knew, because of his connections in the street, within minutes, who pulled the trigger. He knew before the police knew. He knew before the authorities knew. You know what happened next. People came to his house, people knocked on his door, and said, "We know who did this. All you have to do is nod your head, and we'll take care of this motherfucker." The police came at the very same moment. Aqeela told the police, and his brothers,

"I don't want anything to happen to that young man who killed my son. This community cannot afford to lose two young men tonight."

I asked Aqeela the same thing that you would: "How is it that you can respond that way? We're dropping bombs on people right now, we're killing people all over the world." And he told me, "We don't need a nonviolent movement in this country, and we don't need a violent movement in this country. We don't need a religious movement in this country, and we don't need a non-religious movement in this country. We need a reverence movement, where we can just stand in awe of each other, stand in awe of creation, stand in awe of the Creator, and strive always to act from there."

The examples that we need, the path we need to walk, the love that we require, is bottomless and always there. It's the love that you had as a child, it's the tears that you shed as a child, it's the openness to all possibility that you had as a child. That, and not debate, that, and not righteousness, that, and nothing else, will ensure that we as a human family can and will survive. Thank you for your journey, thank you for your courage, thank you for your love. □

Robert Inchausti

After the last election I was depressed about my life and my place in it, when a Vietnamese student named Thi came to my office. She said, "I wanted to thank you for the American Literature class you taught last semester." I replied, "Well, you don't have to thank me, they pay me." Thi said, "No, no, you don't understand, I am a boat person. I came over to this country when I was small. And my parents kept telling me that this was such a great country. Well, I live in San Jose, and I really don't see it. I see shopping malls. I see big cars. I see self-absorbed people. It doesn't seem like that great a country to me. Vietnam seems much more beautiful, a warmer place, prettier climate. But after taking your course on American literature now I know what's so great about America."

I said, "Well, tell me. I could use a little encouragement." Thi responded, "Ralph Waldo Emerson." And I said, "That's pretty good." And she said, "I'm not done. Frederick Douglas, Emily Dickinson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Emma Goldman, and Martin Luther King. That's my America!" And I said, "Thi, that's

my America too." And so she gave me a little confidence that day.

One of my favorite books is *Conversations with Kafka* by Gustav Janouch. In these conversations, Franz Kafka and a student whose father worked with Kafka at an insurance agency talk about everything. It turns out Kafka is a sweetheart. One day, they're having coffee and there's a Communist rally taking place down below in the street. And the student says to Kafka, "You're a critic of this modern world. Why aren't you down in the street with the Communists?" And Kafka says, in effect, "That's the problem with this modern world. Everything goes by false names. They call themselves

Is there room for

revolutionaries, but they're really totalitarians." He says, "I've got this nice job with the insurance agency. Don't kid yourself. It's penal servitude." He says, "Tonight I'm going to go home to my little apartment and do some writing. No, I'm going home to my prison cell to swim in my soul."

What Kafka was learning about was misnaming, and I think we can misname ourselves. I never really knew what to call that

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litany of American heroes that Thi described, but now I know. They're spiritual progressives. They all fit together. They're all part of the same movement. They're radical spiritual activists, and this country was built by radical spiritual activists.

While the Network of Spiritual Progressives talks about creating a new bottom line, that bottom line isn't all that new. That "new" bottom line was already being articulated by the Puritan forefathers who were the predecessors to the Mayflower Compact. When the Puritans talked about religious communities, they were talking about models of Christian charity, not models of economic power. It's charity that's really at the heart of the American tradition. We are at the heart of the American tradition. Radical spiritual activists are at the heart of the American tradition. We are not at the periphery.

Now I want to bring two Puritans into the conversation. One of them is John Winthrop, the author of the legendary speech "A Model of Christian Charity," which influenced the founding fathers and was part of the discussion in the platform development groups of the American Constitution. On the good ship *Arabella*, before they even got to the new world, there was a spiritual crisis. The boat's passengers were in a kind of rebellion. The main problem was who was going to get the real estate or poultry franchise, and whether the wealthy passengers would have to sleep near the non-Puritans. These were the kinds of issues being debated aboard the ship.

Winthrop wrote that speech as a kind of keynote address. It was a sermon, which he delivered on the boat. The proof text that he used was that there will always be poor among us. Now he wasn't advocating stoic resignation to injustice. He meant that as a call to responsibility. And Winthrop said that if you think we are going over to the new world to get rich, you're wrong. We're going over to the new world to create a community together where the rich help the poor, and the poor are kind to the rich and don't hate them too much.

At the end of Winthrop's sermon, according to Puritan practice, the ship's passengers conducted a question and answer session. The questions they asked are the same kinds of questions we are asking today. So the rich are supposed to help the poor, and the poor are supposed to help the rich, but what exactly should the interest rate be on long-term loans?

every seven years you have a sabbatical year, and all debt is forgiven.

One other prominent Puritan is William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth Plantation, who wrote a famous history that includes a non-mythologized account of the first Thanksgiving. But the end of it is very interesting, because he laments the fact that Plymouth Plantation has now become commercialized and that the new generation is not really like the old school Puritans. They're more interested in making money and being part of this pluralistic economy.

In a wonderful passage, Bradford lists all the traditional American scapegoats. He says that the blame probably rests with illegal aliens or hired help, because they weren't really Puritans and so their values undermined the tradition. It could even be the liberal theologians within the Puritan tradition. But then Bradford has a moment of honesty and says, (I am paraphrasing) "You know if I really believe God's hand is in all things, then God's hand is maybe in this too. And if God's hand is in the collapse of our Plymouth Plantation, maybe there's a lesson to be learned here: Who did we think we were to do what no other people could do: create a perfect nation that represented God's will on earth? Maybe what we need to do now is humble ourselves and try to come up with some civic practices that don't put us in control of everything. Maybe a constitution that doesn't work, that's fragmented, so power doesn't accumulate in any one person's or party's hands. Maybe a new distribution of authority. Maybe that would be a good idea, maybe not." And then he stops.

I recently heard someone talking about how Vaclav Havel is one of the great spiritual progressives of our time. I was very moved by his play *Largo Desolato*. When Havel was first released from prison, he began to suffer from writer's block and fell into a deep depression. He wrote *Largo Desolato* about his post-prison predicament. The play's protagonists are a writer (who resembles Havel) and a student who comes to visit him. She tells the writer something like, "I just wanted to come and let you know that your book *Phenomenology of Love*, I think that's the title, something like that, your book *The Phenomenology of Love* changed my life."

The writer responds, "Oh, yeah?" The student replies, "Yeah, it was on the bus that I was reading it. And I just

Spirit in our economy?

And Winthrop, how do you make the ideal real? How do you live your idealism, how do you live your values? How do you make it concrete? Freedom is not freedom for capital. It's freedom to live your highest values, freedom to practice what you preach. Winthrop responded by asking what the Bible has to say about these issues. In good times you can charge an interest rate. In bad times you let the debt slide. And after

looked up at the people and I said to myself, all these people, they don't know that they're alive. How do I tell them that they're alive? Because of the awe that I felt for them, I wanted to communicate for them, but I didn't know how to do it. So I wanted to ask you, because you wrote the book. How do you communicate that awe to people?"

And the Havel character replies, "You know you've given

SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM

me the greatest compliment a student could give a philosopher. You have asked me to tell you the meaning of life. When I wrote that book, *The Phenomenology of Love*, I knew. But the meaning of life isn't like an answer to a question. It's not something you answer once and carry around the rest of your life. It's more like a house you inhabit. Sometimes you're there, sometimes you're not. And I can tell by your question, you're there. So can you show me the way back to my house?"

I work with the Newman center (the organization for Catholic students) at Cal Poly. One of the things we do is we

take trips of reverse mission to Tijuana in order to place students in a third world context. They live for a while in communities where they meet people that are living in abject poverty, or what they think of as abject poverty. It takes them about fifteen minutes to be totally converted. They can't believe it. They meet people who have nothing but are happy, centered, and spiritual; who treat them better than their own best friends. The scales drop from their eyes. And they see for themselves the spiritual side of politics. That's what I want to be about. □

C. Welton Gaddy

American politics already has been transformed by religion and spirit, but not by the religion that most of us find acceptable and not by a spirit with which we're comfortable. In fact, historically there have been several iterations of a religious/spiritual transformation of American politics. At present, the discussion of religion and spirit in American politics is far more propositional than it is relational; it features a spirit that is more judgmental than it is careful; a religion that is exclusive rather than inclusive; and a spirit that is restrictive rather than expansive.

The pervasive presence of this particular religion and the movements of this version of spirit in American politics have caused a great deal of confusion—confusion between religious authority and political authority, entanglement between the institutions of government and the institutions of religion, judgments about the authenticity of a person's religious experience based on support for a small set of social and political issues and certain candidates (mostly from one particular party). The result is a deeply divided nation in which the political process takes on the character of religion and the substance of religion looks like the stuff of politics. While some people celebrate the triumph of this religion in the nation, others rightly fear a loss of passion for religious liberty, the demise of interest in public welfare, a corrosion of support for minority rights, a lack of sensitivity to the environment, and a growing threat to both the vitality of democracy and the integrity of religion.

So, how do we then speak about religion and spirit transforming American politics without exacerbating—rather than eliminating—the present problem? Perhaps we begin by asking *which religion* and *what spirit*. There is no such thing as American religion. Members of the Interfaith Alliance come

from over seventy-five religious traditions. Now look at the similar diversity that characterizes this conference—it's both beautiful and remarkable.

The proper role of religion and spirit in transforming American politics is motivational and personal in nature, prompting us, guiding us, encouraging us, sustaining us, as we link the core values of our respective religious traditions to the core values of our constitutional form of government. But our efforts should not be put toward recreating the nation as an expression of our

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particular religious vision. Rather, our efforts should be to cooperate with other people whose motivations may be completely different from ours in order to shape a nation committed to a form of government that values all religions, respects citizens who claim their rightful freedom from religion, and encourages politics that strengthen and advance such core values as freedom and justice, civil rights, peace, care for the environment, and compassion for the poorest among us.

American politics needs the transformation that can result from the activism of religions that respect the traditions of others, and that realize that we must seek both *freedom of religion* and *freedom from religion*, because if there's not freedom from religion there is not freedom for religion.

I want to see a flourishing of religions that refuses to turn difference into a moral category. We need religions that do not mistake the secular for the sacred, that do not escalate political viewpoints to the status of doctrinal absolutes, and that practice forgiveness and reconciliation in the social and political realms as well as in private life. We need religions that faithfully worship in the nation out of their own respective traditions without worshipping the nation or the tradition, and

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religions that reject the offer to become contract employees of the federal government in order to get a mandatory hand out to provide social services that are far too important to support at the expense of a relationship with government that compromises civil rights and religious liberty.

Religions that can transform American politics are religions that commend and inspire hope that is bigger than any one political party. They are religions that refuse to become a lackey to any one candidate for public office. These are religions that don't seek special privileges for themselves but seek equal treatment for everybody. These are religions that build bridges across divides rather than deepen them.

The spirit that can transform American politics is the spirit that makes truth-lovers restless until we speak truth to power, and that encourages us to speak truth to the public that may not know the truth because of the powers.

It is the spirit that sustains enthusiasm, that cools hot heads in the interest of civil dialogue, that can disturb as well as comfort and comfort as well as disturb. It is the spirit that recognizes no national boundaries but births citizenship in the world; the spirit that requires reverence for all of creation and inspires protests against all who betray that reverence and the reasons for it; the spirit that places on one spiritual continuum singing and voting, meditating and lobbying, praying and then working like crazy to become a part of the answers to the prayers that you've offered.

Such religion and such spirit can indeed transform Ameri-

science and not afraid of it. Such religion and spirit can transform American politics into an arena of civil debate rather than a venue of strident shouting matches. Politics can become a venue in which all religions are respected rather than used as a political tool for electoral success.

The transformation of American politics would bring about politicians whose actions and voices support not a Buddhist nation, not a Sikh nation, not an Islamic republic of Iraq, not a Christian republic of the United States, but a nation that cares for its people, seeks peace and never, even in the worst of circumstances, glorifies violence. In other words, brings into being a nation that lives as a good citizen of the global village.

Do you see that the transformation of American politics really means that transformation of Americans? I would suggest to you this is not God's work. This is our work. This is our place and our time to do the political work that reflects the wisdom of our spiritual traditions, and to establish a nation that really is committed to freedom and justice for everybody.

I am drawn more and more to a spiritual image that appears in several different religious traditions: it is the image of walking together. Think what would happen were we walking together and working together. But it is a spiritual image that has resonance in our national vision. It was there as early as the Mayflower Compact. The words of that Compact are still repeated in a congregation of Plymouth, Massachusetts in the context of worship every Sunday. Would that we heed them at least once a week, if not once everyday of every week. Here are the words:

We pledge to walk together in the ways of truth and affection as best we know them now or may learn them in days to come. That we and our children may be fulfilled and that we may speak to the world in words and actions of peace and goodwill.

Here are words, my friends, words of religious vision, words of national covenant that compliment the spirit of cooperation, that if embodied as well as recited, could indeed transform American politics. □

Spirit in politics?

can politics so that politicians see the whole federal budget as a moral document, not just a few lines in it; that politicians understand that criminal justice is about rehabilitation, not just incarceration; that politicians are aware of the promise of

David Robinson

Too often we think of politics as a once-every-four-years event, a round of partisanship, and this candidate versus that candidate. But 98 percent of our shared life in the public sphere happens between

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elections, not in them.

My organization, Pax Christi, is grounded in what we call a spirituality of nonviolence. A big part of what Pax Christi people do is struggle with how to translate a spirituality of nonviolence into our lives, into our workplaces, and most importantly into our relationships. What we call *gospel nonviolence* is about anti-domination. Nonviolence is about countering the worldview and individual actions that are grounded, animated, and played out in the system of domination, whether

we are talking about the relationship between a husband and a wife, between a parent and a child, between a boss and a worker, or between a superpower and a brutally impoverished country in the Middle East called Iraq.

One of the other values that we as people of faith bring to the public sphere—and this is universal—is that, irrespective of tradition, we're all called to be truth seekers. Consider a rare piece of truth-telling in the public sphere: it was done by General Jay Garner, who led the invasion of Iraq. He was quickly retired. Listen to what he said, and you will understand why:

One of the most important things we can do right now is start getting basing right. Look back on the Philippines on the turn of the twentieth century, they were a coaling station for the Navy, and that allowed us to keep a great presence in the Pacific, that's what Iraq is for the next several decades. Our coaling station that gives us great presence in the Middle East. That's what this war is about right now.

The idea that a reasonable transition that takes into account our responsibilities to the Iraqi people (who some Americans believe don't have the capacity to govern themselves, which in itself is a racist version of the white man's burden routine) masks the fact that we plan to be there for several decades. So, if we pull back the bulk of our forces, and bring them home, and create a brutal Iraqi military police state, in order to, as colonial powers must do, maintain enough stability for our corporate contractors to be able to do business there, we will be washing our hands of a situation, but we won't be enacting any of our values and we certainly won't be keeping faith, either with ourselves, our truest or best angels, or with the Iraqi people.

We need to pull out of Iraq. Our presence drives the killing. As soon as we are truly gone, leaving no bases behind, and no economic domination in place, the Iraqi people will have, for the first time, a true opportunity at democratic governance. □

Rebecca Solnit

When the war broke out three years ago, the people around me fell into a terrible despair that startled me a little bit. They concluded that we didn't stop the war. But then they started to extrapolate: *we didn't stop the war, we didn't have any effect, we have no power, we've never changed anything, it doesn't work.* It was fascinating to see them talk themselves into despair. Despair is very much dependent on how we frame things, how we interpret history, what we pay attention to. And so I started writing about hope in order to argue them out of that despair.

I have two principal tenets: one is that the world changes in much more peculiar, unpredictable, lurching, side-long, sneaky ways than anyone anticipates. The day after the Soviet Union collapsed, it became, in retrospect, the most obvious thing in the world that it had been about to happen. But, if I'd told you in advance that South Africa would become a post-apartheid regime and Nelson Mandela would become its president instead of being imprisoned for life, or that Latin America would become the most democratic and hopeful part of the hemisphere, or that San Francisco would have 4,000 same-sex marriages in its city hall, you would have thought I was a wing-nut.

I am just suggesting how unpredictable everything is.

Rebecca Solnit is the author of ten books, including A Field Guide to Getting Lost and Hope in the Dark.

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Hope doesn't mean that everything is fine, or everything will be fine—only that there are always glimmers of possibility. Absolute uncertainty is really grounds for hope.

My second basis for hope is that the past is a lot more glorious than we remember it being. The year I was born, the Berlin Wall went up, the Cold War seemed like it was permanent, we came very close to an all-out nuclear war. The Civil Rights movement was in full swing, but the kinds of discrimination, segregation, sexual harassment in the workplace, and exclusionary practices that are now illegal were the law of the land. People often fail to remember changes for the better because any form of social progress immediately becomes the status quo.

People don't really remember what enormous victories we have had. We forget the victories in struggles led by Martin Luther King, Ella Baker, Cesar Chavez, Native American movements, feminism, which were not a glimmer on the horizon in 1961, I can assure you—except maybe in the mind of Betty Freidan and a just a few other people.

Change doesn't come from the center, and change doesn't come from the limelight. It comes from the shadows, it comes from the edges, it comes from people who nobody's noticed



yet. Those are the people who are going to change the world. To quote Gandhi, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

because hope is not like a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch feeling lucky. Hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihila-

Spirit on the Left?

Change really starts in the "they ignore you" phase. And it's all the stuff that's being ignored that is going to change the world.

The G8 meeting that just transpired was absolutely fascinating to me, because I was in Birmingham in 1998 where the first G8 was held seven years ago. Jubilee 2000 was also there, with their Cancel the Debt campaign. I suffer from being hideously pragmatic at times. In 1998 I just sort of thought, okay, canceling the debt is a really good idea, but it's way out there. But it's happening now. And the change that canceled the debt for the eighteen poorest nations in the world—40 billion dollars worth of debt this summer—didn't come because Tony Blair is such a wonderful and sensitive guy (when he's not bombing children in Baghdad). It came because of those people who took something really unrealistic and unlikely and stuck with it until it became reality. That's the kind of wildness that fascinates me. People talk about dark times, but the darkness is that really rich shadowy place of the unknown. In *Hope in the Dark* I wrote this:

To hope is to gamble, to bet on the future, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty are better than gloom and safety. To live is to risk. I say all of this

lation of the earth's treasures, and the grinding down of the poor. Hope just means another world might be possible—not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action. Action is impossible without hope. At the beginning of his massive treatise on hope, the late German philosopher Ernst Bloch wrote, "The work of this emotion requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong." To hope is to give yourself to the future, and that commitment makes the present inhabitable.

Anything could happen. And whether we act or not has everything to do with it. Though there's no lottery ticket for the lazy and detached, for the engaged there's a tremendous gamble for the highest stakes right now. I say this to you not because I haven't noticed that the United States has come close to destroying itself and its purported values in pursuit of an imperialist foreign policy and the eradication of democracy at home. Our civilization is close to destroying the world on which we depend: the oceans, the atmosphere, the uncounted species of plant and insect and bird. Wars will break out. The planet will heat up. Species will die out. But how many, and what survives, depends on whether we act. □

Fritjof Capra

Over the past two decades, a new conception of life has emerged at the forefront of science. It is a systemic view of life, based in part on new discoveries in complexity theory. In this new view, the biological and the cognitive aspects of life—in other words, body, spirit, mind, and consciousness—are understood as integral parts of a unified whole.

This view is now replacing the classical Cartesian and neo-Darwinist views, which are mechanistic and reductionist. In those views, the body is a machine, separate from the mind, and evolution is nothing but random mutations plus natural selection. Thus, there is no room for a spiritual dimension. The new conception of life, by contrast, includes the spiritual dimension as an essential aspect.

The origin of life is one of the big puzzles in science. The traditional idea, formulated by Darwin himself, has been that life somehow emerged out of some primordial “chemical soup,” in which small molecules somehow assembled spontaneously into structures of ever-increasing complexity. This idea runs counter to all experience with simple chemical systems. Many scientists have therefore argued that the odds for it are incredibly small; or, alternatively, that there must have been an extraordinary triggering event.

Today, our starting position for resolving this puzzle is radically different. During the past ten years, scientists working in this field have come to recognize that the flaw of the conventional scenario lies in the idea that life must have emerged out of this structureless chemical soup through the progressive increase of molecular complexity. The new thinking begins from the hypothesis that very early on, *before* the increase of molecular complexity, certain molecules assembled into primitive membranes that spontaneously formed closed bubbles, and that the evolution of molecular complexity took place inside these bubbles, rather than in a structureless substance.

So, the new scenario of the origin of life begins with the formation of tiny oily droplets—bubbles bounded by an oily membrane—in the primeval oceans. These tiny droplets formed spontaneously in a mixture of oil and water, following the basic laws of physics and chemistry, just like the bubbles that form when you shake a mixture of soap and water, or oil and vinegar.

Once these globules had formed, a complex network

chemistry gradually unfolded in the tiny spaces they enclosed, which provided the bubbles with the potential to grow and evolve into complex, self-replicating structures. This is called “pre-biotic evolution,” or “molecular evolution.” When catalysts entered the system, molecular complexity increased rapidly, and eventually life emerged from these bubbles, or protocells, with the evolution of proteins, nucleic acids, and the genetic code.

