

Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē·kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world.

JULY/AUGUST 2007

CELEBRATING
THE GOOD IN
AMERICA

INTER-DEPENDENCE DAY



IMPEACH

Bush & Cheney

Is it time to put this back on the table?

Congressmen Dennis Kucinich, James Moran and Mel Watt

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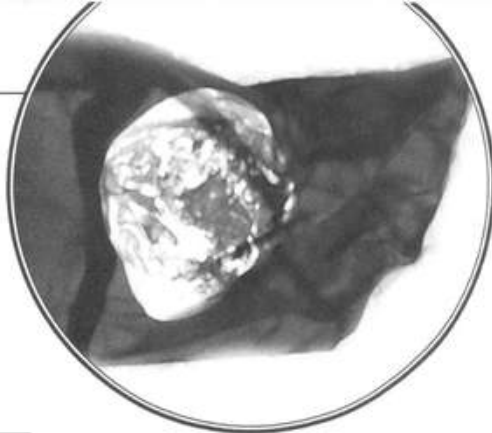
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Tikkun

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Readers Respond

AN INTERFAITH MAGAZINE?

WHEN I FIRST realized that *Tikkun* was moving beyond its original focus on Judaism and becoming an interfaith magazine as well, I was quite unhappy. For years I've loved the magazine, though I must admit to reading it primarily on the newsstands as do thousands of others, I'm sure (probably not much help to you, since we get the benefits without paying our fair share). Still, I feel part of the *Tikkun* world. In fact, I often feel quite proud because I hear people talking about *Tikkun* and its ideas, people who are not Jewish and who I would never dream read the magazine (but they do, even though their names are not on your subscription roles). Anyway, when I saw the May/June 2007 issue, I realized I should stop worrying. On the one hand, you have some of the most exciting religious thinkers in the country—evangelicals like Tony Campolo and Glen Stassen, Buddhist David Loy, and even the most famous and respected teacher of Catholic spirituality, Richard Rohr. On the other hand, you continue your tra-

dition of solid politics with the feature on torture, and provide us with some very stimulating thinking on Judaism by Or Rose, Erik Gleibermann, Jacob Feinspan, and Melanie Kaye Kantrowitz. As we say, *yasher ko'ach* (congratulations/keep strong). You are pulling it off even though I doubted that was possible. And I love the color.

SANDI COHEN
Bronx, New York

Editor responds:

Because our particular approach to Judaism is one of a global Judaism that sees the common strands in all the various religious traditions and refuses to privilege Judaism as being on a "higher" plane or more "chosen" than any of the other major traditions, we have no difficulty in seeing ourselves as both continuing to be a Jewish magazine and also being an interfaith magazine. Both/and rather than either/or thinking is part of the path for the future of humanity.

N.Y. TIMES AD

On May 17 the *Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP)* bought a full page ad in the New York Times to advocate for "An Ethical Way to End the War In Iraq."

Thank you for the New York Times ad. It expresses exactly how I feel. Hopefully others will pressure their

Congresspeople and senators to read this ad and act upon it. Unfortunately, for all his so-called Christian piety, Bush and his cohorts act more like the anti-Christ than like "Christians."

ELI HRUSKA

Many congratulations on the magnificent ad you placed in the New York Times. This could truly initiate a watershed moment, a metanoia, in our public discourse about Iraq, especially if the peace candidates—starting with Kucinich, Gravel, and Ron Paul—endorse it. But imagine what will happen if one of the

frontrunners (e.g., Obama) finds the moral courage to endorse it as well! Blessings,

THOMAS I. ELLIS, PH.D.
Hampton, VA

I consider the belief (which you apparently hold) that a state—much less an imperial state like the United States—will even give serious attention to moral principles, much less give them primacy, to be naive to the point of irrelevance. It's like imploring a horse to meow. It's not in the nature of the animal. That's not what states are about. Any consideration they do give to moral principles stems

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from the belief that it will yield a sufficient political payoff. Which is the same reason they do anything.

Perhaps your appeal to states is simply tactical, meant to highlight the gulf between their behavior and humane principles. That may be effective in some cases. And if sufficient political pressure is put on them to make it worth their while politically, they may take your advice.

But if you expect them to take it for its own sake, please reconsider.

Sincerely,

DAVID STONE

Princeton Function N7

STRIDENT AND ONE-SIDED?

TO THE EDITOR,

While I do not have a problem with much of Jerome Slater's indictment of Israel's shortcomings and failings in

"The Need Not to Know" [*Tikkun* Jan/Feb 2007], I am struck by the strident tone and one-sided nature of his presentation. Slater's analysis provides barely a hint that there are two sides that have continually made mistakes and committed wrongdoing in this conflict. He is sure that Ben-Gurion only accepted the UN partition plan for tactical reasons, with the intention of embarking upon ethnic cleansing when presented the opportunity. There are quotes that support this view, but he totally ignores the historical words and actions of the Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini (an active ally of Hitler during World War II) and other Palestinian leaders of that era, which substantiate their intention to destroy the Palestinian Jewish com-

munity. In the initial months of battle 100,000 Jews of Jerusalem were under siege and 3.5 percent of the total Jewish population of Palestine (not just fighters) were killed or wounded.

If the Arab side had either accepted partition or credibly offered equal rights of citizenship to a free Palestine, open to both Jewish and Arab immigration, there need not have been a conflict. There were substantial elements within the Zionist movement that advocated binationalism instead of an explicitly Jewish state. Mind you, the Ben-Gurion that Slater "knows" is the same man who was criticized by Benny Morris for refusing to take back the Old City of Jerusalem and to ethnically cleanse all of the West Bank when the Jews had a decisive

military edge at the end of the independence war, and the same man who advised from retirement after the great victory of 1967 that Israel should give up the conquered territories as quickly as possible. And Slater makes his contention about Ben-Gurion while ignoring Yasir Arafat's similar tactical justifications for signing onto the Oslo Accords, made to a Muslim audience in South Africa, among other places.

The most noxious measures imposed upon the Palestinians, including the depredations of the wall/fence, are reactions to the Intifada-related attacks on Israelis that have taken hundreds of civilian lives. While both sides share blame for the breakdown of the peace talks of 2000-2001, the Palestinian

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turn toward violence in 2000 (although "enabled" by an overly lethal initial Israeli response) insured that the Israeli peace camp was routed from power. Returning Israelis to an embrace of negotiations and reconciliation is a difficult challenge, compounded by the unfortunate election last year of Hamas and the ongoing mindless rocket attacks on Israeli towns.

RALPH SELIGER
editor, *Israel Horizons*
and Weblog at
www.MeretzUSA.blogspot.com

Jerry Slater responds:

For a serious dialogue on controversial matters, it is essential that critics state their opponent's argument carefully and meticulously, not tendentiously. Seliger fails that test. I did not say that Ben-Gurion had the intention of embarking upon 'ethnic cleansing.' What I actually said was that Ben-Gurion and other Zionist leaders intended Israel in the future to 'resume its drive for Jewish sovereignty' over all of Palestine. On the major substantive issues, there is no serious issue

about Ben-Gurion's intention to disregard the UN partition when Israel was strong enough to do so; the evidence here is compelling, and Seliger comes close to (reluctantly) conceding that. But he wants to know why I ignored the rejectionism of al-Husseini and other Palestinian extremists. The answer is that everyone knows about the Palestinian rejection of the UN Plan, but few know—or want to know (hence my title)—that Ben-Gurion also had no serious intention of genuinely accepting a compromise settlement.

Seliger also claims that 'the most noxious measures' the Israelis have imposed on the Palestinians are simply reactions to Palestinian terrorism in the Intifada. For several reasons this is highly misleading. In the first place, the Israeli occupation and repression of the Palestinians has been going on for at least forty years, even if it is true that 'the most noxious measures' are more recent. Secondly, the Israelis have repressed ALL Palestinian resistance to the Oc-

cupation, including attacks on Israeli military forces in the territories (which are not 'terrorism') and even non-violent demonstrations. But most importantly: No doubt the Israeli occupation and repressive measures would have been less noxious if there had

been no Palestinian resistance. Naturally every colonial occupier prefers to rule with the minimum force necessary—so long as its occupation is not contested. That tells you nothing about the justice of the occupation, nor of the non-terrorist resistance to it.

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Current THINKING

Religio-Phobia Again

When the Campaign for America's Future published its program for its annual Take Back America conference this June, there were no sessions devoted to the Religious Left or Spiritual Progressives. In a country in which 80 percent of the population claims to believe in God, and 60 percent say they pray at least once a week, the CAF grouping once again avoided one of the most hopeful developments of the past decade: the emergence of a Religious/Spiritual Left. When NSP members around the country protested, CAF added a workshop focused on how progressives might effectively organize evangelicals. They would have been smarter to give a full plenary session to the task of overcoming religio-phobia in the Left, and how to change the liberal agenda along the lines suggested in our Strategy of Generosity. The liberal world keeps on proving how little they "get" what it is they are doing that pushes religious or spiritual people away.

ALZHEIMER'S RISING

More than 5 million people in the United States are currently living with Alzheimer's disease, a 10 percent increase over previous estimates from five years ago. The vast majority of those with Alzheimer's, or 4.9 million people, are seniors over the age of sixty-five. A small number of younger men and women, between 200,000 and 500,000, are believed to be afflicted with the early-onset form of the disease.

These figures, from The

Alzheimer's Association and researchers at Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center in Chicago, highlight the striking impact of an illness that afflicts more and more seniors across the United States, and around the world.

Advancing age remains the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's, with the disease striking 13 percent, or one in eight people 65 and over. That number increases to 42 percent for those older than 85. Today, with the advancing

wave of 78 million baby boomers now hitting the sixty-year mark, more and more elderly Americans will succumb to the disease as they enter their sixties and beyond.

By mid-century, the number of people with Alzheimer's is expected to grow to as many as 16 million, more than the current total population of New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston combined.

In its current budget re-

quests the Bush Administration has actually cut funds for research. Congressional advocates of new monies for Alzheimer's research are asking for a boost in the budget to twice the current funding level. But anyone serious about ending this terribly destructive disease should be asking for a raise of ten times the existing funding level. Unfortunately, our political leaders can always come up with money for war, but not for our own health.

NOT ALL SPAM IS SPAM

It's a pain in the neck and elsewhere to get hundreds of emails each day urging us to buy some new product that will cause us to instantly lose weight, enlarge our penis, receive a free computer, find the perfect date, or provide sexual fulfillment by watching other people's sex acts.

So, it seemed to make sense when some people decided to label the above as "spam" and to find ways to eliminate it. We have a spam filter on some of our email addresses, and we are glad it works.

Unfortunately, the definition of "spam" has now extended to all email that is unsolicited and sent out to a large list of people. The problem here is that this kind of email includes political communications from non-profits that are perfectly legitimate and ought to be protected.

Take, for example, the attempts on the part of organizations opposed to the war in Iraq or to the destruction of the environment to communicate with you. Some people know more about these issues than the rest of us—and often they have special information that the establishment media does not want to print. For many of these ethical trailblazers, there is no way to get that information out unless they can get hold of people's email addresses and send it to them. Why should this attempt to reach out to their fellow citizens be given the same "spam" label as the attempt to sell them some for-profit products?

"I have a right to privacy," some people answer. "I don't

want some political cause to invade my private space unless I choose to let that happen. If some friend of mine knows about that cause and sends me information, I won't call it 'spam,' but some organization that I don't know has no right to fill up my inbox with their materials."

This kind of argument would be more persuasive if it had been raised as an argument for a constitutional amendment that would ban all forms of unsolicited advertising in public space. Take billboards first. I go out for a walk down my street and am suddenly confronted with a billboard with a scantily dressed woman inviting me to consume some product. I didn't invite that into my consciousness, but there it is. Why wasn't this banned as spam?

Unfortunately, the answer is that the spam that is under assault when it comes to social change organizations is the spam of those without the resources to buy the media ads and street or highway billboards. The wealthy and the corporations have a way to force their message into your "private space" and most people have accepted that and don't fight it.

If the "spam" of social change organizations is regulated or made illegal (as in some states it already is), who benefits? Those who have the means to get their message out through the mass media.

"But still, these spammers don't have a 'right' to invade my space!"

The real question here is: do we have a right "not to know?" What if our government is killing hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq with our tax money, or the corporations from whom we buy products are destroying the environment so that our community's rate of cancer is rising dramatically?

Why do we have a "right" to not know about all this? And, conversely, if some organization finds a way to get our email addresses, why do we have a right to not receive their communications? Is this kind of information really "spam" that should be prevented, made illegal, or stopped by having the service provider sued for allowing non-profits to send this kind of informa-

tion to people who didn't request it? How could they have requested it when they never even heard about the issues until the social movements started raising them?

We all have a desire to not have our inboxes filled up, even with valuable information that we "should" know. Many of us feel quite annoyed and overloaded with all the materials that get past our spam filters. But no government, and no corporation with control over what you or any political group can send out on their cyberspace networks, should have the right to censor or control which communications get delivered to you.

Not all spam is spam. Or, at least, political spam is kosher.

Sheehan's Departure

When Cindy Sheehan published her resignation letter detailing why she was relinquishing her leadership role in the anti-war movement, many of us felt saddened not only by the loss of a powerful woman whose voice of anguish had stirred millions of Americans to reconsider their support for the war, but also by the pain caused by an unsupportive Left. In her letter, Cindy talks about the way it became harder for her to withstand the withering personal assaults and critiques mobilized by the political Right at a time when so many on the anti-war Left had themselves been harsh and judgmental.

People who have been hurt by their past experiences long for leaders and movements to transform the world. But they are so fearful of being let down again that they become hypercritical of those leaders and movements, and sometimes even sabotage them.

We've done a lot to avoid these dynamics in the NSP. We wish Cindy Sheehan a well-deserved rest and renewal of her family and personal life, and will welcome her into the NSP/*Tikkun* world whenever she might be willing to join those of us who continue in the struggle.

Funding and Crying:



Why the Dems Capitulated ...

To One of the
Least Popular
Presidents in U.S. History

to Support one of the Least Popular Wars

in U.S. History

BY MICHAEL LERNER

WHEN I LIVED IN JERUSALEM and worked with the Israeli peace movement, we described our spineless Labor Party and some of the allegedly pro-peace intellectuals as “shooting and crying.” First they would support military action, then they would lament how terrible it felt to be “forced to stoop to the level of violence” (allegedly imposed on them by “the enemy”). Their standard solution: blame the Palestinians for forcing our innocent, well-intentioned liberal Jews into a violent stance.

Nancy Pelosi and her colleagues in the House are now “funding and crying.” The Speaker of the House has immense power to decide when (if ever) a bill gets to be brought up for a vote. Having already sent a funding bill for the troops which Bush vetoed, there was no good reason for the Dems to fund anything more. They simply should have told the country that they would only consider other funding when the president had a timetable to get the troops out by the spring of 2008. Meanwhile, they could have funded a \$10 billion appropriation bill whose funds would be restricted to one purpose only: the safe return of U.S. troops to United States soil, thereby emphasizing that keeping troops in Iraq was keeping them in harms way, while withdrawing them was the only way to not “abandon the troops.” If the Dems had done this while simultaneously taking ads in the media, they would have provided more than enough political cover for them-

selves. And those ads could have conveyed another important message: withdrawal means withdrawal. It does *not* mean “pre-positioning” U.S. troops in U.S. bases in Iraq or in neighboring countries for possible future re-involvement, and it does *not* mean calling them “advisors” to the Iraqi troops as a new PR gimmick to continue their presence there.

Instead, just a week after claiming that they would stand up to President Bush, the Dems capitulated on May 24, 2007, to one of the least popular presidents in U.S. history to support one of the least popular wars, delivering \$100 billion for Bush’s Iraq war slush fund (the Democratic-controlled House Armed Service Committee had already defeated an amendment that would have prevented these funds from being used by the Bush Administration to attack Iran). Once passage of the bill was assured through a combination of Republicans and war-supporting De-

mocrats, and once the Democratic liberals would no longer face the political struggle that would have ensued had they stuck to their promises and prevented the war from being funded, then they were able to turn around and “courageously” trick their own constituents by voting against the bill whose passage they had assured. “You see,” they would say to their constituents, “I, personally, was opposed to the war and voted against it.” Funding and crying.

Too many critics of the Dems will reply: “They just don’t have any backbone.”

But why don’t they?

The answer is not that Dems are less decent or less principled human beings than their Republican colleagues who, even in the minority, keep disciplined focus on their own principles. If you believe, as the Republicans do, that the entire world is best served by the flourishing of American corporate power and profits, then it is principled to fight for America’s capacity to own or to control the oil sources in the Middle East. And if you believe that democracy can only flourish within the context of advanced capitalist economies, then imposing the will of American oil corporations (as the latest oil bill being endorsed by the Iraqi government-under-American-bayonets is doing) is advancing the interests of democracy. Armed with their ideology, Republicans are not afraid to fight for what they believe in, even in the face of domestic polls showing that their positions are out of whack with the majority sentiments of the American people. Their views are driven by their commitment to corporate power, not by the latest polls.

This is where the Dems’ spinelessness comes from: they lack a coherent vision. Thus, the best they can do when challenging the Iraq war is to critique how the war has been fought, but they rarely present why the war was an ethical monstrosity and how this ethical failure has led to the failure on the ground. Dems are stuck in the same fundamental paradigm as Republicans, imagining that the only way to generate adequate homeland security is through military or political domination of other countries. Sometimes they talk about achieving this domination through “soft” methods like “diplomacy backed by our economic and military strength,” but the fundamental goal is the same: to get “our way” and protect “our interests” (often confused with those of the corporations). This shows up in their inability to challenge Bush’s imposition on Iraq of an oil arrangement that will allow U.S. corporations to make huge profits, despite the pronounced opposition among Iraqis to giving their oil rights away. Lacking a moral compass, the Dems’ policies seem haphazard and can then be labeled as “cut and run,” since they are unconnected to any larger plan.

Democrats will argue that what they are doing is protecting themselves from political backlash should they force an evacuation from Iraq and then find that there is an escalation of the killings. So even though the continued presence of U.S. forces is already producing the feared bloodbath, with hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead or wounded and two million Iraqis turned into refugees, the Dems reason that the Republicans will take the blame as long as the Dems continue to fund the Republicans’ war. Very few Americans will fall for this immoral and narrowly

self-interested approach. They elected the Dems to end the war, and the Dems have failed to do so.

The Dems’ underlying fear is that if they end the war they will be portrayed as “weak.” What they fail to notice is that their very failure to follow through on their promises to end the war—their craven capitulation to Bush only a week or so after claiming that they would stand up to him on the war—is generating the very same perception they sought to avoid. Americans are already concluding that these Dems cannot be counted on to stand up for their own ideas, and that the Dems’ perception of their own self-interest is all that guides them. What they fear is already happening—they are being seen as wimps precisely because they won’t take personal risks for what they believe in. Unlike the Republicans, who managed to fight powerfully for what they believed in when they were a minority in Congress under President Clinton between 1992 and 1994, the Dems majority won’t fight for their own supposed ideas. So why should anyone trust the country’s defense to people who won’t fight for themselves or their own views?

An increasingly likely election year consequence: the American people may elect a Democratic president along with a Republican Congress in 2008. When the Dems first promised a new kind of principled politics during and after the 2006 elections, many people allowed themselves to hope once again. But if that hope is continually rebuffed, people feel foolish, and even humiliated, by having opened themselves to the possibility of real change. “If the Democrats are going to allow their own self-interest to be the determining factor in what they do politically,” many reason, “then why shouldn’t I do the same?” “So,” people say, “I’ll stop paying attention to politics—it’s too depressing—and I’ll go back to paying attention to my own personal life and not worry about those bigger issues.” The strategy of the Dems is not only morally bankrupt, but it has a good chance of backfiring in the 2008 elections.

Unfortunately, trying to revive the New Deal and Great Society visions of the 1930s and 1960s, with their strong focus on material benefits for the disenfranchised and the poor, is not an adequate vision on which the Democratic Party can reconstitute itself in the twenty-first century. That’s why so many of the Democratic Party candidates for president elicit a yawn. To provide a basis for the fundamental changes the world needs, including ending poverty and homelessness, repairing the global environment, creating meaningful work and more time for relaxation and celebration of the grandeur of the universe, encouraging and nurturing our capacities to be creative and loving, creating a willingness to reduce levels of consumption and to share our wealth with the rest of the world, we are going to need a worldview which sees human beings as embodiments of the sacred who desire a world which responds to their needs for ethical and spiritual fulfillment. “No peace without justice,” cries the Left. But we add, no peace and justice without love, kindness, generosity of spirit, and awe and wonder at the mystery and marvel of the universe. We can’t get one without the others.

The Dems need to realize that in the twenty-first century our own economic, political, and environmental well-being depends

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on the well-being of everyone else on the planet—and then they need to develop the kind of programs that the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) has advanced.

The only way the human race is going to survive the next hundred years is if we overcome nationalist chauvinism and embrace our common humanity. The first step to do that is to reject the 5,000 year old, “Strategy of Domination,” with its misguided assumption that homeland security is best achieved by military, political, or economic domi-

nation over others (hard version: wars like the one now being waged in Iraq; soft version: diplomacy backed by military threats and economic boycotts).

Instead, we need to embrace a new paradigm: homeland security can best be achieved by generosity and transforming the hearts and minds of the people of the earth to the view that what the United States really wants is the well-being of everyone, not just of our own corporate and political elites.

On May 17, 2007, the NSP bought a full-page ad in the *New York Times* to demonstrate this strategy with respect to Iraq (read it at www.tikkun.org/iraqpeace). Recognizing that many Americans want to know what would happen after the withdrawal of U.S. troops, the ad implores the Dems and the peace movement to explicitly call for an international force to replace American troops and to conduct an election in which the people of Iraq could determine their own future without being under the rule of an occupying power. It also called for a Global Marshall Plan, not only to rebuild Iraq once it was safe to do so, but to dedicate 1–2 percent of the U.S. GDP each year for the next twenty years to eliminating domestic and global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate healthcare and education, and to repair the global environment. Yet, none of this is effective unless it is accompanied by an unequivocal confession of wrongdoing and repentance on the part of the people of the United States of America. Therefore, the third part of the plan is to ask the Congress to send representatives to the UN and to every country on

the planet to do what President Bush won't do—acknowledge that we had no right to go to war, that we set loose a set of events that has led to killing far beyond anything that happened under Saddam Hussein, and that we were guided by a mistaken Strategy of Domination which we now intend to replace with a Strategy of Generosity.

How do these ideas spread when the anti-war movement has not yet become a peace movement and hence is unwilling to condemn all forms of violence, including the violence of “the insurgency” which strikes against ordinary civilians in Iraq based on their religious or ethnic identities? How can we move forward when anti-war activists are so filled with hostility toward anything labeled religious or spiritual that they are willing to embrace people like Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens (see the next editorial), but are unwilling to send out the message of the NSP? What are we to do when organizations like MoveOn become adjuncts to the Nancy Pelosi double talk in the Democratic Party?

Here are the things you could do that would make an impact:

1. Get involved in your local political party (Democratic, Republican, Green, etc.) and find out how to run to be a delegate to the state and national conventions of your party. Then, bring the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan into that party's state and national discussion by asking them to explicitly endorse this direction. If you live in a district in which your elected representative did not vote in favor of ending funding for the war, you should personally run against her or him. Yes, YOU.
2. Approach your city council, state legislature, representative to the Congress, and Senators—and ask them to introduce and vote on the Global Marshall Plan. Or get it put on the local ballot or state ballot.

Start with this formulation: *We, the people of____, call upon the Government of the United States to recognize that Homeland Security is best achieved when the United States switches from a Strategy of Domination of other countries to a Strategy of Generosity toward others, recognizing that our economic, political, and environmental well-being is dependent on the well-being of everyone on the planet. As a first step in this direction, we call upon the President and the Congress to fund a Global Marshall Plan that would allocate at least 1–2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of the United States each year for the next twenty years to eliminate global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, inadequate healthcare, and to repair the global environment. Aware that aid programs fail when they indiscriminately drop money into the laps of dictators and irresponsible bureaucracies, or when they are administered in ways that are insensitive to local cultures and environmental needs, we call upon our elected representatives to implement the Global Marshall Plan by working with NGOs, religious communities, educators, environmentalists, and an international organization set up solely for the purpose of delivering this*

support in the most intelligent and socially conscious ways that can be developed, in cooperation with local communities, and utilizing the talents and skills of the recipients as well.

3. Help us build an international moratorium in which everyone who opposes the war in Iraq stops working and instead dedicates that day to attending teach-ins, religious celebrations, and/or going door-to-door to educate people about the fundamental issues about the war and about the Strategy of Generosity.
4. Help us build "Iraq Summer 2008"—an NSP project to recruit people to go door-to-door in "red" (pro-war) Congressional

districts (which are sometimes located in otherwise "blue" pro-peace states) to present our vision of how to end the war and what should follow it.

5. Insist that MoveOn and other voices of the anti-war movement voice the ideas of the NSP's Spiritual Covenant with America, particularly our Strategy of Generosity and the details of our Global Marshall Plan.
6. Donate to the NSP to have our ad reprinted newspapers nationwide. Read and donate at www.tikkun.org/iraqpeace.

Meanwhile, the Dems will continue to fund wars, and then cry. When will they understand get that this is a losing strategy? ■

Anti-Religious Zealots Unite

in Support of the Bush Administration's Anti-Muslim Rhetoric

YES, NORMAN PODHORETZ AND THE NEO-CONS are still on the forefront of the struggle to convince Americans that they must not give up in Iraq because we face an enemy of "Islamofascism." This, in Podhoretz's words in *Commentary* (June, 2007) is "yet another mutation of the totalitarian disease we defeated first in the shape of Nazism and fascism and then in the shape of Communism; it is global in scope; it is being fought with a variety of weapons, not all of them military; and it is likely to go on for decades." Podhoretz reminds us of this in his article "The Case for Bombing Iran," which is presumably still a live issue in the White House where his son-in-law Elliot Abrams serves as the chief advisor on Middle Eastern affairs.

But the neo-cons have a powerful new ally: the anti-religious zealots who have spent the past few years in a crusade against those who believe in God.

Consider, for example, the words of Sam Harris, author of the best-selling *The End of Faith*. Even before his book became the darling of anti-religious fundamentalists on the secular left, Harris had become a champion of the anti-Islamic crowd. He wrote: "It is time we recognized—and obliged the Muslim world to recognize—that 'Muslim extremism' is not extreme among Muslims. Mainstream Islam itself represents an extremist rejection of intellectual honesty, gender equality, secular politics and genuine pluralism. The truth about Islam is as politically incorrect as it is terrifying: Islam is all fringe and no center. In Islam, we confront a civilization with an arrested history. It is as though a portal in time has opened, and the

Christians of the fourteenth century are pouring into our world."

In another article, Harris states: "It is time we admitted that we are not at war with 'terrorism.' We are at war with Islam. This is not to say that we are at war with all Muslims, but we are absolutely at war with the vision of life that is prescribed to all Muslims in the Koran. The only reason Muslim fundamentalism is a threat to us is because the fundamentals of Islam are a threat to us. Every American should read the Koran and discover the relentlessness with which non-Muslims are vilified in its pages... We must come to terms with the possibility that men who are every bit as zealous to die as the September 11 hijackers may one day get their hands on long-range nuclear weaponry... Our press should report on the terrifying state of discourse in the Arab press, exposing the degree to which it is a tissue of lies, conspiracy theories and exhortations to recapture the glories of the seventh century. All civilized nations must unite in condemnation of a theology that now threatens to destabilize much of the Earth."

This is precisely the kind of thinking George Bush has been trying to legitimize in order to give plausibility to his continuing war against Iraq and the plans still afloat, though not yet executed, to strike at Iran.

But Harris can't carry this weight by himself. He is now joined by Christopher Hitchens, a columnist for *Vanity Fair* magazine who has been a junior partner to the neo-cons in demeaning Islam. Hitchens believes that Americans should be proud of their fight in Iraq, which he believes was correct from the start even when poorly planned and executed. Hitchens writes: "Coexistence

with aggressive regimes or expansionist, theocratic, and totalitarian ideologies is not in fact possible. One should welcome this conclusion for the additional reason that such coexistence is not desirable, either. If the great effort to remake Iraq as a demilitarized federal and secular democracy should fail or be defeated, I shall lose sleep for the rest of my life in reproaching myself for doing too little. But at least I shall have the comfort of not having offered, so far as I can recall, any word or deed that contributed to a defeat."

So what is Hitchens up to now? His latest crusade, not surprisingly, is his new book *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, in which he states: "Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience." Hitchens's clever put downs and quick turns of phrase make him perfectly suited for TV punditry.

So what's to blame for this neat packaging of war and secularist assaults on God? We've heard the Christian Right blamed for the war in Iraq, but Hitchens, Harris, and many others remind us that secularists can be just as reactionary and just as war-mongering as any cheerleader for the Right Hand of God.

Obviously, we at *Tikkun* do not argue that secularism automatically leads to hatred of Muslims or to justifications of violent conflicts to destroy Islamic institutions or countries. But it is more than annoying to hear the religio-phobic claims that religion automatically leads to hatred and war. More people were killed in the secular wars and atrocities of the twentieth century than were killed in all the known "religious" wars and religiously generated persecutions throughout all of human history.

Blaming the war in Iraq on fundamentalist Christians battling fundamentalist Muslims is a deep distortion of reality. The real story is this: every person, community, and tradition on the plan-

et struggles between seeing the world through the framework of fear—hence the need to dominate others—and seeing it through the framework of hope, hence seeking ways to build alliances based on caring and generosity toward others.