This marked the emergence of a universal ancestor—the first bacterial cell—from which all subsequent life on Earth

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descended. The offspring of the first living cells took over the Earth by weaving a planetary bacterial web and gradually occupying all the ecological niches. In doing so, the bacteria continually transformed the Earth’s surface and atmosphere, making it conducive to the subsequent emergence of higher life forms and establishing the global feedback loops and other features of self-organization that turned the planet into a living system. During the first two billion years of evolution, the bacteria invented all of life’s essential biotechnologies, including fermentation, photosynthesis, nitrogen fixation, respiration, and various devices for rapid motion. Recent research in microbiology has made it evident that, as far as the processes of life are concerned, the planetary network of bacteria has been the main source of evolutionary creativity.

One of the main discoveries of complexity theory has been that this creativity is an intrinsic property of all living systems. Its detailed dynamic, which we can now describe mathematically, involves the spontaneous emergence of new order at certain points of instability. Thus, evolution, in this new view, is not just a response to environmental pressure, but is a consequence of life’s inherent creativity. Life continually reaches out to create novelty.

Driven by this inherent creativity, the planetary web of life expanded through a combination of three different mechanisms of evolution. This is another fairly recent major discovery. First, there is evolution through mutation, as in the neo-Darwinian theory. In addition, bacteria developed another avenue of evolutionary creativity that is vastly more effective than random mutations: they freely trade genes, and thus hereditary traits, in a global exchange network of incredible power and efficiency. As one microbiologist described it: “Gene trading is like jumping into a pool with brown eyes

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and coming out with blue eyes.”

And finally, bacteria also form new organisms by living together in long-term symbiotic arrangements that eventually result in new species. This process, known as symbiogenesis, is the greatest source of evolutionary innovation for larger organisms, because it allows them to acquire entire genomes from bacteria, and with them fully integrated biological functions, such as mobility, vitamin production, photosynthesis, and so on.

Over billions of years, these three avenues of evolution—mutations, gene trading, and symbiogenesis—created forms of life of ever-increasing complexity and diversity. In this majestic unfolding of life, all living organisms continually responded to environmental influences, and they did so autonomously, according to their own natures. From the beginning of life, their interactions with one another and with

which is also true for the related Latin word *anima*, the Greek *psyche*, the Sanskrit *atman*, and the Hebrew *ruah*. The common meaning of these key terms indicates that the original meaning of “spirit” in many ancient philosophical and religious traditions, in the West as well as in the East, is “the breath of life.”

Since respiration is indeed a central aspect of the metabolism of all but the simplest forms of life, the breath of life seems to be a perfect metaphor for the network of metabolic processes that is the defining characteristic of all living systems. Spirit—the breath of life—is what we have in common with all living beings. It nourishes us and keeps us alive.

Spirituality, or the spiritual life, is usually understood as a way of being that flows from a certain profound experience of reality that is “mystical,” “religious,” or “spiritual.” There are numerous descriptions of this experience in the literature

Spirit in science?

the nonliving environment were cognitive interactions (in the new sense that we have come to understand cognition, the process of knowledge). As their structures increased in complexity, so did their cognitive processes, eventually bringing forth conscious awareness, language, and conceptual thought.

When we look at this scenario—from the formation of oily droplets to the emergence of consciousness—it may seem that all there is to life is molecules, and the question naturally arises: Is there any room in this new vision for the human spirit? The view that life, ultimately, is all about molecules is, indeed, one that is often advanced by molecular biologists. It is important to realize, in my opinion, that this is a dangerously reductionist view. The new understanding of life that is now emerging is a systemic understanding, which means that it is based not only on the analysis of molecular structures, but also on the analysis of patterns of relationships among these structures and of the specific processes underlying their formation. The defining characteristic of a living system is not the presence of certain molecules, but the presence of a self-generating network of metabolic processes.

Life, then, is not all about molecules. It is much more about patterns of relationships among specific processes. These processes of life include, most importantly, the spontaneous emergence of new order, which is the basis of life's inherent creativity. Moreover, the life processes are associated with the cognitive dimension of life, and the emergence of new order includes the emergence of language and consciousness.

Where does the human spirit come into this picture? To answer this question, it will be useful to remember the original meaning of “spirit.” The Latin *spiritus* means “breath,”

of the world's religions, which tend to agree that it is a direct, non-intellectual experience of reality with some fundamental characteristics that are independent of cultural and historical contexts. One of the most beautiful contemporary descriptions, in my view, has been offered by the Benedictine monk, psychologist, and author David Steindl-Rast.

In accordance with the original meaning of spirit as the breath of life, Brother David characterizes spiritual experience as moments of heightened aliveness. Our spiritual moments, he says, are those moments when we feel most intensely alive. The aliveness felt during such a “peak experience,” as psychologist Abraham Maslow called it, involves not only the body but also the mind. Buddhists refer to this heightened mental alertness as “mindfulness,” and they emphasize, interestingly, that mindfulness is deeply rooted in the body. Spirituality, then, is always embodied. We experience our spirit, in the words of Brother David, as “the fullness of mind and body.”

This notion of spirituality is very consistent with the notion of the embodied mind that is now being developed in cognitive science by George Lakoff and his colleagues. Spiritual experience is an experience of aliveness of mind and body as a unity. Moreover, this experience of unity transcends not only the separation of mind and body, but also the separation of self and world. The central awareness in these spiritual moments is a profound sense of oneness with all, a sense of belonging to the universe as a whole.

This sense of oneness with the natural world is fully borne out by the new scientific conception of life. As we understand how the roots of life reach deep into basic physics and chemistry, how the unfolding of complexity began long before the formation of the first living cells, and how life has evolved for

billions of years by using again and again the same basic patterns and processes, we realize how tightly we are connected with the entire fabric of life.

The awareness of being connected with all of nature is particularly strong in ecology. Connectedness, relationship, and interdependence are fundamental concepts of ecology; and connectedness, relationship, and belonging are also the essence of religious experience. I believe therefore that ecology is the ideal bridge between science and religion.

When we look at the world around us, we find that we are not thrown into chaos and randomness but are part of a great

order, a grand symphony of life. Every molecule in our body was once a part of previous bodies—living or nonliving—and will be a part of future bodies. In this sense, our body will not die but will live on, again and again, because life lives on. Moreover, we share not only life's molecules, but also its basic principles of organization with the rest of the living world. And since our mind, too, is embodied, our concepts and metaphors are embedded in the web of life together with our bodies and brains. Indeed, we belong to the universe, we are at home in it, and this experience of belonging can make our lives profoundly meaningful. □

Riane Eisler

Our challenge is to create the social conditions that support the realization of our enormous human capacity for consciousness, creativity, empathy, and caring. This is the core of a progressive spiritual political agenda.

Most of us share the vision of a world where peace will no longer be an interval between wars. We are seeking a world of peace. A world where every child will be wanted and truly cared for. A world where abject poverty and hunger will be memories of a brutal past. A world where our natural life-support system, our mother Earth, will truly be honored. A world where governments will invest in really caring for people—in health, in education, in welfare—rather than in weapons and armaments. In short, a world where generations to come will be able not only to survive, but to thrive.

If we look around us at the world today, it's discouraging because we seem to be going backward rather than forward. But it is precisely in periods of regression that we have to be proactive. I know from my own personal life what can happen if people don't stand up to be counted. I was born during a time of massive regression: the rise to power of the Nazis in Europe, first in Germany, and then in my native Austria. I was a very small child when I saw the Gestapo come to our home and brutally push my father down the stairs and drag him away.

But I also saw something else: spiritual courage—courage out of love, to stand up against injustice. My mother displayed it. She stood up to the Nazis and demanded that my

father be released. She could have been killed, but by a miracle she wasn't. By a miracle she obtained his release, and we escaped the fate of my grandparents, my cousins, and my aunts and uncles—to be exterminated in Nazi concentration camps.

Those experiences have profoundly affected my life, and they have also profoundly affected my research. They made it very important for me to ask questions about human possibilities, about whether or not all this cruelty is inevitable, about possible alternatives.

I tried figuring this out using conventional categories—

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capitalism versus communism, and Right versus Left, and religion versus secularism—and they were of no help, just as they are really not much use today. All such categories merely identify particular fragments of society; not one of them really describes the whole social system. They don't even take into account the most fundamental human relations, without which none of us would be here: the relations between women and men, and between parents and children.

If we don't look at the whole of a picture, we can't connect the dots. Thus, in the research that I and others have been carrying out, we look at a database that includes not only the public sphere of politics and economics as conventionally defined, but also the private sphere of families and other intimate relations which we inhabit.

We can then see patterns. I call one of them the "partnership" model and the other one the "domination" model. My research was intended to answer the question, what kind of system supports relations of mutual respect, mutual benefit,

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mutual accountability, and, yes, mutual caring? And that was how we came to the partnership model.

In order to really build a partnership-oriented institutional and belief structure, protest just isn't enough. We have protested, but the kind of change we need hasn't happened. We can't just be against; we have to offer better alternatives to assess what has been missing and to formulate long-term strategies.

If you look at modern history from this perspective, it can best be understood as the struggle between a powerful movement towards partnership that is met with resistance from the dominators every inch of the way. Every benefit we have was achieved by challenging entrenched traditions of domination that we were told were divinely ordained. The people pushing us back paid particular attention to primary human relations. Whether it was Hitler in Germany, Khomeni in Iran, or the rightist fundamentalist would-be regime in this nation, these issues have been primary.

The rightist-fundamentalist alliance first came together in this country around a "women's" issue: the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in the 1970s. Ever since then, it has had a long-range strategy called "family values" and "morality." Of course it's been a very immoral agenda. Part of our job is to have the spiritual courage to point this out.

But in the intervening years, despite the success of the women's movement, conservatives have been so successful in advancing this regressive agenda, focusing on these primary human relations—and the cultural construction of these relations in terms of domination rather than partnership—that do

dissent and use force to impose their will.

Now, fortunately, not everybody in these families succumbs to believing in this kind of authoritarian model of relationships, but unconsciously a great many people do. And that kind of mentality particularly comes to the fore in periods of dislocation, when people are frightened, where they want the "protection" of that strong father, strong leader. That kind of family morality is the kind of "morality" suited to an undemocratic, rigidly male-dominated, chronically violent culture.

So, we have no choice. Spiritual Progressives must have an integrated family and political agenda.

This is a highly spiritual program, because it is based on the core principles of caring, nonviolence, and empathy, which are at the heart of both humanism and at the core of the world's great religious traditions. The people pushing us back are very selective in what they choose from the scriptures, and they select the dominator elements that we have inherited. When you look back at the historical moments they came from, you see brutal, tribal, biblical societies; where women were still stoned to death for any accusation of not being a man's possession; where children could be taken to the gates of the city and killed if they were disrespectful; where we're told that God commanded that whole cities be exterminated. That's not moral, that is immoral, and we have to make those distinctions. We need a morality, and, yes, a family values agenda that's appropriate for a world of partnership rather than domination.

I've outlined some of the steps that are needed in an article I wrote for *TIKKUN* (See volume 15, number 1). I begin

Spirit in our families?

you know what has happened? In 1992, a survey asked Americans how many of them agreed with the proposition that the father of the family is the master of the house. Forty-two percent answered yes. By 2004, the percentage of Americans agreeing with this proposal had risen to 52 percent.

We can't afford to cede this terrain to regressives any more. It is in our families and other intimate relations that people first learn what is normal and what is moral. It is in those relations that people first learn either to accept human rights violations as "just the way things are," or to respect human rights. They affect how people think, how people act, how they govern, and who they vote for—because people tend to replicate unconsciously their family structure in the kind of government and social structure they vote for.

Slogans like "traditional values" have often marketed the kind of family where fathers make the rules and harshly punish disobedience. And that is precisely the kind of family that prepares people to defer to "strong leaders" who brook no

with the rights of children to grow up healthy and thrive, including the right to shelter, nutrition, and healthcare; freedom from violence; and a clean environment.

The second component is to promote equality between women and men. I have written a great deal about this as well, but just think about it: this superior-inferior model of our species is a template for equating difference—beginning with the most fundamental difference in our species, that between female and male—with either superiority or inferiority, with either dominating or being dominated, with either being served or serving.

We certainly have to support *all* families—that's the third component—whether children are parented by a man and a woman, a single parent, or two parents of the same sex. We don't have a culture that supports families. We've got to bring that out, and we've got to change it.

Fourth, we must protect reproductive freedom and show that the only way to prevent abortions is to provide family

planning and sex education, as do other nations with much lower abortion rates, such as Scandinavian countries.

We similarly have to take a strong stand against intimate violence, violence against women and children. The United Nations tells us that that violence against them is the most ubiquitous human rights violation in the world. But it is much more than that. It is a school for learning that it's legit-

imate to use violence to impose your will on others.

Most of the progressive movements throughout history have focused on dismantling the top of the domination pyramid, but have not paid enough attention to the foundations on which it rests. The pyramid will continue to stand unless we change those foundations. All it takes is spirituality, putting love into action. □

John Dear

I thank the God of peace and justice for having sent a holy prophet of peace and justice to us. The night before our government assassinated him, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. summed up the situation we are still in. "The choice," he said, "is no longer violence or nonviolence. That's not what we're talking about. It's nonviolence or non-existence. Unless we all become nonviolent we are doomed."

Dr King said those prophetic words with great hope. And I think that's where we stand today—on the brink of destruction, called to be a people of active nonviolence. This is the spiritual journey we must be on in these dark times: to find that common ground and walk that road of nonviolence together.

Remember what Gandhi said: "We are constantly astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence." They're not being reported, but I think that more is happening right now on the planet in active, creative nonviolence than ever before in history. It's an exciting moment to be alive.

I find hope in the shared wisdom, the common ground, that we are experiencing these days in nonviolence itself. When I was working in the Fellowship of Reconciliation, I met thousands of peace activists around the world. I learned from my experience that all religions are rooted in nonviolence; it is the common ground that we share together. To my mind the word "Islam" means peace. Judaism has the magnificent vision of the Prophets saying that someday they're going to beat their swords into plowshares and study war no more. Gandhi exemplified Hinduism with his daring nonviolence. And the Buddhists say, "We're going to be compassionate to all living beings. No, let's not stop there. We'll be compassionate to the air and the earth and the universe." I would submit that even Christianity is about nonviolence.

A little word about Christianity. Don't believe these vio-

lent war-makers who say war is what Christianity is about. Violence has nothing to do with the gospel of Jesus. Mahatma Gandhi said that Jesus was the most active nonviolent resister in the history of the world. Later on he said that the only people who don't know Jesus was nonviolent are Christians. Jesus practiced a radical, active, creative nonviolence. He taught not only to love one another but to love even your enemies. He practiced meticulous nonviolence. Anyone who claims to be a Christian has to go down that difficult road of nonviolence. That's the measure of Christianity—our nonviolence.

The future of peacemaking is interfaith, active nonviolence. The truth is that all life is interconnected, that we're all sisters and brothers of the God of peace—already reconciled, already united, already one. If we really understood that, we would never be able to hurt another person or support war or support starvation or 20,000 nuclear weapons.

There is no cause, however noble, for which we will ever again support the taking of a single human life. We're always being told that we have to kill. But we will refuse. Instead of killing others, we will, like Dr. King and Mahatma Gandhi, be willing to be killed in the struggle against violence. It's the soul of peacemaking to lay down our lives. Gandhi says it's a life force. If we can just tap into it, we can transform the whole world.

Nonviolence is not a tactic or a strategy. It's an active, creative practice of unconditional, unlimited, universal love for every human being on the planet. It's the way I define the spiritual life.

I find hope in the practice of nonviolence in three ways: in our prayer, in our community, and in our action. I love not just our political work for disarmament, but the mystical work, the inner journey we take to be with the God of peace and allow God to disarm our hearts of the violence and injustice and wars within us—so that we can be instruments of the God of peace. If we can be servants of the God of peace and justice, then anything is possible.

Our task in the Network of Spiritual Progressives is to affirm that God is not a God of war, but the living God of peace; not a God of injustice and oppression, but a God of justice and liberation; not a God of vengeance and retaliation, but of unconditional love, infinite mercy, infinite compassion;

The Rev. John Dear S.J. is a priest, pastor, retreat leader, and author. From 1998 to 2000 he served as director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. For a list of his books and recent activities go to www.johndear.org

and not a God of violence, but the God of nonviolence.

I find hope in communities like Tikkun, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi, Sojourners, and the Catholic Worker Houses. We can't do this work alone, and we've been thinking we can. But if we come together and learn from our sisters and brothers in Latin America and Africa to create communities of faith-based nonviolence, we can go forward and do something new together.

Finally, I find hope in our action. Nonviolence is not something that can be preached, not even in conferences. It's on

the frontlines where we get involved, whether you're combating the death penalty, or closing the School of the Americas, or joining the One Campaign, or the Non-Violent Peace Force, or stopping the war in Iraq.

We have to learn the hard lesson of the prophets and speak the truth, as Ezekiel said, whether we're heard or not. So let's keep speaking the truth of peace, justice, and nonviolence, and accept the consequences. And not be discouraged.

Dear friends, don't despair, don't be afraid, don't be silent, and don't give up. There's too much work to do. □

BLESSING By Byron Williams

Creator of the Universe, we pray for your spirit of love to be in our midst, for it is that spirit that binds us to the eternal prism of hope. In moments of crisis, it becomes necessary to dissolve the false sense of patriotism in the will of a few, in order to assume the powers that have been universally granted by You.

We pray that You use us as spiritual volunteers in your movement of peace and justice—to lift those who are down, to put a smile on a downtrodden face, to open the eyes of the spiritually blind, to give the voiceless a song to sing. Like the prophet Isaiah, we petition You to send us into urban areas that see the gun as the only effective means of conflict resolution; send us into failing schools whose hope unborn has died; send us to the elderly so that the winter of their lives will be filled with renewal and the joy of spring.

Send us so that poor whites, poor blacks, poor Hispanics, and others, living in the red states will realize that they have more economic self interests that unite them than the percentage of melanin in their skin that divides them. For we profess on this day that fear and hatred are no match for pos-

sibility and hope. We pray that You will forgive us. Forgive us for participating in the silence of consent. Forgive our collective silence as we've allowed guns, tax cuts, war, the destruction of our national resources, and the dehumanization of gay, lesbians, bisexual, and transgender brothers and sisters to be synonymous with the will of God. We too are guilty of dancing to the seductive melody of nationalism, of the *you're either with us or against us* chorus, which is nothing more than the morphine of comfort that allows one to condense dissent into a lack of patriotism. But we proclaim on this day that dissent is indeed the oxygen of democracy, and without it we will risk choking on the fumes of our own megalomania.

We further proclaim a declaration of interdependence. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. we confess that we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. We declare a respect for the opinion of those whose world views may differ from our own, for they are not our enemies. But we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all are indeed created equal, for we are

endowed by You with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the right to have access to healthcare, the right that everyone will have shelter, the right that we not go to bed hungry, the right to work for a livable wage, the right to a quality education, the right to be responsible stewards of our natural resources. And because it is the pursuit of happiness, and because it is only a pursuit, we understand it is You who stands in the gap serving as our nexus of hope. Not only does our interdependence connect us to each other and to You, it also connects us to our past.

Therefore, we believe that Martin Luther King was right, that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. We believe that James Russell Lowell was right, "Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne," yet it is the scaffold that sways the future. We believe that Fanny Lou Hammer was right, for we too have become sick and tired of being sick and tired. We believe that Gandhi was right because an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind. We believe that Abraham Joshua Heschel was right that the road to the sacred leads directly to the sacred. And we also believe that here on earth our work, Your work, will truly be our own. Amen. □

Reverend Byron Williams is a syndicated columnist and pastor of the Resurrection Community Church in Berkeley, California.

MAKING ROOM FOR SPIRIT

The Network of Spiritual Progressives

This past summer, the over 1,300 attendees at Tikkun's Conference on Spiritual Activism ushered in a new project of the Tikkun Community, the Network of Spiritual Progressives. The NSP will focus on challenging the misuse of religion by the Religious Right, creating a New Bottom Line in America, and challenging the anti-spiritual and anti-religious biases that have increasingly become part of liberal culture.

Since the conference, almost fifty local NSP chapters have sprung up all over the country. And they've already gotten to work! In October, the southern Vermont chapter of the NSP, in conjunction with the Vermont Clergy Association, held an Abrahamic Family Reunion—an interfaith gathering to honor the end of Ramadan. Rupa Cousins was on the planning committee and co-facilitated a dialogue with over 100 Jewish, Muslim, and Christian attendees. An interfaith service featured a talk about fasting traditions, a traditional breaking of the fast dinner, and a facilitated conversation exploring questions like “What holds special meaning for you in your faith?”

The Minneapolis chapter of the NSP found a unique way to get out the message that we must curb our consumption by buying local, buying sustainable, or buying nothing at all.

In December, scores of Spiritual Progressives descended upon malls and holiday parades, distributing \$3 gift certificates to local independent coffee shops, especially those known for giving back to the community. The note attached suggested that, in the midst of the winter holiday frenzy, the recipients give themselves some time—even if only half an hour—to relax, have a warm drink, and think about how they might shape their holiday celebrations in ways that reflect their deepest values.

Here's a taste of what else is happening:

☛ In New York City, members of the NSP chapter are hard at work advocating for a New Bottom Line in their respective professions.

☛ The Boston Chapter has formed a group to study books and essays addressing the ideas of the NSP, while other members are tracking their personal energy-consumption in order to make the political less abstract and more concrete.

☛ In Portola Valley, California, NSP members have held workshops at houses of worship to explore interfaith spiritual activism.

☛ The Raleigh, North Carolina, group has held discussions on topics such as “Understanding Fundamentalism in Many Traditions.”

☛ In Eugene, Oregon, the NSP group offers emotional support for activists needing to recharge.

If you are an NSP or Tikkun Community member and are interested in starting a local NSP chapter, please send an email to community@tikkun.org or call us at (510) 644-1200. To find out if there is an existing NSP chapter in your area, and who to contact to get involved, visit www.spiritualprogressives.org.

The summer Spiritual Activism conference also catalyzed the Young Spiritual Progressives (YSP) movement. These young, energized spiritual activists met at the conference and quickly formed a working group, a blog, and a listserv to exchange ideas, discuss current events, and organize local and regional events. You can join their conversation by emailing spiritualprogressives@googlegroups.com.

The NSP is already planning a second conference on May 17–20 in Washington, D.C., which we anticipate will be even bigger than the first. The D.C. conference will launch a prophetic spiritual politics agenda to the media and the politicians in D.C. and will train organizers who will take the agenda into their communities. Registration is now open at www.tikkun.org. This is a great time to join the NSP. You can join by going to the Tikkun website (www.tikkun.org), emailing us at NSP@tikkun.org, or by calling (510) 644-1200.

Look for more updates on the NSP in the pages of future issues of **TIKKUN**.

—*Robyn Thomas, Executive Director, and Simone Richmond*

Western Sahara: The Other Occupation

Stephen Zunes

Imagine an Arab Muslim nation, most of whose people have lived in the squalor of refugee camps for decades in exile from their homeland. Most of the remaining population suffers under foreign military occupation, with a smaller number living as a minority within the legally-recognized territory of the occupier. The occupying power is in violation of a series of UN Security Council resolutions, has illegally brought in tens of thousands of settlers into the occupied territory, routinely violates international standards of human rights, has built a heavily-fortified separation barrier deep inside the occupied territory, and continues to defy a landmark decision of the International Court of Justice. Furthermore, and despite all this, the occupying power is considered to be a close ally of the United States and receives substantial American military, economic, and diplomatic support to maintain its occupation and colonization of the territory.

This certainly describes the situation regarding Israel's occupation of the Palestinian West Bank (including greater East Jerusalem) and Syria's Golan region, as well as its quasi-occupation of the Gaza Strip. But it also describes the thirty-year occupation of Western Sahara by the Kingdom of Morocco. Despite all the well-deserved attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the importance of working to end Israel's occupation, the failure of the international community—including progressive movements in the United States and elsewhere—to also address the Western Sahara conflict raises questions as to why Morocco is getting away with its ongoing violation of human rights and international law with far less world attention than Israel receives.

Western Sahara: A Brief History

Western Sahara is a sparsely-populated territory about the size of Colorado, located on the Atlantic coast in

northwestern Africa, just south of Morocco. Traditionally inhabited by nomadic Arab tribes, collectively known as Sahrawis and famous for their long history of resistance to outside domination, the territory was occupied by Spain from the late 1800s through the mid-1970s, well over a decade after most African countries had achieved their freedom from European colonialism. The nationalist Polisario Front launched an armed independence struggle against Spain in 1973, and Madrid eventually promised the people of what was then still known as the Spanish Sahara a referendum on the fate of the territory by the end of 1975. Irredentist claims by Morocco and Mauritania were brought before the International Court of Justice, which ruled in October of 1975 that the right of self-determination was paramount, despite pledges of fealty to the Moroccan sultan back in the nineteenth century by some tribal leaders bordering the territory and close ethnic ties between some Sahrawi and Mauritanian tribes. A special Visiting Mission from the United Nations engaged in an investigation of the situation in the territory that same year and reported that the vast majority of Sahrawis supported independence, not integration with Morocco or Mauritania.

During this same period, Morocco was threatening war with Spain over the territory. Though the Spaniards had a much stronger military, they were at that time dealing with the terminal illness of their longtime dictator General Francisco Franco as well as increasing pressure from the United States, which wanted to back its Moroccan ally King Hassan II and did not want to see the leftist Polisario come to power. As a result, despite its earlier pledge to hold a referendum with the assumption that power would soon thereafter be handed over to the Polisario, Spain instead agreed in November 1975 to partition the territory between the pro-Western countries of Morocco and Mauritania.

As Moroccan forces moved into Western Sahara, most of the population fled into refugee camps in neighboring Algeria. Morocco and Mauritania rejected a series of unanimous UN Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign forces and recognition of the Sahrawis' right of self-determination. The United States and France, meanwhile, despite voting in favor of these resolutions, blocked the United Nations from enforcing them. At the same time, the Polisario—which had been driven from the more heavily

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populated northern and western parts of the country—declared independence as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

Thanks in part to the Algerians providing significant amounts of military equipment and economic support, Polisario guerrillas fought well against both occupying armies. Mauritania was defeated by 1979, agreeing to turn their third of Western Sahara over to the Polisario. However, the Moroccans then annexed that remaining southern part of the country as well.

The Polisario then focused their armed struggle against Morocco and by 1982 had liberated nearly 85 percent of their country. Over the next four years, however, the tide of the war was reversed in Morocco's favor thanks to the United States and France dramatically increasing their support for the Moroccan war effort, with U.S. forces providing important training for the Moroccan army in counter-insurgency tactics. In addition, the Americans and French helped Morocco construct an 800-mile "wall," primarily consisting of two heavily fortified parallel sand berms, which eventually shut off more than three-quarters of Western Sahara—including virtually all of the territory's major towns and natural resources—from the Polisario.

Meanwhile, the Moroccan government, through generous housing subsidies and other benefits, successfully encouraged thousands of Moroccan settlers—some of whom were from southern Morocco and of ethnic Sahrawi background—to immigrate to Western Sahara. By the early 1990s, these Moroccan settlers outnumbered the remaining indigenous Sahrawis by a ratio of more than two to one.

While rarely able to penetrate into Moroccan-controlled territory, the Polisario continued regular assaults against Moroccan occupation forces stationed along the wall until 1991, when the United Nations ordered a cease-fire to be monitored by a UN peacekeeping force known as MINURSO. The agreement included provisions for the return of Sahrawi refugees to Western Sahara followed by a UN-supervised referendum on the fate of the territory, which would allow Sahrawis native to Western Sahara to vote either for independence or for integration with Morocco. Neither the repatriation nor the referendum took place, however, due to the Moroccan insistence on stacking the voter rolls with Moroccan settlers and other Moroccan citizens whom it claimed had tribal links to the Western Sahara. Perhaps in part to help solicit American cooperation with United Nations efforts to resolve the conflict, Secretary General Kofi Annan enlisted former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker as his special representative to help resolve the impasse. (Baker's principal deputy was none other than John Bolton, now the infamous interim U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.) Morocco, however, continued to ignore repeated demands from the United Nations that it cooperate with the referendum process, and French and American threats of a veto prevented the Security Council from enforcing its mandate.

The Stalled Peace Process

In 2000, the Clinton administration successfully convinced Baker and Annan to give up on efforts to proceed with the referendum as originally agreed by the United Nations ten years earlier and instead to accept Moroccan demands that settlers be allowed to vote on the fate of the territory along with the indigenous Sahrawis. This proposal was incorporated in the first Baker Plan presented in early 2001, which would have held the plebiscite under Moroccan rule after a four- to five-year period of very limited autonomy with no guarantee that independence would be one of the options on the ballot. The Baker Plan received the enthusiastic backing of the new Bush administration, which had come to office in part through Baker's role as lead counsel for the Bush campaign regarding the disputed Florida vote the previous November. This connection led some analysts to note that it was only appropriate that Baker would put forth a plan that would give legitimacy to a rigged election. Most of the international community roundly rejected the proposal, however, since it would have effectively abrogated previous UN resolutions granting the right of self-determination with the option of independence and would have led to the unprecedented action of the United Nations placing the fate of a non-self-governing territory in the hands of the occupying colonial power.

As a result, Baker then proposed a second plan in which, as with his earlier proposal, both the Sahrawis and the Moroccan settlers would be able to vote in the referendum, but the plebiscite would take place only after Western Sahara experienced far more significant autonomy for the four-to-five years prior to the vote. Independence would be an option on the ballot, and the United Nations would oversee the vote and guarantee that advocates of integration and independence would both have the freedom to campaign openly. The UN Security Council approved the second Baker plan in the summer of 2003.

Under considerable pressure, Algeria and eventually the Polisario reluctantly accepted the new plan, but the Moroccans—unwilling to allow the territory to enjoy even a brief period of autonomy and risk the possibility that they would lose the plebiscite—rejected it. Once again, the United States and France blocked the United Nations from pressuring Morocco to comply with its international legal obligations.

In what has been widely interpreted as rewarding Morocco for its intransigence, the Bush administration subsequently designated Morocco as a "major non-NATO ally," a coveted status currently granted to only fifteen key nations, such as Japan, Israel, and Australia. The following month, the Senate ratified a free trade agreement with Morocco by an 85 to 13 margin, making the kingdom one of only a half dozen countries outside of the Western hemisphere to enjoy such a close economic relationship with the United States, though—in a potentially significant precedent—Congress insisted that it not include products from the Western Sahara.

U.S. aid to Morocco has gone up five-fold since the Bush

administration came to office, ostensibly as a reward for the kingdom undertaking a series of neoliberal “economic reforms” and to assist the Moroccan government in “combating terrorism.” While there has been some political liberalization within Morocco in recent years under the young King Mohammed VI, who succeeded to the throne following the death of his father in 1999, gross and systematic human rights violations in the occupied Western Sahara continue unabated, with public expressions of nationalist aspirations and organized protests against the occupation and human rights abuses routinely met with severe repression.

The Significance of the Struggle for Self-Determination

The Sahrawis have fought for their national rights primarily by legal and diplomatic means, not through violence. Unlike the Palestinians and a number of other peoples engaged in national liberation struggles, the Sahrawis have never committed acts of terrorism. Even during their armed struggle against the occupation, a conflict that ended fifteen years ago, Polisario forces restricted their attacks exclusively to the Moroccan armed forces, never towards civilians.

The lack of resolution to the Western Sahara conflict has important regional implications. It has encouraged an arms race between Morocco and Algeria and, on several occasions over the past three decades, has brought the two countries close to war. Perhaps even more significantly, it has been the single biggest obstacle to a fuller implementation of the goals of the Arab Maghreb Union—consisting of Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and Mauritania—to pursue economic integration and other initiatives that would increase the standard of living and political stability in the region. The lack of unity and greater coordination between these nations and their struggling economies has contributed to a dramatic upsurge in illegal immigration to Europe and the rise of radical Islamist movements.

The majority of the Sahrawi population lives in exile in the desert of western Algeria in refugee camps under Polisario administration. The 150,000 Sahrawis living in these desert camps have developed a remarkably progressive political and social system governed by participatory democracy and collective economic enterprises within a limited market economy. Though devoutly Muslim, Sahrawi women are unveiled; enjoy equal rights with men regarding divorce, inheritance, and other legal matters; and hold major leadership positions in the Polisario and the SADR, including posts as cabinet ministers. While the Bush administration claims it seeks to establish such democratic governance throughout the Arab and Islamic world, in reality the U.S. government is actively preventing the Sahrawis from establishing such a democratic system outside these refugee camps by supporting the occupation of their country by an autocratic monarchy.

Over the past three decades, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic has been recognized as an independent coun-

try by more than eighty governments, with Kenya and South Africa becoming the latest to extend full diplomatic relations. The SADR has been a full member state of the African Union (formerly known as the Organization for African Unity) since 1984 and the international community recognizes Western Sahara as Africa's last colony. By contrast, with only a few exceptions, the Arab states—despite their outspoken opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Syrian land—have supported Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara.

With Morocco's rejection of the second Baker Plan and the threat of a French and American veto of any Security Council resolution that would push Morocco to compromise, a diplomatic settlement of the conflict looks highly unlikely. With Morocco's powerful armed forces protected behind the separation wall and Algeria unwilling to support a resumption of guerrilla war, the Polisario appears to lack a military option as well.

As happened during the 1980s in both South Africa and the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, the locus of the Western Sahara freedom struggle has recently shifted from the military and diplomatic initiatives of an exiled armed movement to a largely unarmed popular resistance from within. In recent months, young activists in the occupied territory and even in Sahrawi-populated parts of southern Morocco have confronted Moroccan troops in street demonstrations, despite the risk of shootings, mass arrests, and torture. Yet, here in the United States, a country that has played such a significant role over the past three decades in perpetuating Morocco's illegal occupation, this revolution is not being televised. Even within the progressive community and among those well-versed in foreign affairs, very few people are aware of the Western Sahara struggle or could even find Western Sahara on a map. However, despite the lack of media coverage, the Sahrawi intifada will likely intensify as a result of the international community's failure to resolve the conflict.

Building an Anti-Occupation Movement

Israel and Morocco are unique among the world's occupying powers. While Turkey and Armenia have also violated a series of UN Security Council resolutions regarding their illegal conquests of territories belonging to other sovereign states and should be similarly obliged to withdraw, the vast majority of the peoples native to those territories are of the same ethnicity as, and largely supportive of, their conqueror. Likewise, there are other occupied nations whose peoples deserve statehood, such as Tibet and Chechnya, but these nations are legally recognized by the United Nations and the international community as part of the sovereign territory of their occupier.

Western Sahara is the only land—outside of the remaining territories still held by Israel since the June 1967 war—that is recognized by the United Nations as being illegitimately under the rule of a foreign power against the will of the subjected population. (The only other cases in recent years have been

East Timor, which finally won independence four years ago following a quarter century of brutal Indonesian occupation; Namibia, which became free from occupation by the then-white minority government of South Africa in 1990; and Kuwait, which was liberated from six months under Iraqi occupation by a massive American-led military operation in February 1991.)

The moral and legal arguments in support for Western Sahara's freedom from Moroccan rule and the culpability of the U.S. government in maintaining Morocco's illegal occupation and colonization of the territory are reason enough to make this a priority for the peace and human rights community in the United States. There is a particularly strong imperative, however, for those of us supporting Israeli-Palestinian peace to address the Western Saharan conflict as well.

One of the major accusations leveled against those of us working to end Israel's policies of occupation and colonization is that we are somehow "anti-Israel." While such attacks in most cases are unfair and inaccurate, it is unfortunately true that a significant minority of those active in solidarity efforts with the Palestinians are not simply anti-occupation but are also ideologically opposed to Zionism and to Israel's very existence as a Jewish state. To counter such suspicions, it would help those involved in the various campaigns to end Israel's occupation and to stop unconditional U.S. support for the Israeli government to also address Morocco's occupation and

unconditional U.S. support for the Moroccan government.

Imagine, for example, if a divestment campaign included not just Caterpillar, Motorola, and other American companies backing the Israeli occupation and colonization of the West Bank, but also Kerr-McGee, the U.S. energy conglomerate prospecting for oil in the Western Sahara on behalf of the Moroccan occupiers, or Westinghouse, which provides the electronic surveillance equipment along Morocco's separation barrier? Or a campaign for conditioning U.S. military aid to Israel on the Israeli government ending its occupation that also demanded the same conditions regarding U.S. military aid to Morocco?

Rather than provoking divisive and polarizing arguments along the false dichotomy of "pro-Israel" versus "pro-Palestine," the debate on college campuses and within labor unions, Christian denominations, and other institutions could instead center on the real issues: the right of self-determination, the repressive nature of foreign military occupation and colonization, and the illegitimacy of invading and annexing neighboring lands. With such an anti-occupation movement also targeting an Arab Muslim country, it would be less likely to provoke the backlash that has occurred against a movement that solely targets the world's only Jewish state.

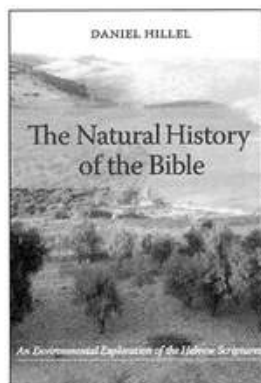
There is a sizable movement in Europe supporting the Sahrawis' right to national self-determination, often working in conjunction with those supporting the Palestinians. By contrast, there is relatively little activism on Western Sahara here in the United States. Yet this can change: just ten years ago there was relatively little activism in this country regarding East Timor either. Working in conjunction with fellow peace and human rights activists in Canada, Great Britain, and Australia, however, supporters of East Timorese self-determination eventually forced the United States and these other governments to end their support for the Indonesian occupation. As a result, East Timor is now free.

A similar campaign may be the best hope for the people of Western Sahara and the best hope we have to save the vitally important post-World War II principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter—currently being challenged most seriously by Israel and Morocco—which forbids any country from expanding its territory through military force. Increased activism in support of the Sahrawis' right of self-determination will also enhance the struggle for Israeli-Palestinian peace by helping to redirect the debate from bitter ideological disputes unique to that conflict to the defense of universal moral and legal principles. Focusing on the U.S. role in maintaining the Moroccan occupation will also further expose the Bush administration's false claims that its Middle East policy is based upon supporting freedom and democracy and upholding the rule of law.

In short, supporting the campaign to free Western Sahara from the Moroccan occupation is both an important moral imperative and a smart strategic move for all those who care about peace and human rights. □

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Israel and the Politics of Muslim Identity

Nader Hashemi

In October 2005, at a Tehran conference on "The World Without Zionism," Iran's new hard-line president, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, declared that Israel "must be wiped off the map." The reaction in the Muslim world was silence. This raises the question: why the obsession with Israel? Is anti-Israel sentiment confirmation of ancient ethno-religious hatred? Or is this proof of the persistence of Muslim anti-Semitism? The evidence suggests a compelling alternative interpretation.

Generally, when Muslims comment on Israel they invoke its human rights record for their moral censure of the Jewish state. Given the persistence of this theme, they appear to be suggesting that Israel is the worst violator of human rights in history. The problem with this position is that it is both factually inaccurate and morally dishonest. Yes, when judged by international human rights standards, Israel's record leaves much to be desired and has uniquely egregious features, but in truth, Muslim regimes have a more deplorable human rights history. If human rights are the standard, why not condemn the human rights disasters afflicting fellow Muslims in Darfur or Chechnya? Why the double standard? The answer lies not in Muslim anti-Semitism but primarily in the enduring legacy of European colonialism and Israel's perceived connection with this legacy.

For much of the Twentieth century, opposition to European colonialism has been the most powerful organizing theme in the Muslim world. No topic can galvanize the masses more than the issue of national independence. Such sentiment has dominated the politics of many Muslim societies for decades and has sunk deep roots within Muslim political culture.

Muslims perceive Israel fundamentally as a European settler state formed on the ruins of Palestinian society. The ongoing Occupation of the West Bank, with its escalating settlement construction and human rights violations, serves as a constant reminder of the imperial impact on the region. In other words, the conflict in Israel/Palestine today is perceived by Muslims as in-your-face colonialism not from a bygone era, but of the present.

The impact of colonialism also explains why there is widespread sympathy for the plight of Palestinians in much of the developing world. Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans instinctively relate to Palestinian victimization because of its

similarity to their own colonial/imperial experiences. The facts that the final borders of Israel/Palestine remain to be determined, that most of Israel's political leaders have been European, and that Israel is generously supported by a superpower, give the Israel-Palestine conflict the decidedly colonial spin of powerful Europeans versus impoverished natives. The Third World has seen this script before and experiences the Palestinian question with a sense of *deja-vu*.

Arguably, this explains why Israel was singled out for criticism at the 2001 UN Conference on Racism when similar charges could have been made against other governments (Russia in Chechnya, China in Tibet, Sudan in Darfur, and others). Not only is Palestine firmly located within the Third World, but the exceptional support Israel receives from Washington, the unresolved status of its borders, the perceived European-versus-native contestation plus the extraordinary media exposure the conflict receives, makes Israel/Palestine unique in relation to other Third World conflicts. Hence the increased moral scrutiny.

The unresolved dispute in Israel/Palestine, therefore, acts as a constant reminder of the carve-up, humiliation, and defeat faced by Muslim societies as a result of Western intervention. Palestine has now morphed into a core "identity issue" for Muslims, precisely because of its perceived link to the twentieth-century Muslim experience with colonialism. For Muslims, accepting the existence of Israel while the Palestinians remain a largely refugee population would be tantamount to giving colonialism a moral stamp of legitimacy.

What does this portend for the future? If the disproportionate criticism Israel receives is not due to anti-Semitism but rather to the unique features of the conflict, then this would suggest that a just resolution of the dispute would over time diminish hostility towards Israel. Evidence from Iran suggests that this might be true.