There are splits in both the religious and secular camps about the wisdom and morality of the war in Iraq. Those who have been attracted to a worldview of domination and control will make that a feature of their secularist intellectual life (e.g. Lenin, Mao,

Kissinger, Ariel Sharon, and the current leaders of China) or their religious life (Pat Robertson, George Bush, President Ahmadinejad of Iran, the West Bank settlers, U.S. Senator Lieberman). Conversely, those who are attracted to a worldview of love and generosity will make that a feature of their secular intellectual life (Herbert Marcuse, Alice Miller, Robert Jay Lifton, Che Guevara) or of

their religious lives (Saint Francis of Assisi, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Sister Joan Chittister, The Dalai Lama, Deepak Chopra, Anne Lamott, Gandhi). Each will find in the texts of their secular or religious traditions plenty of sources that can bolster their attachment to the worldview that determines what kind of religious or secularist perspective they embrace.

We strongly oppose both the war in Iraq and the Bush Administration's interest in a strike against Iran, an interest constantly being fanned by the American Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in response to the desires of the most militaristic voices in Israel. The use of military means to achieve domestic security is once again being proven to be a total fantasy, both in Israel's dealing with the Palestinians and in the U.S.'s approach to solving the problems of the Middle East. The more people rely on violence, the more violence there is in the world. And, yes, this is a religious perspective, though certainly not the perspective of all religions or the dominant one at the moment in almost any large religion. But it is also a perspective that is very far from the secularists who are assaulting those of us who do identify with a religious community or a spiritual practice. ■



Taxation without Representation – Today

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

WHEN I WAS A KID GROWING UP in a small town in Colorado, the 4th of July meant fireworks—from big rockets to sparklers—and lots of excitement and fun with family and friends. But, every year at the end of the fun and food somebody, usually my Dad, would say a few words about freedom and opportunity—how much we should value a country where everyone had the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labor to achieve the American dream.

My Dad's 4th of July toast to America echoed the rallying cry of the revolutionary movement: "no taxation without representation." Since the legitimacy of government was derived from the people, surely the people should consent to having the fruits of their labor taxed to support the common good. Absent that most fundamental civil right, violent overthrow of the offending political regime was warranted.

Remarkably, this basic civil right is still denied today to hundreds of thousands of citizens of our country.

My wife and I live in the District of Columbia, our nation's capital, where we do not have voting representation in Congress. Imagine. As a result of the sacrifice of a lot of young men and women of this and other countries, the citizens of Baghdad have voting representation in their parliament, yet the citizens of our nation's capital do not.

This situation came about early in our country's history. In 1790, Virginia and Maryland ceded to the United States a ten-square-mile parcel of land for the seat of the new Federal government. In 1800, the Federal government assumed sovereignty over this area of land pursuant to the Constitutional authority "to exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever" in the new "District of Columbia." Between 1790 and 1800 the residents of the District voted in their respective States as a result of federal legislation, but when the Federal government assumed direct control in 1800, no voting representation was provided in the legislation providing for federal sovereignty.

Fast forward to today. The District of Columbia is now home to nearly 600,000 people, a population roughly comparable to that of eight states. As a result of "home rule" legislation adopted by Congress, the District now has a fully functioning elected government that assumes the responsibilities of both a "state" (e.g., Medicaid, education standards, motor vehicle registration) and a "city" (e.g., street maintenance, garbage removal, zoning and land use).

But we do not have a voting representative in Congress. Of course, we pay Federal taxes. This is, literally, "taxation without representation," a slogan that is imprinted on all District license plates.

The issue is political. Most of the residents of the District are Democrats (I am very much in the minority) so Republicans are reluctant to accept a new member of Congress who will invariably be a Democrat. This seems an argument hardly entitled to any weight. We did not ask, and should not have asked, whether African Americans or women or eighteen-year-olds were D's or R's in deciding whether to extend the suffrage to them. Even this Republican is willing to have a Democrat represent me—at least I would have a vote and a voting representative in Congress that I could petition.

Advisers to President Bush assert that there may be a constitutional bar to voting representation for District residents because the Constitution states that the House should be made up of "Members chosen by the People of the several States". But, since the federal government has plenary sovereignty in the District, it has the independent power to accord voting representation to District citizens. Yet, the District is treated as a state for purposes of federal regulation of interstate commerce "among the states," and the citizens of the District are able to bring suit against citizens of "other states" in federal court. Again, when the land making up the District was transferred to the Federal government in 1790, the citizens of the District were empowered by federal legislation to vote in Virginia and Maryland. It was only a subsequent act of Congress assuming sovereignty over that land that deprived District citizens of a vote. Congress has the power to act in this matter.

The rallying cry of the 4th of July—no taxation without representation—is for me, my wife, and hundreds of thousands of other District citizens, just as fresh a rallying cry today as it was in 1776. It is time for voting representation for the District of Columbia.

NOTE: The DC Voting Rights Act has passed the House and is pending in the Senate. The president's advisers are recommending a veto on Constitutional grounds. ■

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of Tikkun and often challenges our editorial positions.



Heschel at a meeting of Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, c. 1968.

America has been enticed by her own might. There is nothing so vile as the arrogance of the military mind. Of all the plagues with which the world is cursed, of every ill, militarism is the worst: the assumption that war is an answer to human problems.

-Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Moral Outrage of Vietnam" (1966)

Heschel & the Vietnam War

by Edward K. Kaplan

*Abraham Joshua Heschel was one of the most significant Jewish theologians of the twentieth century. Tikkun particularly recommends his books *The Sabbath*, *God In Search of Man*, *The Prophets*, and *Who Is Man?* Rabbi Michael Lerner studied with Heschel at the Jewish Theological Seminary and developed a deep and lasting friendship, and Heschel's theology plays a foundational role in Tikkun Magazine. In September, 2007, Yale University Press will publish the 2nd volume of Edward Kaplan's definitive study of the life of Abraham Joshua Heschel. We are printing part of one chapter of this biography below.*

HESCHEL WAS THE MOST VISIBLE TRADITIONAL Jew in the anti-Vietnam War movement. Like thousands of Americans he opposed U.S. military support for the corrupt Saigon regime, but his dissent had no institutional backing. He was not associated with Reform Judaism, whose leaders were in the vanguard of social action, civil rights, and the antiwar movement. Orthodox rabbis, closer to his observance, either rejected political protest or upheld the government's prosecution of the war. A majority of [Jewish Theological Seminary] JTS faculty dissociated themselves from Heschel's involvement. Although some detractors (and friendly conservatives) considered him naive politically,

he kept himself well informed of events. He read the *New York Times* every day, followed other news sources, and studied books on the international situation. But he chose to judge events according to sacred values. He entered the antiwar movement in 1965, after an inner struggle that led him to conclude that the U.S. assault on North Vietnam was "an evil act."

Heschel had necessarily been aware of political currents since his youth in Warsaw and Vilna, and his university years in Berlin, but while revising his 1933 doctoral thesis into *The Prophets* he had moved from a stance of academic neutrality to one of engaged political commitment. At heart he was a contemplative who craved solitude for prayer, study, and reflection, as he wrote later: "Loneliness was both a burden and a blessing, and above all indispensable for achieving a kind of stillness in which perplexities could be faced without fear."

As a U.S. citizen, however, he realized that "in regard to the cruelties committed in the name of a free society, some are guilty, all are responsible." Citing Leviticus 19:15 [actually 19:16], "Thou shalt not stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor," he declared that public opposition to the Vietnam War was a religious obligation, "a supreme commandment." He judged the Johnson administration misguided, wedded to the Cold War notion that "Communism [is] the devil and the only source of evil in the world." He believed that U.S. forces could not defeat North Vietnam without destroying the country's natural and human resources; the United States should withdraw immediately. Above all, Heschel feared for the American soul. In his judgment most citizens were indifferent to what he described as the criminal behavior of their elected government. Although religious law required Jews to obey the rules of the country in which they lived, it also decreed that "whenever a decree is unambiguously immoral, one nevertheless has a duty to disobey it." Militaristic thinking was the immediate peril: "I have previously thought that we were waging war reluctantly, with sadness at killing so many people. I realize that we are doing it now with pride in our military efficiency."

Community of Faith and Dissent

IN THE FALL OF 1965, WHILE STILL TEACHING AT UNION Theological Seminary, Heschel joined a protest rally organized by a local committee of clergy, both Christians and Jews. At issue were the maneuvers by the Johnson administration to stifle dissent. (At a Chicago news conference Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach had threatened to prosecute "some Communists" involved in nationwide demonstrations against the war.) Along with a Jesuit priest and a Lutheran minister, on 25 October (about two weeks before his Fosdick inaugural lecture), Heschel spoke out at the United Nations Church Center, 777 U.N. Plaza. The Lutheran Richard John Neuhaus, pastor of St. John the Evangelist in the poor and predominantly black Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, expressed shock that "the President should be amazed by dissent." The Jesuit Daniel Berrigan, a poet and ardent pacifist, insisted that it was the duty of religious persons to involve themselves in politics. During the question-and-answer session, Heschel proposed a national religious movement to end the war. He told a *New York Times* reporter that the group would establish an official body to continue its opposition. Neuhaus and Berrigan were taken by surprise, but they approved of the idea.

In November, Heschel participated in a "teach-in" on Vietnam with more than five hundred clergy. Absent was the charismatic Daniel Berrigan, "who had been sent to South America by his superiors in an effort to prevent his further participation in protests against the Vietnam War," as noted by the FBI. Francis Cardinal Spellman, who in addition to being archbishop of New York was a longtime archbishop for the military services, had begun wielding



*Antiwar mobilization
2/6/68 at Arlington
Cemetery, Washington
D.C. Left to right: Bishop
James Shannon, Rev.
Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Rev. Ralph Abernathy,
Rabbi Maurice
Eisendrath, Heschel.*

his authority against Catholic dissenters. It was probably Heschel's idea to represent the exiled Jesuit with an empty chair on stage. The Hasidim of Bratslav, after the death of their revered leader Rabbi Nahman, reverently placed his chair in their Jerusalem synagogue.

The National Emergency Committee of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam (CCAV) was founded on 11 January 1966 (Heschel's fifty-ninth birthday) at the apartment of Union president John Bennett. Elected co-chairs were Neuhaus, Berrigan, and Heschel—a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Jew. Liberal Protestants dominated the movement; Catholic priests and nuns were slower in coming to the fore because of their submission to American bishops and authorities in Rome who objected to their participation. But soon, incited by students in Catholic universities, thousands of Catholic clergy—even a few bishops—joined the protests as individuals of conscience. By April, the co-chairmen of the Emergency Committee consisted of Bennett, Heschel, John MacKenzie, S.J., and the Catholic publisher Philip Sharper. The committee obtained office space from the National Council of Churches at its center on 475 Riverside Drive. Volunteers helped establish nearly 165 local committees in more than twenty states. With the energetic William Sloane Coffin, Jr., the Yale University chaplain, as acting executive secretary, this network of notables soon achieved national outreach.

The committee's first act was to send a telegram to the recently inaugurated President Johnson urging him to extend the bombing halt that had begun the previous Christmas and to pursue negotiations with the National Liberation Front and the North Vietnamese. Among the twenty-eight signatories were Philip Berrigan, a Josephite priest and brother of Daniel; presidents of the Reform and Conservative rabbinical associations; Reinhold Niebuhr; Martin Luther King, Jr.; and editors, theologians, and national and international religious leaders. The religious mainstream was mobilized. For the next few months, the group added members and organized or sponsored acts of spiritual resistance to the war, such as rallies, fasts, vigils, and other forms of non-confrontational protest. Their approach was moderate, cautious, and patriotic, rejecting even peaceful violation of laws, the staple of nonviolent civil rights actions. The means had to be compatible with the ends.

Heschel was considered by many to be "the most influential Jewish leader on the National Emergency Committee" and "its prophetic voice." As had been the case during the Vatican II negotiations, his philosophical training and immense knowledge of Christian and Jewish sources prepared him to interpret the religious significance of current issues. Far more than a photogenic figurehead, Heschel was a regular participant in meetings who helped draft position papers and even raised money. He sent letters to rabbis and prominent Jewish laity, such as Hans Morgenthau of the University of Chicago and the Council on Foreign Relations and J. Robert Oppenheimer of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, asking them to join as sponsors. Morgenthau was pleased to add his name as one of the only nonclergy.

The CCAV combined piety and political action. John Bennett displayed his professional authority in politics as well as theology. A "quiet and methodical" man, as president of Union Theological Seminary and chair of the editorial board of *Christianity and Crisis*, he was seen as "the most important of the early anti-Vietnam voices." Another Protestant eminence was the dynamic Robert McAfee Brown, a liberation theologian and champion of civil rights who had been arrested as a freedom rider. Born in Carthage, Illinois, Brown had served as a navy chaplain in the Pacific. He abandoned his early pacifism after learning of the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews by the Germans and Poles. Brown taught at Union for ten years before moving to Stanford University in 1968.

Richard John Neuhaus was the youngest national board member. Born in Canada, ordained a Lutheran minister at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, he was theologically conservative but politically progressive, one of the rare activists from the Missouri Synod. From his parish in Brooklyn, he worked for civil rights while remaining suspicious of left-wing thinking and ideology.

Daniel Berrigan soon moved beyond the committee, to more radical acts of opposition to the war. (Berrigan's first arrest for civil disobedience took place in October 1967 at the Pentagon.) But even after their paths diverged he remained an admirer of Heschel's; over the years Berrigan visited Heschel at his office at the Jewish Theological Seminary, sometimes debating with rabbinical students in the corridors or in one of Heschel's (continued on page 68)

HESCHEL AND THE VIETNAM WAR

(continued from page 16)

classes. Without advocating his tactics, Heschel respected Berrigan's spiritual radicalism, which was compatible with the poet's personality they shared.

The two other Jews on the National Emergency Committee came from the Reform movement. Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, the fiery president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the Reform lay organization, was a champion of civil rights and other progressive causes. Participating more directly in the committee's planning was the youthful Rabbi Balfour Brickner, director of UAHC interfaith activities and a member of its Social Action Commission. Brickner was responsible for building Christian-Jewish relations and was among the hundreds of Reform rabbis active in the civil rights movement of the 1950s. He had been arrested in the South.

Heschel had finally found his true community. He relished these religious activists, who admired him as an embodiment of the biblical vision of peace and prophetic outrage they shared. His closest bond was with William Sloane Coffin, Jr., a charming, immensely talented, devout Presbyterian minister, zealously committed to social justice. Ethics and piety were inseparable for Coffin. As a student at Yale Divinity School, he was inspired by courses on Christian ethics by H. Richard Niebuhr, Reinhold's brother. He also emulated the theologian Karl Barth, who had said: "A Christian goes through life with a newspaper in one hand and a Bible in another." Yet Coffin was fascinated by Judaism. He had married a Jewish woman, Eva Rubinstein, the daughter of the pianist Arthur Rubinstein (who had once evaluated the artistry of Heschel's wife, Sylvia; Coffin himself was a pianist of professional caliber). Coffin's sense of justice was outraged by anti-Semitism, which he found conspicuous at Yale.

During their first week of organizing the Emergency Committee, Coffin and Heschel connected almost immediately. Charisma played an important part. The activist pastor felt himself to be in the presence of a ven-

erable prophet, "the most rabbinic figure I had ever seen or heard." With teasing affection, Coffin described their meeting. Heschel emerged from an elevator in the CCAV headquarters, "a totally inadequate beret on the top of his massive head of white hair.

He proceeded to walk about the floor, his hands behind his back, listening to the score or so of seminarians talking animatedly into phones in the various offices we had taken over. Eventually he came to a stop in front of the map, where he seemed to be counting the number and noting the location of red pins.

"Good evening, Father Abraham," I said.

He turned. "Why do you call me Father Abraham?" he asked.

"Because you are patriarchal and ecumenical, and because I am sure the original Abraham, father of us all, looked just like you."

"You are very quick," he said, returning my smile through a beard whose hairs were as numerous and white as those on the top of his head. "Tell me, why are there no pins in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi?"

"Because so far in all three states we have found only one Unitarian minister in New Orleans who is openly opposed to the war."

"And what about Dallas? Why is there no pin there? Did you talk to Rabbi [Levi] Olan?"

I replied that I had. When I said, "I hear you're the only clergyman in town who is willing to speak out against the war," the rabbi had replied, "Come to think of it, that's both true and not funny."

Then Heschel wanted to know if I had persuaded any cardinal to join our board. I reported that I had spent four days trying to work my way through a seemingly endless line of Monsignors in order to reach the two most likely candidates: Ritter in St. Louis and Cushing in Boston. I had reminded the Monsignors that our position on the war was also that of the Pope, but that seemed to impress them little. However, they sounded sympathetic—as well as Irish and jovial—and had promised to do their best. But so far there were no results.

Heschel was intrigued and invited Coffin to share the family Sabbath dinner the next evening. Coffin was impressed by Sylvia Heschel, with whom he shared musical affinities,

and their "precocious fourteen-year-old daughter," Susannah. Coffin felt enough at ease with Heschel to press the volatile issue of conversion. Wouldn't it be "to the greater glory of God" (*ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, the Jesuit motto) if the Jewish people accepted the divinity of Christ? asked Coffin provocatively. Heschel countered with a personal, rather than a theological question: "Tell me, my friend, were the Sabbath never again welcomed in this fashion, were the Torah and Talmud no longer studied, were the ark of the covenant of the Lord no longer opened in synagogues the world around, tell me, would that be *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*?" Taking this stirring testimony as a test of wits, Coffin answered indirectly: "Father Abraham, you are not only a great philosopher and theologian, you're a shrewd old Jew."

Heschel was "taken aback" at this unaccustomed familiarity and asked for an explanation. Coffin replied from a less dogmatic viewpoint: "Well, I have a question for you. Do you think it is *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* that God's chosen people should not have recognized God's love, in person, on earth?" Heschel was silent for some time. "Then raising his shoulders and turning up the palms of his hands, he said: 'Put it that way and we have a dilemma.' Then he proceeded to prove how possible and interesting it is to live with that dilemma. We talked of nothing but religion until one o'clock in the morning. Heschel wasn't out to convert me, and I couldn't see why any Christian would want Heschel to accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Wasn't it enough that he was close to [being] a saint?" ■

Extended quote taken from William Sloane Coffin, Jr.'s autobiography, Once to Every Man: A Memoir. New York: Athenaeum Press, 1977.

This piece is excerpted from Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940-1972, by Edward K. Kaplan, to be published by Yale University Press in September 2007. Reproduced by permission.

Edward K. Kaplan is Kaiserman Professor in the Humanities, and was founding chair of the Program in Religious Studies at Brandeis University. He wrote Holiness in Words: A. J. Heschel's Poetics of Piety and co-authored with the late Samuel Dresner, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Prophetic Witness.

The Lack of Money

by David Loy

WHAT IS MONEY? WE USE IT EVERY DAY, SO WE MUST understand how it works... or do we? Perhaps our familiarity keeps us from appreciating just how strange money actually is.

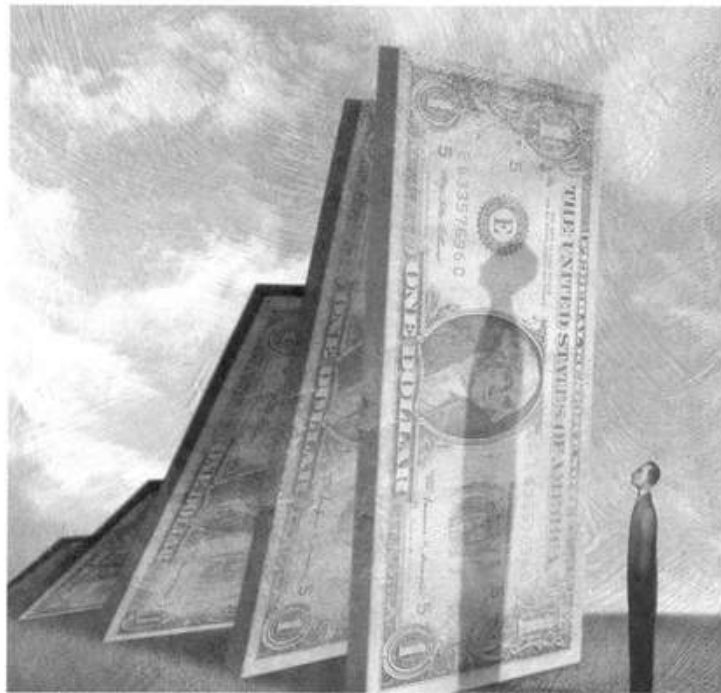
Look at a dollar bill. What is it? A piece of paper. You can't eat it, ride in it, or sleep on it. In and of itself, it is literally worthless, a *nothing*. Yet money is also the most valuable thing in the world, because we have collectively agreed to make it so. The anthropologist Weston LaBarre called it a psychosis that has become normal, "an institutionalized dream that everyone is having at once." And, as we know, that dream always has the potential to turn into a nightmare. The temptation is to sacrifice everything else (our time becomes "labor," the earth becomes "resources," etc.) for "pure means." To some degree that's necessary, of course. Like it or not, we live in a monetarized world. The danger is that, psychologically, we will reverse means and ends—so that the means become the goal. As Schopenhauer put it, money is abstract happiness; someone who is no longer capable of concrete happiness sets his whole heart on money. Money ends up becoming a "frozen desire"—not a desire for anything in particular, but desire in general. Remember Midas and his golden touch?

Nowadays, of course, Midas is socially acceptable—in fact, perhaps there is a bit of him in all of us. Living in a world that emphasizes instant convertibility tends to de-emphasize our senses, in favor of the magical numbers in bank accounts. Instead of appreciating fully the sensuous qualities of a glass of wine, often we are more aware of how much it cost and what that implies about us as sophisticated wine-drinkers.

Because we live in a society in which those magical numbers are the most important thing of all, most of us are anxious about having enough money, and much of that anxiety is appropriate. But what is enough, and how do we know the difference between financial planning and abstract happiness?

Today money serves at least four functions for us. Because it is indispensable as the *medium of exchange*, it has also evolved into our *storehouse of value*. Once wealth was measured in cows, granaries, servants, and children, but the advantage of gold and silver—and now bank accounts—is that they are incorruptible, at least in principle. Gold doesn't even tarnish. It is, in effect, immortal. This is quite attractive in a world haunted by impermanence and death.

Capitalism added an addictive little twist, which we take for granted today but which was suspicious, not to say immoral, to many people in the past. Capitalism is based on capital—*using money to make more money*. This third function encouraged an economic dynamism that is really quite extraordinary. The downside is the compulsion to always reinvest whatever we get to get even more, on the assumption that one can never have *too much*. Psychologically, of course, this tends to become: you can never have *enough*. How many meals a day can you



eat? How many cars can you drive? How much do you need to retire? But capital can always be used to accumulate more capital.

Why do we fall into such obsessions? The *anatta* "not-Self" teaching of Buddhism implies a special take on our hang-ups with money. The problem isn't just that I will someday get sick and die. My lack of self right now means that I feel something is wrong with me here and now. I experience the empty hole at the core of my being as a sense of lack, and in response I become preoccupied with projects that I believe will make me feel more "real."

This points to the fourth function of money: it has become our most important "*reality symbol*," the best way to secure one's identity, to cope with the gnawing intuition that we do not really exist. Suspecting that our sense of self is groundless, we used to visit temples and churches to ground ourselves in a relationship with the Divine. Now we open bank accounts and invest in the stock market to ground ourselves economically.

Needless to say, there is a karmic rebound. The more we value money, the more we find it used—and the more we use it ourselves—to evaluate *us*. We end up being manipulated by the symbol we take so seriously. In this sense, the problem is not that we are too materialistic but that we are not materialistic enough, because we are preoccupied with the symbolism of money. We are infatuated less with the actual things that money can buy than with their power and status—not so much with the comfort and power of an expensive car as with what owning a Lexus says about *me*.

The basic difficulty is that we are trying to resolve a spiritual problem—our "emptiness"—by identifying with something outside ourselves that can never confer the sense of reality we crave. We work hard to acquire a big bank account and all the things that society teaches us will make us happy, and then we cannot understand why they do not resolve our sense that something is lacking. Is the reason that we don't have enough *yet*?

Another way to make this point is that money is not a thing but a process. Perhaps it's best understood as an energy that is not really yours or mine. Those who understand that it is a socially constructed symbol can use it wisely and compassionately to reduce the world's suffering. Those who use it to become more real end up being used by it, their alienated sense of self clutching a blank check—a promissory note that can never be cashed. ■

David R. Loy is Best Professor of Ethics/Religion and Society at Xavier University in Cincinnati. He is the author of A Buddhist History of the West and The Great Awakening: A Buddhist social theory.

50th Anniversary Strategy for Peace Action

by Glen Stassen

DURING THE WORST PERIOD OF THE COLD WAR—when the U.S. government and the Soviet Union were threatening each other with nuclear war and not engaging in peacemaking—my pastor went to Moscow and preached in the Baptist church there. And he invited the pastor of the Moscow Baptist Church to come preach in our church.

A vision came to me—one of those epiphanies when you remember exactly where you were sitting and what struck you. I received a vision of the church as truly following Jesus and making a real difference for peacemaking. That vision has stayed with me for life.



DEAN ROHRER

My talents were in physics, and I won some prizes. So I studied physics at the University of Virginia, and worked summers doing nuclear physics research at the Naval Research Lab in Washington. It was fascinating. But I remembered that vision: we don't need better bombs; we need better ethics so those bombs don't go off.

So I surprised my girlfriend: "I've decided not to get my Ph.D. in physics, but instead to go to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary." She didn't say a word, but I knew what she was thinking: "Cross one more off my list." Nevertheless, she followed me to seminary. And I studied to follow that vision.

But the U.S.S.R. and the United States kept building more and more nuclear weapons, enough to destroy the world. In a sermon on Jeremiah 4:19-31, which reads like nuclear devastation, I cried out: "God, what are you doing? You are supposed to be in charge of history. But these bombs are about to destroy everybody. Are you really Lord or not?" So when Randall Forsberg called for a Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, I joined. I am an evangelical Jesus-following peacemaker. What other kind of Christian is there?

The Freeze Campaign has now joined with SANE (The Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy) to form the largest grassroots peacemaking organization in the United States, Peace Action. This year Peace Action is celebrating its 50th anniversary—dating from the beginning of SANE, which had rocketed to national attention with its ad picturing the world's most famous pediatrician, Dr. Benjamin Spock, looking glumly down at a young child, while nuclear testing was continuing. The caption read: "Dr. Spock is worried."

Peace Action is worried now—about the administration's unilateralism. This administration has left or blocked eight international treaties (most of them designed to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction), declared three wars in one term, ignored international law designed to protect prisoners from torture, and refused to talk with crucial players around Iraq, one of which may be developing nuclear weapons.

For its celebration, Peace Action has just published a strikingly readable book showing major victories peace organizing has won—*Peace Action: Past, Present, and Future* (Paradigm Press). Its concluding chapter lays out Peace Action's new unifying strategy: "*Real Security through International Cooperation and Human Rights*." Here is a nutshell summary.

Like *Tikkun*, Peace Action knows we need a framing narrative that clearly diagnoses the problem (reliance on go-it-alone unilateralism) and a clear alternative (start cooperating with the treaties that stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction, prevent torture of defenseless prisoners, prevent further unilateral "preemptive" interventionist wars, work with other nations and the United Nations, whose cooperation is crucial for reducing recruitment to terrorism). On the one hand, the strategy is conservative: Americans want us to be law-abiding citizens in the world, and we want the respect of other nations. On the other hand, it makes a radical difference for goals we care about: greater safety for our children, reduction of the nuclear threat, saving billions of dollars, and sustainable peace with justice. Therefore, it can win the support of the majority of U.S. citizens.

The world is turning toward connection and interdependence in economic, health, environmental, social, and political ways. Policies of unilateralist isolation are out of touch with the reality of increasing interconnectedness. Unilateralist, go-it-alone policies that rely on U.S. military domination and disrespect for human rights have caused international anger at the United States, more recruits to terrorism, one disaster after another, and a much less secure world. We are now in a teachable moment when many are rising up to demand real security through international cooperation and human rights.

Much of what has been wrong and destructive can be diagnosed and articulated within a single narrative: the need for international cooperation, weapons-reduction, and support for human rights. Why did the United States put itself in a position where hundreds of thousands of lives and large parts of an ancient culture have been lost in Iraq? Our government arrogantly entered into the war as a go-it-alone action while ignoring the checks and balances of the United Nations and other nations, the reports of international inspectors that no WMDs could be found, and the warnings of the international Red Cross that torture and abuse were taking place.

The struggle against terrorism can be far more effective if the United States works in cooperation with, not against, other nations. Here are some of the specific directions that Peace Action's unifying strategy sets forth: End U.S. policies that support "pre-emptive war." Emphasize global cooperation as a wiser and more effective path toward real security. Secure Senate ratification of international treaties that support real security by eliminating testing and production of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, landmines, and weapons in space. Block funding for new nuclear weapons. (We've just now succeeded in blocking appropriations for the nuclear "bunker buster"—shockingly designed for first use.) Redirect money to universal health insurance, better schools, job training, energy-conserving transportation, and basic requirements for human rights and justice for all—including international efforts such as the Global Marshall Plan.