Reformists in Iran have been arguing that we should not be "more Palestinian than the Palestinians." Their point is that if representatives of the Palestinians agree to a final peace agreement with Israel, then all Muslims should be obligated to honor such a treaty. Arguably, the small moves toward a settlement during Oslo have produced this fissure within Islamist ranks in Iran, a fissure which certainly will grow larger the closer the Israel/Palestine conflict is brought towards a just and lasting settlement. □

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The End of the Melting Pot

Ilan Stavans

A virgin world where doors of sunset part,
Saying, "Ho, all who weary, enter here!
There falls each ancient barrier that the art
of race or creed or rank devised, to rear
Grim bulwarked hatred between heart and heart!"
—Emma Lazarus, "1492" (1889)

Quick: name a Woody Allen movie that has a leading black actor in its cast. Time's up! Now mention a *Seinfeld* episode in which Elaine, Jerry, George, and Kramer socialize in the Upper West Side apartment with some Korean friends. How about a story about Cuban-Americans written by Isaac Bashevis Singer?

For the past several decades, American Jews have focused on creating a map of Jewish life, particularly of Jewish life as lived in Manhattan. Yet for all its realism, this map is imaginary. Artists like Allen, Seinfeld, and Singer have created a comfortably monocultural Jewish city at the expense of the multifaceted, ethnically diverse Manhattan marked by the Dominican restaurants of Washington Heights, the African-American chess players in Harlem, or the Chinese street vendors of Delancey Street.

Of course, the occasional Puerto Rican or African American character appears in these works, and there are many Jewish writers who have offered more consistently intricate multicultural pictures. Just think of the stories of Tillie Olsen and Grace Paley; the novels of E.L. Doctorow and Bernard Malamud; the poetry of Allen Ginsberg, Philip Levine, and Adrienne Rich; or the plays of Tony Kushner. But these good-will examples are exceptions to the rule. Over the past half-century, Jewish writers have generally suggested that at best they will coexist with the ethnic Other, but they will never attempt to understand these people's circumstances. They are too busy understanding themselves.

This turn inward is perplexing for many reasons. For one, it goes against the Jewish ethical imperative toward reaching out to the larger world. The inward turn also runs counter to the very basis of Jewish prosperity in America: the country's pluralism and tolerance. Think of George Washington's letter

to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, which, by stating that the U.S. government "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance," greased the place of Jews in America. (See *The Jews of the United States: A Documentary History, 1790-1840*.) The very multiculturalism that much recent mainstream Jewish culture has shied away from is precisely what has made Jewish life here possible.

Most of all, however, the homogenization of Jewish urban experience has obscured the diversity within the Jewish world itself.

Jewish Diversity in America

The Jewish journey in multicultural America began with the settlement in 1654 of Portuguese-speaking Sephardic Jews from Recife, Brazil, in New Amsterdam, part of the Dutch colony of New Netherland. (Ironically, of the original group of twenty-three, all but one, Asser Levy, left what would become the United States within a relatively short period of time.) Peter Stuyvesant, who served as director-general of this diverse town, wanted to keep these Jews out. He described them as "deceitful," "very repugnant," and "hateful enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ." But Jews were also seen as agents of economic growth, and Stuyvesant eventually allowed them to stay. As it turns out, this would be the onset of a community invited in initially for its mercantile talents but later embraced for its intellectual stamina.

It would systematically grow over a period of 350 years, from an original "twenty-three souls, big and small" in the French frigate named the *Ste. Catherine* to between 200 and 300 Jews in 1700, between 938,000 to 1,058,000 at the end of the nineteenth century, and between 5,340,000 and 7,700,000 at the end of the twentieth. (See Jack J. Diamond, "A Reader in Demography," *American Jewish Year Book* vols. 77, 91, 92, and 102.) By 1680, Ashkenazic Jews had arrived to join their Sephardic counterparts. That coexistence was never without tension as the community sought its way in the mainstream, fighting xenophobic sentiments. George Washington's revolutionary war, and the effort by the Founding Fathers, turned pluralism and tolerance into republican values that were then emphasized, with much peril, by Abraham Lincoln during and after the Civil War. Jews, Irish, Germans, and Italians mixed with the Native-American, British, and African population in what came to be known in the early part of the twentieth century as the Melting Pot, a term popularized by a British Jew, Israel Zangwill, author of *Children of the Ghetto*.

As Jews—especially the now predominant Ashkenazi

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Jews—worked hard to “melt” into America, they also erased their own differences. Ladino-speaking Jews, for example, as well as the Ladino media, have been all but written out of American Jewish history. We hardly ever hear about early figures in American Judaism like Haim Isaac Karigal, a visitor to the colonies from Hebron, Palestine, who in 1773 preached a sermon in the Touro Synagogue of Newport, Rhode Island, calling for loyalty, which in his view meant “obedience to the crown and denouncing “public commotions and revolutions.” Or Emma Lazarus, a child of a Sephardi father and German-Jewish mother, who advocated a multicultural pluralism. Or Mordecai Manuel Noah, a journalist and playwright (he is the author of *The Fortress of Sorrento* and *Natalie; or, The Frontier Maid*, among other plays) who in the first half of the nineteenth century explored the inherent tension between being an American and being Jewish.

Can Identity be Melted?

Mordecai Manuel Noah's question about his hyphenated American-Jewish identity was prescient. As the Great Tide of Ashkenazim washed ashore, they simultaneously advocated assimilating to American values and retaining a unique Jewish identity. The tension between the one and the many, between an ethnic minority and the mainstream majority, became a staple. How to live a normalized American life, just like everyone else, and at the same time retain a sense of uniqueness? How to embrace the American values of democracy and freedom and not disappear as a millenarian people?

In the second half of the twentieth century, Jews in America seemed to have figured it all out. Just 2 percent of the population, they chose to assimilate and became increasingly influential in the worlds of moviemaking, theater, literature, music, TV, and—crucially—politics. The White House paid considerable attention to American Jewish voices. There had been prominent judicial and diplomatic figures, from Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis to Henry Kissinger, who served, for better or for worse, as representatives of the Jewish community in the larger social spectrum. This representation, obviously, would flourish in the decades to come, making Senator Joseph Lieberman the first Jew on the presidential ticket (during the Al Gore campaign in 2000) and turning the “hidden” Jewish identity of political celebrities like Madelyn Albright (Secretary of State during the Clinton years) and Democratic presidential hopeful John Kerry into decisive news items around the globe.

But there was another side to the coin. As Jews assimilated, the tight circle of Ashkenazic Judaism was being broken. In defining Jewish identity, the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, breaking with rabbinical tradition, have accepted patrilineal descent. Inter-marriage has become accepted. Having a convert in the household, or even having non-Jews in Jewish households, is, and has been for some time, the trend. According to the National Jewish Population Survey, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages

among American Jews at the beginning of the twenty-first century remain at a record high: between 47 percent and 51 percent. The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau stumbled in counting the number of Jews in America mainly because of the fluid ways in which Jews and non-Jews identified themselves.

Jews—ordinary Jews like my uncle and aunt—started getting worried. In the Seventies, my uncle was a successful Avenue of the Americas lawyer, my aunt a devoted housewife. They had two children a bit older than me who had been raised in an assimilated milieu. But as soon as the younger of them began dating a non-Jewish girl, the parents became scared and immediately switched gears. They not only attended Reform synagogue regularly but got involved in the temple's board. Soon they were emphasizing their Jewishness in a way I had never seen before. By the time their daughter-in-law married into the family, she had undergone a conversion: not only did she embrace Judaism as a religion but, lo and behold, domestically she became the center of attention. Soon the newlyweds moved to his parents' home, arguably in order to keep the family together.

This story reflects concerns many Jews have begun to feel. As Jews solidify their status at the center of the Melting Pot, inner doubts have emerged about the road the community has taken in order to become fully American. Have we given up too much of our ethnic identity? Is complete assimilation the sole way into a full American identity, as it was thought in the Fifties?

Re-Ethnicification

Even as assimilated Jews began to ask these questions, the ethnic identity of Jews in the United States was undergoing another profound shift. Just as the Ashkenazim had washed ashore in the late nineteenth century, a new tide of immigrant Jews has been steadily making America its home at the start of the twenty-first. As a result of political instability and the collapse of Third-World economies, Jews from south of the Rio Grande—from Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, and Peru—have moved north in search of freedom and happiness. Likewise Jews from Russia and the former Soviet block, as well as those from countries like South Africa, Syria, Iran, and Egypt: tired of the anti-Semitism in their countries of origin and eager to grant their children a fair education, they have relocated to the major centers of Jewish life in America. Since its inception in 1948, Israel has also been a magnet for Jews from around the globe. But the political impasse in the Middle East has unquestionably made *aliyah* unattractive to thousands, who have redirected themselves to the “blessed land” of New York and Los Angeles. As a result of these new immigrants, the monoculture of Ashkenazim is under assault.

Between Ashkenazic fears of intermarriage and the growing multiethnic identity of American Jews, the old dream of full and unequivocal assimilation once embraced by Ashkenazic Jews is now drastically being reversed. Young

American Jews are, as ever, proud to stress the *American* half of their identity. But they are less unequivocal about losing their ethnic identity than their forebears had been. Indeed, their objective, I believe, is to be *hyphenated* Jews, ethnic creatures loyal to their minority background without sacrificing their patriotism.

All this, in my view, amounts to a thorough process of what I would call "re-ethnification," a collective recognition by American Jews not only of their Jewishness as a form of ethnicity but also of the fact that to be Jewish in the United States one doesn't need to trace one's roots to Central and Eastern Europe. American Jews come from everywhere. There can be African-American Jews, Asian Jews, Native-American Jews, and Latino Jews, as well as what the U.S. Census Bureau has defined as "other," not to mention, obviously, Sephardic and Mizrahi. In other words, while intermarriage drives Ashkenazim to re-ethnize so that they remain Jewish, Jews of other ethnicities embrace ethnification in order to maintain an identity apart from the Ashkenazim. In short, to be a Jew and an American one must be aware of one's own hyphenated nature.

This "re-ethnification" process is of dramatic relevance. It isn't about purity at either end of the hyphen. Instead, it is about cross-fertilization on all sides, a process that not only

allows Jews and non-Jews to find a middle ground but also has initiated within the Jewish community a move to energize the center by pointing to different places of the Diaspora, not just to Eastern Europe and Israel.

Multiculturalism has been a feature of the United States since its inception, but as the population numbers have changed, so has the texture of society and its principles. It used to be that new immigrants would eventually be allowed a space within the mainstream culture. But multiculturalism has finally changed the mainstream: it subverted and decentralized it. Already 12 percent of the nation's entire population

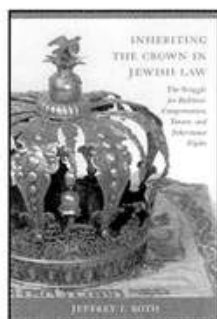
is non-U.S. born. And by the mid-twenty-first century only one American in four will be of European descent.

In an increasingly heterogeneous America, Jews will have to establish bridges and make alliances with groups of non-European origin, whose idiosyncrasies, it might be assumed, are likely to require a different kind of cultural sensibility. In recounting Jewish history in general, American Jews seldom stress the period of *La Convivencia* in the Iberian Peninsula prior to the expulsion. Now that Latinos in the United States are fundamental players on the social chessboard, are Jews familiar enough with the Hispanic psyche and history to create a partnership with the various Latino subgroups, such as Mexican-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Dominican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans on the mainland? Will we be willing to bring back the history of our own Sephardi communities in order to find common ground with our fellow citizens?

Since the Enlightenment, Jews have served as agents of modernization. They have helped make America competitive at almost every level. But Jewish cultural perception has become stagnant. To the question "Who are we?" a majority of American Jews, I believe more by inertia than anything else, still respond as they did after World War II, pointing to Europe as the source of cultural and religious sustenance. But we are no longer primarily European Jews, nor is America primarily a country that looks to Europe. A major demographic metamorphosis has taken place, one that gives room to the less monolithic, more varied nation we live in. Throughout history, Jews have strived to reinvent themselves in diversity. Think of Woody Allen's *Zelig* as a paradigm. But that multicultural self is still not recognized as a communal feature. It needs to become one if we are likely to identify as our own the face in the mirror. □

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Jewish Renewal: Toward a “New” American Judaism

Shaul Magid

It is time to begin thinking about writing the history of Jewish Renewal in America. This is not because the Jewish Renewal movement is over. Quite the opposite: Jewish Renewal, just one generation old, is quickly becoming part of mainstream American Judaism and is now at a threshold moment.

Jewish Renewal is essentially an attempt to revive, recontextualize, and reform Jewish spiritualist movements that have most recently manifested in Hasidism but have roots in pre-modern Jewish pietism. It is a reformation of Jewish spiritual practice in the spirit of humanism and global consciousness. Most of what has been written about Jewish Renewal—by both insiders and observers—focuses on how it relates to developments *within* the parameters of Judaism.

People often ask, is Jewish Renewal *sui generis*, is it a fad, is it “good for the Jews” or not? In my view, these are the wrong questions. Jewish Renewal is a theology that grows as much out of late twentieth-century America as out of Judaism. It is, perhaps, the second stage of an indigenous American Judaism born in America’s transition from late pluralism to multiculturalism following the Second World War. (While Jewish Renewal is developing at a fast pace in Israel, the Israeli context is quite different and deserves a separate study.) The right question to ask about Jewish Renewal is this: Will Jewish Renewal provide the beginnings of a new American Judaism that will change the face of Judaism in the twenty-first century? Or will it, like the Hasidic and Mussar movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, fold back into the strong current of conventionality, serving at best as a chapter in the history of Judaism in America?

Chabad’s Spiritual Outreach

The initial groundwork for Jewish Renewal arguably began in 1929 when the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn (1880–1950) traveled to America. Schneersohn saw the dark cloud forming over Europe two decades before the rise of Nazi Germany. A virulent anti-Zionist, he believed America would be the next phase of the

Diaspora and the future of Judaism. In America, he created what became the Chabad movement.

The vision of Judaism that dominated Chabad after the emergence of Schneersohn’s son-in-law, Menahem Mendel Schneersohn, as the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe melded classical Hasidic spirituality with an attenuated accommodation to modernity. In the 1960s, American Chabad became the first large-scale American Jewish attempt to reach out to an unaffiliated, alienated, and spiritually charged youth culture. Hasidic nomenclature and metaphysics were employed to interpret contemporary events, while Hasidic spirituality was proffered as a “Jewish” alternative to the spiritual renaissance influenced by Eastern religions. Chabad emissaries envisioned Hasidism as the alternative to counter-cultural spirituality, at least for Jews.

This outreach was not necessarily intended to make more Chabadnikim (Chabad followers)—although this did occur—but rather to proffer a user-friendly and Americanized Jewish mysticism as a tool to foster Jewish traditionalism, distinctiveness, and identity. As much as reaching out to an alienated Jewish-American youth population, Chabad challenged the non-Orthodox influence on American Jews by arguing that Hasidically reconstructed Orthodoxy was the most, if not the only, authentic Judaism. Paradoxically, Chabad succeeded in large part because its particularistic, hegemonic vision of authentic Judaism fed off the multicultural spirit of the late twentieth-century American youth movement. In reaching out to alienated youth, Chabad emphasized the importance of claiming a particular identity within a multicultural environment.

The two figures perhaps most important to the founding of Jewish Renewal, Rabbis Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (Jewish Renewal’s acknowledged architect) and Shlomo Carlebach (renowned singer, songwriter, and translator of Hasidism to counter-cultural America), began their religious lives at the forefront of this new Chabad project. Chabad’s approach was attractive to these young immigrants from war-torn Europe who had already been introduced to the West and who wanted to bridge the old world and the new. Chabad’s structure of outreach and its openness to translating Hasidic ideas to an alienated audience served as an important foundation for Jewish Renewal. The young Rabbi Zalman and Rabbi Shlomo absorbed the essence of Hasidism (as manifest in

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Chabad and other sects)—its focus on joyous celebration and integrated Judaism—as a much needed alternative to the ossified state of American Judaism immediately following the war. They also knew that the unreconstructed Hasidism that was transplanted from Europe could not speak to a youth culture who had already “tuned in, turned on, and dropped out” of the American mainstream. While Chabad was not the answer for these young seekers, it provided the necessary template for their project.

From the Jewish Renewal perspective, Chabad outreach fails because it only envisions America, and modernity more generally, in functional terms. For Chabad, America is simply the next (perhaps last) stage of the Diaspora. What Judaism requires is the strengthening of Jewish resolve through the performance of *mitzvot* in order to anchor Jewish identity and thus hasten the redemption. Arguably, American Chabad has added little to the kabbalistic worldview it inherited from Europe. Jewish Renewal differs from Chabad by not viewing the historical events of the twentieth century as merely another chapter in the book of Jewish exile. Instead, these events are understood to have created a seismic shift in the world that demands a radical change of perspective for all religions, Judaism included. The tragedy of the twentieth century, viewed theologically, is viewed as the result of a world in disaccord, partly fed by the exclusivist doctrines of Western religion either manifest (Christianity and Islam) or covert (Judaism). For Judaism to participate in this global shift it must seriously reconsider its entire theological foundation.

The End of Denominationalism

As has been duly noticed by observers of American Judaism, one of its distinctive characteristics is its denominational structure, largely adapted from American Protestantism. While contemporary American Jewish denominations have their foundations in western and central Europe (German Reform, German neo-Orthodoxy, Hungarian Neologism, and central European proto-Conservatism) the transition from these more intellectual and theological movements to religious denominations took place on American soil.

Nineteenth-century America was guided by an ideal of pluralism or, as British playwright Israel Zangwill later termed it, a “melting pot” in which different cultures would come together and mix, forming “out of the many, one.” The primary issue for Jews at the end of the nineteenth century was how best to navigate a pluralistic culture. Conservative Judaism, and to a lesser extent Modern Orthodoxy, followed the cultural pluralism of Horace Kallen, who suggested that ethnic and religious minorities in America could maintain a private sphere of separation and uniqueness (i.e., their own religious practice) while in the public sphere mixing together with everyone else and living the American dream. Reform Judaism responded instead with an inclusionary model of acculturation to American life, omitting many of the particularities of Jewish law or practice that could not be made to

coexist with modernity. One denomination rejected the American mainstream—albeit only in the private sphere—while the other denomination accommodated to it. Both denominations reacted to the American religious landscape, rather than engaging proactively in contributing to it.

The first indigenous American Judaism, Mordecai Kaplan’s Reconstructionism, challenged the denominational structure of Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform Judaism. An ex-Orthodox rabbi, Kaplan took a sociological approach to religion, transforming it into culture, or as he put it, “Judaism as a Civilization.” On the one hand, he called upon assimilated and Reform Jews to return to *mitzvot*, and on the other he suggested to traditionalists that they view Jewish religious law (*halachah*) as an expression of the Jewish will and not necessarily the will of God. This became known as a post-halachic approach to Jewish practice. Kaplan thus created a way for Jews to live religiously in various ways, from traditional halachic to non-halachic reform, while considering their piety as an expression of cultural identity and not an adherence to doctrinal authority.

Kaplan was able to envision a Judaism that would transcend denominations because he had moved past the ideology of pluralism. For Kaplan, the distinctiveness tolerated and then erased by a pluralist ideology was replaced by a celebration of diversity. Kaplan saw the demise of the inclusionary pluralism of the melting pot and knew that assimilationist Judaism would have to retrieve a theory of separateness without exclusivity. He knew that to survive in America, Judaism had to become an unadulterated “American” Judaism, one that fully participated in the theological and cultural climate of America and was not simply a reaction to it.

Despite its revolutionary possibilities, or maybe because of them, Reconstructionism has not become a significant movement in American Jewish life. The reasons for this are not clear. Perhaps it simply could not compete with the dominant institutional structures of existing denominations. Perhaps its radical theological critique of tradition coupled with the centrality of post-halachic practice as “folkways” was too much for many secular but sentimental Jews to swallow. Many American Jews want a “traditional” Judaism they choose not to observe (this is part of the success of modern Orthodoxy, the Conservative movement, and Chabad) or an assimilationist social activist Judaism they can live as part of their Americanism (Reform). Reconstructionism is too idiosyncratic in that it demands too much of a ritual commitment and too great a theological leap. Perhaps it is also because Reconstructionism now views itself as a denomination when in fact its greatest strength was to offer a new theological model that could be adapted by Jews who identify with other denominations.

Jewish Renewal has arguably fulfilled the role that Reconstructionism first claimed, so much so that it could be viewed as an extension of Reconstructionism, as even Reb Zalman has acknowledged. Emerging in the heyday of multiculturalism, Jewish Renewal, unlike its predecessor, does not

have any pretense of being a denomination. It is not bound by the enclosed denominational structure that could be confining for any religion functioning in an American landscape of shared diversity and the blending of religious sensibilities. Free from the confines of both doctrinal and sociological denominational boundaries, Jewish Renewal responded to the celebration of diversity with a syncretistic approach that readily borrowed from unpopular and even deviant strains inside Judaism and from spiritual resources outside Judaism. Most radically, Jewish Renewal has made the important, innovative move of enabling non-Jews to find meaning in Jewish worship. This syncretism may make Jewish Renewal more than just an indigenous American Judaism; its anti-denominational spirit may be the beginning of a new era of Judaism—Judaism as an American religion.

Historicism vs. Syncretism

Liberal Jewish denominations including Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionism, were built on the foundations of historicism. They argue that the Jewish tradition has developed over time, adopting new ideas, some from outside its own boundaries, and re-formulating old doctrines to align with contemporary beliefs and practices. While historicism exposes tradition to a critique of its own authority, it can still be employed to support a largely self-enclosed theological universe. For example, many Jewish historians, like Yehezkel Kaufman and Heinrich Graetz, have maintained that Judaism is a unique phenomenon in the history of religion. They argue that while Judaism may have been influenced by surrounding culture, ancient Israelite religion and later Judaism successfully absorbed and “Judaized” these foreign influences into its own distinct and independent outlook.