I invite all persons of faith, and all who hope for peace, to join with Peace Action in this pressing time, a time when our nation surely needs major corrections in direction. I invite all to join in a vision where synagogues, churches, and mosques become a true influence for peace, and nothing less. ■

Glen Harold Stassen is the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at the Fuller Theological Seminary. He has published a number of books, including Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War, Living the Sermon on the Mount, and Kingdom Ethics, which won the Christianity Today award for best book of 2004 in theology or ethics.



My Problem with Religion

by Richard Rohr

"The corruption of the best is the worst."

— Latin proverb

"These people make a big show of saying the right thing, but their hearts aren't in it ... so I am going to step in and shock them awake, astonish them, and stand them on their ears."

— (Isaiah 29:14, Eugene Peterson translation)

A RECENT STUDY ON ALTRUISM IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE SHOWN THAT people affiliated with religion are statistically no less or more loving than people who call themselves unbelievers. In fact, they are often more egocentric, and only a very small percentage is genuinely or heroically altruistic. If true, this is surely disappointing and humiliating for religion, although I must say that it largely matches my own observations. Some of the most naturally generous people I have ever known have been secularized Jews. And they don't even believe in an afterlife system of reward and punishment! We really have to look at this.

I believe there is a deep dilemma and contradiction at the heart of institutional Christianity. Maybe it is even a necessary one. All I know is that it can only be resolved by authentic inner experience, "prayer," mysticism, or dare I call it, "spirituality." I am convinced that religion, in its common cultural and external forms, largely protects the ego, especially the group ego, instead of transforming it. If people do not go beyond first level metaphors, rituals, and comprehension, most religions seem

to end up with a God who is often angry, petulant, needy, jealous, and who will love us only if we are "worthy" and belonging to the correct group. We end up with the impossible scenario of a God who is "small," and often less loving than the best people we know! This supposedly divine love is quite measured and conditional, and yet ironically demands from us a perfect and unconditional love. Such a salvation system will never work, unless we allow an utterly new dimension of love "to astonish us and stand us on our ears," as Isaiah says above. Unless God is able and allowed to love us unconditionally, we will never know how to do the same.

Most people I know would never torture another human being under any conditions. Yet people believe in a god who not only tortures, but tortures for all eternity. That is bitter vengeance by anyone's definition. Why would anyone want to be alone with such a testy and temperamental god? Why would anyone go on the great mystical journey into divine intimacy with such an unsafe lover? Why would anyone trust such a god to know how to love those who really need it? I personally know many people who are much more generous and imaginative than this god is. We have ended up being ourselves more loving, or at least trying to be, than the god we profess to believe! Such a religion is in deep trouble—at its core.

Most of my Jewish and Christian friends are very tolerant and accepting of different races, cultures, and religions. They are willing to see good wherever good is to be seen. But not our god. Our god only likes "born again" Americans, and preferably morally successful and "normal" people, who hopefully attend my denominational service on the proper day. (This is easily the quickest growing form of religion in most countries today). Even stingy little Richard Rohr ends up being much more caring, patient, generous, and merciful than Yahweh Sabaoth! How did we get to such absurdity? Especially after Jesus spends most of his ministry affirming those who are wounded, unworthy, not successful, normal, or properly affiliated?

Perhaps you say, "But religion has always taught me that God is love!" Yes, religion "says the right words," but this god we hear about is never allowed to be loving in the way that we have experienced it from even our middle range friends and lovers. I have experienced immense patience, tolerance, and mercy from many of my friends. They put up with my failures and idiosyncrasies, and eventually know that some of my patterns will never even change. They often accept me as I am, and learn to love me as I am—which eventually almost indirectly changes me! Every good parent knows that unmerited love creates love-in-return. Grace creates gracious people. But not our god! God, and the history of religion, seem to prefer mandates, coercion, blame, and shame to achieve some kind of supposed transformation. This is quite helpful for social order and control of the immature, I really understand that. But it is quite clear to me, in the later years of my life, that God does not love me *if* I change, but God loves me so *that* I can change. That is an entirely different agenda.

It often seems that religion's most common concern is to find out what God *does not* like, where God is *not* present, and who God *does approve* for hating and excluding. Perhaps we are seeking to legitimate our own need to exclude and hate and dominate? Why else would we like a God who succeeds by punishing and always dominates? We have been told in recent years that God does not like homosexuals, God is not present in mosques and synagogues, and that God is not bothered at all by the direct and collateral damage of our necessary wars. Abortion killing is the only killing that is inherently bad because the fetus is "innocent life." This "morality" will only work if we can dare to think of ourselves as innocent. If legal protection and moral response depends on us being innocent or worthy, then who can be "saved?" What makes the Good News good news is precisely that God loves and defends unworthy and non-innocent life. Otherwise, you and I have little hope. And we can easily justify capital punishment, torture, euthanasia, and even pre-emptive wars against the unworthy ones—which is exactly what we have done. We have become the small god we worship.

I think my central disappointment with much of religion is that it is so stingy in its attitudes, and actually seems to prefer a stingy god. It loves tribalism and group think. It likes to convert others more than change itself. Religions are notorious for excluding, expelling, and excommunicating. It is almost their job description. We actually fear and condemn anything that appears to be a call to mercy beyond our boundary markers. Any universalism ("catholicity") or inclusivity is deemed dangerous. It feels like abdication of sacred ground, for some reason. We always come up with our fear of others, our fear of contamination, our fear of losing some

Jesus is the universalist
par excellence, always
making the outsider the
hero of his stories.

supposed great truth that we are protecting and living. What fragile people religion has often created.

Monotheism's great breakthrough was that its God was "Lord of all the earth." Doesn't monotheism necessarily prepare us for one pattern, one reality, one world—one love? Yet the religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have been—up to now—inclusive only at very small levels. The very people who defend the "Creator of all things" are the last ones who really defend that same creation. Sure, God created all things, but we only have to love and respect small parts of it, which just happens to be my part—"Our people" much more than "all people." The ecologists, humanists, and some globalists end up being much more "monotheistic" in practice than most Christians I know.

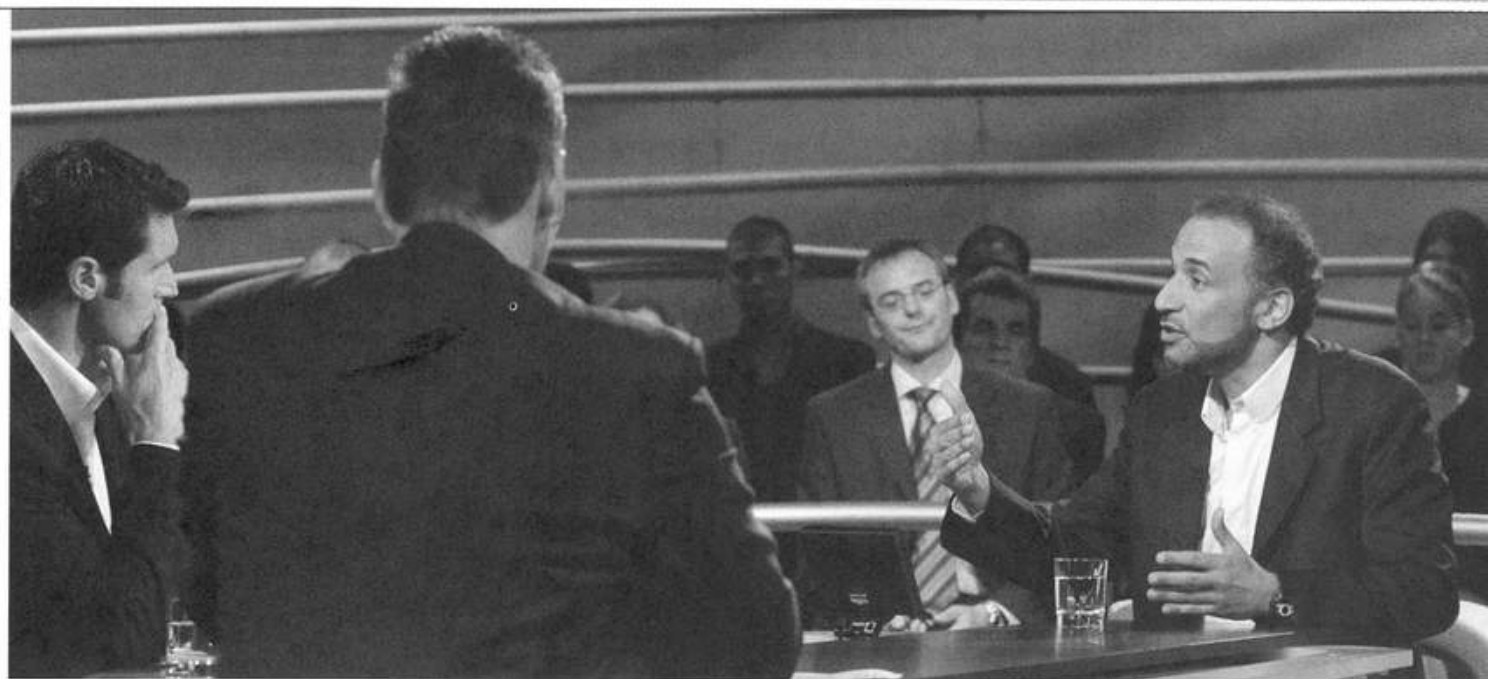
Isaiah loves to speak of "the nations counting as nothingness and emptiness" (40:17), that "all of humanity will see the glory of God" (40:5), and that "my house will be a house of prayer for all the peoples" (56:7), which is later quoted by Jesus. The light revealed to Israel is to be "the light to all the nations" (42:6) because their message offers illumination for everybody and not just for themselves.

Jesus is the universalist par excellence, always making the outsider the hero of his stories, the non-Jews those with more faith and more compassion, the sinners those who are saved, the women better than the men, and as he continually puts it, "the last first"—while the so-called elect and chosen are his constant opponents. Jesus' clear criterion for one who speaks with authority is simply one who has gone through the belly of the whale experience, or what he calls the "sign of Jonah," the "only" sign he will give. Membership in a group or correct verbiage is not what gives you authority in Jesus' understanding, but those who "drink the cup that I must drink and are baptized with the baptism which I must be baptized" (Mark 10:39). This is "the true authority of those who have suffered" and come through the cleansing bath transformed.

Jesus reaches this shocking and scandalous conclusion because his starting place is quite different. He does not begin with any preoccupation with human sinfulness or the weighing of worthiness or unworthiness (that is the preoccupation of the ego). In fact, he just assumes that we are all "sick and in need of a physician." As he puts it, "I did not come to call the virtuous" (Mark 2:17). Jesus' starting place is human suffering instead of human sinfulness. How else can you explain his full time ministry of healing, exorcism, affirmation of the excluded ones, the alleviation of human distress and humiliation? He is not naïve about sin, but just recognizes that human sinfulness, "hardness of heart," is much more a symptom than a cause. Sin largely reveals the problem and he uses it for diagnostic purposes, not for condemnation or exclusion. Sin, for Jesus, is not a set of purity codes or debt codes—which he goes out of his way to flaunt—but inner attitudes which blind and bind us inside of ourselves, and away from communion and mercy.

It is not moral unworthiness that keeps people from God, but moral righteousness and self-sufficiency. It is that simple recognition, which is almost his constant message, which makes Jesus the ultimate, perennial, and radical reformer of religion, and why religious people oppose him. It makes one wonder if such a foundational critique can ever fashion itself into a proper religion at all. I agree with Simone Weil who said "the problem with Christianity is that it insists on seeing itself as a separate religion, instead of a healing message for all religions." I am afraid that is what will always emerge when you have religion without spirituality, or pious practices without inner experience. The very best thing will then become the very worst thing, and the only way *through* is to "be awakened and astonished" by a divine love that is of an utterly new dimension. ■

Fr. Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque. For more information please visit www.cacradicalgrace.org.



Is Tariq Ramadan Too Beautiful to be True?

Swiss professor Doctor Tariq Ramadan, right, Professor of Islamic Studies at Oxford College, in front of Swiss journalist Massimo Lorenzi, left, speaks about the construction of minarets in Switzerland, during a debate of the television show "Infrarouge" at the Swiss Television, in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, May 8, 2007.

In "Who's Afraid of Tariq Ramadan?" (The New Republic 6/4/07) Paul Berman implies that all of us should be. Ramadan responded to the article on the phone from England to the editors of Tikkun.

Tariq Ramadan is a controversial Egyptian-Swiss philosopher who promotes a vigorous European Islam. But what kind of Islam? Every article about him seems to involve question marks: what does he really believe, and why do different writers have such opposite takes on him? Some believe him when he preaches to large crowds of young Muslims that they should respect European political processes, vote, support female autonomy, and reject violence. Others, like Berman, fear it is all a front. Berman relays to American readers the severe criticisms of Ramadan that have appeared in Europe over the last decade. The charges are that Ramadan is a "moderate" only in quotes, and is, in fact, a Trojan horse for some version of the Islamo-fascist ideas popularized by his grandfather, Hassan al-Banna. Al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood from which various current Islamist movements descend, including those as disparate as the Iranian regime and al-Qaeda. His ancestry continues to give Ramadan superstar status for many Muslims.

Ramadan himself is accused of anti-Semitism, of saying contradictory things to Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, and of not standing up against abusive practices in the Muslim world. For example, in one televised debate, Ramadan refused to condemn the stoning of women: he only called for a "moratorium" on the practice. Berman castigates the British writers Ian Buruma and Timothy Garton Ash for giving Ramadan an essentially free pass on such issues, while criticizing Ayaan Hirsi Ali (see page 29), who is uncompromisingly feminist and rationalist. The United States refused Ramadan a visa in 2004 to take up an academic position at Notre Dame University.

Domestic violence
is not Islamic.
Female circumcision
is not acceptable.
Forced marriages are
not Islamic.

In a New York Times review of Ramadan's book In the Footsteps of the Prophet, Stéphanie Giry casts the central issue as one of trust. She questions whether Muhammad was quite as liberal as Ramadan portrays him, but asks, "why take issue with this portrayal if it can help reconcile Islam with Western liberalism today? [This] project that Ramadan states is his own is worth pursuing even if, for some, Ramadan himself cannot be entrusted with it."

Does it come down to whether Ramadan personally can be trusted? Or is there much more opposition than Giry imagines to the project itself? The project may not merely be a matter of reconciling Islam with Western liberalism, which conjures images of turning Islam into something inoffensive like the Church of England. Rather, it may be a project of infusing Western politics with strong ethical imperatives that arise from religious belief (a project that is increasingly being undertaken by the Church of England itself). For some, this appears to attack the heart of the Enlightenment and secular society.

Do the charges against Ramadan come from people who have no understanding that believers can bring their ethics, rooted in religion, into politics, without trying to impose their religion on others? Is it so hard to see that his moratorium on stoning was an issue of strategy and tactics, not goals? Ramadan describes it to us as a matter of the way he engages with the Islamic world, for his ambition is not just to Europeanize Islam, but to give reforming leadership to the entire Islamic world.

On the phone from England, he has a slight Swiss-French accent and touches of French grammar in his fluent English. His gentle manner was marked by moments of insistence that we have italicized.

Tariq Ramadan responds to his critics:

On Muslim Political Participation in the West

PEOPLE ASK ME, "ARE YOU FOLLOWING THE QURAN or are you following the constitution?" My position is the Quran and the teachings coming from the Islamic tradition are telling me that I have to follow and respect the constitution of the country I live in. And this is not disputable. This is the starting point of my loyalty to my nation, my loyalty to my country and my sense of belonging.

If we speak about western Muslims, I wrote a *Manifesto for a new "WE,"* saying, look, you have to be much more involved in your society. You have to be committed citizens and not only to be connected to issues at the domestic level that have to do with Islam, you have to show concerns about schools, about the mainstream school system, about everything which has to do with your society and to build very proactive linkages with your fellow citizens on issues that are common concerns and not only international issues or when Muslims are discriminated. This is what I call the new "WE." So, it's not you as a Muslim and me as a Christian or as a Jew, but us as citizens of the same country, sharing the same future and same hopes and same values to come together and to build our own projects.

I tell Muslims it's not our business to convert people in the West to Islam. You are here to bear witness to our Islamic message. So be the best Muslims you can. Be the best citizen you can. And out of your behavior, show the beauty of our Islamic way.

On Religiously-Based Ethics in a Secular Society

I REALLY THINK SOME OF THE SECULAR MOVEMENTS AND INTELLECTUALS are trying to say that there's a clear division between your ethics, your values, and the public sphere. This is completely wrong and all of us know this. You have conviction in your private life. What you are trying to do in the public life is just to be consistent. You cannot be with God on Saturday, on Sunday, on Friday and forget him on Monday. What you are trying to do is to nurture this ethics—these convictions in your heart and mind—to try to be consistent. Your personal ethic, for example, as to justice, generosity, or dealing with solidarity, respecting the people, is what you got from your religious tradition. But you have to put this into practice in daily life in a visible way. The public sphere is where we propose and try to

implement it's not a sphere where we impose. We are against imposition. We don't want to convert the people, but to share our values and to come with very strong ethics, because what is needed now in the political arena is much more ethics, what is needed in the economy is more ethics. And this approach to bringing values into the public sphere is completely aligned with the approach of Rabbi Lerner and the Network of Spiritual Progressives. What the world, the universe, the creation is telling us is, if you're not to respect this creation, this creation is going to collapse and we are going to be responsible for that. So the spiritual message coming from global warming is: more ethics in the way you deal with the creation. And this is exactly what is going on when it comes to tens of thousands of people being killed every day out of starvation. So I think that this so-called clear-cut distinction between the public and the private sphere—*no one* is living it in his or her personal life because what we are just trying to do is to be consistent.

On Women

WHAT I'M DOING ABOUT PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS is to say we have two main problems. The first one is the literalist reading of the scriptural sources. You take one verse and it says you can beat a woman, and men have authority over women and things like this, by taking some of the verses. And the other problem that we have is the cultural dimension. We are coming from patriarchal and macho cultures, for example, Asian and Arab cultures, and this had an impact on the way we were reading the scriptural sources. This is why I think that we need a liberating process here on these two main fields: against the literalists and against the cultural reading of the sources.

The very old Islamic tradition is always referring to women by dealing with their functions, woman as a mother, woman as a daughter, woman as a wife, and that's it. And my position is to say we have to come with a very strong input in the Islamic tradition today with woman as woman, as a being: an autonomous being, and not only one connected to a social role.

I have been promoting what I call "Islamic feminism," which is resisting oppression in the name of Islam, in the name of Islamic principles, against the cultural oppression or the literalist understanding. During the last fifteen years in Africa I have been saying that domestic violence is not Islamic. Female circumcision is not acceptable. Forced marriages are not Islamic. And we have to give the right for the first wife to say "no" to polygamy because this is a right that was given by the scholars from the very beginning. So I'm pushing in that direction. I did it in Morocco, in Islamic Western African countries, in Indonesia, in Malaysia, and in Egypt. I did it everywhere I was able to go. So I am known in the Islamic majority countries as someone who is supporting Muslim women and even going very far as to this. And then people say, "Yes, Tariq Ramadan has this discourse but there is nothing in practice!" I like the way my own assistant put it. He said if you want to know how Tariq is about women, look at all the Muslim women who are working with him and promoting his ideas and at the grass-roots level are working with him in his different offices, for example in the United States, and you will find women very active, very, very aware of their rights, and not accepting any kind of discrimination. This is my agenda and this is what I'm trying to do.

On Being Two-Faced, and his Message in Islamic-Majority Countries

[BERMAN IS] SAYING THAT WHAT I'M SAYING *HERE* IS NOT WHAT I'M SAYING *THERE*. If this was the case, it would be possible for me to go to Egypt or Jordan or Indonesia, where I cannot go. I'm banned from there. I'm banned from Saudi Arabia because I'm very strong on this. So I'm heard by Muslims when I go to Morocco, to Malaysia and other countries. All the people know that this discourse is heard and it's heard because what I am saying in *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* is that what we are doing in the West will have a tremendous impact in the Islamic majority countries. And this is happening now.

I was involved in interfaith dialogue for decades, but it's not enough. We have to *work* together. It's important to do it in the West because we are in a

(continued on page 69)



RAMADAN

(continued from page 25)

democratic society where we are experiencing and enjoying freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and freedom of worship, while in the great majority of the Islamic majority countries, this is not possible. If there is to be a fracture between us, it will be in *our* societies. Then, if we are not able in *our* democratic societies, with all the assets that we have, if we are not able to get that dialog, that proactive involvement in our society, how is it going to be possible with the Islamic majority countries? It's not—it's just impossible. So we have to do it here in order to be able to build bridges with Islamic majority countries.

But it's up to us, and this is what I'm trying to do and this is my life. It's to go to the Islamic majority countries and to promote the same discourse. For example, to go, as I have done... You know, I'm just *really shocked* by people being able to write such allegations. This text [of Berman's] is really just coming from the French books and translation and summaries of what was said during the last ten years in France and just to say things like this, without checking that I'm going to the Islamic majority countries! When I was in Morocco I was supporting people working against discrimination of women and promoting women against literalism and cultural discriminations and saying "in the name of Islam we have to resist."

This is what I have done everywhere in Islamic majority countries. But I have also very clearly taken a stand on violence and on killing innocent people, saying "I can understand the resistance of the Palestinians but I won't accept killing innocent people." *I said it. I repeated it.* And this is also something which I have done: the moratorium on corporal punishment, the death penalty and stoning, something for which *I got huge criticism in Islamic majority countries*, where people were saying, "Tariq Ramadan is supporting Bush and the West by coming with this." While I was challenging the Muslims in the name of the Islamic teachings and the Islamic

text to *stop* doing it and open a debate about it, and out of these debates you will see that it's not implementable.

On the Enlightenment

SOME OF OUR INTELLECTUALS OF TODAY HAVE A VERY REDUCTIVE APPROACH towards enlightenment and religion. It's as if it was a resistance against religion and everything came from the rational resistance to dogmatic authority. It was never like this. When you study what's coming from the Jewish tradition and from the Middle Ages up to the Enlightenment period, we have Maimonides, for example, and Mendelssohn, trying to build a connection between the rational field and the revealed dimension. We have this in the Islamic tradition as well. When I say to people, "What do you know about Abu Hamed al-Ghazali? What do you know about all his philosophy on doubt?" I am trying to say, "Yes, we can go through the doubt and rational exposure, but it doesn't mean that we have to reject the dimension of revelation." Al-Ghazali was from the eleventh century. Then we had al-Shatibi, in the fourteenth century, building a rationalist approach towards the legal dimension. It's as if all this has nothing to do with Enlightenment, that Enlightenment was, very specifically, rationalists against religion. It's not this. It was not true. Scientifically it's wrong. Historically it's wrong. And now the way they are setting the scene of our dialog today is very worrying because it's a dogmatic rationalist approach towards Enlightenment, which was never the case, which was never the reality.

On Anti-Semitism and Israel

IN SAUDI ARABIA, THEY WANT ME TO BE PERCEIVED AS A THREAT because I'm very critical towards their regime. Look, I'm not Islamophobic by being critical toward the Saudi government, but I am not anti-Semitic when I'm critical towards what the state of Israel could do in some situation. We have to understand that political criticism has nothing to do with Islamophobia or anti-Semitism. It has to do with political discussion.

On Berman's article in *The New Republic*

I'M READY FOR ANY KIND OF DIALOG, ANY KIND OF DEBATE, when it is based on what I have said and what I have done. For example, the starting of his article is on Voltaire. He's repeating that I was involved in banning the drama [Voltaire's play *Fanaticism, or Mahomet the Prophet*] in Geneva. My answer was published in a book, *Faut-il faire taire Tariq Ramadan?* I sent the journalist to the mayor of Geneva to ask him, was I involved in it? And he said, "Tariq Ramadan was not involved in this. The decision was taken before he came back from Egypt."

So there is, in this text, not less than thirty-four allegations, repeated allegations, not based on facts. It's just repeated from what was published about me or posted on Internet. He's not serious. So I'm not dealing with a dogmatic secularist able to open the debate. I'm dealing with wrong allegations, with only one thing: Tariq Ramadan has an agenda. He's connected in one way or another with the thoughts of his grandfather. There is something which is simple. Intellectual property is just intellectual property, *check the facts*.

And have you seen the picture [an artist's portrait in the article]? The top of the picture is me. The bottom is my grandfather. It's not my lips. It's not my build. This is what they want to do. They want to say, "Be careful with this guy because he has a double talk. He is speaking as a modern voice of Islam; in fact, he's falling into footsteps of his grandfather."

So I'm criticized both by Muslims, because I am doing this, and at the same time, by the West. *I accept* to be criticized. But the problem is that when I'm reading an article like this one it's unfair; it's based on nothing. It's just, he says, you know, "It's too beautiful to be true." This is what they are telling me. It's too beautiful to be true. He has a double talk. And they want me to stop. ■

To learn more about Tariq Ramadan go to www.tariqramadan.com.

Why Holocaust Denial Undermines Islam

by Hamza Yusuf



Auschwitz

EPISTEMOLOGY IS A BRANCH OF PHILOSOPHY that studies the nature and basis of knowledge. How do we know things? It also studies the veracity of "truth." How do we know the difference between belief, knowledge, opinion, fact, reality and fantasy? The Greek philosopher, Carneades, believed that knowledge of reality, of what is true or false, is impossible, that nothing can be known with certainty; his philosophy is known as skepticism. It does not reject belief altogether; Carneades felt that our belief about any given matter should be subjected to intense scrutiny and then, using a scale of probability, we should accept or reject the likelihood of its truth or falsehood. But we must make no absolute claims to it. Another Greek skeptic, Cratylus, however, was more radical in his approach and believed that nothing could be known at all, and thus no statements could convey anything true or meaningful. He finally gave up talking altogether.

Most of us are neither moderate nor extreme skeptics; we believe what our teachers told us. Although some of us learned later that perhaps a little skepticism was indeed warranted, we survived with our grasp of reality reasonably intact. We live in a world where facts are meaningful and opinions can be assessed, at least to the degree that we deem them sound or unsound. When it comes to religion, those of us who are raised in traditions often reject such assessments and simply believe what we were taught. For many religious people, skepticism is anathema, the work of the devil. However, our Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have always been concerned with and seriously interested in epistemology, because each of these faiths have profound truth claims that need substantiation or "believability."

Islam, at its advent, developed a sophisticated methodology for the validation of truth claims. One of the greatest achievements of the Islamic scholastic tradition is *'ilm ar-rijal*, the science of narrators. It is the study of reports of events in the life of the Prophet, especially of his sayings and deeds. Its formulators established a rigid set of criteria to validate the truth claims of those who asserted they saw or heard the Prophet do or say such-and-such. Reports were grouped into two categories: *ahad*, or solitary reports in which one or a few people claimed to have heard or seen something, and *mutawatir*, or multiply-transmitted reports narrated in numbers large enough to preclude collusive fabrication. The solitary reports must meet many criteria before being accepted as sound statements that nonetheless contain, depending upon the degree to which the criteria were met, a certain probability of error. On the other hand, firmly established multiply-transmitted reports, in numbers that rule out collusion, are taken as uncontested fact.

The Quran, the seventh century book narrated by Muhammad, is considered *mutawatir*, and thus epistemologically undeniable. Whether one believes it is from God or not is another matter, but the Quran in its current form is the same Quran the Prophet taught to his companions more than 1,400 years ago; untold numbers in each generation of Muslims have transmitted the same recitation, making it infallible in its historicity and accuracy. Islamic scholars accepted multiply-transmitted reports from Muslims and people of other

faiths. Upon this epistemological foundation rests the Muslim faith. Creedal matters are deemed valid only if they are buttressed by multiply-transmitted traditions that can be traced back to the Prophet. Although Islamic jurisprudence is largely based upon solitary evidence (hence the differences of opinion in the various schools), the Quran and the creed of Islam are both founded upon multiple narratives that achieve an undeniable status. Early Muslim scholars would certainly consider much of our current knowledge of history to have achieved such status. For instance, there is consensus among historians that the Normans invaded England in 1066; too many accounts of this momentous event exist and have been recounted in each generation through multiple sources. In the case of any solitary original source, healthy skepticism is warranted. When Lee Harvey Oswald claimed to be a patsy, it led to an entire field of conspiracy studies among Kennedy assassination buffs. Did he act alone or didn't he? That aspect of the event is debatable. But was John F. Kennedy shot on November, 22, 1963 in a motorcade at Dealey Plaza in Dallas? Far too many accounts of that tragic event exist; to deny it is simply to deny reality and have one's sanity questioned.

Much of what we know about the world and what we accept as truth comes from multiply-transmitted accounts. Let's say I claim that Australia doesn't exist and is merely a figment of our imagination, that its origins lie in a whimsical cartographer in the Middle Ages who decided that such a large ocean needed a land mass. And, when confronted with people who claim to be from Australia and can prove it, I dismiss them as part of a conspiracy of cartographers who wish to perpetuate the myth of their forbearer. I would be laughed at, or ignored, or deemed "certifiable." While this example seems absurd, many people actually believe things just as fatuous and far-fetched.