These arguments show that historicism can acknowledge the complex and quilted nature of the genealogy of a religious tradition and yet also support the authority structure of that tradition. This is because authority is determined not only by the genealogy or purity of doctrine but by the decisions of authorities as to what is “inside” or “outside” tradition. On this reading, historicism and traditionalism are not mutually exclusive. In fact the former has often been used to support the latter.

Syncretism or, more accurately “conscious syncretism,” is an act that intentionally infuses foreign ideas and practices into a religious tradition that may lead to new religious formations not grounded in any traditional precedent. In most cases, these foreign ideas are incompatible with the *au courant* understanding of tradition. They are not unified with the tradition, but co-exist in unreconciled tension with religious norms.

In the Nineteenth century, the tendency was to value uniform cultures over heteronomous ones. In religion, that tendency led to a belief in the myth of pure, unadulterated revelatory systems. As a type of hybridity, syncretism was a pejorative term mostly relegated to “oriental” religions that did not make exclusivist claims, and were thus considered

inferior religions. Modern Jewish thinkers, even the more progressive and historicist thinkers, tended to present Judaism as a coherent belief system and avoided the notion of syncretism as a phenomenon in the history of Judaism.

In a multicultural world, however, syncretism has taken on a positive valence. Blending is viewed not as “defiling” but as enhancing a particular religion. The phenomenologist of religion Gerhard van der Leeuw has suggested that religions are in constant flux and thus borrowing is a natural part of religion’s own dynamism. Multiculturalism pushes particularistic societies to abandon their master narratives and theories of “uniqueness” in favor of an orientation that acknowledges, and supports, borrowing from one another while maintaining distinct, but not exclusivist, identities. While historicism may sometimes undermine the mythic construct of uniqueness, it often erects in its place an ostensibly “factual/historical” construct of distinctiveness that is still exclusivist in orientation. In existing Jewish denominations built on the historicist model, Judaism is still by and for Jews and theories of Jewish chosenness are still defended. In Jewish Renewal’s syncretistic model, Judaism is constructed by Jews but what Judaism has to offer is not necessarily limited to Jews; the boundaries of Judaism itself have become permeable.

As I see it, only in Jewish Renewal’s syncretistic post-denominational approach does Judaism move in a direction that suggests both an ideological and functional universalism. This non-exclusivist particularism frees Judaism to view itself as one of many societies, and one of many spiritualities, each of which has a role to play in the order of the world. When Judaism no longer needs to defend its uniqueness (theologically or historically) it can more comfortably view itself as a partner in humanity. While it is true that the permeability of boundaries threatens the survival of any distinct community,

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the multicultural model that promotes an ideology of "mutual recognition" and respect is a buffer against that danger. In this regard I think Jewish Renewal takes multiculturalism more seriously than other American Jewish alternatives. Its universalism is not some prophetic or messianic utopianism relegated to a redemptive future, but part of the way Judaism needs to be lived in the here-and-now. Instead of simply assimilating into a pre-existing Americanism as the Reform movement did, Jewish Renewal creates a religious framework in dialogue with other religious currents in America. Instead of offering Judaism as a separate sphere of religious practice, Jewish Renewal offers a blending of Judaism with other spiritual practices in order to construct a more complex and sensitive religious alternative that is aligned with American sensibilities garnered from a counter-culture now mainstreamed.

A New Reality Map

In many respects, Jewish Renewal may be understood as the belated success of Reconstructionism and the adaptation and subsequent subversion of American Chabad. Or, to put it another way, multiculturalism created the cultural context, Kaplan provided the beginnings of a post-denominational framework, and Schneersohn provided the spiritual passion and commitment to outreach. Like Chabad, Jewish Renewal is a kind of outreach, but its goal is not a return to Orthodoxy; its goal is the creation of a new American Judaism that is unafraid and open to the world. Like Reconstructionism it is willing to rethink its most sacred doctrines and is willing to bring the private sphere of religion into the public discourse of justice, equality, and freedom.

Unlike Jewish denominations more generally, Jewish Renewal is not apologetic in tone or practice. As I view it, it is not out to defend Judaism from outside critique but rather to see Judaism as a potential resource for renewed spiritual

meaning and sustenance in America. It takes multiculturalism at face value and does not succumb to the deep-seated cynicism Jews often bring to any gesture of inclusion and equality. Throughout history, fear—whether real or imagined—has prompted Judaism often to adopt a reflexive inward posture, which has sometimes justified the false accusations against it. Jewish Renewal has determined that tragic history (isn't most of Jewish history tragic?) sometimes demands a creative response and not a reflexive, defensive, and inward-looking reaction. Sometimes tragedy does not teach us that we have gone too far but that we have not gone far enough. For Jewish Renewal, post-war America was an opportunity to reinvent Judaism using courageous interpretive schemes in the syncretistic spirit of postmodern spirituality.

In Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi's language, Jewish Renewal offers a new Jewish "reality map" that can be adopted by any Jewish seeker, a "map" constructed from the wellsprings of the Jewish mystical and Hasidic traditions refracted through an Aquarian Age commitment to global humanism. Its openness to the larger world can speak to those inclined toward humanism, and its ritual passion and creativity can speak to those more inclined toward devotion and piety. Liberated from denominational confines, Jewish Renewal has provided a new template with which contemporary American Judaism can re-evaluate itself. The ramifications are enormous and the price is quite high. In this sense Jewish Renewal is testing the elasticity and courage of American Judaism. Can it meet the world halfway "with its sacred learning under its arm"? □

NOTE: This essay is the first in a three-part series. In the next installment Magid will address the theological underpinnings of the universalist turn of Jewish Renewal and its relationship to Jewish heresy and deviance.

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appease religious groups, pedagogues, and state officials who were concerned about the nature of what was being shown. In 1917, the National Council on Public Morals proclaimed, "Moving pictures are having a profound influence upon the mental and moral outlook of millions of our young people." Throughout the Twenties and Thirties, Hollywood was a battlefield between the artist and the moralist. Civic and religious groups of various stripes feared the democracy and sexuality of films and kept close watch over their content. There was also religious bigotry; one Catholic publication, *The Churchman*, bemoaned the "shrewd Hebrews" who ran Hollywood.

By 1922 Hollywood reluctantly responded to local and state pressure groups by setting up a highly visible system of self-regulation under the aegis of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). Will Hays, a Republican politician and former postmaster general, headed the organization. In 1924 Hays introduced "the Formula" requiring producers to submit potentially offensive scripts to the MPPDA. The talkies brought new anxieties over the power of cinema to disseminate dangerous ideas. In 1927 the Hays office published its list of eleven "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" for producers, which forbade the depiction of brothels, nudity, childbirth, miscegenation, or anything disrespectful to church or family. Finally, Hayes was compelled to issue a more formal code, whose main author was Daniel A. Lord, a zealous Jesuit priest who denounced such iniquities as birth control, Communism, Darwin's theory of evolution, European culture, and most modern education and art. Under pressure from Wall Street interests and the Catholic Church, the producers finally had to accept the new code in 1930. For the next few years the Code proved difficult to enforce, as sex and violence were amongst the few definitive ways of luring audiences to the cinema during the Great Depression.

The decisive year proved to be 1934, when the Catholic Church established its Legion of Decency, an 11-million-strong pressure group that began to organize a series of boycotts against films that it considered "unsuitable" and publishing lists of "approved" films. The Legion's oath of obedience not to attend forbidden films was recited by millions during Sunday mass. That same year the industry agreed that no film would be distributed or exhibited in the United States unless it carried the Production Code Administration's (PCA's) seal of approval. In effect, all scripts would be vetted by the PCA before shooting. Joseph Breen, a Catholic, was appointed head of the PCA and his office had final editorial control over scripts before films began shooting.

From that point onwards, for about the next twenty years, the code defined the ideological boundaries of the classic Hollywood film. In keeping with its purpose of pacifying religious groups in the country, the code forbade any film from ridiculing any religious faith. Clerics could not be depicted as villains or comics, and religious ceremonies were to be represented respectfully. Miscegenation, white slavery, and sex perversion

(or any allusion to it) were forbidden subject matter. "Impure love" could not be represented as attractive. Patriarchal values were to be enforced, as films had to be sympathetic to marriage as an institution. "Compensating moral values" were required where the narrative depicted "impure love." This meant that any character who disobeyed patriarchal values would be made to suffer within the narrative to "compensate" for her immoral behavior. Producers could not depict dances suggestive of "sexual actions" or "indecent passions." Criminal activity could never be depicted so as to "throw sympathy with the crime against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation." Use of the flag had to be "consistently respectful."

Then, as now, film industry censorship was largely market driven, rather than the product of state policy. In fact, it was the U.S. courts that finally broke the censors' iron-fisted grip on the industry. Beginning in 1952, the Supreme Court found reasons to overturn a number of film bans. The watershed case was *Burstyn Vs. Wilson*. The Italian neo-realist director Roberto Rossellini had made a short film, *The Miracle*, about a peasant woman who believed she had been divinely impregnated by her favorite saint. The film was set to screen in New York State, along with several other foreign films. A campaign of protest was sparked and New York City's Cardinal Francis Spellman's resounding condemnation fanned the flames until the censors succeeded in having the film's exhibition license revoked on grounds of "sacrilege." The distributor, Joseph Burstyn, sued, and the case made its way to the Supreme Court. The Court proclaimed that movies were entitled to First Amendment protections and that the state's ban on "sacrilegious" films was unconstitutional. A few years later the censors tried to ban exhibition of the film adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, because it depicted adultery in a sympathetic light. Again the court's decision upheld the First Amendment principle that government cannot suppress ideas it doesn't like. In 1965 the Supreme Court invalidated prior censorship schemes, which meant that state censorship boards now had the burden of proof in denying exhibition licenses. These days state censorship of films is virtually a relic of the past. In 1968 Jack Valenti, the new head of the MPPDA, replaced censorship with the ratings system.

However, that was not the end of church-sponsored censorship drives, intimidation tactics and boycotts. Far from it. When Martin Scorsese decided he wanted to do a film adaptation of Nikos Kazantzakis's 1948 novel *The Last Temptation of Christ*, he couldn't get a studio to touch it for ten years. The Christ of the novel, and the film, is a figure both human and divine, who struggles with this inner conflict. Marriage and family life, far from being the ultimate end of a good Christian life, were presented as temptations to be overcome by the holy man on a more important and more selfless mission. In 1983 Paramount Pictures finally decided to risk the wrath of fundamentalist groups, but then withdrew their support for the film when members of the Moral Majority and the Evangelical Sisterhood, along with other conservative Christian

groups, organized a major protest against Gulf & Western, the parent company of Paramount Pictures. Other Hollywood studios got the message loud and clear and wouldn't go near the project until 1987, when Universal decided to take a chance on it. They hired Christian marketing consultant Tim Penland to help them make the necessary overtures to religious groups, but this backfired when Penland himself joined the protests against the film. The Reverend Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association organized a direct mail campaign, sending 2.5 million action packets to 170,000 ministers. Bill Bright, president and founder of Campus Crusade for Christ (and a leading member of the Council for National Policy) offered to reimburse Universal for all costs to date related to the film in exchange for all of the prints, which he intended to destroy. Christian radio broadcasters got busy urging their 11 million listeners to boycott the film, and the reverend Jerry Falwell and the Catholic Church weighed in with public declarations against the film and Universal.

On the day before the film was to be released, 25,000 protesters gathered outside Universal Studios waving signs and shouting religious slogans. Fearful of retaliation, theatre chains such as United Artists and General Cinema Corporation cancelled exhibition of the film. Protestors appeared at theaters in each of the nine cities in which the film premiered, and the film led to major hysteria across the country. Universal opened the picture in thirty-five more cities and the protests continued, but on a smaller scale.

In America, where the Religious Right has declared a "culture war," it should come as no surprise that U.S. media institutions are once again key targets for censorship, controversy, and now an Evangelical propaganda drive. The Christian Right is sending the signal that Hollywood will either have to cater to the growing Christian market through private industry "self-regulation" or compete with new entertainment entities that will.

Just how powerful Christian market forces are going to be in controlling Hollywood output, or competing with it, remains to be seen. *Left Behind: World at War* producer Peter Lalonde, a Christian who brought the movie rights to Sony Pictures on the heels of *The Passion of the Christ*'s success, has publicly criticized Sony for under-serving the religious market. He hired his own publicist, claiming that Sony refused to budget adequately for promotions. President of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Benjamin S. Feingold, denied that Sony was under-spending and said that the budget was commensurate with the market demand. But Lalonde's public tantrums seem intended to *create* a market, not just serve an existing one. He claimed that this was "more than an everyday direct-to-video release" and has threatened to drop Sony Home Entertainment for the next release, despite the studio's intention to make more *Left Behind* films and its general willingness to make more Christian movies. Lalonde said that his people want to build their own distribution systems: "We lack only one thing: real capitalization." □

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malls are run. The developers and owners rarely run the mall themselves—what they are interested in is developing another mall. Instead, they either hire or create a separate management company, headed by a general director, the most important person in the life of any mall. Although directors are ultimately responsible for the security, cleaning services, and maintenance, their most crucial job is to fill the mall with people who will buy things. The stores in an Israeli mall pay a maintenance fee, generally about \$14 per square meter of space, directly to the management company. To the owners, they pay either a per-meter rent, which can range from \$40 to \$60 per meter or more, or 7 percent of their gross intake, whichever is larger. For a director to retain his job, he must keep the owners happy by maximizing the amount of money passing through the stores' registers, and thus the percentage that arrives in their pockets.

The most important tool managers possess is their power to decide which stores to "bring in" to the mall—and which to force out when their rental contracts expire. Malls almost never sell individual store space so as not to lose this power. This is because the right "mix" of shops is what attracts people to the mall, thus keeping the cash register singing. And increasingly, the right "mix" is understood to be composed almost exclusively of chain stores.

Early mall-theory held that every successful mall must be "anchored" by one or preferably two giant-size stores—for example a department store like the Israeli HaMashbir or a huge supermarket. But mall-theory has been updated. "Now the anchors are the famous chains—Fox, Castro, Honigman, TNT," says R. "If you are a self-respecting mall, you have to have these stores." When I first tried to understand why malls were filled with chain stores, I concluded that it was because only chain stores had the financial reserves to pay the high rent and maintenance costs that malls entailed. And that is certainly a factor—on the street it is possible to find a small shop, in a less desirable corner, one that needs refurbishing, and to try to start a small business with a minimum of investment. That is impossible in a mall. But the main reason that new single-outlet stores are rare in malls is that they are largely being blocked from entry by the mall director. Directors choose to rent the vast majority of the stores under their control to chains—usually, the larger the chain the better. "Superfarm or NuvoFarm?" says Rosenbloom. "That's simple. I'll always choose the stronger one." R points storefronts out to me in the mall in which we are sitting that used to be occupied by successful, one-of-a-kind shops that were forced out by the Kanyon's new management, who wanted to install more chain stores. She also points out a shop, sold by its original owners, that went bankrupt after they opened up too many franchises at once. "Today," she sums it up, "either you're everywhere or you're nowhere."

Mall directors prefer chains because of the financial backing they bring with them—chains have the cash to invest in advertising and in special sales that bring in customers—and

they are more likely to pay their rent on time. But the real attraction of the chains is that they charge the malls with a particular kind of energy that sweeps us away from wherever we are—Nes Ziona or Afula, Netanya or Bet Shean—and transport us into the realm of the universal. Malls, as we have said, are situated in no place. Taken blindfolded into a mall, you won't know whether you are in Eilat or Hadera, or even New Jersey or Toronto. Although most of the chains are Israeli owned, the signs and logos—like those of Fox, Castro, and TNT—are in English. The language of fashion is also international. In malls all over the world, this season's color is orange, and there is nothing an Israeli on the Left can do about it [*Editor's note: In Israel, the color orange is associated with the right-wing settler movement*]. So Moshe Rosenblum is wearing a shirt colored a delicate orange.

The mall cuts itself off from the neighborhood it is situated in because its desire is turned towards something larger, more abstract, and thus more perfect than the gray and grimy reality of the local. It aspires to global culture, whose engine is the constant need for economic growth, and which is the most powerful force on earth today. The more places a chain exists in, the less it is local, and the more it participates in that perfection; it radiates the charisma of that power. As we walk through the towering but impenetrable outer walls of the mall and into a circular reality flashing with the bright logos of the most familiar and popular chains, we step into an alternative existence, a brave new world, the one we see on television and surf on the Internet. We are in a place that is nowhere and everywhere. We are redeemed from the physicality and the mortality of the merely local.

But the flash and shine of the mall studded with prestigious chain stores comes at a price. The mall-dominated economy destroys small businesses, integrating retail trade—once the last democratic bastion of the entrepreneurial spirit—into the world of large corporations. It also creates a new kind of feudalism. While some chain stores are operated by their owners, many sell “franchises” to people who at one time would have used their money to start their own small business. Like serfs who must give part of their crop to their landlord, the franchise holders have to pay a certain percentage of their gross earnings to the franchise owners, alongside the percentage they pay to the mall owners. “The owners use complicated contract agreements to abuse the franchise holders,” says R. “Everything has to be done according to very specific standards, and the franchises have to produce high enough profits, or they will replace the franchise owners.”

Still, isn't this what people want? Haven't Israelis voted with their feet, by showing up at the malls and making them a huge success?

In fact, not all malls are successful. As anyone who works in the development, management, or marketing of malls will tell you, the general consensus in the field is that too many malls have sprung up too close to each other. Many

malls are locked in life or death struggles with other malls. “The malls are spending massive amounts of money on advertisement(s), on creating children's activity centers within the malls and on other strategies for competition,” R told me. The extra expense is passed on, of course, to the consumer. And in Israel, “traditional” malls, built on the outskirts or in the industrial zone of cities, are now also threatened by the new Power Centers—huge discount malls built, often semi-illegally, on agricultural lands approachable only by automobile. The Power Centers have the added advantage of being open on Shabbat, which coalition agreements within municipal boundaries will not permit.

More importantly, the effects of mall culture on Israeli cities and on the landscape are too significant to be determined by the ability of air-conditioning, bright lights, and the glamour of chain stores to attract shoppers. Besides their impact on the health of downtown areas and small businesses, Yael Dori of Amutat Adam Teva VeDin explains, malls nearly always require cities to expand approach-streets to double lanes, shrinking the space for sidewalks and trees. They also contribute to the suburbanization of commerce throughout the city, leaving the poor who live within a city's traditional boundaries, and who often have no automobiles, trapped in an environment stripped of jobs and revenue for schools and other facilities.

“In many parts of the United States, Canada, and Europe,” says Irit Solsa, an architect and the chairman of Amutat Merchav, the organization for Israeli urbanism, “the law requires open town meetings in which citizens have a hand in determining the future of their city and its surroundings. In Louisiana right now, for example, town meetings that will help determine the shape of the reconstruction of towns and cities damaged by Katrina are being held.”

Here in Israel, more often than not, no comparable discussion takes place, even in the city and regional councils in which decisions about city planning are made. The rise of the Israeli mall has been enabled by the political system and by city and national governmental management failures, which have left municipalities on the verge of bankruptcy. Mayors tend to readily push for the approval of a new mall, because when developers begin to build on a piece of formerly industrial or agricultural property—in the case of Ayalon, the mall was built on what was a city dump—they must pay the city a large, one time “*Heytal Hashbacha*,” a nice chunk of ready cash. The malls also pay the city government a substantial piece of *arnona* (residency taxes) while providing for themselves much of the services that the city would provide the stores in a traditional downtown—lighting, security, waste disposal.

“The mayors are thinking very short term—how to raise some money so they can leave their term looking like a success. Their longest term horizon is about getting elected for another term,” says Solsa. “And the city engineer, because he is a political appointee, has to go along with what the mayor thinks. The mayors also have a lot of political clout in the

regional councils, enough to pressure the representative of the Ministry of the Interior, which also has to approve the plan, to agree to what they want."

Solsa thinks that malls could actually, in some cases, be harnessed in order to help strengthen cities, if planned correctly. "Take the Kfar Saba mall as an example. It sits right on Rehov Weizman, and is open at both ends to the street," says Solsa. "It's not a black box like other malls. The city insisted that residential housing be built right above the mall and invested money keeping Rehov Weizman beautiful as the mall was being built. The result is that the downtown was strengthened, not destroyed, by the mall." In most other cases, says Solsa, the rise of the malls coincided with the neglect of downtown areas—a sloughing off by the mayors and the cities of their most basic responsibilities. What happened in Netanya, Solsa told me, in the 1980s and 1990s is representative of the sequence of events in other cities as well. Planners and developers convinced Netanya city politicians that by creating new neighborhoods far from the city center, they would attract a "better" population to the city. The new neighborhoods, instead of increasing revenue, expanded the area to which the city must provide services, and further impoverished its coffers.