Holocaust denial is one such example. As one who has read some Holocaust denial literature, with the poorly reproduced pictures and claims of the orchestration of these scenes in collusion with the U.S. government, I can attest to the tragic gullibility of people who take such literature as historical truth. To return to the Kennedy assassination, if one reads Mark Lane's version that a rogue element within the CIA killed Kennedy, the "facts" seem overwhelming. But if one reads another version that the Mafia killed Kennedy because of his failure to return Cuba to the gambling lords of Italian America, the "facts" also seem overwhelming. Finally, one can read the version that Mossad killed Kennedy because he wanted to force nuclear inspections in Israel, and again the "facts" seem conclusive. Each of these accounts is presented with utter certainty by the "researchers." In the end, reality is manipulated to meet the needs of the mythologist. Indeed, we are each entitled to our own opinions, but not to our own facts. And those who present alternative versions of "reality" tend to reject everything that does not suit their theory, and cherry-pick and interpret everything—facts, innuendos or "coincidences"—that does.

In the case of the Holocaust, the facts are clear and transmitted from multiple sources. Tens of thousands of Jewish and other individuals who survived the death camps and other horrors of Nazi Germany lived to tell of it. Nazis were brought to trial, evidence was presented in court, and they were convicted. Mass graves were found, and gas chambers were discovered, which were clearly not delicing rooms as some callously claimed. The ovens exist and cannot be reduced to an efficient way of preventing cholera outbreaks or disposing of victims of starvation. I have personally met many Holocaust survivors and their children. I have seen tattoos. I have also heard firsthand accounts of the horrific events. The numbers and details of such events may be legitimate areas of research and inquiry for scholars, but questioning whether the events took place at all undermines the epistemological basis of our collective knowledge. Muslims, of all people, should be conscious of this as their religion is predicated on the same epistemological premises as many major events in history, such as the Holocaust. To deny such things is to undermine Islam as

Participants in a symposium hosted by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, look at a screen showing Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in Jerusalem, following a conference in Iran which hosted Holocaust deniers from around the world to debate whether the World War II genocide of Jews took place.



an historical event. That a "conference" examining the historicity of the Holocaust should take place in a Muslim country hosted by a Muslim head of state is particularly tragic and, in my estimation, undermines the historicity of the faith of the people of that state.

In our inherent contradictions as humans, and in order to validate our own pain, we deny the pain of others. But it is in acknowledging the pain of others that we achieve fully our humanity. A close friend of mine, a professor of religion in a Muslim country for many years, recently told me that his wife, an English teacher in that country, had wanted to use *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* as a text for her Muslim pupils. But the school administrators repeatedly denied her request because they deemed it inappropriate reading for young Muslims. It is sad that the current political morass in the Middle East has led to this intolerable refusal to confront a people's collective suffering. Perhaps in acknowledging that immense past of Jewish suffering, in which the Holocaust is only the most heinous chapter, Muslims can better help the Jewish community to understand the current Muslim pain in Palestine, Iraq and other places. In finding out about others, we encourage others to find out about us. It would greatly help our Jewish brethren to know the historical facts of Jewish experience in the Muslim world, which are often heartening and humanizing and very different from their European experience. In our mutual edification, we grow together. ■

Hamza Yusuf is a Muslim scholar, lecturer and author, and the co-founder of the Zaytuna Institute in California, which is dedicated to reviving the traditions of classical Islamic scholarship.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali: An Islamic Feminist Leaves Islam

by Dave Belden

I FIND THE CAREER OF SOMALI-DUTCH POLITICIAN Ayan Hirsi Ali arresting for two reasons. The first is her life story, now told in such eloquent yet matter-of-fact detail in her book *Infidel*. She reveals at first hand the love and misery, the bravery and cruelty of stressed-out cultures: Somali, Saudi, Ethiopian, Kenyan, and Dutch. It is a rare experience to read the authentic voice of any thoughtful young woman growing up in hard times. Here was a Somali girl born to parents in a marriage of love, her father a politician and her mother a beautiful poet. A happy start, but she underwent genital mutilation, exile with her family to various countries, abandonment by her father, severe beating by a religious thug, her mother's contempt, the fierce appeal of the Muslim Brotherhood and the veil, and the opposite and distant dream of female choice discovered in Western romance novels. Then came the chance at age twenty-two, en route to an arranged marriage in Canada, to escape and to make her own life in Holland. And what a life, for she fought to learn Dutch and get herself an education in Western philosophy and politics and by age thirty-two had been elected a Member of Parliament. Her goal was to document and prevent the abuse of Muslim women in Holland. She came out publicly as an atheist. She wrote a movie for which the filmmaker, Theo van Gogh, was murdered on the street by an Islamic radical. The killer knifed a death threat to Hirsi Ali into van Gogh's body. This is a coming-of-age memoir to rewrite the genre. As gripping as any other I have read, this young woman's life cuts through the rationalizations of male powermongers and gives us the individual where we usually hear only generalizations.

The second arresting aspect of her story is that it is not the feminist world or the political Left that has taken up this woman's cause and given her shelter, but the Right. In exile from death threats and a bizarre attempt by the leader of her own party to withdraw her Dutch citizenship (which actually led to the fall of the government), Hirsi Ali went to America, where she now works for the American Enterprise Institute, a well known conservative think tank.

Have Left and Right turned upside down?

AT WHAT POINT DID CONSERVATIVES, WHO I SEEM TO RECALL USED TO OPPOSE feminism and support traditional religion, become the natural champion of a feminist atheist? Why has Hirsi Ali received dressings down from the Left for the anti-Islamic generalizations to which her own life brought her? The Left, which used to be so anti-religious, thinks she shouldn't come out as an atheist? One could be forgiven for thinking that the presence of Islam in Europe is turning politics upside down.

There are personal reasons for my own interest. At age twenty-one I spent a year in Ethiopia and Kenya. I had an education in stories of poverty, war, and idealism from young men, but never expected to hear their sisters' side of it. The African chapters of *Infidel* give life to those mysterious and unreachable Muslim girls I glimpsed in the back rooms of their fathers' houses.

I too was raised in a puritanical religious movement, and had to laugh with Hirsi Ali when she objects to a westernized Ethiopian friend in Holland that she could not possibly show her legs or her hair, because if women all did that the men would go crazy with sexual passion and nothing in society would function! Her revelatory discovery at age twenty-two that in Holland the buses run to the minute despite the mini-skirted girls on the street reminded me of my discovery at the same age that many of the sexually loose people outside my religious movement were just as kind, if not actually kinder, than those in it. Fortunate are those who discover the hollowness of their culture's assumptions: though it may entail painful ruptures with beloved family and friends, it is the beginning of independent thought. But, in my case, revelations about the shaky foundations of my parents' theology and exclusivity had taken me to the Left. How come Hirsi Ali's very similar experiences had taken her to the Right?

The British press had been contemptuous of my parents' religious movement in its heyday. The left press even called us fascists. True enough, our movement was puritanical and in some ways cultic, but it was also a pioneer of conflict resolution, and it promoted ecumenism, racial harmony, and British apologies for the sins of Empire. It was not at all as patriarchal or conservative as the typical immigrant Islamic communities in Britain today. Imagine my surprise, then, on visiting England in 2002, to read the leading left daily, the *Guardian*, on Muslims in England. The paper ran a series of articles that fell over backwards to give a positive portrayal of the kind of religious morality that had been mercilessly criticized by the Left as repressive, patriarchal, and homophobic when practiced by native English Christians. On that same visit I first heard of Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She was called an *Islamophobe* by the *Observer*, the *Guardian's* sister paper. This was *before* she had come out as an atheist and ex-Muslim. The claim seemed to be based on her vocal criticisms of the abuse of women and girls in immigrant Islamic communities and her relating this to Muslim teachings about male dominance.

Why does the Left talk of Islamophobes but not of Christophobes?

I ASSUMED THAT THE LEFT'S EMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS OF IMPERIALISM HAD had brought it to some kind of dawning awareness that it was disrespectful to dismiss the core religious beliefs of the immigrants. I approved. I wished my natal community had been



Ayaan Hirsi Ali chose the anti-religious version of the Enlightenment.



*The option of tradition
and the veil*

treated half as fairly. However, this generosity did not appear to extend to white conservative Christians, such as those responsible for electing George W. Bush in America, so it wasn't some general epiphany about religion. Even though many conservative American Christians had for some generations been pretty poor in the Bible Belt and had felt oppressed by the intelligentsia and establishment (thus being the sort of people the Left might champion), the Left's own identity had been forged in opposition to them. The Left struggled against what it called the "false consciousness" of such working class people, addicted as they were to their "religious opiates." Now that conservative Christians had become suddenly powerful in America, they could be loathed more openly than ever. No girl from, say, Alabama, who gained massive publicity about sexual abuse and blamed it on Christianity, would be criticized by the Left as a Christophobe. Has the Left ever even used the word? The conservative Muslims, however, were still the underdogs, and respect was owed to them, or at least alliance with them was politic. That meant alliance with their leaders, who were being roundly criticized by a few brave women like Hirs Ali. It seemed as if multiculturalism was in conflict with feminism, and was winning.

Ian Buruma's *Murder in Amsterdam, The Death of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance*, is a useful guide to this bizarre

turnaround whereby by the 1990s, "It was now the Left that stood for culture and tradition, that is, those of the immigrants, while the Right argued for the universal values of the Enlightenment." The Enlightenment was always a universalist movement, believing that rational enquiry leads to objective truth for all humankind. That is how Hirs Ali embraced it, arguing that Muslims have the identical rights to free thought and choice as anyone else. But Buruma explains that it can also be seen as a nativist European movement—not just everyone's but more importantly "ours." Now that Christianity has declined so far that Europeans cannot be brought to rally round it, conservatives are increasingly seeing the Enlightenment as the only movement that can unite Europe against its supposed enemies: the Islamists and the low-income immigrants. The left-leaning establishment in the Netherlands could not bring themselves to discuss the deep problems of crime, poverty, sex abuse and alienation among Muslim immigrants, because that, to them, felt like racism. Worse, any hint of such "Islamophobia" felt like anti-Semitism, and the memory of the Dutch failure to protect Dutch Jews from Hitler was vivid in their minds.

So we come to the strange place where a flamboyantly gay man, Pim Fortuyn, almost became prime minister of the Netherlands on a conservative Enlightenment platform—one that rallied the liberated Dutch against the patriarchal, crime-ridden immigrants—only to be murdered, like his friend Theo van Gogh: except in his case by a left-wing animal rights activist. And we come to Hirs Ali, a left-winger inspired by English feminist pioneer Mary Wollstonecraft, who finds that her own left party no longer supports individual rights, only communal rights, thus forcing her to stand for Parliament in a party of the center-right.

Buruma points out that radical Islamism is no traditional movement. Instead it opposes the local cultures of the immigrants with what it considers to be its universalist Islamic values. This argument has been made eloquently and thoroughly by Olivier Roy in *Globalized Islam, the Search for a New Ummah*. Both men make the point that Islam is open to various interpretations and emphases, and that it is the Muslims who leave rural communities for big cities and European countries who can get most cut off from their traditional cultures and become most attracted by radical universalist claims. Hirs Ali was unusual only in that she latched onto Enlightenment universalism, rather than one of the Muslim universalisms. Buruma clearly wishes she had instead espoused the kind of benign universalist Islam (as opposed to violent Islamism) that many *Tikkun* readers and spiritual progressives would

recognize in their own Muslim faith or in that of their Muslim friends and acquaintances, or in books like Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's *What's Right With Islam*, or Beliefnet's *Taking Back Islam*, edited by Michael Wolfe.

Three attempts at creating universal values

IT IS BECOMING CLEARER THAT THREE GENERAL APPROACHES WITH claims to universal applicability are vying for young Muslims in Europe: the secular Enlightenment, the theocratic Islamists, and those we might call the Muslim progressives. A striking example of a boldly progressive Islamic woman is that of Asmaa Abdol-Hamid in Denmark. As reported by the London Guardian on May 16, the twenty-five-year-old social worker, student and town councillor describes herself as a feminist, a democrat, and a socialist. She has gay friends, opposes the death penalty, supports abortion rights, and could not care less what goes on in other people's bedrooms. In short, a tolerant Scandinavian and European. She is also a Palestinian and a devout Muslim who insists on wearing a headscarf, who refuses, on religious grounds, to shake hands with males, and who is bidding fair to be the first Muslim woman ever to enter the Folketing, the Danish parliament in Copenhagen.

A friend, a Muslim business executive and mother of three in Albany, NY, emailed me about this Guardian article, "Isn't it so very sad and laughable that no one in the entire spectrum will agree to let this young woman define herself. The Left and Right insist that she should fit their definition of who Asmaa is, only Asmaa has no say. And that picture is priceless, she has the scarf pin in her mouth."

One of the more widely heard female voices for this Islam in America is that of Pamela K. Taylor, co-founder of Muslims for Progressive Values and advisory board member for the Network of Spiritual Progressives, on her *Newsweek/Washington Post* blog. In a private email she wrote:

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is an extremely controversial figure within progressive Muslim circles. Progressive Muslims generally believe that there are huge problems with Islam as practiced, and with Muslim society in general. We critique classical scholarship, which seems to have taken every opportunity to restrict women's freedoms and enlarge men's. We also critique Muslim cultures, but recognize that many of the most egregious issues have nothing to do with Islam, and would in fact be alleviated if people tried to implement Islam. For instance, honor killing, forced marriages, restrictions on women's political, educational, or economic activities are completely against both Islamic ethics and legal principles. They find no support in the Qur'an, and discouragement from the Prophet.

Hirsi Ali, on the other hand, blames every ill of Muslim society on Islam. She also says that Islam can't be reformed, which we consider to be absolutely ridiculous. There will be resistance, huge resistance, to reformation but that doesn't mean it can't or won't someday happen. (I tend to believe that it will happen sooner rather than later.)

Most people on the Left that I know are not prepared to classify a major world religion as evil and irredeemable. That is rhetoric that sits better with evangelical Christians who believe every belief system other than their own narrow understanding of Christianity is evil. It also is well received by people who are anti-immigrant, or who want to justify continued economic and cultural imperialism of the oil-rich Middle East. Unfortunately, Ayaan and (continued on page 71)



Asmaa Abdol-Hamid, a feminist and devout Muslim running for parliament in Denmark.

Gate 4-A

by Naomi Shihab Nye

WANDERING AROUND THE ALBUQUERQUE AIRPORT TERMINAL, after learning my flight had been detained for four hours, I heard an announcement: "If anyone in the vicinity of Gate 4-A understands any Arabic, please come to the gate immediately!" Well—one pauses these days. Gate 4-A was my own gate. I went there. An older woman in full traditional Palestinian embroidered dress, just like my grandma wore, was crumpled to the floor, wailing loudly. "Help," said the Flight Service Person. "Talk to her. What is her problem? We told her the flight was going to be late and she did this." I stooped to put my arm around the woman and spoke to her haltingly. "Shu dow-a, Shu-bid-uck Habibti, Stani schway, Min fadlick, Shu-bit-se-wee?" The minute she heard any words she knew, however poorly used, she stopped crying. She thought our flight had been cancelled entirely. She needed to be in El Paso for major medical treatment the next day. I said,

"No, No, we're fine, you'll get there, just late, who is picking you up? Let's call him."

We called her son and I spoke with him in English. I told him I would stay with his mother until we got on the plane and would ride next to her. She talked to him. Then we called her other sons just for the fun of it. Then we called my dad and he and she spoke for a while in Arabic and found out, of course, they had ten shared friends. Then I thought, just for the heck of it, why not call some Palestinian poets I know and let them chat with her? This all took up about two hours. She was laughing a lot by then, telling about her life, patting my knee, answering questions. She had pulled a sack of homemade mamool cookies—little powdered sugar crumbly mounds stuffed with dates and nuts—out of her bag and was offering them to all the women at the gate. To my amazement, not a single woman declined one. It was like a sacrament. The traveler from Argentina, the mom from California, the lovely woman from Laredo—we were all covered with the same powdered sugar. And smiling. There is no better cookie. And then the airline broke out the free beverages from huge coolers and two little girls from our flight ran around serving us all apple juice and they were covered with powdered sugar too. And I noticed my new best friend—by now we were holding hands—had a potted plant poking out of her bag, some medicinal thing, with green furry leaves. Such an old country traveling tradition. Always carry a plant. Always stay rooted to somewhere. And I looked around that gate of late and weary ones and thought, "This is the world I want to live in. The shared world." Not a single person in this gate—once the crying of confusion stopped—seemed apprehensive about any other person. They took the cookies. I wanted to hug all those other women too. This can still happen anywhere. Not everything is lost. ■

Naomi Shihab Nye lives in San Antonio, Texas. Her books include 19 Varieties of Gazelle, Sitti's Secrets, and Habibi (a novel for teens). Forthcoming is a collection of essays, I'll Ask You Three Times, Are You OK?: Tales of Driving and Being Driven.

Inter-Dependence Day Celebration

How to turn July 4 or other national holidays into a meaningful celebration ...

of what is good in America while acknowledging our interdependence with all people on the planet.

FACED WITH JULY 4TH CELEBRATIONS THAT ARE focused on militarism, ultra-nationalism, and “bombs bursting in air,” many American families who do not share those values turn July 4th into another summer holiday focused on picnics, sports, and fireworks, while doing their best to avoid the dominant rhetoric and bombast.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives believes that this is a net loss. There is much worth celebrating in American history that deserves attention on July 4th, though it is rarely the focus of public events.

We also acknowledge that in the twenty-first century there is a pressing need to develop a new kind of consciousness—one that recognizes the interdependence of everyone on the planet. A new revolution is necessary—one in which our actions reflect a realization that our wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of everyone else on the planet and of the planet itself.

We’ve designed the following material as a possible guide for





people who share the values we hold. We hope that families will reflect on the themes raised in these pages at their celebrations, and that churches, synagogues, unions, community organizations, and neighborhood associations will incorporate elements of this material into their public celebrations of July 4th. Pick and choose from the following ideas to select the pieces that work for you.

Celebrating What is Good about the United States of America

TODAY, HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WILL CELEBRATE all that is good in the history of the United States of America. Even though we know there is much to criticize about America (including the use of the word "America" as synonymous with the United States, thereby ignoring Canada, Mexico, Central and South America) there is also much to celebrate.

Today we mark the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a document that still inspires many Americans today. We're going to read the declaration aloud. As we do, listen for those ideas that you find inspiring, resonant, or in some other way pertinent for our lives in twenty-first-century America

{Read the Declaration of Independence aloud. Then go around the table and ask people to comment on any parts of the document that seem applicable or inspiring today.}

Unfortunately, the high ideals expressed in the Declaration, "that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," were not actually put into practice when the Constitution was created and the United States came into existence. The word "men" was not applied in a general sense to include women, but rather to only include men. And, in fact, for the first decades of our country the only people who could vote were white men who owned property. Worse, slavery was permitted and African Americans were counted as 3/5 of a European American in the census that determined how many people living in a given area deserved representation in the Congress. Native Americans—those who had survived the near genocide of European settlement—did not figure at all in these equations.

Some of these distortions were rectified through the democratic process that had been set up by the founders of our country. History books focus on the people who were in power as if all change comes from those in positions of authority. The truth is that ordinary citizens created much of what we love about America. Often they encountered resistance from those in power; sometimes they found allies in power who joined in the struggle.

At this celebration, let's give thanks for the ordinary and extraordinary Americans whose struggles brought about those changes. As I read each of the following, let's enjoy a bite of (whatever food item you choose) in celebration of their achievement!

- To the waves of immigrants from all parts of the world who struggled to accept each other and find a place in this country.
- To the escaped slaves and their allies, particularly Quakers, evangelical Christians, and freedom-loving secularists, who built the Underground Railroad and helped countless people to freedom.
- To the coalitions of religious and secular people—women and men, black and white—who built popular support for the emancipation of the slaves.
- To the African Americans and allies who went to prison, lost their livelihoods, and were savagely beaten in the struggle for civil rights.
- To the working people who championed protections like the eight-hour day, minimum wage, workers' compensation, and the right to organize, often at great personal cost to themselves.
- To the immigrants who fought against "nativist" tendencies and refused to close the borders of this country to new groups of immigrants, and who continue to support a policy of "welcoming the stranger," just as this country opened its gates to their ancestors when they were the immigrants and strangers.
- To the women who risked family, job security, and their own constructed identities to shift

our collective consciousness about men and women and raise awareness of the effects of patriarchy.

- To all those who risk scorn and violence and often lost connection to their families to lead the struggle for the acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer people.
- To those who continue to work for equal access for people with disabilities.
- To those who have developed ecological awareness and who advocate for sensitivity to animals and to the earth itself.
- To those who fought to extend democratic principles, not only in politics, but also in the work place and in the economy.
- To all of the innovators and artists who have brought so much beauty and usefulness into our lives.
- To those who developed innovations in science and technology, in literature and art, in music and dance, in film and in computer science, in medical and communication technologies, and in methods to protect ourselves from the destructive impacts of some of these new technologies.
- To those who developed psychological insights and increased our ability to be sensitive to our impact on others.
- To those who brought the insights of their own particular religious or spiritual traditions which emphasized love and caring for others and generosity towards those who had been impoverished—and sought to turn those ideas not only into a call for personal charity, but also into a mission to transform our economic and political systems in ways that would reflect those values.
- To those who fought for peace and non-violence, and who helped stop many wars

{Invite other attendees to offer “toasts” to other groups who have contributed to the things that are good about America.}

{Sing songs of the civil rights movement, the suffrage movement, the labor movement, or any other song of struggle. Two such songs appear below. You can find recordings and lyrics for others at <http://www.labor-studies.org/> (click on “labor songs”) and at <http://creative-folk.com/equalityday.html#music>.}

All that we celebrate today in America involved struggles to overcome entrenched ways of thinking. Adding to the difficulty of the larger struggles were the struggles among groups of people working for liberation. Sometimes people in oppressed groups would say to each other, “My suffering is more intense and more important than your suffering,” which undermined, rather than built, solidarity. Sometimes people with power used one oppressed group to fight against another oppressed group. Some people in each previously oppressed group would seize their hard-won power and turn their backs on the needs of others, even discriminating against or looking down on others whose struggles had not yet been won. It was sad and shocking when people struggling for peace found that some of their allies were racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic, anti-Christian, or that they held hateful views about all religious people, all secular people, all white people, or about all men. Sometimes that would lead people to give up. Luckily, many others did not give up, and so the struggles for human freedom dignity, human rights, economic security, and civil liberties were not abandoned. Those struggles continue today, and it could easily take many more decades before they are fully realized.

So many people have retained their basic decency and caring for others. We are surrounded by people who care. True, it's often hard to see this in our society. When first approached, many people express indifference to the well being of others. Our economic system encourages selfishness, me-first-ism, “looking out for number one,” and indifference to the ecological and ethical impacts of our activities. Acting counter to those attitudes feels not only unfamiliar but risky.



Melinda Weekes, left, from Boston, Mass., and Lanre Olugbade, right, originally from Nigeria, hold up signs during a demonstration outside the Sudanese Embassy in protest of the Sudanese government's role in atrocities in the Darfur region, Friday, April 28, 2006 in Washington. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)



Most of us yearn for a different kind of world, but think it is “unrealistic” to struggle for what we really believe in, since we are convinced that nobody else shares that desire with us. This is part of the reason we’ve created a Network of Spiritual Progressives to support each other in building a world that really does reflect our highest values. If peace, social justice, ecological sensitivity, full implementation of human rights and a society based on love is “unrealistic,” then we say “screw realism”—being realistic in a deeper sense is not accepting “reality” as it is currently presented to us. We want a different kind of world and we have to engage in non-violent struggles to build it. This has always been the way we have won the battles for precisely the things that make us proud of the victories of the American people: it was always people who were told that what they wanted was “unrealistic” and who essentially said “screw realism—we’re going to fight for what is right” who became the real heroes of the American story. Of course, the powerful often obscure that history and teach us to think that all the human rights and liberties and freedoms were “given to us,” but actually it was precisely the ordinary people like us who made the big changes that have made this country worthy of celebration.

Today we celebrate the moments when the United States and the American people have acted not only from self-interest but also from genuine caring. We in this country have a huge amount of goodness in us, and we’ve shown that side to the world as well. We showed it when we supported the Second World War efforts to stop Hitler and the fascists. We showed it when we stopped the war in Vietnam. We showed it when we reacted with revulsion at the torture being done in our name at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. And we are showing it today when we’ve finally been told enough truth about the war in Iraq that we are turning against the war in massive numbers.

{Ask people to share their own stories about times when they’ve felt proud of the United States or of Americans. If there is a large group, break into smaller groups of four to five people. After allocating at least three minutes for each person, resume the larger group conversation.}

We are proud of our country. We love its physical beauty. Many of us come from immigrant families who found refuge here when there were few other societies on the planet that would welcome our ancestors. Let us once again commit to overcoming the fear of the other and cultivating a spirit of generosity and love toward the stranger.

We are proud of the people of this country in many of the same ways that we are proud of our own families. Despite the sometimes overwhelming problems, we still care very deeply and are committed to working things through.

Celebrating Global Interdependence

WITH THE ADVENT OF A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING of how our global environment works, and with the increasing integration of the economies of all countries into a global economy, we’ve come to see that the well-being of everyone on this planet is interconnected. We are all fundamentally interdependent. And we’ve learned the same thing about Nature—when we pour poisons into the air, ground, or oceans, those toxins eventually come back to hurt us and other people around the world. Yet the ideal of individualism persists, and we’re encouraged to act as if we need no one else, no community support.

Despite the persistence of an individualist mindset, our impact on others and theirs on us is huge, and manifests not only in personal and cultural ways, but also in relationship to economic and political conditions. Today, close to 3 billion people (half the people in the world) live on less than two dollars a day, and close to half of that number live on one dollar a day. Huge numbers of people are starving even as we read this and enjoy our good meal and playful celebration. Is it any wonder that some of these people and those who care about them (even if they themselves are not poor), are very angry at the way the world’s politics and economics are set up? We don’t think it is good or legitimate when their anger gets expressed in violent ways. But we also have to take some responsibility for benefiting from a world order that is so unfair and so cruel. According to UN figures, somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 children under the age of five will die today, and again tomorrow, and again the

next day, because they lack the food and basic medical supplies that could have kept them alive. That's over 12 million children a year—the equivalent of two Holocausts per year.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives wants to change this, both by changing the terms of global trade agreements so that they work on behalf of the poor and the hungry, and by establishing (first in the United States, and then in all the advanced industrial societies) a Global Marshall Plan that would allocate between 1–2 percent of our Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty years toward the goal of ending once and for all both domestic and global poverty, homelessness, inadequate education, and inadequate health care. On this celebration of our Interdependence, we want to reaffirm our shared commitment to these goals and commit to working with the Network of Spiritual Progressives on the best ways to achieve these goals.

{Download the text of the Global Marshall Plan, which is available on our website. Go to www.spiritualprogressives.org and click on "Guiding Ideas" at the top. Distribute it to attendees rather than reading it aloud.}

The Global Marshall Plan is the first step toward providing the sense of mutual trust that will allow for the next step needed by humanity in the twenty-first century: a global plan for how to allocate the world's resources and regulate what is put into the environment by individuals and corporations. We cannot save the planet from ecological destruction if we are not willing to develop a coherent rational plan and then use it to guide our use of the resources of the planet. Such a global plan will not be workable until the peoples of the world truly understand their interdependence. So, our celebration of Interdependence Day is an important part of the process of building that new consciousness. For that reason, we need to ask each other now to make a pledge to bring more people next year into this celebration.

Yet, our interdependence with the world goes deeper than that. Every human being on the planet is valuable, created in the image of God, and fundamentally deserving of love, caring, kindness, and generosity. We know that there is a huge cultural and intellectual richness in the variety of cultures, religions, spiritual practices, music, literature, and shared wisdom of the societies that make up our world. On this Interdependence Day we not only commit to helping improve the material conditions of the rest of the world, but also to learning from the rest of the world. We approach this task in a spirit of humility, aware that we in the United States have sometimes appeared to the rest of the world as a big bully and not as a society genuinely interested in sharing its cultural and intellectual and material gifts or in learning from others about their own particular cultural and spiritual heritages. The impression of arrogance is particularly intense at this historical moment when the war in Iraq and the attempts by the United States to manipulate other countries is so visible to many of the people on our planet, but it will be a problem even after we stop the war in Iraq.

We want to communicate to the peoples of the world our own deep sorrow and repentance at the ways that our wonderful country has taken wrong turns in its foreign policy, the ways that it has acted with arrogance and insensitivity to the needs of others, and the ways it has supported an economic system whose insensitivity to the needs of the environment and its preaching of "me-firstism" has already done immense damage.

{Sing here songs of other cultures and bring their poetry and fiction and spiritual practices as well, or go around the table sharing aspects of other cultures that you find inspiring.}

We are happy to celebrate this Interdependence Day on Independence Day for the United States.

Some of us wish to invoke God's blessing on our country, and will do so now. But we also wish to invoke God's blessings on all people on our planet and on the planet itself. We know



Union demonstrators wave flags as they gather for a rally against the Free Trade Area of the Americas conference Thursday, Nov. 20, 2003 in Miami.



that nationalist chauvinism, thinking that we are or can be better than everyone else, the manic need to be "number one," can lead us into wars and destructive behavior. Instead, we want to bless everyone on the planet, to celebrate with everyone. So we rejoice in the people of this country, we rejoice with them as we celebrate all that is beautiful and good in this country, and at the same time we affirm our deep connection to all people on this planet and invoke God's blessing on all of us, together, and pray that we soon will see a triumph of a new spirit of kindness, generosity, love, caring for others, ecological sensitivity, and celebration with joy, awe and wonder at all the good that surrounds us and keeps us alive.

{Sing here: Oh beautiful for spacious skies,}

Oh beautiful, for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America! God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea.
Oh beautiful, for pilgrims' feet
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America! God mend thine ev'ry flaw;
Confirm thy soul in love for all, thy liberty in law!
Oh beautiful, for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life!
America! America! May God thy gold refine,
'Til all success be nobleness, and ev'ry gain divine!
Oh beautiful, for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years,
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America! God shed Her grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea!

{Offer prayers for the well being of all peoples. Allow participants to offer blessings from their own traditions.} ■

Written by Rabbi Michel Lerner and Nichola Torbett and distributed by the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP). To spread this message and this way of thinking: please join the NSP at www.spiritualprogressives.org, 2342 Shattuck Ave, #1200 Berkeley, CA. 94708, or by contacting Nichola Torbett, Director of National Programming, Nichola@tikkun.org (510) 644-1200.

IMPEACHMENT

One thing we celebrate in America is the possibility that Congress can impeach our president and vice president. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House, announced immediately after the Democrats won majority control of the House, that impeachment was "not on the table." In April, Dennis Kucinich introduced a resolution to impeach Vice President Cheney. We asked him and other members of Congress to explain whether or not this is the time to put impeachment back on the table.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)

TIKKUN: There was a very put-downish editorial in the *Cleveland Plain-Dealer* about your plan to impeach Vice President Cheney. Its basic point was that there isn't a single person in the Congress who'll back you on this.

KUCINICH: Some already have. More will be signing on. This is about our Constitution, about whether those who take an oath to defend the Constitution keep faithfully that pledge. Vice President Cheney has not only failed in his oath to protect the Constitution, but he has also led this country into a war based on a very aggressive program of misinformation in the media that he fostered. He needs to be held accountable.

TIKKUN: But opponents might argue that his acts were speech acts. He didn't engage in theft, or killing anybody directly. He didn't sleep with an intern. All he did was advocate for a position—it was the Congress that didn't exercise its responsibility to investigate before voting for a war.

KUCINICH: You're correct in that Congress had a responsibility. However, the vice president sat over the shoulders of people in the intelligence community. He made strong efforts to change intelligence products when he had no right to do that. Then, based on that cooked intelligence, he went and created a case for war. This is a very clear-cut case of a violation of his role as the vice president. It doesn't excuse those members of Congress who failed to adequately perform their role, but the vice president was in a singular position in this regard and took the lead. If you look at the articles, I cite *chapter and verse* where time after time he went to the national media and said: "We know they have weapons of mass destruction." He stated it with the certitude that anyone would expect the vice president of the United States to be able to have when he's equipped with the facts. But he had no facts to base it on, and he basically created a case out of fiction. That raises this to the level of an impeachable offense.

TIKKUN: The second main argument against impeachment has been that (a) it will divert energy from stopping the war, and (b) Congress will accomplish nothing else if it first tries to impeach Cheney, but then tries to impeach Bush. How do you respond to this argument?

KUCINICH: We should end the war, of course. Congress is currently engaging in a less-than-substantive debate on the war. Congress has the authority to stop the war right now by simply refusing to provide any funds whatsoever.



REASONS FOR IMPEACHMENT:

- Article I, that Richard Cheney had purposely manipulated the intelligence process to deceive the citizens and the Congress of the United States by fabricating a threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to justify the use of the United States armed forces against the nation of Iraq in a manner damaging to our national security.
- That despite all evidence to the contrary, the vice president actively and systematically sought to deceive the citizens and the Congress of the United States about an alleged threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.
- That preceding the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the vice president was fully informed that no legitimate evidence existed of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The vice president pressured the intelligence community to change their findings to enable the deception of the citizens and the Congress of the United States.
- That in this the vice president subverted the national security interests of the United States by setting the stage for the loss of more than 3,300 United States service members and the loss of 650,000 Iraqi citizens since the United States invasion; the loss of approximately \$500 billion in war costs, which has increased our federal debt; the loss of military readiness within the United States armed services, through an overextension and lack of training and lack of equipment; and the loss of United States credibility in the world affairs and decades of likely blowback created by the invasion of Iraq.
- That with respect to Article II, that Richard Cheney manipulated the intelligence process to deceive the citizens and the Congress of the United States about an alleged relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda in order to justify the use of United States armed forces against the nation of Iraq in a manner damaging to our national security.
- And that, despite all evidence to the contrary, the vice president actively and systematically sought to deceive the citizens and Congress of the United States about an alleged relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda.
- That preceding the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the vice president was fully informed that no credible evidence existed of a working relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda, a fact articulated in several official documents.
- With respect to Article III, that in his conduct while vice president of the United States, Richard Cheney openly threatened aggression against the Republic of Iran, absent any real threat to the United States, and has done so with the United States' proven capability to carry out such threats, thus undermining the national security interests of the United States.
- That despite having no evidence that Iran has the intention or the capability of attacking the United States, and despite the turmoil created by the United States' invasion of Iraq, the vice president has openly threatened aggression against Iran.

Furthermore, I point out in the articles that Article VI of the United States Constitution states, and I quote, "This Constitution and the laws of the United States shall be made in pursuance thereof and all treaties made or which shall be made under the authority of the United States shall be the supreme law of the land. Any provision of an international treaty ratified by the United States becomes the law of the United States."

The United States is signatory to the U.N. Charter, a treaty among the nations of the world. Article II, Section 4 of the United Nations Charter states, and I quote, "All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."

The articles conclude by pointing out that the vice president's deception upon the citizens and the Congress of the United States which enabled the failed United States invasion of Iraq forcibly altered the rules of diplomacy so that the vice president's recent belligerent actions toward Iran are destabilizing and counterproductive to the national security of the United States of America.

These articles of impeachment are not brought forth lightly. I've carefully weighed the options available to members of Congress and found this to be the path that is the most important to take.

Mr. Cheney, as illustrated in the articles of impeachment, used his office to systematically build a case, which was covered in deceit, to try to convince this country to go to war with Iraq, falsely claiming that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, and had connection to Al Qaeda's role in 9/11. That is, and should be, a violation of his constitutional oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution, and to safeguard all laws. We have a case here that is pending—this isn't theoretical—and this is about the proper exercise of checks and balances. This is Congress's responsibility, whether it's a Democratic majority or a Republican majority.

—Congressman Dennis Kucinich

TIKKUN: What is the reason Democrats have felt the need to continue funding the war? After all, these are people whose one certain skill is that they know how to read their own constituency well enough to keep on getting elected. If, as many of us in the peace movement claim, the American people feel strongly about ending the war, why don't members of Congress feel that in order to preserve their own future, they have to refuse funds for the war?

KUCINICH: The central point of where we are at as Democrats is that we took control of the House and the Senate based on the public's objection to the war. Had Iraq not been an issue in 2006, it's not certain the Democrats would have gained the House and the Senate. But since Iraq was an issue, that's how we took back the Congress. Now, proceeding from there, what should we have done? We should have simply informed the President that there was no more money to be given for the war. We didn't need to pass any act; we simply had to refuse to pass any bill to fund the war. Nevertheless, we proceeded to describe a Democratic version of the war in Iraq as compared to a Republican version of the war in Iraq, something that the American people, as they discover, are not going to be very happy about. Democrats could bring this war to an end. I think there's much more support for ending the war across the United States than there is within the Congress. The Congress has, for whatever reason, locked itself into this position for support of the war. The propaganda that you have to support the war in order to support the troops has to be exposed, because the truth is that troops are being kept in harm's way by this war. It's not in the interest of the troops or the American people to stay in the war, and the troops are being used as pawns.

TIKKUN: I don't understand why we don't take the leadership and move quickly to end the war now.

KUCINICH: One thing you have to keep in mind is that some Democrats who were elected in districts and primaries tended to be not as strongly opposed to the war as others, so we ended up with a Democratic sweep in November bringing in members who were not as strongly opposed to the war. The surprise is that Democrats win the election on the war, yet the new Democratic Congress may not be as strongly opposed to the war. It's a kind of a paradox. That is, I think, a fact, and I also think we need to realize that the Democratic Party survives only at the good graces of the American people. If the American people feel we are not being responsive to the new direction they were looking for in November, there will be serious consequences in 2008.

TIKKUN: *Tikkun* has argued that one of the reasons why Democrats have not received an unambiguous message from their constituents saying: "if you vote for any funds for this war, we're not going to support you" is that while people are against the war, they're confused about what would happen next. Although your own bill does address some of this, we've said that there needs to be a clear message that says that the United States would replace its forces with some kind of international peacekeeping mechanism that would allow a plebiscite on the part of the people of Iraq on whether they even *want* one country or three, and what their future should be. This plebiscite can't take place as long as U.S. troops are there.





An Iraqi baby, no name given by the parents, fights for her life as her mother gives her oxygen in the emergency room of Baghdad's Yarmouk Hospital late Sunday, Nov 23, 2003. The baby and her four-year-old sister, Fatima Serhan, suffered severe burns to their faces when parts of their family house collapsed and caught fire. Their five-year-old brother Rida was brought to the hospital dead.

Secondly, the United States should engage in public repentance for what it has done, and acknowledge to the peoples of the world not just that we're getting out, but that this was a terrible mistake based on a wrong theory of how to do politics. That wrong theory is domination of others as the way to provide security, and that instead the United States should replace that with a strategy of generosity as a way to provide for homeland security for others, in which the United States becomes known as the most generous and caring society in the world, not the toughest and most powerful. To make that strategy real, we're calling for a Global Marshall Plan in which the United States would lead the other G8 countries in this direction by example, by donating 1 percent of its GDP to a Global Marshall Plan to end homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, inadequate healthcare, and repair the global environment.

That plan provides a positive vision. But we have not seen, either from the Department of Peace campaign or the peace movement, any serious responsiveness about putting the positive vision at the center of what it's talking about, but only the negative vision of "let's get out."

KUCINICH: I support the goals of the Global Marshall Plan and also of the Generosity Strategy. We need to have some principles that animate in a positive and constructive way. That was what was behind my bill to create a Department of Peace, behind HR 808 and also behind my bill HR 1234 to create a plan to end the war in Iraq by not only ending the occupation, but also moving forward with a diplomatic initiative to create an international peacekeeping and security force that would stabilize Iraq as our troops leave. It also calls for a program of reconciliation between the Shiites, the Sunnis, and the Kurds, a plan of reconstruction that would end the involvement of U.S. contractors and private armies, a plan to pay reparations to the Iraqi people who have lost hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens in this war and who've had devastating damage to their social networks and to their institutions. We have to repair the breach. That's essentially what *tikkun olam* is all about, healing the world and that breach that we have created between the people of Iraq and the people of the United States, and I'm determined to do that.

TIKKUN: Concretely, would you introduce a resolution to the Congress supporting a Global Marshall Plan?

KUCINICH: Yes, and I'd like to work with you on it. Absolutely. Because I know what you're talking about; you're talking about addressing the issues of homelessness and poverty and the entire range of economic structures that have created the injustice. I think that we need to look at this on a global basis, because we can focus on poverty in the United States, but the truth is, there's poverty everywhere, and it's all interconnected. If you're looking at global poverty, homelessness, hunger, as you do in your plan, and you also look at so many of the other ways in which peoples' lives are eroded by not having access to housing, healthcare, or education. We've got so much talent in this world that ought to be tapped to become involved in this, and I'm certainly ready to work with you on it, because I think that's what you've articulated in the Global Marshall Plan and the Strategy of Generosity. They're things that really tap people's hearts and souls, and that's something that ought to be supported.

TIKKUN: Perhaps you could raise it in the debates among presidential candidates for the 2008 primaries.

KUCINICH: I like the idea, and I'll look for the opportunity to do it, because I agree—there has to be a global vision, and to be able to flesh it out in a detailed way, which the Global Marshall Plan does, is very helpful. ■

Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA)

CONGRESSMAN JAMES P. MORAN: I liked the Network of Spiritual Progressives' ad in the *New York Times*. Generosity and repentance are important values. Your ad came out on May 17, 2007, the very day we were considering authorization for the Armed Services Bill, and I wish its message had been absorbed by the members of that committee. The armed services authorization, which provides half a trillion dollars for war-fighting on the part of the United States, passed overwhelmingly in the House. Many of the important peace-oriented amendments were rejected, including those that would have limited America's role in Iraq, in any further military adventure into Iran, and other limits on our military adventures.

TIKKUN: How do you understand that? Why is that happening?

MORAN: I think that this is still a militaristic country we live in. We're still almost in an age of adolescence. The descendants of Europeans who took land from the Native Americans felt that we had a mission to dominate all around us, and we have insisted on the proliferation of guns, notwithstanding the number of American civilians who have been killed by them, and I see that as consistent with a philosophy that America should have the biggest, most lethal military in the world. That's defining all our national character.

TIKKUN: When we're putting forward the notion that security can be achieved in another way, from your perspective, we're up against quite a lot.

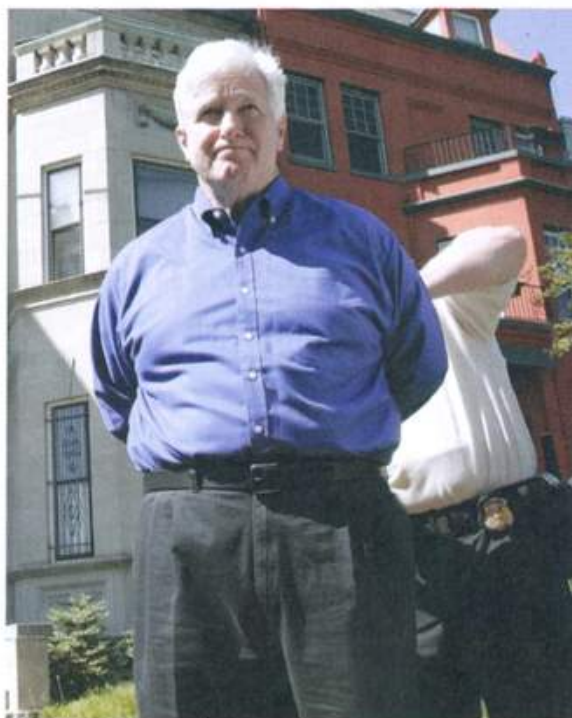
MORAN: Oh, I think that it will take generations to have America turn around and be the kind of moral instrument envisioned by its founding fathers. I read your ad carefully and appreciated it. I think the idea is admirable, wonderful, in fact. But in my mind there is no conceivable way that this country will acknowledge its mistakes, let alone apologize for them, in the next few years. The closest thing we ever came to an apology was when Bill Clinton apologized for the Rwandan genocide. In that case, it wasn't anything we did; it was our apathy standing on the sidelines, not intervening, allowing it to happen.

President Clinton indirectly and directly acknowledged some of the wrongdoing on the part of the United States: slavery, the oppression of the Native Americans, and things like that. But he's not our leader, and the leader we do have now certainly does not have the security and confidence in who he is to help this country pursue a different course.

TIKKUN: It doesn't sound though that there are many people in the House willing to provide that leadership either.

MORAN: Oh, I think that's quite true. The majority of the members of the House feel that their constituency wants them to be pro-military, wants them to be victorious in Iraq and around the world, wants them to enable this country to continue to spend its money on military weaponry rather than reconciliation or investing in the betterment of future generations.

TIKKUN: In 1965, when the second wave of feminism was beginning to cohere, there were very, very few people who thought that it would be possible for a woman to run for the Pres-



Rep. Jim Moran, D-VA, center, is handcuffed in his arrest during a demonstration outside the Sudanese Embassy in protest of the Sudanese government's role in atrocities in the Darfur region Friday, April 28, 2006 in Washington.



ident of the United States, or be on the governing bodies of corporations, or have equal rights in the workplace. Yet those changes occurred against a system of thinking that had been in place for thousands of years. They very quickly changed when people, a small group at first, began to advocate for a different way of thinking. I'm wondering if you can identify any people—perhaps yourself—who would be willing in the House to take leadership to try to put forward a different vision of what the United States should be and how we should challenge the notion that security comes through domination.

MORAN: Several of us have tried to be that leadership in regards to the Iraq War. Rep. John Murtha has shown a great deal of courage in speaking out against the war, and has received a good deal of criticism from the Administration and the right wing in America as a result. I have tried, through amendments, speeches, and votes, to move the direction of the country away from war and towards peaceful coexistence, a more rational international policy, and more investment domestically. I had an amendment yesterday that originally was designed to close down Guantanamo Bay because it is a legal black hole. Every day it stays open undermines the values and principals we purport to stand for. I compromised with the members of the Armed Service Committee. Chairman Skelton told me he was sympathetic but that it wouldn't pass, and it turns out he's right, unless we compromise it substantially. So finally I compromised it down to the point of requesting a plan from the Administration regarding what they would do if we were to close down Guantanamo, thinking that if we could get that passed when the Appropriations bill is considered we could shut down funding for Guantanamo through the appropriations process. I did get that amendment passed, but just barely. More than a dozen Democrats voted against even developing a plan for moving the people at Guantanamo. All but five Republicans voted against it.

We've had 772 prisoners at Guantanamo and we have only charged four of them. The members of Congress must know that the majority of them are innocent. Even the U.S. military has acknowledged that the majority of them were never involved in any violent action against the United States. Eighty-six percent of them were turned in, not by U.S. forces, but by Pakistani and Afghan Northern Alliance forces in return for bounty. Nevertheless, only a bare majority was willing to require the Administration to plan for what would happen if we did close it down.

TIKKUN: Let me ask you about the resolution that Dennis Kucinich introduced to impeach the vice president. So, is putting impeachment back on the table an important part of the dynamic of shifting the public discourse around the war?

MORAN: Well, the Speaker thinks it may be a distraction from other things we can actually accomplish, and we are unlikely to accomplish the impeachment. On the other hand, this Administration has been violating habeas corpus, a fundamental right that is defining of America. The right for people to know what they're charged with and to be able to defend themselves in court is being violated every day. We have violated that right in 772 cases now, so I think that's something important that the judiciary committee should be working on. And there are any number of other issues that are important to our body of laws that this Administration violates. I think that if we got into impeachment it would be all-consuming; it would attract all the attention and distract us from the need to limit the war in Iraq, the need to invest money in human infrastructure in this country, the need to bring about a more sane budgetary policy where we don't leave trillions of dollars of debt to future generations, the need to develop an environmental policy.

All of those things may be more mundane than the drama of impeachment, but they need to be done. I really don't think at this point we'd be able to impeach the vice president or the president. If you look at the very few people who've signed the impeachment resolution—I signed on to John Conyers' with regard to the president and Dennis Kucinich's with regard to the vice president—they're not going anywhere and very, very few members have signed on to them. So if we can't even get official co-sponsorship, the idea of bringing it to

a vote is...it's just not going to happen. It really isn't an effective use of our time.

TIKKUN: When Republicans in Congress were a minority before 1994, they pushed for their clearest and sometimes most extreme programs, even though they knew they were going nowhere, simply because in pushing for them they were using the Congress as a place to educate the American people. It seems as if there aren't very many Democrats who think of their role in the Congress as an educative tool and so they shrink down their agenda according to what they think is going somewhere and is going to pass.

MORAN: I don't think that's entirely true. The difference is the Democrats are not as extremist as the Republicans. The Republicans came in with the desire to eliminate government. The Democrats are much more moderate in their attitude.

TIKKUN: So you don't think that pushing impeachment would be something that might scare the president or the vice president enough to consider moderating some of their other views?

MORAN: Not at all. I don't think they'd take it seriously. I think it'd be an opportunity for the Right Wing media machine to jump all over Democrats accusing us of wasting the public's time and money on a distraction, a wild goose chase...

TIKKUN: How would it be a distraction if the charges were lying to the American public about torture, about the judiciary and habeas corpus, about the war? How would that be more of a distraction than what they did with Clinton?

MORAN: Now that would be an argument you would have to make with them. I'm just telling you what they do, and they have a much more effective noise machine in terms of using the American media than Democrats do, so I think that they would be able to convince a large share of the American public that it was distraction from the real public business.

TIKKUN: What's your theory about why they have a more effective noise machine when the majority of the American public agrees more with the Democrats on the issues?

MORAN: David Brock has detailed that. In the case of the right wing media, there are a few very wealthy people who fund these think tanks and who own many of these means of communication, Rupert Murdoch being one of them. The Cook family, the Olin Family, the Coors—they've all funded these people, these radio hosts basically get subsidized by very conservative individuals until they make it on their own. And they've done very well. I could go down a long list of people: Rush Limbaugh, Shawn Hannity, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck. They appeal to people because they're simplistic. They appeal to the lowest common denominator, if you will, of the human spirit, our most base instincts. They keep it simple by trying to distinguish everything between good and evil, and everyone who doesn't agree with them is evil. They equate all of the wrongs that people encounter every day with liberalism, with Democrats. They have a very effective means of propagandizing. They're students of Lenin: Lenin said that if you say something often enough and forcefully enough people will believe it. They've shown that this continues to work throughout American society.

TIKKUN: Why did you personally sign on to these impeachment bills if you don't think they are "going to go anywhere?"

MORAN: I signed on out of principle. I think this president should have been impeached. I think that if the Congress could consider impeaching a president for his private consensual acts with another person—even though she was very young, he wasn't doing anything a lot of legislators haven't done at one time or another in terms of yielding to personal temptation. I didn't consider that an impeachable act, and if Congress is willing to impeach for reasons like that then why not impeach a president and vice president who have sent us to war which caused the death of thousands of American soldiers, the severe wounding of tens of

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.afterdowningstreet.org
a non-partisan coalition providing information and a useful events calendar

www.impeachbushcheney.net
blog collecting information related to grassroots impeachment movements

www.impeachbush.tv/impeach/
an explanation of the process of impeachment

www.impeachbush.org
this site's poll currently has the most hits, with nearly a million users 'clicking' for impeachment

www.usalone.com/chenev_impeachment.php
this online poll can send along your vote as a personal message to your congressional representatives and the editor your local daily paper

thousands, the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. We are talking about a president and vice president who have violated our Constitution in terms of unwarranted surveillance of our phone calls, who have looked into personal privacy records, ignored the concept of habeas corpus, and illegally detained people and tortured them. They both have violated the rule of law in a great many ways—such a president and vice president should be held accountable. That's why I think the impeachment process would be healthy for the nation. But my views are not shared by anywhere near the majority of the Congress, nor the American people.

Things have gotten so bad under this Administration—the worst Administration in American history—that I think the political pendulum is going to swing.

I do think that in our lifetimes we will see the beginning of a new progressive majority in this country. *Tikkun's* ideas are going to acquire far more consideration and influence. I think that the militaristic approach on the Right, many people in AIPAC, the Likud Party's approach to security in Israel—all of that conservative militaristic domination approach to the future is going to lose credence, and I think you're going to see a new generation of leaders who are willing to negotiate, to try to better understand their enemy, and over time convert their enemy, at least, if not to act as a friend to their enemy, in order to avoid combat. This accepted reliance on militaristic solutions that we're seeing today is not sustainable and I do think we'll see a transformation pretty soon—probably under the president-elect in 2008—that will bring about a much more peaceful world and a much more rational approach to foreign policy and a much more generous approach to domestic policy.

TIKKUN: In the presidential candidates, we have many of the same problems we have in Congress, namely, people who still share the vision of safety coming through domination.

MORAN: Some of them, but only some of them. I don't think Barack Obama feels that way. I don't think John Edwards feels that way in his heart. I don't know about the Republican candidates. Ron Paul is a libertarian and doesn't believe in militaristic solutions, but he's not a mainstream Republican candidate. The mainstream Republican candidates clearly are not that far from the approach the Bush and Cheney regime and the neocons have had. But I think that for the most part, the Democrats have had a very different direction, and a direction much more consistent with *Tikkun*.

TIKKUN: What I'm hearing from you is, in terms of transforming popular consciousness, that there isn't anything you think we can do at the moment. We can't elect a Democratic Congress because we did that and they weren't ready to cut funding for the war, and we can't demonstrate, because that doesn't have much of an impact...

MORAN: I think demonstrations are good. I just think we have to be realistic in that they're very limited in their effectiveness. But I think they're good. They give like-minded people the opportunity to get together; it encourages them; it gives them confidence that they're not alone out there, and it does get some coverage by the media.

I think it's very important what the Network of Spiritual Progressives is doing to educate, inform, and communicate. Encouraging your members and readers of *Tikkun* to write letters to the editor, trying to get more people to subscribe to *Tikkun* Magazine, putting ads in newspapers like you did with the *New York Times*. There are bound to be hundreds of thousands of people who took a couple of minutes to read that ad. And there will be some proportion of those people whom it might have turned around. It might cause them to reflect upon the wisdom of generosity and reconciliation. I don't think it's going to get the majority of the American people to be willing to apologize for anything. It will get some. The fact that you can't bring this about in a time period that is satisfactory to you, the fact that you can't get a majority of people to agree with you, doesn't mean it's not the right thing to do. It is the right way to spend your time. I think that eventually it will prove to be prophetic. ■

Rep. Mel Watt (D-NC)

TIKKUN: Do you support the impeachment of Dick Cheney?

CONGRESSMAN WATT: Having served on the House Judiciary Committee during the Clinton Impeachment, I know how high the standard is for impeachment and how divisive and protracted the process is. Instead of us spending all of our time between now and the 2008 election engaged in an impeachment process, I would opt to do more aggressive oversight which we've been doing. So it's not that I'm opposed to impeachment—if someone files articles of impeachment then we're called upon to do it. I'm sure I'll be right in the middle of it because I'm still on the House Judiciary Committee.

At this point, I think it would be more of a distraction than it would be a practical pursuit.

TIKKUN: And what do you think of the Democrats' capitulation on the issue of the Iraq War?

WATT: I don't know that I would characterize it as a "capitulation." I think there is recognition that everybody here is torn—we have soldiers over there and we don't want to pull funding in a way that would jeopardize the safety of those soldiers.

TIKKUN: But if we stopped funding and they were all brought home?

WATT: If you stopped funding and they were all brought home that would achieve a very desirable objective, but the worry is if you stop funding and are not able to prosecute the war in a way that protects soldiers who are already over there. I mean this president is not likely to back off this war no matter what we do. So, I'm not planning to vote for the money but I can understand why people are conflicted and I don't characterize that as a capitulation.

TIKKUN: So this war could just go on and on and on, couldn't it?

WATT: It could, yes.

TIKKUN: And the Democrats were elected to bring it to an end, weren't they?

WATT: Well, I think everybody was elected to bring the war to an end and as soon as we can figure out a way to end it we will do so. We have different means of expressing what that process should be. I'm expressing my view by voting against the funding. But I am not inclined to characterize what other people are doing as a capitulation. I do think demonstrations against the war help. I think that an aggressive expression of dissent about the fact that the war is continuing is very important. ■



From right to left, Rep. Carolyn C. Kilpatrick, D-Mich., Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., Rep. Bobby Rush, D-Ill., Rep. Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y., and former Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Rep. Mel Watt, D-N.C., speak to the media outside the West Wing of the White House.

Whiskey, Rebellion, and the Religious Left

by William Hogeland



IN THE EARLY 1790s, FARMERS, ARTISANS, AND LABORERS attempted an insurrection against the newly formed government of the United States. Coalescing in what was then the Wild West—the headwaters of the Ohio River, in western Pennsylvania—the rebellion embraced and drew energy from settlers in northwestern Virginia, western Maryland, and Kentucky. By 1794, when the federal government acted to suppress them, thousands of men were marching in militia discipline. They flew the flag of a new trans-Appalachian country. Secession was underway. The Union was in turmoil. At issue were the essential values of the American people.

“The Whiskey Rebellion” was Alexander Hamilton’s dismissive term for those events. The first Secretary of the Treasury, author of the programs the rebels were dedicated to resisting, Hamilton hoped the term would consign both his opponents and the complexity of their vision to historical oblivion. It worked. For generations the Whiskey Rebellion has been taught as a dustup on the broad highway to national consensus.

In fact, the rebellion brought to a climax longstanding struggles among Americans over money, credit, and economic justice. It consumed Hamilton’s prodigious talents and energies. It led President Washington, in suppressing it, to abrogate civil liberties, giving later executive-branch aggression strong precedent in the founding administration. Yet, to the extent that we recall anything about that breakpoint moment, we more or less recall some

hillbillies getting hot over a beloved beverage. And if we remember that the rebellion’s trigger was a federal tax, we’re likely to mistake the whiskey rebels for the forebears of those who abominate all taxes.

The rebels were not against taxes, as they explained in a series of published resolutions—co-gent products of delegated meetings, not the work of spontaneous drunks. They rejected what they described as taxes not in proportion to property—what we call regressive taxes. And “regressive” would be a mild term for Hamilton’s tax on whiskey. Whiskey and finance had a complex relationship in eighteenth century rural economies, counterintuitive to us but well understood by Hamilton, which enabled his whiskey tax to draw cash from ordinary people and pass it, in the form of reliable interest payments, to a small group of wealthy bondholders, the financiers and merchants who speculated in public debt. The idea was to consolidate enormous wealth in the hands of those who could fund large projects and build the United States into a commercial empire.

The whiskey rebels opposed policies that consolidated wealth and opportunity. They wanted laws that made the political process democratic, gave ordinary people access to economic de-

velopment, and dispersed wealth and credit more or less fairly among American citizens. They wanted a kind of equality. Some readers will no doubt think it a wishful anachronism to ascribe to ordinary people, living in the eighteenth-century American countryside, a critique of elite finance and a radical vision of economic fairness—a vision that went so far as to promote landless and otherwise unpropertied laborers. The real anachronism is the pervasive denial, in certain history circles, of that viewpoint's centrality to our founding struggles. The radicalism of the people's movement was certainly no secret to Hamilton and his peers, who went to great lengths to disable it.