Malls are just one example of the tendency in Israeli public life to sell off or abandon more and more of what used to be public space to private contractors and developers, and to create an Israel designed, primarily, not for people, but for automobiles. For two days in December, Amutat Merhav held a public conference in Bersheva, which raised essential questions about the future of Israel, whose need for housing, commercial areas, and infrastructure will continue to grow: "What will be the shape of this growth?" Solsa asks. "Will it be a continuance of existing patterns of development: fragmented, automobile-based, enclaves consuming ever larger quantities of land, fragmenting and destroying the last areas of agricultural and open spaces of the dense coastal plain? Or will it be a smarter, more urbane and civic development, based on public transit accessibility to homes and jobs, on dense and yet human-scale development that will strengthen existing cities and protect and enhance important open spaces and ecological areas?"

What if the current haphazard planning, based on the needs of developers and of city politicians for a quick infusion of cash, continues? What if the inevitable pollution and destruction of green areas in a car-based society is not curbed? What if global warming, caused at least partly by exhaust emissions, continues to wreak havoc on the weather? What if the innermost centers of our towns and cities continue to be left to the poor, who grow increasingly desperate as schools and city services decline even more in quality? Then, in fact, the malls will be truly necessary, more even than they are now, because the outside will have become intolerable, and only there, in the privately owned and privately policed air of the cathedrals of the global market, will we be able to laugh and breathe, to meet each other and fulfill our destiny. □

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victory in February 2001, with 62 percent of the vote, was mainly attributed to the Israeli public's deep disappointment with Ehud Barak's mismanagement of the final status talks with the Palestinians, but was also a tribute to the successful image transformation of the seventy-three-year-old Sharon.

However, Israel's press was more difficult to win over. Gradually, however, the hostility was lowered. Though he gave few interviews, Sharon made extremely serious efforts to improve relations with the media, inviting reporters for lengthy briefings while turning on the charm. Journalists who had been boycotted by Sharon for years were all of the sudden welcomed, including Barnea, whom Sharon had not spoken to for nearly two and a half decades. Those journalists who weren't immediately won over by Sharon's charm offensive eventually relented when more and more details of the irresistible disengagement plan began to trickle out.

Media adoration is notoriously unreliable, but three months have passed since the completion of the Disengagement, and Israel's press has yet to turn against Sharon. This is despite the fact that he has yet to reveal any blueprints for future diplomacy, while even more corruption has been revealed within his Likud party. But Sharon is still getting great press. Perhaps the main reason for this, aside from the enduring awe that he actually managed to carry out the Disengagement without any serious casualties, is the identity of Sharon's main challenger now within the Likud.

The Israeli media has never forgiven Benjamin Netanyahu for confounding their hopes and expectations by defeating Peres in the 1996 elections, and they have dogged him ever since. Netanyahu did gain a fair amount of praise from the media for his fiscal policies. But every time he expressed reservations over the Disengagement, he was attacked. When Netanyahu finally resigned from the cabinet a couple of weeks before its implementation, the media's gloves were off, and Netanyahu was roundly branded as a traitor.

In the ensuing contest within the Likud, Sharon received massive media support, while every public appearance of Netanyahu was ridiculed. When at first the opinion polls among Likud party members showed Netanyahu leading Sharon by a wide margin, the newspapers began polling the entire electorate, allowing them to print results which showed Sharon far ahead of Netanyahu. The media's message to the Likudniks was loud and clear: vote Netanyahu if you want to be kicked out of office in the next election.

At this point in time, it's reasonable to assume that as long as Benjamin Netanyahu remains Sharon's only credible challenger, Sharon will remain the media's favorite. If and when he eliminates Netanyahu as a credible opponent, this all may change, especially if the Labor party's new chairman, Amir Peretz, begins to be perceived as prime minister calibre. But then of course, Sharon could always promise to dismantle a few more settlements, which undoubtedly will keep Israel's media firmly on his side. □

The Real Middle East

Joe Lockard

- *Why They Don't Hate Us: Lifting the Veil on the Axis of Evil*, By Mark LeVine. One World Publications, 2005
- *The Modern Middle East*, by Ilan Pappé. Routledge, 2005

As U.S. universities grapple with the forces of globalization, Middle East studies has become a leading site for contested scholarship. Due to the discipline's location at the confluence of critical state interests, global corporations, religious conflicts, and political sensibilities (particularly towards criticism of Israel), studies of the region are both eminently useful and consistently charged. Driven by public demand for objective reporting and analysis on the one hand, and by a requirement for "useful" facts justifying the foreign policy endeavors of the Bush administration on the other, it's safe to say that Middle East studies is the single most politicized area of academic research in American universities today.

That is to say, there is a political and administrative demand to control knowledge, to make it productive by integrating it into broader systems of power. The Bush administration's Middle East policy legitimates itself by using a rhetoric of false democracy, factual disinformation, and neo-religious moral authority. Cultural knowledge and counter-information generated by scholars that lie outside these parameters contradict the notion—widespread



in the United States—of a disinterested national benevolence, the sort of social self-congratulation that supports American exceptionalism. Middle Eastern societies might not, after all, not be entirely about brutality and domination.

At its best, Middle East studies benefits from a rich pool of scholars who understand the role of historic colonialism and oil-driven neo-colonialism in creating the contemporary Middle East. Such scholars appreciate the complex imbrication of religion and politics in nations as distinct as Israel and Saudi Arabia, and view the U.S. role in the region with skepticism at best. In short, an intellectually exciting Middle East studies department is an academic "perfect storm" waiting to happen, the sort

of public relations nightmare that makes university deans wonder why they did not choose a safe career like repairing Gulf Coast flood levees during hurricanes.

The issue for scholars, teachers and educational institutions at this juncture must lie in how to create new knowledge and promote free discussions about the Middle East that will resist what Henry Giroux correctly terms "the new authoritarianism." It is the twin specters of Islamic terrorism and oil shortages that have supplied right-wing authoritarianism in the United States with organizing impetus and themes. Progressive counter-education against the use of the Middle East as a political and military stomping-ground for the American Empire needs new ideas, new texts, and new pedagogies. Where might they be? Two recent studies, Mark LeVine's trade book, *Why They Don't Hate Us: Lifting the Veil on the Axis of Evil*, and Ilan Pappé's textbook, *The Modern Middle East*, exemplify both the advantages and pitfalls of available critiques of social transformation in the Middle East.

Anti-Globalist Culture Jamming

LeVine's study is long, sinuous, and twisting, like an 'Um Kalthoum song. He accompanies his academic career with a musical one, so readers can come away from *Why They Don't Hate Us* with as much musical knowledge as political insight. LeVine uses the idea of "culture jamming" to discuss the cultural cross-inspiration and oppositional connection between rap, blues, heavy metal, and music from the Islamic world. This is not culture jamming in the Negativland sense of appropriating pop music samples in order to criticize

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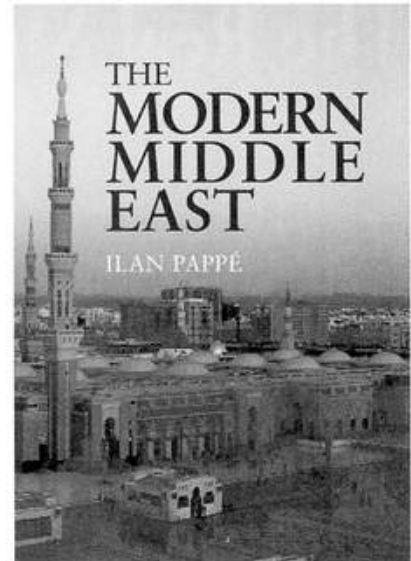
LeVine's innovation lies in his belief that multicultural combinations of scholars, activists, and artists can produce and articulate community-based radical politics that will have mass appeal and thus impact politics. Scholarship needs to find a new voice in order to bring its knowledge of world cultures and ideology to bear effectively on the world.

power, but rather jamming as a strategy for solidarity and resistance among groups that share massive youth consumer cultures and political marginalization. So, it becomes possible to read Shiite preacher Moqtada al-Sadr and 50 Cent as streetwise gangsta rappers up against the same metaphorical Man. That Man's precise identity changes from Europe to the Middle East to the United States, but there is a global jam happening against this authority figure who is always a stand-in for neoliberalism.

LeVine argues that neoliberal economics involve communicative pathologies no less than terrorism does, and that cross-cultural jamming provides a means of building the political trust needed to overcome global antagonisms and build an "axis of empathy." Different versions of this argument on the political utility of popular culture have appeared in the past, made by artists as different as Louis Armstrong and 1970s Czechoslovakian rockers Plastic People of the Universe. LeVine's innovation lies in his belief that the multicultural combinations of scholars, activists, and artists can produce and articulate community-based radical politics that will have mass appeal and thus impact politics. Scholarship needs to find a new voice in order to bring its knowledge of world cultures and ideology to bear effectively on the world. Progressive scholarship might as well learn to carry a tune if it wants to achieve its goals.

What is most fascinating about the cultural front LeVine envisions is not his high estimation of the political vanguardism of left-wing Middle Eastern intellectuals, but his remarkable faith in the capacity of regional youth to assume the same political agency that Western college students had during the 1960s. For LeVine, young people in the Middle East have, through the experience of neoliberal globalization, become quasi-revolutionary subjects much like post-war European and American youth. Are Middle Eastern youth really so ripe for radicalization? The author believes they truly are.

The next step of LeVine's argument is similarly Gramscian, with some serious qualifications. He proposes to bridge the divide between the Islamic world and the West by employing progressive religion to transform the new public political space created by culture jamming into something palatable to the masses. If popular music culture can be a leading means of mobilization, LeVine reasons, why not also use popular religion? "Only by helping people to hear God's voice," LeVine writes "can Christians transcend Bush and his dreams of apocalyptic rapture, Jews transcend Sharon and his 'settler Judaism,' Muslims transcend bin Laden and his nihilistic utopianism...." In short, the new philosophy of praxis, which Gramsci conceived of as worldly, material, and humanist, will now be divinely inspired,



even for secularists who do not claim specific religious commitments.

The problem with using Gramsci in this fashion is not that Gramsci's philosophy was itself inherently secular. Clearly, for any progressive religious purpose, left-wing theory, even in its most non-religious forms, has much to offer persons of all cultural persuasions. Yet problems begin when LeVine asks secularists to play the religion card, as if faith itself does not matter. Nor does he consider if it makes sense to ask both the Western and Middle Eastern left to transcend religious nationalisms without interrogating the role of religion in creating and perpetuating the so-called clash between their civilizations. This creates some serious problems for LeVine. Even leaving aside the more clearly nationalistic forms of religiosity ascribed to by both Bush and bin Laden, the author's approach offers uncritical support for what all must acknowledge has been a critical factor causing Middle East violence.

It is at moments like these, despite LeVine's brilliant comparative observations on culture in Islamic countries and the West, or his persuasive case concerning the effects of globalization on the Middle East, that one feels that we are endlessly revisiting the lessons of the Enlightenment. Refusal to distinguish between state and religious authority

represents an illegitimate invasion against private conscience—even in the Middle East. As many Arabs and Israelis will *both* tell you, there is nothing progressive about the religious colonization of the public sphere when everyday life is so heavily over-determined by the most oppressive of religious ideologies.

Middle East Modernism and Exclusion

If LeVine is a hip-hop anti-globalist writing a book-length culture jam, then Ilan Pappé is an older-style theorist of regional modernization who perhaps owes more to Eugene Rostow than he thinks. There is a strong modernist vs. postmodernist generational difference between the intellectual styles of Pappé and LeVine.

Pappé's milieu is the old school of Israeli leftism, one characterized by decisive certainty on the correctness of its historical knowledge; more frequent recourse to "I was there" narratives or rhetorical histrionics than to solid analysis; and condescension towards "outsiders" for their supposed ignorance. This is a problem that extends across the right-to-left spectrum of Israel's political society, where there is a pronounced conversational tendency to assume that an interlocutor is an ignorant *tam* in desperate need of education by monologue. The late twentieth-century's emphasis on the relativism of knowledge has had little if any discernable impact upon the Left in Israel and Palestine; cultural attitudes employing unchallengeable victimization and self-righteousness as political platforms remain common.

Pappé adopts this well-tried and tired pose in the opening paragraphs of his twentieth-century history survey text, *The Modern Middle East*. He writes "I have devoted my struggle within Israeli academia against my own state's and society's wish to be excluded from the Middle East and thus remain—as [Israel] has been since its inception in 1948—an alien state within the region. I paid dearly for this struggle... I was

nearly expelled from Haifa University in April 2002."

This is nonsense twice over. Against the background of a public controversy involving Pappé's support for a master's thesis alleging mass killing of Palestinian villagers in 1948 by the Alexandroni Brigade in the coastal village of Tantara, a faculty colleague filed a complaint against Pappé for slandering faculty and staff, damaging their professional reputations. An academic disciplinary court summarily dismissed the complaint, without hearing, two weeks later. Pappé's academic freedom was at risk only in his own imagination. In an environment where there are so many real victims, false claims of victimization have a special distastefulness.

The Association of University Teachers in Great Britain nonetheless seized on Pappé's claim in 2005 as grounds to call for a boycott against Haifa University, a boycott that Pappé supported in *the Guardian* and other public fora and which the AUT rescinded after a re-vote. Belying his claim to struggle against Israel's supposed cultural self-exclusion from the Middle East, Pappé's political history is that of a participant in efforts to ghettoize Israeli academia. Sharing an all-too-common escape tactic in Jewish intellectual history, Pappé's history counters Israel's proclaimed distinctiveness among its neighbors by substituting a distinction of a different kind—the negation of Israel as an authentic neighbor and player in the Middle Eastern world. In the relatively few allusions to Israel that appear in this volume, a clear pattern emerges: Israel and its Zionists are colonial infiltrators, nation-destroyers, regional troublemakers, labor exploiters, and cultural thieves. For the most part, to read Pappé, Israel is a nation-state that exists in an ahistorical lacuna created by the events of 1948. A reader would never know that Israel functions within the same set of social and political contradictions as other states throughout the Middle East, including the introduction of neo-liberal economics, mass impoverishment, militarization, labor migration, male supremacist culture, and oppressive religious

orthodoxies and bureaucracies. Israel possesses far more in common with the Palestinian territories, Jordan, or Lebanon than any of them have with European societies; it requires mutual xenophobia to ignore that commonality.

Condensed treatment hardly explains some of the historical ellipses that characterize Pappé's text. In a chapter on Middle Eastern media, radio disappears in a paragraph and a half, although it was an immensely influential popular medium from the establishment of colonial broadcasting networks until the 1960s. It is surprising to learn that, according to Pappé, Ibrahim Hasan Sirhan began Palestine's film industry in 1935 with a twenty-minute documentary. Yaakov Ben Dov, a student of Sergei Eisenstein, and Joseph Gal-Ezer filmed in Palestine throughout the teens and 1920s. Natan Axelrod began releasing Carmel newsreels in 1935, and Helmar Lerski directed *Avodah* in the same year.

These Jewish immigrant filmmakers inconvenience Pappé's inherently exclusivist definition of who counts as a "Palestinian." Imagine if an American cultural historian categorized Anzia Yezierska as a Polish rather than an American silent film script-writer in 1920s Hollywood because she was an immigrant. That is precisely the sort of categorization Pappé performs here. Such denial of identity leads to a denial of history. Other forms of denial appear here. An otherwise competent chapter reviewing rural history in the Middle East is marred by counterfactual assertion, based on one secondary source, that the Palestinian countryside during the Mandate witnessed "unprecedented devastation" and impoverishment. Issa Khalaf's "collapse thesis" points out stunning changes in the Palestinian Arab world during the years of the Mandate, including the consolidation of elite-notable class power and land ownership, dispossession of peasants, growth of the wage labor sector, and the rupture of older social institutions. But does modernization equate with devastation? During

much of the interwar period, for example, the Arab-owned citrus sector paced the growth of the Jewish-owned sector despite the latter's advantage of foreign capital investment, and by World War II was larger than the Jewish sector. While this benefited land-owning Arab families—and citrus monoculture contributed to rural proletarianization—Palestine's rural peasantry remained resilient and as or even more adaptive towards modernization than the peasantries of other Middle Eastern societies.

What is most striking about this chapter, however, is how nuanced Pappé's treatment is of early twentieth-century Egyptian cotton agriculture, Nasser's land reforms, and the rural sociology of the region. How can such strength in one area be reconciled with weakness in another? The strength of Pappé's writing emerges in his knowledgeable ability to summarize and integrate social movements within a problematically over-broad regional category called the 'Middle East' stretching from the Atlantic to the Arabian Sea, with the exception of Israel. History-writing in general is far more successful where it aims towards inclusion rather than exclusion, and Pappé's failures occur where he chooses exclusion of people or contradictory facts.

There is a manifest hunger that emerges at moments in Pappé's writings for an immersion within Arab cultures that has been denied to him by circumstances of birth and history. In a February 2005 interview, Pappé mentions reading and writing increasingly in Arabic; in this book he mentions in passing an observation from a Yemenite newspaper. Ilan Pappé is taking one of the intellectual directions that can most benefit Israeli Jewish society: learning the neighbors' language and its cultures. This critically necessary educational process in support of peaceful co-existence does not, however, need to entail the internalized self-negation of Jewish national subjectivity, the anti-modern road that Pappé has chosen for himself. □

Killer, Poet, Sage, Boy: Pinsky's *David*

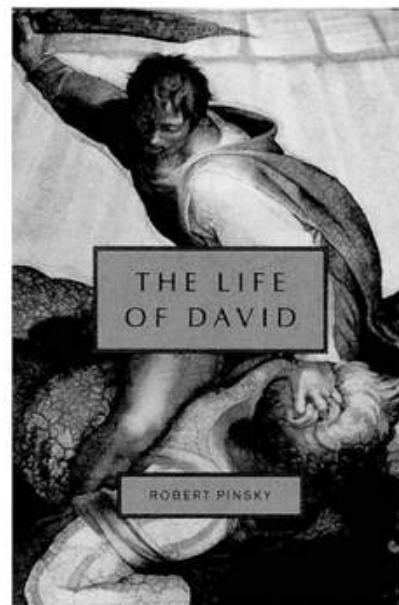
Anne Winters

■ *The Life of David*, by Robert Pinsky. Schocken, 2005.

From Robert Pinsky, America's former Poet Laureate, one might have expected an exploration of biblical poetry—the prophets, Job, the Song of Songs. But his first poem on a biblical subject actually arose from the (prose) Book of Daniel. And in his new book, Pinsky has written an immediately absorbing and beautifully written introduction to the best-loved and by far the most charismatic of all biblical kings: *David Melech Israel*.

As a companion, Pinsky proves particularly intuitive and quirky when he suggests contemporary parallels to the tenth-century BCE contexts: during David's years in exile, we are invited to "call him a warlord, or a guerilla." And when Israel's first king, Saul, dispatches bloody ox-hunks to the tribes as a troop-requisition and omen of his power, "The violent clarity of that notification, at once symbolic and literal, is like something from the *Godfather* movies or *The Sopranos*, those fantasies of ruthless patriarchal domination."

Pinsky intersperses retellings of these royal incidents with legendary *sequelae* to the biblical stories, intriguing meditations on Hebrew words, and midrashic interpretation. But the book's most striking gift by far lies in its attention to tiny, dependent-clause details that a contemporary might otherwise



gloss over given the Bible's laconic avoidance of emphasis or interpretation. For instance, David's slaying of the Moabites, as described in Samuel: "And [David] defeated Moab, and measured them with a line, making them lie down on the ground; two lines he measured to be put to death, and one full line to be spared." Pinsky underlines the bizarre *finesse* of this slaughter, "that systematic arrangement of the victims along the ground to be measured in three equal lengths, the seemingly mad and meticulous care to spare one third of them, and not as a certain number of people but as yardage, as though *Moabite* were a kind of cloth or metal chain."

In his reading of some passages, however, Pinsky may underestimate the

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influence of the Lord's underlying attitudes and Is-ness in the world. In Saul's case, for example, God's earlier anger at Israel's request for a mortal king ("they have rejected me") surely is reflected in Saul's inexplicable disobediences, which often feel like set-ups to justify the divine dismissal. Thus, the "faithful priest" Samuel's failure to show up as promised causes Saul to enrage God by prematurely launching the Philistine war. God's role is not causative in a logical or Aristotelian mode, nor merely factually prophetic. Rather, God's sorrow and wrath are deeply entwined with the space and time of Saul's rule, where its power to warp is so strongly felt.

Tribal histories, non-Jewish antecedents, and biblical sources contribute, of course, to our understanding of David's quicksilver qualities, and Pinsky offers lucid summaries of material usually found only in more technical books. Pinsky encourages us to think of David in terms of his complex tribal backgrounds and ancestors as a way of grasping the significance of his alliances and his ever-shifting loyalties in exile. David emerges as a chance-taker, deliciously unstable, labile as the psyche itself; he is so multifaceted that only lists and litanies seem capable of invoking him. To the eighteenth-century poet Christopher Smart, David was "Man, soul, and angel, without peer/Priest, champion, sage, and boy." Pinsky responds with "ever-admired killer and poet," "articulate dodger," "fluent, fluid...agile shape-shifter." The varied anecdotes are partly due to the tangle of early narrative sources, which become intelligible to non-specialists under Pinsky's economical handling.