And there's another element of the founding story that today's readers—especially those in polar opposition, on the secular left and the religious right—may find even stranger. The inspiration for those founding populists' radical vision of America's future came from evangelical Protestantism's hopes for Christian millennium. It came, that is, from the religious left.

It's often assumed that, to whatever extent the American Revolution had religious affiliations at all, that they were with rationalist Anglican liberalism, with deism, with the apparent agnosticism of certain famous founders—that is, with the Enlightenment's impact on Christianity. Samuel Adams's retro Puritanism does get a nod, but it's Paine's "Age of Reason" that rings the bell. Often overlooked by historians are evangelicals, illiberal in their religious fervor, proponents of the eighteenth century radical populism that remains so little known. Evangelicals' central importance to our founding struggles was by no means obscure at the time.

History texts often give the movement known as the Great Awakening short shrift, listing a quick set of associations—Great Awakening/Jonathan Edwards/Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God—and hastily moving on. The prevailing impression is of fire-and-brimstone thundering against vice. What's important to remember about the Awakening is the emphasis its exponents placed on vices they called "waste," "luxury," and "greed." Puritans had viewed the pursuit of wealth as a sign of potential virtue, but amid the astonishing conversions that occurred throughout English-speaking North America in the 1740s, the converted young people of the Awakening—"new lights," who castigated established churches as dead, seeking lively and emotional rather than doctrinal evidences of redemption—loudly questioned facile connections between greed and goodness.

By the 1760s, the evangelical movement had become largely a working-class phenomenon, and it contributed to the passions of urban artisans and rural militias, "associators" whose energies the upscale merchant class tried to deploy against British interference in trade, ultimately in favor of American independence. The merchants worked hard to turn working-class associators away from longstanding struggles against rich Americans and direct them against Tories and loyalists. The effort was famously successful in Boston; in Philadelphia, laborers became hard to control. The merchant class was at times a natural ally of established churches, at other times of liberal theology, but rarely of evangelical fervor, and our picture of the revolutionary period should be complicated by the religious enthusiasm and economic radicalism of the democratic associators—and by their hopes for millennium.

"Millennium." It's a term that comes with some lurid and hotly disputed imagery. The thousand-year reign of Christ ... the titanic last battle between Satan and the Redeemer ... the mark of the Beast ... the end of history. Secular liberals today tend to regard such things as the natural province, scary or laughable or both, of the Christian right. Yet in the decades before the Revolution, as effects of the Great Awakening united people throughout the colonies in a shared vision of salvation, millennium came to be equated with a renovation of North American society along lines that today's secular left would be more likely to recognize and approve than many on the religious right. Not that the eighteenth-century evangelicals were social reformers. They disdained tinkering with inherently flawed human institutions. They eschewed prating about raising up the poor. They preferred a tougher program: the salvation and resulting happiness of all people, a happiness that, though hard-won, would be complete.

Theological distinctions are salient here. "Pre-millennial" theology envisions the final, catastrophic battle between good and evil as preceding the perfect reign of Christ—a necessary precondition, condemning millions of infidels to unimaginable suffering. But some Awakening theologians placed Christ's perfect reign prior to the last battle. This "post-millennial" vision

"To annihilate the Self-hood of Deceit & false Forgiveness" by William Blake (1757-1827). Blake was an English poet, visionary, and artist who declared in one poem, "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's."





*"Stepping out of the Sun"
by William Blake. Blake rejected
all imposed authority and
established religion. He believed
in racial and sexual equality.
Radical politics and mystical
mythology intertwined in
his work.*

opens possibilities for a gradual transformation of all souls, rendering the awful holocaust possibly unnecessary. Last battles might actually be for the souls of human institutions, battles in which goodness must win—and was indeed, some evangelicals were thinking as early as the 1750s, already winning, as witnessed by the Awakening itself and the inter-colonial spiritual unification it fostered.

At the end of history, these preachers believed, life on earth would go on, perfected as the Kingdom of Heaven. Accidental distinctions among persons—rich and poor, creditor and debtor, and (in the eyes of some evangelicals) master and slave—would fall away. The thought that such a transformation was on the verge of actually taking place, and taking place on the North American continent, connected powerfully in the 1770s with the new idea of American independence and contributed enormous emotional intensity—routinely ignored today in both popular and academic history—to working people's hopes for the Revolution. The Declaration of Independence, often viewed today as a product of high Enlightenment philosophy, seemed to many at the time to predict a redeemed society.

But by the 1780s, already disappointed by immediate outcomes of the Revolution, some radicals, especially those across the Appalachians, were combining their ideas about popular finance and access to political and economic power with a vision of exclusively western redemption, with secession from the decadent seaboard cities of the new United States. For them—and for Alexander Hamilton—the last battle would come with the Whiskey Rebellion.

The forgotten great American of the Whiskey Rebellion is Herman Husband, whose tale is one that today's self-described spiritual progressives may find at once inspiring and cautionary. By the time of the Whiskey Rebellion, Husband was in his seventies, a veteran evangelical and radical. His life had spanned almost the entire eighteenth century. His long, strange trip was forcing him toward stark conclusions.

In the fall of 1794, when he was arrested by federal troops at his lonely farmhouse in the mountains near the village of Bedford, Pennsylvania, Husband was barefoot, disheveled, a frontier prophet. Albert Gallatin, the western Pennsylvanian republican who later became Jefferson's Treasury Secretary, called Husband "the Pennsylvania madman," and it would not have been obvious to many that Husband had been born into slave-owning privilege in the Chesapeake gentry and had made a fortune as a businessman and land speculator. Always spiritually restless, as a teenager he was swept up in the Great Awakening, rejecting the institution of slavery and bolting from his parents' genteel Episcopalianism, adopting first "new side" Calvinism and then becoming a Quaker. In middle age, thrown out of the Quaker meeting for challenging what he saw as revelation-killing discipline, he became a leader of the 1760's "regulation" movement in the backwoods of western North Carolina, where he was living. Regulators, like whiskey rebels after them, used riots and other crowd actions to obstruct the corruption and cronyism not of British rule but of the financiers and politicians of the American tidewater (i.e. the wealthy coastal plains, distinct from the poorer hill country) whose policies were keeping rural settlers economically paralyzed. Regulators soon marched against the governor's troops and were trounced.

But Husband was a pacifist. After trying to restrain regulator violence, he fled North Carolina a wanted fugitive. Under the alias Tuscape Death, he came into the mountainous Pennsylvania wilds, a middle-aged radical with a strong need to start over.

Husband's neighbors in remote western Pennsylvania saw him not as a madman but as their best advocate. He was a self-taught expert in finance, history, philosophy, politics, and the Bible. In rural radicalism's most hopeful year, 1776, Husband's hard-bitten constituents elected him to the Pennsylvania Assembly, where he helped pass anti-monopoly laws and break up cartels.

Husband didn't merely envision a populist future for America. He saw actual visions. In the 1770s, he had an overwhelming experience. The Allegheny Mountains were revealed to him as the eastern wall of the New Jerusalem of Biblical prophecy—literally. He saw the American West as the promised Holy City, eastern finance interests as infidels, and the Biblical prophets as both predicting the founding of the United States and offering a detailed primer for governing the nation for the benefit of all.

Now Husband's sermons began prophesying such things as social security, progressive taxation, the abolition of slavery, profit sharing for workers, welfare, legal birth control, and an end to

the gold standard. Far from espousing anti-federalism, like some other radicals, Husband imagined a federal system based on the visions of Daniel, designed to check the power of corruption in states and locales. Federal authority, which would render what he called good government—with the most privileged taking up, by law, a portion of responsibility for the good of all—was for Husband an image of the restored temple of Jerusalem.

The actual U.S. Constitution, published in 1787, crushed him. He read the document as re-empowering forces of the Antichrist: eastern corruption and high finance. It removed all hope for the western smallholders in whom Husband had invested the redeemed Kingdom. As eastern speculators and industrialists and their local political cronies began sewing up business in the west, reducing farmers to debt peonage and engrossing land, Husband's preaching changed.

He abandoned pacifism. When Hamilton's whiskey tax was passed, hamstringing western settlers as never before, Husband saw the Beast resurgent and invading. The last battle for the holy work of the Revolution, Husband now believed, was truly at hand. He urged his constituents to wage it, turning their local militias against the government.

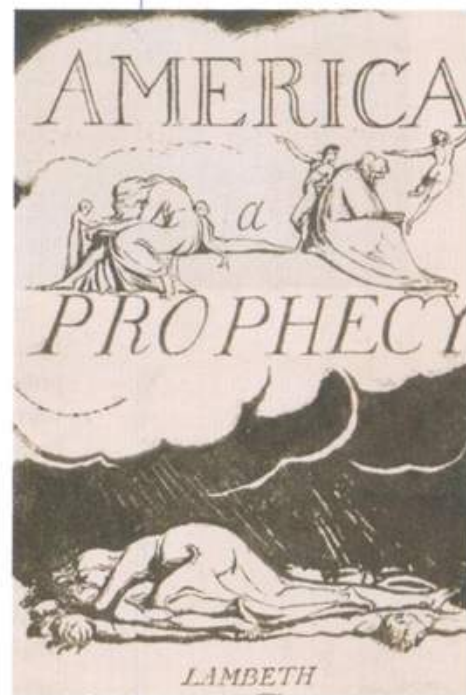
In the end, the old man saw George Washington, once his hero, now a horn of the Beast, riding down on the western country at the head of thousands of dragoons. The troops kicked doors, rousted families from beds, tortured detainees, and held hundreds of people on no charge and no evidence. As he awaited arrest in his farmhouse, Husband's long career of evangelical agitation for social justice neared a troubled end. After a long, embattled career, desperately seeking resolution of the most painful kinds of spiritual and political tensions, Herman Husband committed himself, in the Whiskey Rebellion, to the resolution offered by violence.

Given Husband's equating Christian evangelicalism and American nationhood with socialist policies, it's not surprising that the spiritual impulses involved in our founding tend to embarrass not only the Religious Right, but also, and perhaps in some ways more significantly, the secular Left. Historians who insist that the populist class consciousness of eighteenth-century laborers and artisans was central to American independence are often also those whose Marxist leanings prompt them to associate social equality with atheistic or agnostic rationalism—certainly not with millennial dreams, with fervor for salvation through Christ crucified! Herman Husband's vision of a United States with social welfare services, regulation of business, and progressive taxation was inspired by the illiberal phenomenon of revelation. Those seeking (and finding!) precedents for Left ideas in our founding history may need to wrestle with complications to the progressive story represented by Herman Husband and the Whiskey Rebels.

For in some ways those complications are not unfamiliar at all. The American left has so often come to grief over its fatal attraction to explosive, millennial transformation. In the idealism of young American Communists of the 1930s—many of whom managed to support the Hitler-Stalin pact and deny Soviet gulag and mass murder—and of young New-Leftists of the late 1960s—some of whom contrived to undermine victories of the civil-rights and anti-war movements with theatrical displays of Maoist-influenced violence—we can hear ambiguous resonances of the Great Awakening, of Herman Husband's thwarted dreams for the perfect redemption of the entire world, of an end to history sparked by the blazing transfiguration of America.

The Whiskey Rebels' violence was futile, of course. After his arrest, Husband was marched across the Appalachians in cold weather and thrown in jail for the winter in Philadelphia. He died of pneumonia. His gravesite is unknown. Today's spiritual progressives, at times perhaps feeling as marginalized and frustrated as Husband did, are unlikely to start rallying crowds to rise up in arms. Yet, the journey toward the Whiskey Rebellion of that forgotten, founding American, whose social radicalism was also a spiritual one, may offer today's Religious Left a tale at once inspiring and cautionary. ■

William Hogeland is the author of The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty (Scribner). He is working on a new book about the founding period.



America a Prophecy, by William Blake. William Hogeland has often referred to Herman Husband as "an American frontier Blake."

Carbon: Tax Not Cap-and-Trade

by Dan Rosenblum & Charles Komanoff

A MAY HEADLINE IN THE *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* SAYS IT ALL: "The First Refugees of Global Warming: Bangladesh Watches in Horror as Much of the Nation Gives Way to Sea." Each day's news brings more reminders of the harms that global warming is already causing to people, communities, and nature throughout the world. From Hurricane Katrina and the inundation of island nations to heat waves in Europe and drought in Australia, climate change is wreaking horrific damage.

It's going to get worse, perhaps much worse, before it gets better. According to James Hansen, head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies www.giss.nasa.gov and the preeminent scientist warning the world about global warming, the Earth has already warmed one degree Fahrenheit over the past thirty years. Another degree is in the pipeline because of gases that are already in the atmosphere, and still another degree is in store because of carbon dioxide emissions that will spew for decades from our growing energy infrastructure of fossil fuel-powered electricity generating plants—largely coal-fired—along with refineries processing petroleum and natural gas to fuel our cars and trucks, planes and homes, factories and shopping malls.

We can't take carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases out of the atmosphere, except to a limited extent by leaving forests intact and planting new ones, so some, and perhaps considerable, climate change is inevitable. Melting glaciers and disappearing arctic ice are visible manifestations of what we can expect, but the likely consequences to humans, particularly the poorest people in the poorest countries, are even more horrendous. As Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu noted recently, "Rain or drought, the result is the same: more hunger and misery for millions of people living on the margins of global society." Flooding of low-lying areas, increasingly volatile storms, desertification, spreading famine, disease, and of course, war, as human misery proliferates and intensifies, are the seemingly inevitable consequences of global warming due to humankind's excessive use of fossil fuels.

Tikkun Olam—can we "repair the world?" Is it already too late? The bad news is that Earth's atmosphere has already been burdened with so much carbon dioxide—the principal heat-trapping gas that stays aloft, intact, for roughly a century—that temperatures will continue to rise for some time even if we dramatically reduce our use of carbon fuels. Americans bear major responsibility. On average we use as much energy in a day as people in the rest of the world use in a five or six-day workweek. The good news (yes, there is good news) is that we can limit the damage by taking concerted action to reduce the burning of fossil fuels and the resulting

carbon dioxide emissions. But we must start immediately.

What is needed are two parallel, mutually supporting transformations: first, we need an energy supply-side shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy such as wind, solar, and biofuels. Second, we need a demand-side shift to far lower levels of energy use accomplished by making our homes, businesses, cars, appliances, manufacturing processes, and our very desires less energy-intensive and more energy-efficient.

Some steps to save energy are simple. Riding a bike to work, to school or the store avoids the carbon dioxide emissions from driving and is good for your physical and mental health besides. It adds up—eliminate twenty miles of driving a week and the associated gallon or so of gas, and you've cut twenty pounds of CO₂ from your climate diet; that's half-a-ton per year. Exchange half-a-dozen traditional, energy-hogging incandescent light bulbs for compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) that provide equivalent light with two-thirds less energy, and you've cut out another half-ton. Want another easy step? How about using the sun to dry your clothes? With a clothesline and a sunny day you can dispense with running your gas or electric dryer.

Taking these kinds of steps will save large amounts of energy. But they're not enough—not by a long shot. Unfortunately, too many people ignore the threat and the consequences of global climate change. Furthermore, individual actions, even summed millions of times, only go so far. The choices available to most individuals are too limited, and the psychological and cultural obstacles to embracing energy efficiency in a consumption-based society are, for most of us, too daunting.

We Americans need to reduce emissions by at least 80 percent from 2000 levels to have a shot at holding the further temperature rise to 2 degrees Fahrenheit—the amount that many climatologists view as the threshold beyond which the “monsters behind the door”—the runaway feedback loops such as the release of vast quantities of warming gases now frozen in Siberian permafrost—may be unloosed. To get those types of reductions in emissions and avert the gravest consequences of unchecked climate change will require fundamental changes in how we use energy. A central step in this transformation is to change the economic incentives that shape energy use.

The key to moving our use of energy away from carbon is to put a price on carbon emissions. Why? Because only by making all of us, businesses and individuals alike, pay for the cost



Suggesting a tax on anything may seem crazy, but this proposal would *not* increase taxes. It would be a revenue-neutral tax-shift.

of our pollution can we motivate a radically different set of economic decisions that, collectively, determine how much and what kind of energy we use and how much carbon this usage will emit.

Together, the two of us have spent six decades working to reform U.S. energy policy, but the onrushing climate crisis motivated us to sharpen our focus and to found the Carbon Tax Center earlier this year. CTC's mission is to advocate for and advance adoption of carbon taxes that will send accurate and powerful price signals into every corner of the economy and every aspect of life. This, in turn, will accelerate the transformation from a high-carbon fossil fuels-based energy system to a low-carbon society based on energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable fuels.

The principle of "internalizing" pollution-damage costs into the prices of goods and services is obvious to professional economists, familiar to most policy-makers, and understandable to citizens—and not just on the Left or Right. On the "Supporters" page of CTC's Web site (www.carbontax.org) you'll see that support for carbon taxes spans a broad spectrum, from conservative economists to *The Nation* magazine. Nevertheless, the forces arrayed against carbon taxes are many—not just fuel corporations with a massive stake in keeping the United States addicted to fossil fuels, but our own deep-seated assumptions, including faith, that we can pull through with a mix of native ingenuity and advanced technology.

We would love to agree, but our long experience advocating for energy efficiency and renewables convinces us that higher fuel prices are also essential. For example, as much as we support stronger energy-efficiency standards for automobiles, kitchen appliances, and the like, we must be candid that standards alone won't be enough. Standard-setting takes a long time, and standards alone tend to be static whereas energy use is ever-evolving. Carbon taxes working in tandem with efficiency standards will achieve far more than standards by themselves, by encouraging builders, manufacturers and product designers to pro-actively maximize energy efficiency while giving consumers ongoing incentives to make cost-effective choices valuing efficiency in purchasing, traveling, and daily behavior.

Nor will it be sufficient to subsidize renewable energy. Federal incentives that pay wind and solar generators for each kWh produced, and state "Renewable Portfolio Standards" that mandate increased use of renewable power, have been and will be instrumental in jump-starting these essential sectors. Ditto for biofuels such as automotive fuels made efficiently from cellulosic ethanol. Still, the hurdles for renewables remain high. Taxing petroleum, natural gas and, above all, carbon-laden coal according to their damage to climate will provide a more level playing field and help renewables grow rapidly from their 1-2 percent niche to a majority share of U.S. energy.

Suggesting a tax on anything may seem crazy, given the anti-tax ideology that has colored U.S. politics for over a generation; this is particularly true for fuels, given Americans' sense of entitlement to cheap energy. Yet public alarm over the climate crisis is growing rapidly, powered in part by Al Gore's extraordinary documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*, and more recently by the fifty-state "Step It Up" mobilizations spearheaded by author Bill McKibben. Polls now suggest that Americans are willing to pay more for energy to combat global warming and reduce dependence on foreign oil, particularly from the Middle East.

In fact, for reasons of both equity and politics, the carbon tax CTC is urging would not increase the overall tax burden. Rather, it would be a *revenue-neutral* tax-shift. This point is key. While it is tempting to use carbon tax revenues to accomplish any number of worthy societal goals, including subsidizing energy efficiency and renewables, a revenue-neutral carbon tax is the best way, perhaps the only way, to protect the less affluent from the economic burden of a carbon tax. In CTC's view, carbon tax proceeds should be returned to Americans, either through an equal, pro rata rebate or by reducing regressive taxes such as the federal payroll tax or state sales taxes (depending upon whether the tax is imposed at the federal or state level).

We should note that some large corporations and several environmental groups are proposing a cap-and-trade system as an alternative means of putting a price on carbon. A carbon

cap-and-trade would impose a cap on all carbon emissions from one or more industry sectors, allocate or auction off emission "allowances" up to the cap and require each market participant to have an allowance for each ton of carbon emitted. Market participants would buy and sell allowances with those who can reduce emissions the cheapest selling their allowances to those who would have to spend more to reduce their own emissions. We compare a carbon tax to a cap-and-trade system in an issue paper on our Web site and provide a brief summary here of the six fundamental reasons why carbon taxes are superior:

- Carbon taxes will lend predictability to energy prices, whereas cap-and-trade systems will aggravate the price volatility that historically has discouraged investments in less carbon-intensive electricity generation, carbon-reducing energy efficiency and carbon-replacing renewable energy.
- Carbon taxes can be implemented much sooner than complex cap-and-trade systems. Because of the urgency of the climate crisis, we do not have the luxury of waiting while the myriad details of a cap-and-trade system are resolved through lengthy negotiations. Carbon taxes are transparent and easily understandable, making them more likely to elicit the necessary public support than an opaque and difficult to understand cap-and-trade system.
- Carbon taxes offer far less opportunity for manipulation by special interests, while a cap-and-trade system's complexity opens it to exploitation by special interests and perverse incentives that can undermine public confidence and undercut its effectiveness.
- Carbon taxes address emissions of carbon from every sector, whereas cap-and-trade systems discussed to date have only targeted the electricity industry, which accounts for less than 40 percent of emissions.
- Carbon tax revenues can be returned to the public through progressive tax-shifting, while the costs of cap-and-trade systems are likely to become a hidden tax as dollars flow to market participants, lawyers and consultants.

Cap-and-trade proponents have provided a real service in educating Congress and the country that putting a price on carbon is essential. We are convinced that after thorough examination, the inherent flaws in the cap-and-trade approach will become apparent and our elected representatives in Congress will recognize that the most equitable and effective way to put a price on carbon is through a carbon tax. This shift in the tax burden away from work or income and onto pollution and pollution-generating activities will create powerful incentives to use less energy and emit less CO₂ into the atmosphere while simultaneously promoting tax equity and minimizing impacts on those with lower incomes.

For far too many years we've treated the atmosphere as a free waste dump and ignored the costs of carbon pollution to society. We're now learning, belatedly, but perhaps just in time, that the climate costs can't be ignored any longer. We cannot bow to the inevitability of climate change and its devastating consequences. We all share a moral obligation to people around the world and the generations to come to do as much as we can to reduce our destructive energy use.

Taking responsibility for our own energy use decisions is essential. But it's equally vital that we not pretend that personal actions alone will suffice. Collective action at the level of national policy is imperative if we are to have any hope of repairing our world. The place to start is with a carbon tax. ■

The authors are co-directors of the Carbon Tax Center. They invite you to view their Web site (www.carbontax.org) and contribute your ideas, energy and money to build nationwide support for a tax on carbon emissions.

Virginia Tech

Education and a Culture of Death

by Svi Shapiro



Students gather in front of the War Memorial to mourn their fellow students, Monday, April 16, 2007, in Blacksburg, Va.

EIGHT YEARS AGO I WROTE ABOUT THE TRAGEDY AT Columbine High School. My central concern then was to try to get beyond the way the media was representing the awful events as something that could only be understood in psychological terms—the mad rampage of sociopaths. Such an approach led to legions of experts who spoke to how we must be on the alert for individuals showing signs of anti-social behavior, dissociative affect, depressed or suicidal tendencies, and so on. Again we have witnessed, after the killing spree at Virginia Tech, the same tendency to bring on the psychological experts who can alert us to the “warning signs” of dangerous behavior. And, as at Columbine, there is a similar discussion about whether we have the right systems in place to identify and counsel psychologically troubled individuals, as well as the most effective means of policing and responding to sociopathic behavior.

Have no doubt. In no way do I deny the importance and necessity of such talk. Who can deny that this tragedy might have been prevented through early identification of a deeply troubled mind and adequate capability to counsel such an individual? We must ensure provision of secure and safe environments for students in schools or colleges.

Yet all of this discussion may once again enable us to avoid the deeper cultural implications of such murderous rampages. We must try to avoid the danger of what Russell Jacoby once referred to as “social amnesia”—the tendency, so pronounced in the United States, to see and understand events as isolated disturbances that are disconnected from our shared lives and are random or meaningless in that they tell us little beyond the horror of the event itself. We cannot forget that Virginia Tech is only one (though now the most lethal) in a harrowing line of massacres at schools that includes Columbine, Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Springfield, Oregon; Lake Worth, Florida; Red Lake, Minnesota; Platte Canyon, Colorado; Cazenovia, Wisconsin; and most recently, the killings at an Amish school in Pennsylvania. And, sadly, we must expect more.

Guns

TO HEAD OFF ANY KIND OF SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN PUBLIC POLICY, THE GOVERNOR of Virginia immediately disparaged those who might want to find in the Virginia Tech killings some implications about the easy availability of guns. As Bob Herbert pointed out in a column that appeared in the *New York Times* soon after the tragedy, there are nearly 200 million firearms in private hands in the United States and more than 30,000 people are killed by guns each year. Wherever else the motivation lies, he notes, “the way is made easier by the fact that guns of all sorts are readily available to Americans of all shades of morality and mentality.” In his movie *Bowling for Columbine*, Michael Moore looks at the vibrant gun culture among Canadians. While Canada has had its own tragedies around guns, they occur at nothing like the rate they do in this country. Moore’s point is that easy availability *when joined to a troubled culture like*

our own becomes a dangerous concoction. Perhaps, as Gwynne Dyer has suggested, this could be best summed up as "Guns don't kill Americans; Americans kill Americans."

Toxic Notions of Masculinity

AS WE REFLECT ON THE HISTORY OF MURDEROUS BEHAVIOR SINCE COLUMBINE, it is all too easy to forget that we are always talking about the behavior of young men. Gun violence is inseparable from the toxic psychology of masculinity. In its extreme manifestation such a psychology is rooted in the will to power or dominance; it regards vulnerability as evidence of weakness and defines strength as self-sufficiency and independence from the care of others. Real men are in charge, can impose themselves on the world, are free from emotional dependence on others, and possess the cool personalities that are without fear or insecurity.

Of course, societal changes in recent decades have subjected this version of masculinity to deep criticism. In droves women have rejected the silent, emotionally restrained, dominant behavior of men as inadequate to satisfying intimate relations. And indeed such challenges have opened the door to a far more expansive male way of being—one that is expressive, emotionally nurturing, and that relishes reciprocal intimate connections.

Despite these changes, the ideal of hyper-masculinity lives on and is celebrated in a thousand ways throughout the culture: in the continued proliferation of movies that extol tough-guy violence and male heroes impervious to fear and vulnerability; in rap culture with its raucous expression of male posturing and misogynistic and aggressive attitudes, in the cool pose of a Don Imus with underlying arrogance and contained unflappability. And how can we forget the swaggering, macho image of a president descending from a military aircraft to claim victory against an evil enemy?

Violence as United States Policy

ON THE VERY DAY THAT THIRTY-TWO PEOPLE DIED AT VIRGINIA TECH, 183 died in Baghdad—the continuing deadly legacy of our misguided adventure in imposing change on another country. It is a legacy in which tens of thousands have died and uncounted numbers more have suffered injury as a result of our leaders' arrogant will to power.

While one individual's resort to violence is seen as random and deranged behavior, the government's is viewed as rational policy. As a model of behavior, however, each resembles the other in the way we seek to get people to listen to or "respect" us. "Attend to me or I'll blow you to bits," says each of the protagonists.

Of course, there is a deep paradox at work in all of this. The resort to violence is often, in the end, more a reflection of weakness than strength. For Dylan Klebold at Columbine, or Cho Seung-Hui at Virginia Tech, and for the many others who picked up guns to assert their power, the perpetration of violence was evidence of the isolation and marginality of individuals who found it impossible to gain recognition in less threatening ways. Violence becomes the expression of an ultimate inability to control events or people in any other way, a final statement of one's sense that "I am in a world that treats me as if I am invisible and that my presence counts for nothing." While the invasion of Iraq may have motives connected to unlimited oil reserves, it is also probable that in the aftermath of the humiliation of 9/11, "asses needed to be kicked." There was a deep psychological need to reassert our dominance over others, to show who the boss really is.

So much of the threatening and imperious behavior demonstrated toward others by the Bush administration over the last six years surely has something to do with a deep fear that we may actually be losing control over events. As with all dominating behavior, it produces not respect and admiration for the perpetrators but contempt, fear, and derision.

In such a society compromise, mediation, and dialogue are seen as modalities of the weak. The feminine, with its implications of vulnerability, humility, and shared communication, becomes the embodiment of all that is held in disgust—the wimp, the pussy, and the cry baby. It is easy to see how homophobia enters into this scenario of self-loathing for anyone who hasn't suppressed every aspect of the feminine in who they are. Cho's mailed video recording revealed

While one individual's resort to violence is seen as random and deranged behavior, the government's systematic violence is viewed as rational policy

more than the ravings of a deranged killer; here was the culture's own vicious underside in its demeaning of women and homosexuality—none of it too far from the ugly sexual perversity of the Abu Ghraib jailers or the typical baiting of Marines in training as to their manhood.

It is both sad and frightening to know that our society will pay dearly for this denial of authentic humanity as our soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan must come to terms with broken bodies and tortured minds. The myth of male invulnerability and ultimate control must reconcile with the actual reality of human fear, pain, and weakness. The refusal or inability to come to terms with such vulnerability will produce, in too many instances, behavior that seeks to compensate for or deny this weakness—brutality towards wives and family members or more public displays of aggression.

How Schools Invalidate People

THE ANGER DEMONSTRATED BY CHO, LIKE SO MANY OTHER INSTANCES OF SCHOOL violence, is linked to the deep sense of invalidation felt by perpetrators. Years ago, when I wrote about Columbine, I talked about the way schools in our society represent an arena in which there is a constant struggle for recognition and validation of students' worth. It is hardly a surprise that Cho's experience in school evidenced belittlement and marginalization because of some kind of abnormality (a speech defect, it is believed).