Commenting on the antiquity of the David stories and their abundance of "doublets," or alternate versions of the same incident, Pinsky argues that both incidents and characters like Saul or David acquire a layered, complex color from "the infinite regress of obscured Sources behind everything that survives." He suggests that these multiple and contradictory versions in fact add a

verisimilitude—a human jaggedness and indefiniteness—to David's very human nature. He reminds us, in the end, of the richness introduced by the varied worldviews of different periods of Israelite history: "The meldings and inconsistencies of competing voices make the text read all the more deeply. Because the Late Source tries to pull the

story away from the monarchy and toward theological meanings, the career of David becomes an even more urgent, enigmatic account of destiny and freedom. Because it has been made to issue from the opposed story of Samuel (and Samuel's interpretation of Saul), the story of David is all the more magnetic, tormented, and glorious." □

The Language of Politics

Jonathan Sterne

- *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, edited by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris. Blackwell, 2005.

N*ew Keywords* consists of short, somewhat etymological entries, organized alphabetically. Intended for a broad, non-specialist audience, the book provides background on some of the most overused and fraught terms in contemporary public discourse, starting with "alternative" and ending with "welfare." To cut to the chase: this book is important for anyone who cares about the language used in public debate. In 1946, George Orwell famously wrote that "political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible." Orwell's tack was to take apart the "staleness" and "lack of precision" in public discourse. In contrast, *New Keywords* tries to restore some of that missing precision.

As with all good sequels, *New Keywords* requires some back-story to understand what it's trying to do. *New Keywords* updates an earlier book enti-



tled *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* by Raymond Williams. From his working class Welsh roots, Williams ascended to the top ranks of British academe—Oxford and Cambridge—where he taught in various positions from the 1940s through the 1980s. But Williams never quite felt at home in that posh world, and his work was consistently dedicated to the socialist goal of democratizing culture, and

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with its economic and political life. Williams's work also argued for considering mass media, alongside literature, as a crucial dimension of culture in our time. He was a beacon to scholars in the nascent cultural studies movement of the 1960s and 1970s, whose work analyzed the complex connections between culture and power. If there are "patron saints" of cultural studies, Williams would be one of them. Which is to say that taking up one of his projects is no small task.

Originally published in 1976, the first edition of *Keywords* is an odd classic of cultural studies. While today read mainly by academics, the book was never intended as a scholarly text. Rather, Williams had written for a wider intellectual reading public in Britain. His goal was to engage in public controversies, not to settle academic scores.

Keywords consists of alphabetically-organized entries of varying length that discuss the different inflections of words or concepts that were fraught with controversy in 1970s British public discourse. His entries on terms like "culture," "nature," and "realism" are still widely cited as some of the most profound reflections available on the terms. The book reads like a left-wing answer to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, though on a much smaller scale. This was Williams's intent: while the OED's objective voice concealed its various political takes on the words it defined, *Keywords* was up front with its politics. The OED is also noticeably weak on entries from the twentieth century. Williams at once summarized the history of each of the words for which he made an entry and offered insight into the meaning of the word for his contemporaries. In 1983, he revised the book to reflect the changes in British intellectual life over the intervening years and added a few entries he'd missed. The 1983 version has been a reference work ever since.

Twenty-two years later, *New Keywords* aims to pick up where Williams left off. Whereas Williams' versions used British culture as their touchstone,

New Keywords is a broadly international project, with contributors from the United Kingdom, the United States, Hong Kong, Australia, and Canada. The editors helped to popularize cultural studies in the United States, Australia, and Asia, and the list of contributors is a veritable "who's who" of current scholarship on culture. In part, this testifies to the success of Williams's original and the internationalization of cultural studies in the intervening years. But it also reflects the major difference between the old and new: *New Keywords* has all the advantages and disadvantages of a collectively authored work.

Coming two decades after the last installment of *Keywords*, the editors of *New Keywords* had to rethink even Williams' most celebrated entries, add new ones, and delete old ones (though the editors are clear that they don't so much intend to replace Williams's original text as to supplement it). For instance, Meaghan Morris's entry on "political correctness" replaces Williams's entries on "doctrinaire" and "jargon" quite profitably. Morris concisely tracks the roots of the phrase as an adjective in sectarian Marxist disputes and arguments among leftists; its hijacking as a noun by the first Bush administration; and its subsequent use by Left and Right in the United States, critics of the government in Australia, and European critics of American university culture. "Indeed," she writes, "as the term began to exhaust itself through extended overuse, the core of its appeal crystallized as a widespread anxiety over the power of language and the inaccessibility of truth in media-saturated societies."

Other entries simply cover words that were not relevant to public debate in the 1970s and 1980s, like Steve Jones's entry on "virtual." Still others reflect changes of attitude in the intervening years, like Steven Rose's very interesting entry "Gene/Genetic," which casts its net wide enough to include the roots of the word in "genesis" and popular misinterpretations of the Human Genome

Project. Rose even predicts the decline of the term as a metaphor for identity, at least in the biological sciences.

The disadvantage of collective authorship is, naturally, some unevenness. Though *New Keywords* does attempt to be systematic, the editors freely admit that some words were excluded for reasons that have more to do with the publishing process than any kind of intellectual or political choice. Sadly, for this reason there is no entry for "terrorism" or "waste," and I would have liked to see entries for other terms like "rights" (though one does find an entry for "equality"), "war," "imperialism," and "threat." While there is an entry on "other," as an American expatriate, I would have liked to see a discussion of "our" or simply "us." Some other entries, like W.J.T. Mitchell's on "value," seem to miss the importance of contemporary public debates around "values" as they are applied in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. Last but not least, the book testifies to academic presses' abandonment of good proofreading and copyediting. As an author, I know how difficult it is to catch all of one's own typographical errors. Unfortunately, there are some errors that Blackwell should have caught in the production process, but this is a problem with the quality of academic publishing in general, and not *New Keywords* in specific.

Overall, *New Keywords* is a welcome addition to the contemporary debate surrounding culture, and anyone interested in the politics surrounding what words mean in public discourse ought to read it. For good measure, if you haven't picked up a copy of Williams' *Keywords*, I recommend that as well. I have always enjoyed books of this sort: rather than reading from front to back, this is the kind of collection where the reader begins with one entry and then follows a thread through the cross-references. In that respect, *New Keywords* can be unexpectedly rewarding in ways that a traditional anthology of political writings simply cannot be. □

Reluctant Memory

Gil Anidjar

Sixty years after the liberation of Auschwitz, there remain, among the most powerful and haunting words of testimony, those of Primo Levi. Thousands of words and images, books, documentaries, and feature films have failed to displace, much less replace, the indisputable and singular force of Levi's writing. It might seem banal to account for this force—this weak force, the force of utter weakness and extreme fragility—with the explanation that on the pages of *Survival in Auschwitz* were always more than words. Yet, Levi himself reluctantly presented his words as symbols of excess. Unable to bear that which they were supposed to describe, failing their intended, testimonial role, these were excessive words as well as more than words. These were images, strong yet reluctant images.

There are a number of reasons for this reluctance, and Levi states only one of them clearly: "If I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image," he writes—thereby suggesting he cannot do it. Yet, if he could have so enclosed evil (he could not), Levi would have done so. And had he done so (he did not), it would have been not with words, but with an image. Not with many words, but with one image, and one image only. And not just any image, but "this image": "If I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of thought is to be seen."

Had Levi been able to choose it (he was not: it befell him), this image would no doubt have been unforgettable. Levi



paradoxically underscores the failure of memory, however, when he asserts that the men like the one he describes "crowd my memory." Levi knows that memory fails these men. He knows that they do not dwell in, nor belong to, memory. Why? Because they all "have the same story, or more exactly, have no story; they followed the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run down to the sea." Levi's words are truly haunting. They themselves may even be memorable, but those of which they speak are not. They are "an anonymous mass," to which he gives a name, if not a memory and a remembrance, and it is a name of his own choosing (not a name of their own). They are, Levi says, "the drowned." And they

form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical of

non-men who march and labor in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand.

Just a few lines earlier, Levi had made starker, harsher, the failure of memory that surrounded them, when he emphasized the ephemeral temporality of their passage through the camp. "One knows that they are only here on a visit, that in a few weeks nothing will remain of them but a handful of ashes in some near-by field and a crossed out number on a register." This is why, even before their disappearance, theirs is "an opaque intimate solitude, and in solitude they die or disappear, without leaving a trace in anyone's memory."

Levi was right, of course. The men and the image he offered of them have disappeared. They have vanished from memory in spite of all the efforts and all the commemorations. Yet, in their terrifying anonymity, their collective names have nonetheless left traces that are no less reluctant, if also no less significant, than Levi's entire work of testimony. It is well known that Levi called them "the drowned," a name which he proposed in the title of this section of the book, and which later became the title of another famous volume: *The Drowned and the Saved*. But the name of the "drowned" is only a substitute. It stands in for another name, one that was in fact used in Auschwitz ("I do not know why," says Levi). This other name has a curious history, which has only recently begun to emerge in its true dimension, that of a reluctant trace or memory. It has been massively disseminated throughout numerous testimonies, literary and



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scholarly accounts (those of Bruno Bettelheim and Elie Wiesel among them) written in German, Polish, Italian, French or Hebrew, and other languages. More recently, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben devoted an entire book to the phenomenon.

Even with the impressive attention that has been dedicated to Auschwitz and to the Holocaust, with all the work of memory that has taken place, this particular name has failed to leave more than a reluctant trace in our collective memory. I insist on this reluctance not only because it appears to contradict the wide dissemination just mentioned, but also because the name of which Levi and others speak seems to have acquired its strange, generalized status *after and since the Holocaust*. Although it was only used in Auschwitz, it is mentioned or invoked in post-Holocaust literature regardless of its actual use in the period, location, or context spoken about. In other words, survivors who did not hear the name used during the war, and scholars who have not found it in use in their sources, have nonetheless come to name the phenomenon thus designated with that same name.

What is that name?

It is the name *Muslim* (in—now antiquated—German, *Muselmann*).

But how could it be that the “anonymous mass” of camp inmates, in a camp where the vast majority wore the yellow star, were designated (by other inmates, as well as by the SS) as “Muslims”? I have offered elements toward an answer to this question in my book *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*. The issue raised by the name “Muslims,” is, like Levi’s image, one that is familiar to us. (German children are still taught, *today*, a two-hundred-year-old nursery rhyme cautioning them not to drink coffee, the “Turkish” beverage which, the song ominously warns, “weakens the nerves and makes you pale and sick.” The song immediately adds a further, as it were, prophetic admonition: “Don’t be a Muslim, *Sei doch kein Muselmann*, who cannot help it!”)

Could this reluctance to mention the



name be put down on the account of a legitimate concern over disturbing comparisons? A somehow understandable, if troubling, matter of competition among victims? Does this explain what is repeatedly called “the new anti-Semitism”? I want to call attention to something else that is at work and that, though banal, should warrant our keen attention; that goes beyond the current commemorations and beyond popular and now-formulaic condemnation of anti-Semitism (a condemnation that increasingly takes the aspect of concerned laments about crime and gang violence in “difficult”—read: poor—neighborhoods).

It is only recently that we are beginning to learn more from books about Hitler’s black victims, for example, or about the thousands of Jewish soldiers in the German military during the Second World War. Less recently, we had tried to learn about what relates anti-Semitism to Orientalism, Judeophobia to Islamophobia, and colonialism to Nazism. Hannah Arendt and Edward Said did not get much good press on these particular topics, and those who take account of their lessons remain perhaps all too few (among them stand out scholars who may be familiar to readers of *TIKKUN*, such as Ella Shohat, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Susannah Heschel, and Jonathan Hess). What these scholarly and political inquiries have in common, however, is not that they seek to identify new categories of victims (thereby diluting some hard won, if dubious, “benefits”) or establish new claims for recognition or compensation. What they have in common is first and above all that they enrich our understanding of oppression. They enable us to understand the instrumentalization of hatred from the legitimization of social inequalities to cultural production to the extremes of persecution.

Oppressive apparatuses—let us recall that the most efficient among them have always been state apparatuses—function through complex mechanisms. They produce differences and hierarchies among communities and popula-

tions (the old “divide and rule” principle), as well as through the strategic, often unconscious, separations of different arms of the law (or what passes for law) and a division of labor among ideologues of diverse kinds (politicians, of course, but also jurists, journalists, scholars, and writers—even theologians). They spread fear and feed it. Legitimacy is granted or produced less through enforcement and more through a dialectic of consensus and dissent (some strenuously disagree, for example, on what security measures are to be taken, what rights are to be curtailed, how much torture to use), often with honest intent to do good and dispense, even export, assistance and advantages, even if unequally so. (This is the “civilizing mission,” or the “regeneration” of so-called backward populations by means of legal and political institutions, and even the security and protection of seemingly essential interests, the defense of rights, and so forth).

In this context, the proximity of Jews and Muslims that is evoked by the Auschwitz term “Muslims” should hardly be seen as sign of competition among victims, nor should it be considered as participating in the cultivation of fears and anxieties. Rather, it is the image of memory struggling to overcome its own reluctance in the face of an oppression that continues to exercise

itself with increased impunity. Europe’s tradition of oppression is only one aspect of Western history, of course, but the development of “the persecuting society” (in R. I. Moore’s phrase), which Europe ended up becoming up through its twentieth-century nexus and to which we are heirs must be further explored, better understood, better remembered.

Concerned with an image of “all the evil of our time,” Primo Levi may yet prove to have been more successful than he thought, if relatively so. For the image of evil that he was able to choose and elaborate illuminates that which oppression has produced *in our time*: a Jew who is also a Muslim, and both targeted for death, both as good as dead (like the proverbial “Indian” in another persecuting society—and there are others).

Oppression takes many forms; it benefits from “complexity” and it is intrinsically careful about the way it handles its targeted victims. Oppression separates and isolates them, letting them think they are each other’s enemy, oblivious competitors fighting for its ambiguous, indeed treacherous, favors and vying for its useless and ephemeral recognition. Oppression turns Jew against Muslim, only in order to conceal that it turns Jews and Muslims both—unto death. □

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Capsule Reviews

- *The Other Side of Israel: My Journey Across the Jewish/Arab Divide*, by Susan Nathan. Nan A. Talese, 2005

Although my sympathies are on the Left, I am tired of platitudes about Israel. I understand the allure of being an anti-Zionist, yet I have come to see this stance as both illusory and dangerous. To be critical of Zionist discourse demands a much more serious interrogation of how this discourse has shaped contemporary Jewish identity, including our own.

As I began reading *The Other Side of Israel*, it became obvious to me that Susan Nathan understood my reservations. Nathan invites us on a journey that begins with her own longstanding commitment to Zionism. She takes us with her, intellectually and geographically, as she moves from exercising her Jewish right to return to eventually deciding to live in Tamra, an Arab city in the Galilee.

In Nathan's account, it is the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, and not those Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation, whose plight speaks to problems at the heart Jewish nationalism. Nathan tells numerous stories about individual Arab citizens, their families, and their communities at the hands of the Israeli state, but it is the broader systemic nature of these asymmetrical social arrangements that demands our attention.

One of the most devastating forms of such discrimination is Israel's ongoing land acquisition policies. These are directly linked to efforts to contain Arab Israeli citizens in cities and towns that can no longer accommodate them. Because the state refuses to grant permits to build on the limited available space, these Israeli citizens live under constant threat of having their presum-

ably "illegal" homes demolished. This and other policies assure that Israel will remain a Jewish State.

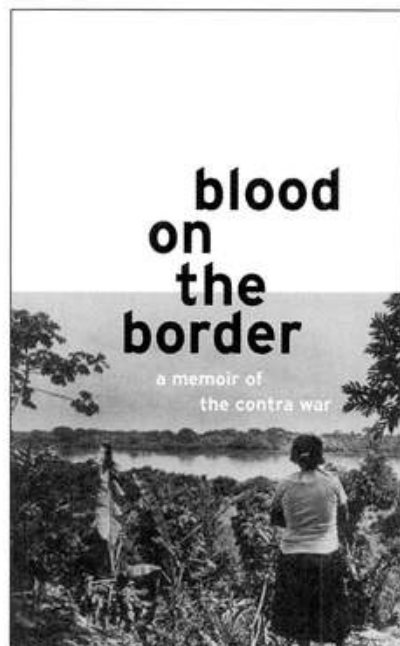
What this means, to Nathan, is that it is not 1967 that marks a turning point in Israeli history around relations between Palestinians and Israeli Jews, but rather, 1948. With great urgency, Nathan insists that we confront this legacy. This means radically rethinking what Israel is. If we want Israel truly to be a democratic state and not just a Jewish one, we will have to confront the gross inequities that mark the parameters of "the other side of Israel" and challenge the legal and social policies that perpetuate these inequities. By demanding that we see the gap between the Jewish state and the democratic dreams of Jewish nationalism, Nathan challenges us to consider what a truly democratic Israel might look like.

—Laura Levitt

- *Blood on the Border: A Memoir of the Contra War*, by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. South End Press, 2005

The last time an international scandal rocked a U.S. administration was the Iran-Contra affair of the 1980s, which revealed a clandestine back door to arms dealers and dictators in the Reagan White House. Like today, Americans mainly focused on the bad guys in our own midst (particularly the photogenic Ollie North), while largely ignoring the complex political situation in Nicaragua that made the scandal possible.

In *Blood on the Border*, historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz brings the Contra war back to life. A partisan of the Sandinista government, Dunbar-Ortiz spent much of the 1980s in Nicaragua, at first as a representative at various UN meetings and later on more overtly po-



litical fact-finding tours. In this memoir, she reminds us of the general contours of the scandal—how the United States attempted to covertly undermine the socialist Sandinista government of Nicaragua by sending money for arms to the rebel Contras. The money came from illegal arms sales to the United States' avowed enemy, Iran, which North *et al* had hoped would use its influence to free American hostages being held at the time in Lebanon.

Dunbar-Ortiz's focus is on Nicaragua. What struck her, however, was how U.S. supporters of the Contras used Nicaragua's indigenous people, the Miskitu, to support their cause. Why would the Miskitu support the Contras, rather than the Sandinistas? This question takes Dunbar-Ortiz out of Managua, Nicaragua's capital, to the country's Mosquito Coast where she battles both the jungle and the Contras to survive. She finds that the Miskitus are indeed opposed to the Sandinistas because the socialist state, entirely preoccupied with nationalism, is unwilling to grant any autonomy to indigenous people.

At the same time, Dunbar-Ortiz discovers that the Contras, rather than aiding the Miskitus, are terrorizing the population, bombing villages, and kidnapping

large numbers of people in an effort to make it appear as if the Miskitus must flee to neighboring Honduras to escape the Sandinistas. The Miskitus are trapped between the two.

Dunbar-Ortiz's story is a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at how international agencies, non-governmental organizations, the media, politicians, and insurgents shape the story of a war. For readers at this moment, *Blood on the Border* provides an instructive gloss on the Iraq war. While the Plame scandal may encourage the Left, the real story of Iraq lies in the de facto civil war between Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, and the Marsh Arabs. —Joan G. Kaplan

■ *Choir Boy*, by Charlie Anders. Soft Skull Press, 2005

While reading *Choir Boy*, the sweet and spirited first novel by Charlie Anders, there is a strong temptation to try to classify it, to try to make it fit. Is it a coming of age novel? A teen transgender tale? A politicized satire? This natural human need to know "what it is" parallels the story itself, the experience fourteen-year-old Berry Sanchez faces as a boy who doesn't want to be a man but isn't sure about

changing into a woman either. Everyone, including his parents, choir director, and a well-meaning tranny prostitute, swirl around him, reacting to this threatening ambiguity and wanting him to choose, needing life to be more clear-cut. Choose one or the other—both is not an option. The answer offered here is to lighten up already and let it (the novel) and him/her (Berry) just be.

Berry has decided that he wants to remain a choirboy forever. With his cohorts' voices breaking around him, he knows there isn't much time before he takes the inevitable step into manhood. He takes desperate action, landing him, progressively, in the care of a gender-specialist shrink, on a clandestine trip to a clinic to obtain female hormones, and eventually to new breasts, new friends and enemies, and much confusion. Only his voice and his intent remain the same.

Anders grazes the political, but handles issues of gender (and religion, race, and class) with a light touch, choosing instead to keep the focus on Berry, a sincere and sympathetic outsider who struggles but remains relatively okay through it all. Berry becomes a placeholder for uncertainty; he is not wholly male or female, child or adult, "goose" (his school's demarcation for ordinary kids) or "swan" (the smart kids), amidst the discomfort, wary acceptance, disgust, and rage of his family, friends, and church community.

There is a believable, frustrating quality about decisions made with a child's ignorance of consequences (e.g., taking the hormones for his voice and ending up with breasts) that take motion and turn Berry into a puzzle to be solved when all he wants to do is sing. Anders weaves in pop culture riffs and teenspeak, pokes at modern psychology, and ends up with a simple narrative with many colorful characters to keep it tripping along. This engaging novel gently exposes a plight that's at once unique to an emerging gender-bender and important to add to our collective story, while also exploring what it can take to find happiness.

—Katje Richstatter

■ *Yom Kippur a Go-Go*, by Matthue Roth. Cleis Press, 2005

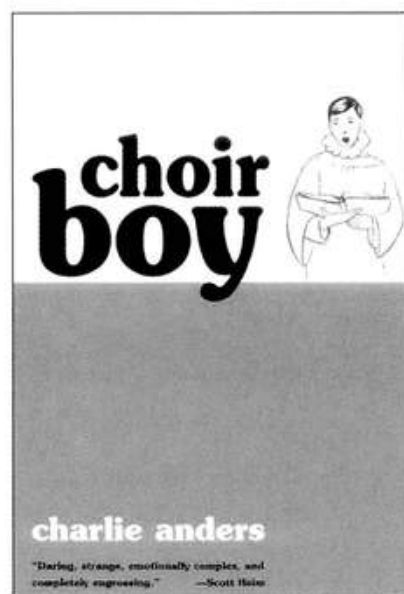
Matthue Roth is a San Francisco-based literary wunderkind. He's also an Orthodox Jew who spends more time in lesbian bars than he does with yeshiva bochers. *Yom Kippur a Go-Go* recounts the start of Roth's literary career and his search for a Jewish, punk-rock soul mate.

Roth wants to wed tradition to the avant-garde, which is nothing new—we've seen it in the pages of *Heeb* and in countless CDs from John Zorn's Tzadik label—but Roth's humor, quirky descriptions, and idiosyncratic characters make the reader feel lucky to be invited to the party. *Yom Kippur a Go-Go* also raises an important question: is it possible to reconcile the demands of tradition with a wild and radically accepting lifestyle?

The tension between these two informs Roth's story. He struggles with the fear that he'll never meet someone both alienated and devout, with the loneliness of keeping Shabbat while his friends go out clubbing, and with the decision of whether or not to be *shomer negiah* (to refrain from physical contact with women outside of marriage).

For the most part, *Yom Kippur a Go-Go*'s frenetic pace is exhilarating, but the trade off is that potential problems (such as how as an Orthodox Jew you deal with your lesbian girlfriend's decision to become a stripper) are simply left behind by the narrative's relentless forward motion. This is not to say that Roth's hybrid identity should necessarily call the integrity of either his radicalism or his traditional bent into question; loving punk shows as much as Shabbat doesn't require an explanation.

Rather, it is precisely because the promise Roth offers—of being able to be profoundly tied to tradition and simultaneously open to transgression—is so appealing that we want him to explore it more deeply. Even so, there is enough here to make *Yom Kippur a Go-Go* well worth the ride. —Liz Winer □



Taking Slavoj Zizek Seriously

Shai Ginsburg



“**W**hat would be my, how should I call it, spontaneous attitude towards the universe?” asks Slavoj Žižek at the opening of Astra Taylor’s documentary *Zizek*. He continues:

It’s a very dark one. The first one would have been a kind of total vanity: there is nothing, basically. I mean it quite literally. Ultimately there are just some fragments, some vanishing things. If you look at the universe, it’s just one big void. But then how do things emerge? Here I feel a kind of spontaneous affinity with quantum physics where, you know, the idea ... is that the universe is a void, but a kind of a positively charged void. And then, particular things appear when the balance of the void is disturbed. And I like this idea spontaneously very much: the fact that it’s not just

nothing—things are out there. It means that something went terribly wrong, that what we call creation is a kind of a cosmic imbalance, cosmic catastrophe, that things exist by mistake. And I am even ready to go to the end and to claim that the only way to counteract it is to assume the mistake and go to the end. And we have a name for this: it’s called love. Isn’t love precisely this kind of a cosmic imbalance? I was always disgusted with this notion of “I love the world,” “universal love.” I don’t like the world.... I am basically somewhere in-between “I hate the world” and “I am indifferent towards it”.... Love for me is an extremely violent act. Love is not “I love you all.” Love means: I pick out something; it’s again the structure of imbalance. Even if this something is just a small detail, a fragile individual person. I say, “I love you more than anything else”: In this

quite formal sense, love is evil.

Žižek—a professor at the Institute of Sociology, Ljubljana—is one of the most celebrated academic intellectuals in the world. His lectures attract scores, at times even thousands, of people. Astra Taylor’s documentary follows the philosopher at public appearances in Buenos Aires, New York, Seattle, Philadelphia, and even primetime American television, as well as in the privacy of his hotel rooms and his apartment in Ljubljana. Whether addressing a packed lecture hall, strolling in the park, sitting on the sofa in his apartment watching videos, or even lying in his bed, Žižek’s accented English speech never ceases, as he articulates a dazzling succession of ideas. For Žižek revels in the movement of one idea to the next—from philosophical questions to TV commercials, from the obscure language of Lacanian psychoanalysis to Alfred Hitchcock films and B movies, from the structure of modern capitalist-consumerist society to science fiction—in an attempt to elucidate complex

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philosophical problems while, simultaneously, shedding light on the moral and political problems of the present.

Commensurate with his theoretical engagement is Zizek's political engagement. Active in the alternative movement in Slovenia during the 1980s, in 1990 Zizek was a candidate for the presidency of the Republic of Slovenia in the first multi-party elections (the most intelligent candidate, as one of his right-wing rivals admitted during a televised round table). From his current podium as a public intellectual, however, Zizek reverses his earlier political position. Rather than offer his audience answers to the question "what is to be done?", Zizek argues that the desire to be provided with such answers only thwarts its fulfillment. Assuming the mantle of the psychoanalyst, Zizek redirects the question to a rapt audience in a perverse form: the question, he says, is not whether he will yield to the audience's desire for an answer, but whether their expectations are legitimate and what these expectations tell them about themselves.

In fact, Zizek's sheer enjoyment in shocking his interlocutors is patent, and so is his pleasure in performing the *enfant terrible* of both politics and philosophy. On the one hand, he directs his provocation at liberal, middle-class sensitivities, employing irreverent jokes to

circumvent the trenches into which the Left digs itself by succumbing to simple, reductive oppositions such as "liberal" and "fascist." On the other hand, Zizek's provocations are also directed at the conceit of the philosophical and psychoanalytical establishments (as when, for instance, he wrote the catalogue of the clothing company Abercrombie & Fitch or when he refers to examples from popular culture in order to explain a complex notion of Lacan). By unsettling professional decorum—at least verbally—Zizek attempts to rephrase philosophical inquiry in such a way as to not only shed new light on it, but also to make it meaningful to everyday life.

One should, therefore, take Zizek's pranks and stories seriously, particularly when they seem fantastical, for our fantasies are the leading clue to ourselves, to our motivations, and to the world in which we live. This might explain the philosopher's fascination with cinema, including the kinds of lowbrow movies upon which serious film critics frown. It may also explain the following story Zizek once told a group of students: When in Paris studying psychoanalysis, he was analyzed by Jacques-Alain Miller (Jacques Lacan's son-in-law). Walking the streets of the city on his way to his daily session, Zizek would think about what would make an interesting dream and develop it, ultimately presenting it

to Miller as his latest dream during the session. Never once, Zizek concluded, did he present a true dream during the analysis. Does this matter? Does the fact that a "fictitious," rather than a "real" dream was analyzed make a difference? Apparently not.

Yet this story reveals something that despite—or because of—Zizek's apparent candor, remains persistently concealed. In *Zizek*, he never drops the clown's mask that he assumes. True, in the best tradition of psychoanalysis, Zizek is the prime subject of his own analytical discourse. He willingly puts himself on the stage as he takes off his protective layers, *literally* showing us where he keeps his underwear—in a kitchen drawer with the rest of his household items. Yet we should not forget that this is a staged striptease: it reveals nothing beyond the public image Zizek nurtures. Rather, it discloses almost nothing, except to perhaps display Zizek's desire to direct his real-life performance to the last detail, suggesting his fascination with Hitchcock, who was known for the meticulous way in which he planned every scene in his movies. *Zizek* thus appropriately ends when, in a rendition of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, the philosopher stages his own death.

For more information on Zizek, visit www.documentarycampaign.org.

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Exiled From Main Street: Talking with Anarchist Band The Ex

Charlie Bertsch

It's past midnight in Amsterdam, but G.W. Sok sounds wide awake. A co-founder of the Dutch anarchist punk band The Ex, he betrays no resentment at having to discuss the band's twenty-five year career at an hour when most people struggle to stay alert. Even though he's been through this drill many times, Sok sounds as excited as if he were conducting his first interview. And, while he is happy to talk about the past, it is abundantly clear that Sok isn't living in it. Most musicians who have been around as long as The Ex pepper their conversation with references to the good old days of their youth, when the fans were smarter, the parties were wilder, and the music was better. By contrast, while he recounts fond memories of his band's early history, Sok deftly escapes the labyrinth of nostalgia. The past is a resource, but so is the future. The world remains ripe with possibility.

In contrast to the relaxed, sunny tone of Sok's speaking voice, The Ex sound like gray skies, threatening to break open at any moment. Constructed out of pulsing, fractured rhythms and a bevy of dissonant notes, their music resists every notion of "easy listening." The title of their first full-length album, *Disturbing Domestic Peace*, (released in 1980) is an apt description of their art. The cover photo shows five policemen in riot gear, one of whom is about to lower his axe onto the entrance of a building. The image reminds us of the violence the state is willing to unleash on anyone who resists the

status quo. Coupled with the album's title, it underscores the limitations of concepts like "disturbing the peace." While it is the people inside this building who are likely to be taken into custody on that amorphous charge, the police are clearly the ones doing the disturbing here. By itself, then, the cover functions as a simple yet effective critique of the ruling order's hypocrisy.

Listening to the record makes things considerably more complicated. Like almost all of the music The Ex have put out over the years, *Disturbing the Domestic Peace* is angular, edgy, tense. In short, it is meant to disturb. When we hear songs like "Rules" or "New Wars," we feel that axe poised in mid-air and grow desperate for the blow to be struck. But that desire aligns us, not with the people inside the building, but with the policemen who are about to discipline them. While Sok's lyrics make classic anarchist points with the detachment of the pamphleteer, the melody-sparse sounds that propel them forward remind us how readily passions can override political reason. The impulse to break down doors always has the potential to free itself from any order we impose upon it. Sometimes the longing for the blade transcends our sense of belonging. This is why art still matters. We need to feel the urge to identify with power without acting against our own best interest. And that is a task for which rock music is especially well suited. The Ex have always understood this, producing music that is taut with pent-up primal energy, refusing to settle down.

As Sok fleshes out his tale of The Ex, he repeatedly underscores the band's restlessness. At one career crossroads after another, the band has turned off the main drag: not signing to a major label, not playing by the rules of the insular punk community, not dumbing down their politics in search of a bigger audience. Asked how The Ex is able to bear the stress of being on the road, Sok's already welcoming voice brightens a notch. "The traveling makes it fun!" And when he says, "traveling," Sok's talking about more than the club-and-festival circuit in Europe and North America. In both 2002 and 2004, The Ex accompanied the great Dutch avant-garde jazz drummer Han Bennink on extended tours of Ethiopia. "The roads there are not very comfortable. So even if Western bands go there, they will not travel around by bus to smaller cities because it takes two days to get there. Also, people hardly know rock music. They only vaguely know something like Michael Jackson or Madonna." Over the course of the interview, Sok mentions these trips to Ethiopia again and again, transforming The Ex's adventurous touring into a figure for their approach to both art and life. Like the speaker of Robert Frost's famous poem, The Ex's decision to take the road less traveled stands in for countless other decisions that have determined the band's career.

In the world of popular music, longevity is both a curse and a blessing. The longer bands are around, the more likely it is that their concert tours will draw consistent crowds and their records consistent sales. Unfortunately, that security is not always enough. To

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The Ex in 1979

remain relevant, bands need to reach beyond their base, convincing not only devoted fans but also casual listeners and critics that they are still worth the expenditure of time and money. Veteran acts must navigate the treacherous waters between the present and present perfect, convincing their audiences, both that they are “now” and that their “then” lies in the future as well as the past. Nobody wants to be a has-been. Yet even the most savvy artists find themselves reduced to history lessons, no matter how vigorously they protest against their obsolescence. The latest Michael Jackson, Madonna, or Rolling Stones albums are not going to turn the clock back on these artists’ careers. It takes more than corporate tie-ins or stadium-sized spectacles to maintain the blood flow in a rock-and-roll reputation. No matter how hard Mick Jagger works on stage, he can no longer sing “Satisfaction” with the sincerity he once did. The Rolling Stones’ time has long since come and gone. Though fans still come to their shows, the release they experience is profoundly melancholy.

The Ex, on the other hand, keep coming. Unlike those platinum-selling acts who are destined for the afterlife of the casino circuit, The Ex have made few concessions to pop convention over the course of their long career. But while this uncompromising approach has prevented them from having hits, it has also protected them from misses. Free from the demands of pleasing corporate functionaries, The Ex have been able to fashion a remarkably constant body of work. While the twenty-three singles and B-sides from the 1980s included on the recent collection *Singles. Period.* (Touch and Go, 2005) demonstrate a degree of progression—the later songs tend to be more varied in instrumentation and tonality—they are clearly cut from the same cloth.

More surprisingly, many of the tracks on The Ex’s 1998 *Starters and Alternators* or their 2004 double album *Turn* would sound right at home in the collection. Indeed, you could put all of The Ex’s songs together, even their collaborations with other artists, and play them on shuffle mode without hearing a single awkward segue.

To some critics, this consistency might seem like a weakness. Record reviews tend to focus on the differences between a new album and its predecessors, highlighting evidence of growth. But The Ex render this approach difficult, if not impossible. Although *Turn* is a fine record, it hardly represents a departure. The music pulses as relentlessly as ever. Sok’s lyrics revisit topics he has explored many times before. If anything, *Turn* confirms that more of the same isn’t necessarily too much.

The Ex’s recent works demonstrate that refusing the mantle of maturity can be an excellent career move. Yet their consistency serves another, more significant purpose as well. Since punk rock first appeared in the mid-1970s, it has been identified with radical politics,

usually on the Left. As Craig O’Hara writes in his book, *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise*, “when it comes to choosing a political ideology, punks are primarily anarchists. This is not to say that all punks are well read in the history and theory of anarchism, but most do share a belief formed around the anarchist principles of having no government or rulers and valuing individual freedom and responsibility.”

Like their counterparts in the British band Crass or America’s Dead Kennedys, The Ex set out to turn the instinctive anarchism of punk into something more self-aware. In place of the willfully blind rage of the Sex Pistols’ “Anarchy In the U.K.”—“Don’t know what I want/But I know how to get it”—they have promoted a political stance designed to channel that energy more productively without compromising those anarchist principles. It can be a difficult balancing act.

The most common critiques of anarchism from both the Left and Right impugn it for confusing immaturity with idealism. The direct actions favored by activists with ties to the punk community are invariably reduced to their lowest common denominator. The electronic version of a February 17, 2003 *San Francisco Chronicle* story on a demonstration prior to the invasion of Iraq provides an excellent example. In a photograph of protesters on Market Street, a “Punx For Peace” sign is prominently displayed. Below it, the caption mocks its message. “‘Punx For Peace,’ as the sign reads? Perhaps, but hundreds of anarchic ‘black bloc’ protesters ran wild downtown for hours after Sunday’s peace rally, and 46 were arrested after windows were broken and stores vandalized.”

It’s not the thousands who marched without incident who get counted and recounted, but the much smaller number whose actions reinforced negative stereotypes of punks and anarchists. The same logic has been applied to protests against the WTO and other international organizations from the 1999 “Battle of Seattle” onward. In the

mainstream media, to be an anarchist is to act like a child throwing a tantrum. The fact that most anarchists do not endorse window smashing, looting, and other actions that get bad press almost never gets reported.

Discussing the problem of media representation, Sok explains that Europe isn't much better than the United States. "In the left-wing press it's clear that anarchy means something different. But when the right-wing press uses it, you always have to distinguish between what you mean with 'anarchism' and what they mean with 'anarchism.' For them anarchy is chaos and nothing else. And for us it's not chaos, but less structured than what they want." The Ex's conception of anarchy is both less showy and more substantive than the sort that makes the evening news, as indicated by 1936, their tribute to the short-lived anarchist government that emerged in Catalonia during the Spanish Revolution. "You always have to explain it somehow, make it clear that it's not about destruction for destruction's sake. Sometimes you have to destroy something to build something new. But that's a different kind of destruction than just looting shops. To me that has nothing to do with anarchism."

Sok offers an example of how things can go awry. "In Germany they organized a festival called 'Do Something' in the early 1980s. The idea was to get active, to do something positive instead of just sitting around. Then, because the whole town was flooded with punks, chaotic-looking people, the police response was very over the top, and the festival ended up in a big riot. That was one thing. But then the next year the punks organized another meeting, only they made it a chaos day from the beginning. They just went there to smash things up. That was the whole demonstration. That's not my idea of being constructive."

Asked whether the need to constantly explain the distinction between the reality of anarchism and the negative stereotypes of it in the media might be a waste of energy better spent elsewhere,

I do think I'm an anarchist. For me there's a sort of feel about what is right and wrong, good and bad. But I also realize that a lot of the people around me who are not anarchists can still be very friendly people. So I don't want to lock them out.

he insists that the labor of self-definition is worthwhile. And then, in the best anarchist fashion, he questions the value of the term for himself. "I always find it hard to call myself an 'anarchist.' We call ourselves 'friends of anarchism.' I do think I'm an anarchist. For me there's a sort of feel about what is right and wrong, good and bad. I try to live according to these rules. But I also realize that a lot of the people around me who are not anarchists can still be very friendly people. So I don't want to lock them out. They might think a bit different, but they are OK. You have to work together to achieve things."

If this sounds excessively pragmatic for an anarchist, it helps to remember what those two categories have in common: a willingness to do what others only think. Like many other punk bands, The Ex fully support the DIY—"do it yourself"—approach. In their case, that means doing everything from releasing records on their own label in Europe to applying for grants to perform their work in unusual ways. While there's always something entrepreneurial about start-ups, in the case of bands like The Ex, the best analogy is not the small business but the small non-profit, paying its employees relatively low wages but freeing them from the ideological and professional pressures of the corporate environment. From this perspective, the band's two trips to Ethiopia look less like a concert tour and more like the sort of educational outreach that the best NGOs aspire to make possible, where the line between vendor and client, teacher and student, privileged and underserved starts to blur in moments of cross-cultural exchange.

"I don't think it's healthy to stay only in your own little subculture and close the door. You have to open the door so people can see how you live and what you're doing." And, however alluring the prospect of doing the job with an axe might be, a twist of the doorknob will be just as effective. "When we started with punk, we thought it meant, 'Everything is possible.' If you have an idea, just do it. See if it works or not. We still believe in that little idea. What happened was that, within a couple of years of our forming the band, punk became a sort of brand name. All these bands started saying, 'Oh, you have to play according to the punk rules.' But we thought that each song can have a totally different structure. Every time it's your own decision how it can be. That gives you much more freedom than if you have to stick to verse-chorus-bridge."

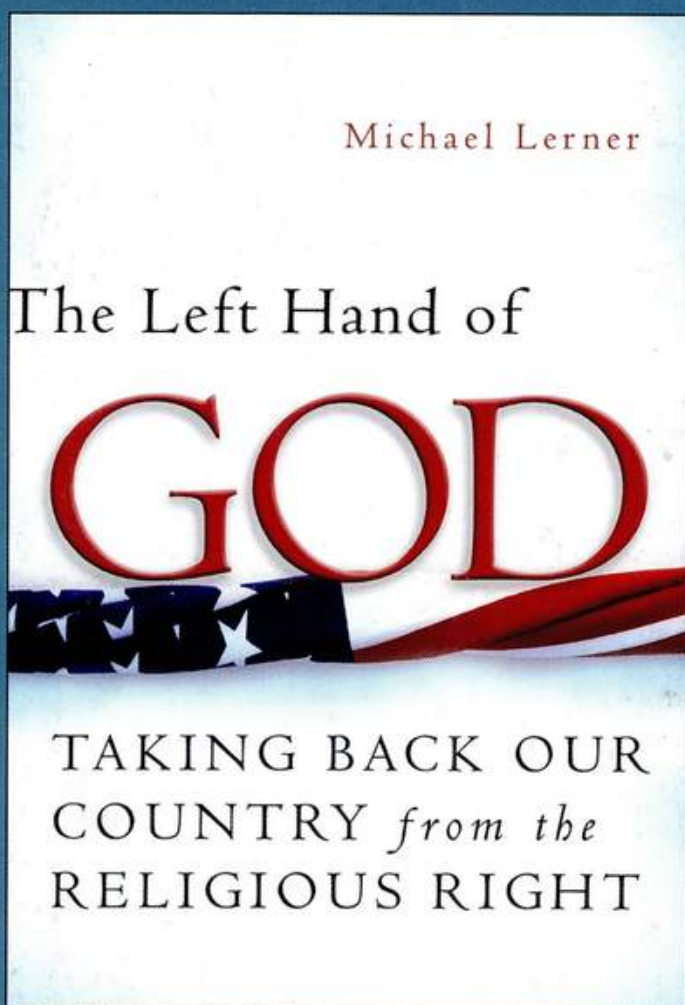
Sok lets the irony of this rule-bound punk and the formulaic anarchism that accompanies it resonate through the rest of the interview. The Ex may have made remarkably consistent music over the course of their career, but not because they were following anyone else's rules. The lesson is clear. Freedom doesn't free us from ourselves. It intensifies what was already there. We can break on through to the other side without losing what matters most. Over twenty-five years of making music, The Ex have crafted a legacy that shows us how to open the door to possibility without fear, to stop worrying about what has already been done, to do it now. □

The Ex's Singles. Period. is available from Touch and Go Records (www.tgrec.com).

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