High schools in particular can be brutal experiences for students who are marked as misfits or failures in the culture of the school. The exclusion, ostracism, or belittling takes a serious toll on the emotional life of young people at this extraordinarily vulnerable life stage. And it can be no surprise that such treatment is the catalyst for angry response. The "trench coat mafia" at Columbine represented one such way to construct a "counter life" that validated and affirmed students who felt themselves belittled by the school culture.

As I and others have frequently noted, this is but the extreme manifestation of what is, in fact, a characteristic dimension of schooling in America. If anything, schools today are "sorting machines" that set in motion a continual process of social selection and hierarchical ordering among young people. They are places that are dedicated to the continual creation and recreation of structures of inequality. These hierarchies, it must be understood, do not simply reflect the unequal recognition of ability or talent among students, but, much more profoundly and consequentially, represent the ranking of individuals on a scale of human worth and value. Indeed, from kindergarten on, educational institutions claim to assess and award the deepest of human attributes—our dignity and inherent worth.

We learn from our first days in the school environment that some will be rewarded, recognized, and lauded for who they are; others will feel the sting of low standing and, in some cases, sheer invisibility. Since school is ostensibly about academic learning and the mastery of skills, it is easy to miss the so much more profound and lasting consequences of schools on our psyches. While the former is often quickly forgotten by the end of the course, the latter influence stays with us for much of our lives.

In a commentary on the Virginia Tech killings, James Alan Fox, a professor of criminal justice, notes that the United States has become an increasingly competitive, dog-eat-dog society. Our society has become a place, he says, that admires those who achieve at any cost, and has less compassion for those who fail. The popularity of reality shows that demonstrate a cut-throat approach to human relations, such as *The Apprentice*, *American Idol*, or *Survivor*, seem to reflect this increasingly shark-like national ambience. The increasing emphasis on testing in our schools both reflects and contributes to this phenomenon. An extraordinary and mounting income inequality characterizes this country. For more and more young people, access to college, and then the struggle to avoid debilitating loan obligations, awaken them fiercely to the social and material disparities that shape lives in this society.

None of this is meant to excuse the horrifying violence in our schools. Nothing can begin to justify such things. But we must allow ourselves to recognize that these incidents do have some



connection to the larger culture in which all of us live our lives. They are not just the manifestations of crazy and violent loners. They tell us something, not just about who these individuals are, but about who we are as a society. Of course, it would be easier to ignore or deny the latter.

An Increasingly Cutthroat Society

IN A POWERFUL BOOK, *LIFE AGAINST DEATH*, WRITTEN DURING THE ERA OF the Vietnam War, Norman O. Brown talked about the competing psychosocial currents that run through both us and our culture: the contrary impulses towards death and towards to life. It is a theme that others, like Jay Lifton, have returned to in their efforts to understand this society. It seems hard to deny the presence of a powerful destructive impulse in American life. We are a society that puts an inordinate emphasis on the capacity to destroy others in the way we define safety or security. (Our military budget today is larger than the total of the military budget of all other nations combined.) We are alone among democratic nations in our practice of state executions (and in the face of the fact that they do not deter the incidence of murder). Video technology, with its proliferation of murderous and violence-themed games, surely contributes to an increasing desensitization towards human suffering. While we cannot hold Hollywood entirely responsible for the violence within our culture, we cannot assume its representations of bloody mayhem and its increasingly graphic depiction of torture and death have no influence.

At the level of everyday life there is the more pervasive way in which we dehumanize or objectify the lives of others. We may consider how workers who have given their best energies to a company are so easily shunted aside for cheaper employees elsewhere in the world, or how employees are cheated of their retirement savings as corporations declare bankruptcy and restructure their financial obligations. We may look at the continuing and pervasive degradation and objectification of women made into the images that are used to sell just about everything. We may recognize how we so readily employ migrant workers to take care of those things that are too onerous or poorly paid for home workers, and then callously demonize them and their children for "invading" this society. And the list goes on.

For so many of us, the "religion" of a heartless and morally unrestrained capitalism shapes our lives. It is not difficult to see just how much this has coarsened and hardened the way we deal with one another. The resulting brutality takes many forms. Sometimes, as we have seen recently, it is horrifyingly and vividly lethal, and sometimes the brutality is a slower and less visible erosion of the bonds of human care and responsibility that affect untold numbers of citizens.

In the immediate term we need to find more effective ways to respond to the dangerous rage of those who evidence mental disturbance (no small thing as budgets are continually cut for mental health services and the waiting lists for counseling grow longer and longer). And we must continue to press for serious control and monitoring of gun ownership, as well as demanding a total ban on the availability of automatic weapons. But, in the long term, what is demanded is something much deeper and more far reaching.

We will need a revolution in our spiritual worldview—one that speaks to the quality of our society and the nature of our human relationships. Such a transformation would mean the challenge of moving our society, and indeed our world, towards seeing the incalculable value of all human life (for some expressed in the notion of being made "in the image of God"). This means nothing less than seeking to embed all human lives in the context of a loving community in which no one feels marginalized, is treated as expendable, degraded or dehumanized, or subject to the scorn or humiliation of an indifferent or callous world. Only then can we finally begin to imagine an end to the rage which seeks to so brutally destroy the lives of others. ■



A participant holds up a sign reading "Stop the Madness" during a memorial service in Littleton, Colo., Sunday, April 25, 1999 for the victims of the shooting rampage at Columbine High School.

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Psychologists Aiding and Abetting Torture

by Deborah Kory

In August, the American Psychological Association (APA) will hold its annual convention in San Francisco. Notably absent from the program: the application of psychology to current world events. War, terror, genocide. "Our War on Terror that has led to the Deaths of Hundreds of Thousands of People"—how about that for a plenary session? Of course there are divisions inside the APA organizing against the Bush Administration's policies and trying to have an impact on public discourse about the war in Iraq, but they are marginalized and fighting an uphill battle in a professional organization whose adherence to the status quo allows it continued legitimacy and access to power.

MANY PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE THEIR OWN MECHANISMS OF DENIAL and self-delusion about their role in society. "We're not political," they'll tell you, "we are just doing what we can in our way to make things better, one person at a time, one research project at a time." Most have no understanding of the collective impact of their profession and no sense that they have any obligation as psychologists to social responsibility. Wars, global poverty, ecological destruction? "That is not in our professional domain," they argue, "though as individual citizens we might get involved in these issues." As a *profession*, psychologists refuse to ask what the psychological foundations are for the global insanity that manifests in violence, wars, and indifference to the fate of others—and what, as professionals, our obligation is to address and seek strategies to heal the pain that leads the human race in self-destructive directions. Of course, the majority of psychologists are compassionate, moral people who worry about these issues—but they believe they must do so as individuals outside the framework of their profession rather than as part of a profession that makes these issues central.

The American Psychological Association is not just another professional association so caught up in the excitement of its own advancements in research that it has become disconnected from our current social reality. Some of its respected members have been *actively* aiding and abetting torture at illegal detention sites set up by the Bush Administration, and the leadership of the APA has *actively* blocked attempts by its members to ban any and all engagement with interrogation proceedings at sites like Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and the secret detention centers set up through the Administration's policy of "extraordinary rendition" (i.e., outsourcing torture to countries that have no laws against it).

In his book *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Alfred McCoy documents the CIA's decades-long exploitation of psychological research for the purpose of developing effective methods of psychological torture, which, it was hoped, would render detainees incapable of withholding information. This knowledge was also used to inform elements of the U.S. Military's SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape) program, which trains service members and civilians in the art of surviving captivity. The SERE program's chief psychologist, Col. Morgan Banks (who later served on the APA's PENS Ethics Task Force), was involved in training BSCT (or "Biscuit") teams in Guantanamo and served at the Bagram detention center in Afghanistan. According to Human Rights First, the interrogation that led to the death of Iraqi Major General Abed Hamed Mowhoush involved the use of techniques learned in the SERE training program. Internal FBI memos and press reports have pointed to SERE training as the basis for some of the harshest techniques authorized for use on detainees by the Pentagon in 2002 and 2003.

Psychologists strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care to do no harm. In their professional actions, psychologists seek to safeguard the welfare and rights of those with whom they interact professionally and other affected persons.

—Principle A, Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, 2002

Law and Disorder

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND THE APA'S ROLE IN TORTURE PROCEEDINGS without taking a look at the truly complex legal environment that the Bush Administration has wrought upon Americans and "enemy combatants" alike since waging the War on Terror. The competing ethical codes, changing laws, challenges to the Supreme Court, and Congressional rubber-stamping have made it exceedingly difficult to know what is legal, particularly for psychologists working in the military.

Nearly every country in the world (including the United States) has ratified the Geneva Conventions, and in 1996 the U.S. Congress took the extra step of strengthening the sovereignty of the Geneva Conventions with the passage of the War Crimes Act. The Act, which passed with unanimous consent, criminalized breaches of the Geneva Conventions and authorized the U.S. to prosecute war criminals—including members of the American military. Both the Department of Defense and the military supported the bill because the Geneva Conventions have long been held as the most explicit and far-reaching protection of prisoners of war.

For over 100 years, the Geneva Conventions have provided a very clear moral compass for countries during wartime. Early in the War on Terror it was found that the Bush Administration was violating the Conventions' dictates and would therefore be subject to criminal prosecution. The Administration's response was to "reinterpret" the Geneva Conventions in a way that no country has ever done before: they claimed that since their detainees did not represent a nation or an army, the Geneva Conventions simply did not apply to them.

After much national and international uproar at these blatant violations of human rights, the Supreme Court finally ruled five to three in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (June 2006) that the federal government did not have the right to set up special military commissions in Guantanamo Bay, that detainees *were* subject to the Geneva Conventions, and that the Bush Administration was in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (the military's own code of ethics prohibits cruel and inhumane treatment of prisoners in interrogations). The ruling implied that the Bush Administration would have to try detainees held as part of the War on Terror either by court martial or by civilian federal court. And though it wasn't explicitly stated in the ruling, the Supreme Court's judgment opened up members of the Administration to prosecution for war crimes.

Instead of complying with the Supreme Court's ruling, the Bush Administration pressured members of the House Committee on Armed Services to draft a bill that virtually reversed the Supreme Court's rulings by allowing for ongoing secret military commissions and provided a number of provisions for allowing detainees to remain indefinitely imprisoned without habeas corpus and the basic human rights guaranteed under the Geneva Conventions. The bill later became known as the Military Commissions Act (MCA). It was passed with a majority in both Houses. As a *New York Times* editorial stated, the MCA "give[s] Mr. Bush the power to jail pretty much anyone he wants for as long as he wants without charging them, to unilaterally reinterpret the Geneva Conventions, to authorize what normal people consider torture, and to deny justice to hundreds of men captured in error."

The APA: Not Taking a Stand for Justice

NOW THE QUESTION FOR THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION IS THIS: if psychologists are members of the APA and yet are also Military Intelligence officers, where are they to turn for legal and ethical guidance? Prior to the War on Terror, psychologists were more or less able to lean on their own Code of Ethics as well as the military's own Code of Justice, since both prohibit cruelty against prisoners as well as information gathered under coercion. With the Geneva Conventions as a basic framework, it wasn't necessary to "take a stand" on torture because it was universally condemned. In other words, psychologists were not likely to find themselves supporting coercive interrogations in secret and illegal detention centers. Nonetheless, both the APA's (Psychiatric and Psychological) issued a Joint Resolution Against Torture in 1985. No one could have imagined the current situation in which the Military Code of Justice, itself committed to the precepts of the Geneva Conventions,

"Torture Victim in a spider's web" is made by a Latin American artist who wants to remain anonymous. Made available by The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims.



would violate domestic law (as defined by the current Administration) and force those in the military to choose between obeying the President and obeying international law.

For psychologists serving in a military setting since the War on Terror began, the ethical boundaries are even more muddled. It is for this reason that the APA has been under fire for the last several years to adopt a decisive and ethical principle with regard to interrogations taking place at U.S. detention centers. The initial furor arose when both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association declared that any and all engagement with interrogation methods (including in an advisory role) was a transgression of policy and that those found to be serving in such a capacity would be punished. The absence of a similar injunction by the American Psychological Association drew fire and became even more problematic when the Pentagon announced it would simply replace psychiatrists with psychologists. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs William Winkewer, Jr. described how psychologists would assess "the character, personality, social interactions and other behavioral characteristics of detainees" and "coach and counsel the interrogator in a way that allows him or her to build a relationship with the detainee." It is important to remember here that one psychologist who performed such "coaching" was Col. Morgan Banks, mentioned earlier, who was one of the founders of the SERE program. Since methods from the SERE program have been widely used to torture detainees, it's not a great leap to imagine that some of this information was passed along by Col. Banks, who served in one capacity or another at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram.

In response to pressure from the public and members of the APA, former APA president Gerald Koocher handpicked a ten-member "Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security" (known as PENS) to write up "general guidelines" concerning whether or not the current Code of Ethics adequately addresses "the ethical dimensions of psychologists' involvement in national security-related activities." The Task Force report concluded that the current Ethics Code does indeed provide enough guidance and that "it is consistent with the APA Ethics Code for psychologists to serve in consultative roles to interrogation and information-gathering processes for national security-related purposes." He added that, "psychologists are in a unique position to assist in ensuring that these processes are safe and ethical for all participants."

Several elements of the PENS report drew criticism not only from the APA community, but from the psychiatric and medical communities as well. First and foremost was the make-up of the Task Force itself. Comprised of people handpicked by Koocher, no fewer than six of its nine members had close ties to the military. Four of the psychologists on the Task Force were involved with handling detainees at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, or Afghanistan—all places where serious cases of abuse have been documented. One of the Task Force Members was none other than Col. Morgan Banks, co-founder of SERE. Another was Capt. Bryce Lefever who was assigned to the Navy's SERE program in the early 1990s and was deployed to Afghanistan in 2002.

The Task Force's defense of the report can be better understood in the context of the larger moral framework in which they were operating. In response to a letter of complaint about the APA's stance on interrogation, Koocher stated: "[your] comments focus on an 'archetype of psychologists-as-healers,' failing to acknowledge that many psychologists perform legitimate work in law enforcement or national security unrelated to healing roles." He is referring here to behavioral scientists and "Biscuit teams," who apparently are not bound by the same ethical principles as psychologists. As long as the behavioral scientist does not act as "healer" he cannot be accused of playing a dual role, nor can he be charged with playing a therapeutic role with his "clients."

The Battle Continues

AT THE 2006 APA CONVENTION IN NEW ORLEANS, THE COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES adopted a "Resolution Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment," which reaffirms that "psychologists shall not knowingly engage in, tolerate, direct, support, advise, or offer training in torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment." Though the Resolution, co-sponsored by the APA's Division for Social Justice, made strides in further clarifying the untenable position

of the APA on torture, it fails as an ethical guidepost on many fronts. First, it makes no mention of the word "interrogation," or which methods are deemed unethical; rather it leaves it up to the psychologist to decipher what is "cruel and inhumane." Second, it contains a loophole that makes the whole resolution somewhat meaningless in the face of the Bush Administration's legal maneuvering. While prohibiting association with torture, it exempts "pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in, or incidental to lawful sanctions." Currently, domestic law—and specifically the definition of torture—is decided secretly by the President (with powers granted him by the Military Commissions Act) and is in direct contradiction to international law. By not specifying that international law supercedes domestic law, or that the Geneva Conventions are the ultimate authority on POW treatment, or what the exact chain of command is when psychologists find themselves in an "atrocious-making situation," the Resolution fails to resolve the problem of psychologists being involved in nebulous illegalities.

Conclusion

FORMER APA PRESIDENT PHILIP ZIMBARDO STATES THAT "when psychologists contribute in any way to interrogations in such settings, they violate and erode the most basic ethical standards that have guided our profession for generations." The APA needs to set a policy that unequivocally bars psychologists from playing any part in illegal interrogations and to specify that international law and the Geneva Conventions supercede domestic and military law. But that isn't enough. Without both the incentive of protection and reward for "doing what's right" and the disincentive of punishment for aiding in human rights crimes, there will be no change in policy. As Brigadier General Stephen Xenakis, M.D., states, "Standards without rules do nothing to stop abusive and illegal tactics ongoing as part of U.S. counterterrorism operations." ■

Deborah Kory is former managing editor of Tikkun and is currently a graduate student in Clinical Psychology at the Wright Institute.

A NEW BOTTOM LINE IN PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCHIATRY, AND SOCIAL WORK

A Talk and Discussion at the APA Convention in San Francisco, August 19, SF Marriot

11am-noon

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER, Ph.D. in Psychology, editor, *Tikkun Magazine*, Director of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, and author of many books, including *The Politics of Meaning*, *Healing Israel/Palestine*, and *The Left Hand of God: Healing America's Political and Spiritual Crisis*.

Peter Gabel, Ph.D. in Psychology, Professor of Law and former President, New College of California, Associate Editor, *Tikkun Magazine*, and author, *The Bank Teller and Other Essays on the Politics of Meaning*.

Debora Kory former managing editor of *Tikkun Magazine* and current doctoral student in clinical psychology at the Wright Institute.

All progressive psychologists attending the APA convention in San Francisco, as well as psychiatrists, MFCs, MFTs, and MSWs living in Northern California are invited to attend a meeting in which *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives will kick off our "New Bottom Line in Psychology" Task Force.

OUR NEW BOTTOM LINE: Help our profession find more effective ways to engage collectively in the healing and transformation of the world by promoting love and caring, kindness and generosity, and ethical and ecologically sensitive behavior. The struggle against torture is but one part of this larger vision.

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The Occupation: One Fable, Three Commentaries

by Roger S. Gottlieb



Reem al-Shaar collects her belongings from her house after an Israeli bulldozer destroyed it near the

Rafah border between Gaza and Egypt, southern Gaza Strip, Wednesday May 2, 2001.

Once upon a time there was a people who moved around a lot. They lived here, and then they lived there. They lived all over the place, because whenever they settled anywhere people would scream at them, "You're not like us, get lost!" and they would have to move.

Eventually the people got really tired of having to move and came to a beautiful land filled with peaceful people. There they grabbed up a lot of the land and made the peaceful people live in tents in the desert. Some of the people they let stay but they were cruel to them, and really nice to each other. And as time went on they took more and more of the land, because they were greedy.

The peaceful people never forgot the beautiful land, and fought to be let back in. And they fought harder and harder and harder, until finally the ones who'd stolen it had to let them back. And then they all shared the land and lived in peace.

Soon something wonderful happened. Everyone in the lands around this beautiful land started being kind and

good to each other. They shared all the money they had with poor people, and didn't try to hurt their neighbors or people who disagreed with them any more.

And so everyone lived happily ever after.

"What was *that*?" demanded Joel, looking up from the video game that he was playing on his laptop.

"It's a fable," said Sarah.

"It's stupid," said Joel, "it doesn't make sense. Why would the other people get kind just because the first one did?"

"I don't know," Sarah replied, "But isn't that what mom says will happen with the Israelis and the Arabs?"

"Quite right, Sarah," said their mother, Rebecca, efficiently scrolling through the "Electronic Intifadah" website, checking on the latest violent Israeli assaults in Gaza and the West Bank. "As we say, 'The road to Baghdad goes through Jerusalem.'"

"I don't get it," grumbled Joel. "Why don't people just go straight to Baghdad?"

"What it means," explained Rebecca patiently, "is that the troubles in this region will be solved only *after* Israel stops oppressing the Palestinians, and gets out of Gaza and the West

Bank, and gives them their freedom to live like other nations. My friends in the Palestine/Israel Working Group make it clear: the Occupation is the central factor blocking a just and lasting peace. Once it's ended everyone who wants peace and justice will work harder. And they'll get more support for their work because people will see something good can happen."

"So," said Joel, looking closely at the huge map of the world which covered one wall of the room, "if these people here," pointing at Nablus, "and here," Gaza City, "get better off, then people here and here," Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, "will be better off too?"

"Absolutely," said Rebecca.

"Why?"

"Oh this is just something you'll understand when you're older. Everybody who is not a Zionist imperialist knows that Israel is the focal point of the region's problems. Poverty, lack of development, oppressive dictatorship, religious fanaticism—all these would improve if Israel gave back the land."

"How much land?"

"All the land."

"All?"

"Well, all the land they took in 1967."

"So they get to keep some of the land? Will all these people," he pointed to Syria, Iran, Egypt, Hebron, "be happy with that?"

"Well...yes."

"And that's what they all say?"

"Well, no. Some do say that the Jewish state must be 'obliterated'—that means completely destroyed. And you see Joel, that's why it's *so* important for the Palestinians to get their freedom. Because what Israel is doing to them, with our government's help, is just so much worse than anything else going on there. That's the key. And if Israel doesn't get it right, it will destroy itself."

"So how bad is what Israel is doing, Mom?"

"It's like South Africa."

"That's awful," Sarah chimed in. "What about women? Do women have it a lot better in the countries around Israel?"

"Not exactly," murmured Rebecca, so low Sarah didn't hear her.

"But you and Ma would be okay there, right?"

"It's...uh.... complicated," Rebecca answered, imagining herself and her lesbian partner living openly in Cairo, Damascus or Teheran.

"And do these people get along with each other when Israel doesn't interfere?" asked Joel.

"Not all the time," Rebecca said vaguely, trying not to think of Syria in Lebanon, the latest deaths from Fatah's budding war with Hamas, or yesterday's bomb in an Iraqi marketplace.

"But all the other countries let people vote and have open newspapers and stuff, not like what Israel does to the Palestinians. At least that, right?"

"Not exactly. But if the Palestinians get their justice then the bad rulers of these other countries wouldn't be able to distract their own people by talking about the problems of the Palestinians."

"That sounds good," Sarah agreed. "And then they wouldn't have anything else to distract them with, right?"

Silence.

Joel persisted: "So if Israel gets defeated, or limited, or destroyed, all the other countries will do better? How will that work, actually?"

"Actually," said Faye, Rebecca's partner and the other mother in the home, as she entered the room, "we really don't know. The Occupation is awful, but so are a lot of other things in those countries: lack of freedom, terrible sexism, habitual violence, hoarded wealth, deep ethnic hatred. And anti-Semitism."

"There you go with that 'anti-Semitism' thing again," groaned Rebecca. "That's always used to stop us from criticizing Israel. The Palestinians just want their freedom."

**"It's...uh....
complicated,"
Rebecca answered,
imagining herself
and her lesbian
partner living openly
in Cairo, Damascus,
or Teheran.**

“Just what the world needs,” brooded Ahmed, “another clever justification of the Occupation.”

“The Palestinians,” hissed Faye, “elected a party whose covenant quotes from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and says Israel wants to rule the world. Does that mean anything to you?”

“Oh, they just say that,” Rebecca answered breezily. “They don’t really mean any of it. Once the Occupation ends all that propaganda will just stop.”

“Besides, you’re avoiding the real point,” she was almost shouting now, “Israel is racist, and colonialist! It takes all that support our government gives and uses it to control these poor people. They just won’t let the Palestinians live.”

“And,” Faye responded with deadly calm, “if the Palestinians get what they want, or at least what some of them want, what do you think will happen to Israel? If Israel goes back to the 1967 borders, the rulers of other countries won’t be able to ‘distract’ with the Occupation anymore, but what of Israel’s very existence—which Hezbollah and Hamas say they will never accept? You think the Islamic movements that won’t have non-Moslems controlling one inch of ‘Muslim land’ will be happy when Israel goes back to where it was in 1967?”

“Just sounds like a war to me,” said Joel. “Israel’s on top now. And later somebody else might be. War, war, and more war.” He folded an old United for Peace and Justice flyer into a paper airplane and sailed it across the room.

“But if peace is made somewhere, it helps other people to be peaceful. Right Mom?” asked Sarah.

“Maybe,” said Faye. “Maybe if there were real democracy in Iran, or peace and security and two states for Israelis and Palestinians, or if our government didn’t prop up dictatorships in the area to control the oil, or if religious leaders on both sides were truly religious instead of murderous, or if people really tried to understand each other’s pain. Maybe one good thing *would* lead to another. And maybe it wouldn’t. We can *hope* that a Palestinian state wouldn’t be a springboard for more war against Israel, but we can’t be *sure*.”

“When did you get so cynical?” demanded Rebecca. “Didn’t the whole civil rights movement start with a few sparks in Montgomery and Nashville? Didn’t feminism start with these tiny little groups of women in New York and Boston? We’ve seen it, over and over again—when the force for transformation rises up it can change the world!”

“True,” sighed Faye. “But it’s hard not to despair. I look at the uncontrolled violence of Fatah and Hamas, and the controlled brutal power of Israel. I see all these men with guns acting like, well, *men*! And on the other side the non-violent Arabs and peacenik Israelis and even groups of Palestinians and Israelis working together. I’d like to think ‘Yes, even a little hope could turn the tide.’”

“And,” fiercely, “even if I’m not sure anything will work, I won’t stop trying to work for peace.”

“All that I’m saying now is that there are *lot* of things that could turn the tide. It’s not *just* the Occupation. The Occupation is not the center of everything wrong in the Middle East. There is no center.”

“The Palestinians are starving, while the Israelis live like Europeans,” said Rebecca quietly, “and build and build and build until the Palestinians have no water, no land, no crops, no economy, nothing. Are we just supposed to watch and keep silent?”

“Look, even with the dangers of withdrawing, you know I’ve been against the Occupation forever. It’s devastating for the victims and morally and politically degrading for the Israelis. And I do think that there won’t be peace until it ends. But I also know that all this talk about how Israel’s mistreatment of the Palestinians is the main problem, the issue on which everything else hinges, is just another of way of saying that what Jews do is worse than what anybody else does. There’s a name for that kind of thinking and you,” long hard pause, “should know what it is.”

Rebecca glared back. They would never agree on this, never.

"Just what the world needs," brooded Ahmed, tapping the ashes from his pipe into an ashtray made from the casing of a tank shell, "another American Jew with another clever justification of the Occupation." Outside his window the Gaza city darkened swiftly as night approached. There had been no Israeli incursions today, and no rockets fired at the Jewish settlements. Yet tomorrow there probably would be more killing, committed by God knows who, for God knows what reason. In the meantime, everyone went around screaming about "Zionism" and "anti-Semitism" and "terrorism" and "imperialism" and, Allah help us, "jihad." And when they weren't just screaming, they were shooting. Israel and Hamas, Fatah and the Syrians, Iran and the Hezbollah and, oh yes, the Americans, they all had their opinions and positions and interests and principles. And they all had their guns and bombs.

But his eight-year-old nephew had just died from complications of a bullet wound, complications that weren't treated because there were no medical supplies, and no one seemed to have enough to eat. His sister hadn't left her bedroom for two weeks, sunk in a depression so deep she could barely look at her own children, the ones still left alive. Outside his window a group of nine and ten-year-olds played at being martyrs, imitating the sounds of explosions with their high-pitched voices.

Ahmed wished he could sit around writing about politics, and be upset because people had the wrong opinions. He'd write something to show that Gottlieb had missed the point, that he didn't get it—that Ahmed, and his family, and everyone he knew were all dying. Some quickly from the bullets and bombs, and the rest slowly from hunger and fear and despair, a twisted knot that was being pulled ever tighter by Israel and America. He'd let Gottlieb and all the rest of them know that he didn't want to kill anyone; he just wanted a life, and a tiny little country of his own to live it in. But in this short time before dark he had to try to get some food for his sister's kids. Then he would go to the mosque for evening prayers, and try to get the words out without crying too loudly.

"Sure, end the Occupation...brilliant, just brilliant," thought Ari. "Sounds easy. I wouldn't have to be morally degraded anymore. I could go back to Haifa instead of putting my ass on the line protecting these stupid settlements. The ones the government keeps promising to get rid of. And then maybe they'd stop trying to kill us in Jerusalem and Netanya." And maybe there wouldn't be any more children like his niece Leah, who would never walk or see again because she'd been on the wrong bus. Or women like his Grandmother Rose, who'd survived Bergen-Belsen but died in Jerusalem after she ordered a slice of pizza at the wrong time

"Doubtful... but maybe.

"But the people who know for *certain* are the ones who don't know anything."

He picked up his rifle and went off to the checkpoint, knowing that he'd probably vote for the peace candidate in the next election, just as he had the last time. Even though the candidate who claimed to be for peace had spent more time showing how tough he was than actually negotiating for peace. He'd go to the next demonstration against the Occupation as well, whether he could muster any hope or not. ■



And on the other side the non-violent Arabs and peacenik Israelis and even groups of Palestinians and Israelis working together. I'd like to think 'Yes, even a little hope could turn the tide.'"

Roger S. Gottlieb is contributing editor to Tikkun and professor of philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Two of his recent books are *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and our Planet's Future* and *Joining Hands: Politics and Religion Together for Social Change*.

AYAAN HIRSI ALI: AN ISLAMIC FEMINIST LEAVES ISLAM

(continued from page 31)

other former Muslim discontents (like Wafa Sultan, or Irshad Manji who maintains her Islamic identity) are also embraced by hyper-Zionists who see demonizing Islam as a tactic for ensuring continued support for Israel.

Why it's wrong to panic about the Islamic "menace" to Europe

TIMOTHY GARTON ASH MADE A SIMILAR POINT IN HIS JOINT REVIEW OF BURUMA'S *Murder in Amsterdam* and Hirsi Ali's earlier memoir *The Caged Virgin* (New York Review of Books, October 2006). Both Ash and Buruma applaud Hirsi Ali's feminist courage but wish that she had been more open to beneficent expressions of Islam, for the simple reason that this is more likely to recruit Muslims who are searching for universalist ways out

of traditional cultural ghettos. A highly polemical critique of Ash's review and Buruma's book on www.signandsight.com by French *philosophe* Pascal Bruckner sparked a vigorous debate on that website in the early months of 2007. The furious misrepresentation with which Bruckner and others assailed Buruma and Ash for their supposed failure to defend the Enlightenment signified to this reader, anyway, how close to panic some European intellectuals feel about the Islamic "menace." Or perhaps it is that they want to generate that panic. If they think that promoting a compassionate and progressive Islam contradicts the Enlightenment, they should read Gertrude Himmelfarb's *The Roads to Modernity, The British, French and American Enlightenments*. Himmelfarb convincingly portrays John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, as an Enlightenment figure who, unlike most of the eighteenth century French *philosophes*, did not despise the common people but strove to educate them in science and literature as well as in faith. Why are so many Europeans so sure that Muslims in Europe will not want the same kind of enlightened faith?

Instead, Europe is full of warnings against the supposedly inevitable growth of a regressive "Eurabia." Extremely low birth rates among old-stock white Europeans have raised the specter of Europe's "slow-motion autogenocide." The phrase is Philip Jenkins' in his new book *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis*. He quotes Mark Steyn, "The design flaw of the secular social-democratic state is that it requires a religious-society birthrate to sustain it." But Jenkins points out the panic is premature, because Islam is by no means immune to the same kinds of pressures that have turned Christian Europe into both a secular and a low birthrate society. He reports that birthrates in Turkey, Algeria, Iran, and Tunisia have already fallen below replacement levels. "Actual fertility rates are dropping so fast that it is difficult to keep track of them," he writes. "Between 1986 and 2000," I was astonished to learn, "Iran's fertility rate plummeted

from six to two" (with 2.1 children per woman being the rate needed to sustain a level population).

If something as fundamental as the birthrate can change so quickly, then who can confidently say that Pamela Taylor is wrong when she says that progressive Muslim culture will spread sooner rather than later? At a recent friendly debate at the University of California in Berkeley between England's most high profile conservative philosopher, Roger Scruton, a Christian, and Imam Zaid Shakir, one of America's most respected and influential Muslim scholars, Shakir made the telling point that Islam in America is very different from Islam in Europe for the simple reason that so many American Muslims are, like himself, converts. The converts' culture is already one that accepts democratic pluralism, with separation between mosque and state. Progressive Islam is well under way in America. I hope that is not disappointing to Hirsi Ali and the AEI.

I imagine and look forward to Ayaan Hirsi Ali's next memoir, after ten or twenty years, perhaps thirty. I have no doubt many young Muslims by then will have openly followed her into atheism. But I expect many more will have embraced both progressive and scholarly interpretations of Islam. As someone who long ago discovered in agnosticism a welcome relief from religious cultism, but who thirty years later is happy to discover and work with progressive spiritual people of many faiths, I even wonder if Ayaan Hirsi Ali may not one day revise her own wholesale antagonism to Islam. (I am not talking of belief, which is so ineffably personal, but rather of recognizing beneficent aspects of her natal religion and the value of progressive allies among believers.) Or is that taking my identification with this woman too far? ■

Dave Belden is managing editor of *Tikkun* magazine. His doctoral thesis at Oxford University was a sociological study of the Oxford Group / Moral Re-Armament, the movement in which he was raised. His 2002-05 column "What do we have faith in?" can be accessed at www.openDemocracy.net.



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[TV]

The Simpsons: It's Funny 'Cause it's True

BY MARK I. PINSKY

FLYING INTO ORLANDO in a 2003 episode of *The Simpsons*, patriarch Homer peers down at a theme park and sees a large, distinctive Future Sphere like the one at Disney's Epcot, and takes a decidedly dim view. "It's even boring to fly over," he whines. Thus begins a typically madcap set of misadventures and missteps familiar to any family that has dragged itself to Florida for a vacation it couldn't afford, including a run-in with a fascist-sounding mouse and grossly overpriced food.

Now, life threatens to imitate art, with the April announcement of a new ride based on *The Simpsons* at Universal Studios in Orlando and Los Angeles. The opening of a feature film on July 27, following the show's landmark 400th episode in May, is likely to cement the long-running television hit's place in American popular culture. The show has managed to accomplish in two decades much of what took Disney seventy years. "*The Simpsons* pulled off an exquisite sleight-of-hand worthy of its postmodernist attitude," said Robert Thompson, founding director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University. "By targeting the ironies and contradictions of the entertainment-industrial complex, it became itself a textbook example of modern cultural marketing and synergy." Thus, as a show written on many levels, and one that critics have noted rewards intelligence, it is not unlikely to hear the bright daughter Lisa discussing Pablo Neruda, only to have her determinedly doltish brother

Bart assure her, incongruously, "I am familiar with the works of Pablo Neruda."

Now airing in seventy countries around the world, the show is the subject of numerous books, including serious works dealing with philosophy, psychology, and religion. In its 2000 millennium edition *The New York Times* predicted, perhaps with tongue in cheek, that *The Simpsons* would still be a top-rated show in 2025. The paper suggested that one of the show's characters, the avaricious nuclear plant owner Montgomery Burns, was a better-known exemplar of capitalism than Ayn Rand, author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. Life magazine, in a cover story titled "The Shows That Changed America: 60 Years of Network Television," called *The Simpsons* the "millennium family unit: struggling, skeptical, disrespectful, ironic, hopeful. . . . The Simpsons verify our country's strength: If they can make it in today's America, who can't?"

In its first dozen years, the show was nominated for thirty-four Emmys and has won twenty-three, including nine for best-animated series. It has also won a Peabody award, which recognizes distinguished achievement in radio and television. *Time* magazine called *The Simpsons* the twentieth century's best television show, and the entertainment industry took note of the series' tenth anniversary with a star on Hollywood



Boulevard. The show has made the cover of *TV Guide* a dozen times. "It's not too hyperbolic to mention *The Simpsons* in the same sentence as Chaplin, Keaton, or Twain," said Thompson. "It ranks with the best American comic art, not just on TV, but in any medium."

But it is in its portrayal of religion that *The Simpsons* may have had its greatest impact. As a family, they have represented the faith practices of most Americans more accurately than any other show on commercial, prime-time television, apart from shows built around a religious premise, like *7th Heaven*, *Touched by an Angel*, *Joan of Arcadia* and *Highway to Heaven*. The Simpsons attend church on Sundays, say grace at meals, read and refer to the Bible and pray aloud—if only out of desperation. Polls suggest that in these respects they are reflective of most Americans. Individually, family members represent a spectrum of belief, from Homer's fear-based neo-paganism, to Marge's true belief, to Lisa's

disenchantment with mainline, socially conscious Protestantism, in favor of Buddhism. And their next door neighbor, Ned Flanders, is a cheery but fervent evangelical. But, like every other institution of modern American life, organized religion is a fat target for the *The Simpsons* satire, usually embodied by Springfield Community Church, somewhere between the Lutheran and Presbyterian traditions. Other, non-Protestant denominations and faiths also figure in episodes—Catholicism, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism (but not Islam).

Asked by Bart what the family's religious beliefs are, Homer answers, "You know, the one with all the well-meaning rules that don't work in real life. Uh, Christianity." Inexplicably, Unitarians have been the butt of most denomination-specific jokes: "If that's the one true faith, I'll eat my hat," Homer cracks. Over the years, the show has grappled with weighty subjects, albeit with a light touch, including: the nature of the soul; a sophisticated critique of mainline Christianity; the continuing theological tension between Protestants and Catholics; the missionary experience in the Third World; and a deft deconstruction of the apocalyptic, "End Times" theology made popular by the *Left Behind* novels. As Tony Campolo puts it, the series "can easily be mistaken for an assault that ridicules middle-class Christianity. It is not! What the show is really depicting through the antics of *The Simpsons* is the character of some of the people who are in our churches, and the ways they choose to live out their faith.... As an evangelical Christian, I find that *The Simpsons* provides me with a mirror that reflects my own religious life."

All of this has not gone unnoticed in the religious world. Among the show's best known fans is Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who once declared, "*The Simpsons* is one of the most subtle pieces of propaganda around in the cause of sense, humility, and virtue." During the same two-week period in early 2001, *The Simpsons* appeared on the covers of both *Christianity Today* and *The Christian Century*, two magazines at

opposite ends of the Christian theological spectrum. *The Simpsons'* successful portrayal of religion—mocking the institutions, while respecting sincere faith and never questioning the existence of God—has made it "safe" for other animated comedies to deal with the subject. A show like *King of the Hill*, for example, portrays with sympathy and understanding the sadness and soullessness of the Sunbelt suburbs. Others treat religion with considerably more savagery, if not outright blasphemy and sacrilege. *South Park* (where Jesus is a full time resident) routinely mines the territory between scatology and eschatology. Both Jesus and God are regularly lampooned in *Family Guy*, another Fox show.

To be sure, *The Simpsons* is not a television show *about* religion. It is a domestic situation comedy about modern life that includes a significant spiritual dimension, and because these weighty matters are coming from cartoon characters, viewers with no particular interest in faith seem to be willing to accept them. If you excise the jokes, *The Simpsons* is a tragedy of operatic proportions—repeated failure and frustration in the cause of self-improvement, punctuated by the occasional, wacky, life-affirming reprieve that returns everything to the status quo. And, like any comedy aimed at a mass audience, it is at its base doggedly conservative. Leon Trotsky used to characterize a political movement he opposed as being "left in form, right in essence." With *The Simpsons*, I think it may be a similar case: cloaking the show's sacred essence in the guise of profane storytelling, although there is no evidence that this is a result of any conscious effort on the part of the show's writers and producers, they have insisted in interviews.

For me, the consistent message of *The Simpsons* is this: If you are part of the American working class or, increasingly, the middle class, your family—and to a lesser extent your faith—are the only reliable defenses against the vagaries of modern life. For some, "modern life" may mean car pooling, office politics, making ends meet or anxieties about raising kids in a risky world; for others, it is a conven-

ient euphemism for globalized capitalism. In this context, religion serves as a palliative, comforting characters in their powerlessness and social futility. As always, Homer says it best: "I guess I'll have to give up my hopes and dreams and settle for being a decent husband and father."

The Simpsons' gospel is not the fighting faith of the Old Testament prophets or of the confrontational Jesus, all of whom sought to rock the boat of unrighteous comfort. At the same time, *The Simpsons'* theology is not one that takes joy in acceptance. Marge, Ned, Reverend Lovejoy, and other believers in the series are not like those collaborationist ministers of the early twentieth century, accused by radicals of preaching "pie in the sky, bye and bye." Their faith is a bulwark, a highly meaningful and relevant refuge. As it is for many us, faith is a last resort against the pressures of the increasing pace and power of the global market, personal and natural disasters, or whatever other significant stresses one might face. Given the world we live in and the economic system we live under, *The Simpsons* is about as trenchant, as life-affirming, and as socially critical a prime time situation comedy as we can reasonably expect on a major commercial television network.

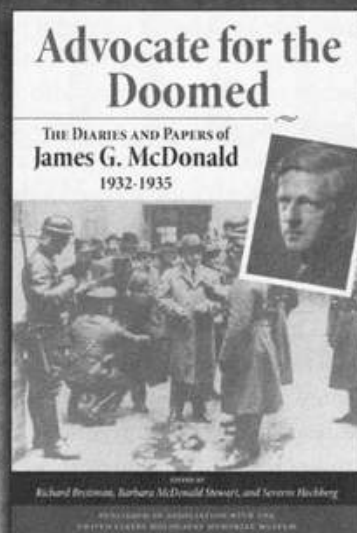
Television, what Homer calls his "teacher, mother, secret lover," has transformed his own family into a consumer unit. "They're creatures of consumption and envy, laziness and opportunity, stubbornness and redemption," Matt Groening said in a 1998 talk at the Museum of Television and Radio University Satellite Seminar Series. "They're just like the rest of us. Only exaggerated." His television family is "utterly addicted to TV," and the series is "about watching TV," he told the students. The movie industry—television's older sibling—has always been fascinated by its younger rival for a mass audience, and by TV's impact on society. One such examination, *The Truman Show*, posits a ratings hit "reality" series about a totally artificial environment in which everyone except the program's title character, played by Jim Carrey, is in on the conceit. The show's promos promise "No Scripts...No Cue



Samuel D. Kassow

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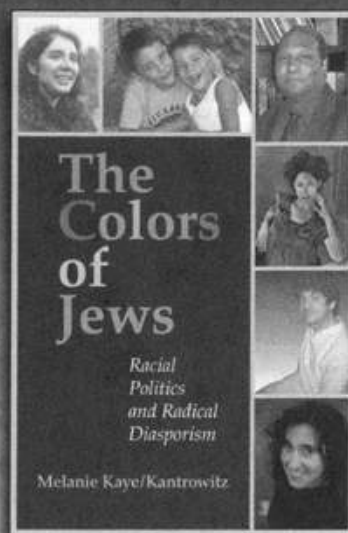
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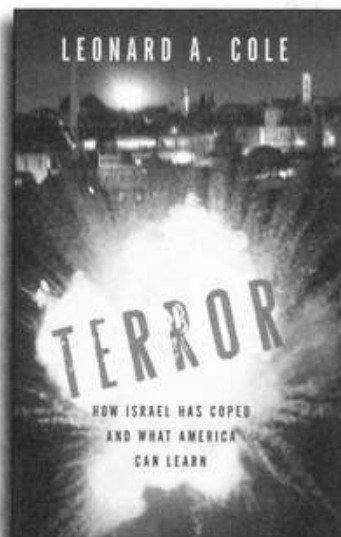
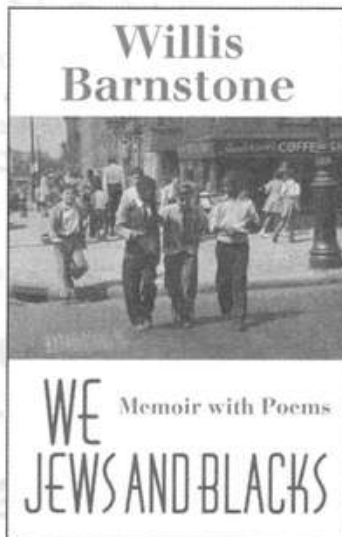
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Cards...It's Genuine...It's a life." At the film's conclusion, the unsuspecting Truman finally punctures his television-created environment. Just as Truman is poised to escape, the show's developer and director, played by Ed Harris, introduces himself: "I am the Creator," he explains, "of a television show that gives hope and joy and inspiration to millions."

Might it be possible to create a progressive cartoon comedy that actually *would* provide hope and joy and inspiration—and sharp-edged humor—rather than some counterfeit, cinematic fantasy? Something beyond *The Simpsons*, with a cutting, *South Park* sensibility, but with a consistent ideological viewpoint? After all, European broadcasters have been churning out such programs for decades. And didn't we always insist that there is joy in struggle? The answer, I think, is yes—with a big "if." It would have to appeal to a group I call "Daily Show Democrats." By that I mean a funny show that not only ripped and ridiculed Republicans and conservatives, but also targeted mushy Democrats when they fail to live up to their principles and ideals, when they sell out and compromise. It would also have to be able to poke fun at our own solemnity and self-righteousness. Given the ideological constraints already on public broadcasting, a program like this would have to emerge from the

commercial sphere, probably on cable or as a podcast.

More than a decade ago, when they were still a counter-cultural movement, Evangelical Christians learned the lesson of the market economy. They realized that in order to create a successful alternative to what they saw (not without justification) as a cesspool of secular television, movies, radio, music, and books, they would have to compete in the marketplace with comparable, if not superior, production values—and they have, earning billions of dollars in the process. The first law of survival of popular culture under a capitalist system is to entertain. Thus, creators and producers understood that their target market, young evangelicals, would not pay for, watch, or consume products simply because they were "Christian."

By the same token, young progressives—or those at least open to progressive notions—will not watch a television program (or listen to a talk radio network like Air America) simply because it promotes or reinforces their values. Because "it's good for you" is not sufficient motivation, as the evangelicals learned. Political magazines aimed at expanding the progressive base cannot read like homework. Funny is money, as the comedians say. A left wing successor to *The Simpsons* would have to entertain, and thus draw viewers and sponsors, but without pan-

dering. Jon Stewart, despite his consistent disavowals of an ideological viewpoint, has demonstrated that this is indeed possible. In many ways *The Simpsons* has opened the door to something bolder; all it requires is for some creative people to walk through.

From my experience, there are lots of laughs on the Left. Why not have an animated comedy show centered on a group of feisty, slightly twisted twenty-somethings putting out a blog or webzine, a group like moveon.org? What if their chief financial backer was an old sixties radical who was sometimes pompous and sometimes wise? Or one based on a multi-racial group of urban squatters trying to survive on the economic edge? Or maybe one about a troublemaking religious community, like Jim Wallis' Sojourners? If these are too adventuresome, how about something more traditional, a flawed superhero with a social conscience? There must be some comic book character out there with a taste for rabble rousing and a post-modern sense of humor. ■

Mark I. Pinsky covers religion for the Orlando Sentinel. He is the author of *The Gospel According to The Simpsons: Bigger, and possibly Even Better* (Westminster John Knox, 2007), and *The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust* (Westminster John Knox, 2004).

[BOOK]

JOSEPH'S BONES

UNDERSTANDING THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOD AND MANKIND IN THE BIBLE by Jerome Segal, Reviewed By Jack Miles

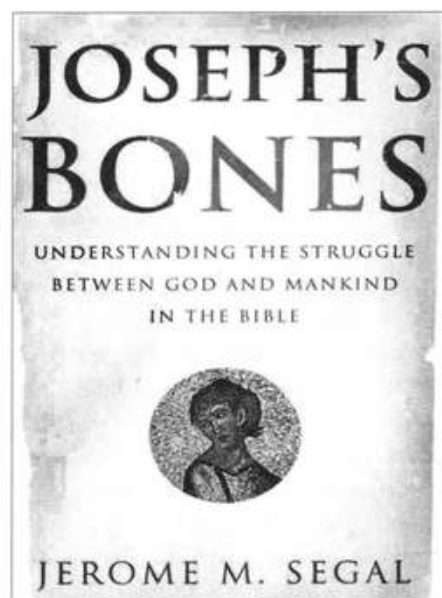
FROM ABRAHAM TO EZRA, the troubled relationship between God and Israel has few moments as happy as the celebration that comes at the end of the Book of Joshua. The wars with the Canaanites have been won. The Promised Land has been secured. The people are at peace with one

another and with the God to whom they now solemnly declare their allegiance. God's in his heaven, all's right with the Israelite world.

And then what? *Then they bury the bones of Joseph.*

The Israelites were forty years in the desert. Not one of those who crossed the Red Sea lived to cross the Jordan. The Exodus-and-Sinai Israelites bequeathed Joseph's bones to their descendants; and only then, at that moment of maximum solemnity, did those descendants see fit to bury the hallowed relics. Quite evidently, the memory of Joseph mattered a great deal to them, but why?

Jerome M. Segal proffers an explanation



on this question in a work as bold in concept as it is modest in manner. Torah, he points out, uses the same word, *aron*, for the cabinet that contains the tablets of the law—the Ark of the Covenant—as for the coffin or ossuary that contains the bones of Joseph. From the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, the Israelites carried only one ark, the Ark of Joseph's Bones. From Mount Sinai to the Jordan, they carried two. "The presence of the two Arks," Segal writes, "underscores the gap between the forgiving Joseph and the punishing deity; it underscores the quite different basis on which the Israelites' relation to each Ark is founded." Segal imagines the desert-wandering Israelites asking themselves, "Are we as God sees us, or as Joseph saw us?"

The *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible) offers several powerful starting points for a critique of the violence of God. But neither Job nor *Kohelet* (Hebrew name of the book of Ecclesiastes and of its writer) is an Israelite, while Lamentations, Psalm 44, and kindred passages in prophecy constitute, on the whole, complaints against God rather than a fully reasoned

critique. Genesis 22 comes closest to a genuine critique, and it lies at the heart of the heart of Torah. To be sustained, however, such a critique must not be left in isolation.

Here is where Segal's originality shows through most tellingly. Even secular, consciously literary critics rarely imagine a biblical writer or redactor consciously attributing one view to God and another to himself, much less employing this difference to sustain a critique of divinity through as extended a narrative as the *Hexateuch* (the first six books of the Bible, Genesis through Joshua). Through his success in finding this split perspective deep within the text of the *Hexateuch*, Segal formulates an exceptionally cogent answer to the problem that the violence of the God of Israel poses for the Jewish religion, past and present. Joseph, Torah's paragon of compassion, becomes, for the ancient writer whose work Segal recovers, the vehicle for a running critique of God. To describe how this critique unfolds would take more space than this review affords. Suffice it to say that Segal's opening insight enables an

arrestingly original reading of the entire *Hexateuch*, followed by a rather stunning afterword entitled "The Implications of This Reading for the Jesus Story."

Jerome M. Segal is a philosopher by training and Senior Research Scholar at the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy. For twenty-five years, he has been deeply involved in the quest for Palestinian-Israeli peace, most notably at the time of the peace initiative of 1988. His reading, at once keenly analytic and politically relevant, reflects both his intellectual training and his existential commitments. But Segal is also Torah teacher at the Fabbrangen Cheder, a Silver Springs Sunday school for children and teen-agers. I can offer no higher praise for this work than to say that it speaks with perfect poise to all three of these audiences at the same time. It is, if I may put it so, a work with a great set of futures. ■

Jack Miles is Distinguished Professor of English and Religious Studies at the University of California, Irvine, and the author of Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God.

[HUMOR]

THE AXIS OF EVIL WALKS INTO A BAR

The AXIS OF EVIL COMEDY TOUR, Comedy Central, March 2007. Commentary by Paul Lewis

ACCORDING TO AHMED, a member of the Axis of Evil Comedy troupe, deciding which terrorist organization to join can be difficult. "There's so many ... out there— Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda. ... Is it like rushing a fraternity?" Presenting this as a question defines the spirit of this humor: why would anyone assume that an Arab or Muslim American would know anything about what it's like to become a terrorist?

By transmuting pain and insult into laughter, Ahmed, Maz Jobrani,



Aron Kader, and Dean Obeidallah perform emotional alchemy. Just as jokes about the stupidity of stereotypes and the strength of in-group affiliation have served Jewish and African American comics and their audiences, so these performers work from the perspective of another misunderstood minority.

Obeidallah: I'm from Eastern Palestine—also known as New Jersey.

Jobrani: I tell my American friends I'm Iranian. They go, "Oh, so you're an Arab." And I go, "No, we're actually different. We're not Arab, but you know we're similar. We're all getting shot at."

Kader: Growing up Palestinian, people would be like, "What are you? Greek? Italian? Jewish? What are you?" "Palestinian." "Pakistilian? What the hell is Pakistilian? That sounds made up."

For these performers, 9/11 was transformative: it shifted them into a world in which, as Obeidallah says, "Middle Easterners became the new blacks" and people who look like them are subjected to racial profiling. To both underscore and undermine a key moment of their discomfort, each of the comics walks on stage by passing through a security checkpoint womaned by a large African-American guard who gives them the hairy eyeball, threatens to do more than ask probing questions, and then lets them through, shouting "He's clear" in each case. But so much of the humor here turns on the suspicion the comics have endured that one gets the sense that they are never in the clear. As Obeidallah says, "Most people would rather fly with snakes on a plane than with Middle Easterners."

Of the four, Obeidallah is the sharpest writer, evidenced by the books he imagines Al Qaeda members borrowing from the "Holy War" section of the public library, including *Chicken Soup for the Terrorist Soul* and *I'm Al Qaeda; You're Al Qaeda*. Ahmed, who also performs with Rabbi Bob Alper as half of "Comedy's Odd Couple," jokes about having given up an acting career in which he was called upon to play parts like Terrorist #4: "And the movie was about a bunch of terrorists who hijack an airplane. Imagine that." Kader's routine about visiting a relative in

Amman, Jordan strikes a deep, complex note. In it, the relative drives him around town railing against America as a "paper tiger" but also craving American products, including Babe Ruth bars and Starbucks coffee. Jobrani demonstrates his command of both dramatic tone and body language. After saying that he would prefer it if terrorists would put ecstasy, not anthrax, in the water supply, he does a hilarious impersonation of a flipped-out dancer.

Considering the volatility of this material, the jokes here are tame. Even so, hostility or, perhaps, exclusivity rears its ugly head once near the opening of Ahmed's routine when he asks if there are any Jews in the audience. After a few seconds pass during which no one applauds, the crowd breaks out into loud, celebratory clapping. Though Ahmed laughs this off in a series of jokes about how Jews and Arabs are similar, members of the otherwise attractive audience have shared in the guilty pleasure of being in a Jew-free zone. In an evening that promotes love over intolerance and calls on Americans, in Jobrani's words, to "stop blaming Middle Easterners for everything," this is a jarring contradiction.

At their best, these comics laugh us away from the dominant cultural and political responses to 9/11. In the months that followed the attacks, as George W. Bush's approval rating soared, joking about him (as an unelected and intellectually challenged president) declined while the chief targets of our ridicule became Osama bin Laden, fundamentalist Muslims, and the Taliban. Amateur animators and composers posted cartoons and songs about killing bin Laden online, while professional comics mocked him and his allies in Afghanistan. With the suddenly-admired president galloping off after the terrorist plotter he wanted "dead or alive," anxiety, fear, and determination ignited hostility that led to both harsh humor and a rise in hate crimes.

The president applied the phrase "Axis of Evil" to Iraq, North Korea, and Iran in his 2002 State of the Union speech, expressing both his militarist view of the crisis and his unwillingness to rely on diplomacy to resolve differences. In the

highly charged run-up to the invasion of Iraq in late 2002 and early 2003—when European governments urged caution and expressed support for letting UN inspectors continue to search for weapons of mass destruction, and when U.S. government officials were deceptively making the case for war by referring to "mushroom clouds" and weapons-grade aluminum tubes purchased by Saddam in Africa—Scott Ott, the creator of the rightwing fake news Web sit Scapple-Face.com, characterized France, Germany, and Belgium as "The Axis of Weasels."

Prominent comedians, including the late-night hosts, piled on. Jay Leno quipped, "I don't know why people are surprised that France won't help us get Saddam out of Iraq. After all, France wouldn't help us get the Germans out of France"—while David Letterman cracked, "France wants more evidence. And you know I'm thinking, the last time France wanted more evidence it rolled right through Paris with the German flag." Even more hawkishly and rudely, Dennis Miller ranted, "I would call the French scumbags, but that, of course, would be a disservice to bags filled with scum. I say we invade Iraq, then invade Chirac."

By reducing cautious opposition to the president's belligerence to the level of folly and cowardice, jokes like these helped move public opinion behind Bush. Four years later, haunted by acts of cruelty committed on all sides, this war-mongering wit has lost its appeal.

In their appropriation of the phrase, then, the Axis of Evil comics intend to insert information into dark places where bias has fed on ignorance. Insisting that their common humanity has been obscured by anger and fear, the jokes of the Axis members reach back to the argument in Shylock's great speech: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh?" Or, as Dean Obeidallah says, "Do you know what it's [been] like living in America with an Arab last name the last few years? . . . I could use a hug." ■

Paul Lewis, professor of English at Boston College, is the author of Cracking Up: American Humor in a Time of Conflict.

[FILM]

The Still Center of the Moving World

INTO GREAT SILENCE

(ZEITGEIST FILMS, 2006)

A ZEN LIFE

(INTERNATIONAL VIDEOWORKS, 2006)

Review by Katje Richstatter

As my prayer became more attentive and inward, I had less and less to say. I finally became completely silent... Prayer involves becoming silent, and being silent, and waiting until God is heard.

—Søren Kierkegaard

Silence occupies an uneasy place in our culture. We crave the idea of silence, a sense of stillness and peace, but are also profoundly uncomfortable with it. We rush to fill it with small talk, or with music or television, as if silence itself is an unwelcome reminder of our existential loneliness. Silence contains mystery and ambiguity, and evades easy explanations. And it is no coincidence that so many religious traditions use contemplation as a way to experience God, or in non-theistic religions like Buddhism, to experience the freedom of awakening. Embracing silence is going deliberately into the unknown, facing questions of purpose and mortality that are comfortably masked by busyness, activity, and words. But is monastic life, or going off the grid, the only way to achieve stillness? Or are there ways to cultivate an inner silence and remain engaged with the messy, noisy world? Two recent documentaries address these questions—Philip Gröning's *Into Great Silence*, and Michael Goldberg's *A Zen Life*. One explores the furthest extreme; complete renunciation, which Carthusian monks have practiced for centuries. The other shows how an individual, D.T. Suzuki, instrumental in bringing Japanese Zen Buddhism to the West, chose the non-monastic path, fully in and of this

world.

Into Great Silence is filmed in the French Alps, where Gröning spent six months in the Grande Chartreuse monastery. The result is an atypical documentary that unfolds the experience of being there without relying on description. There is no soundtrack, only quietly rustling robes, chanting, nature sounds, and chores. There are no interviews, though monks are shown, one by one, looking deeply into the camera. And there is no narrative, though certain characters become prominent, like a grizzled senior slowly completing his tasks, or a dark-skinned African initiate. Gröning intersperses moments of tenderness and community—the human contact of embracing newcomers, or an unexpectedly playful scene during a winter walk. The monastery is austere, but seems full of life and joy, each individual entirely devoted to God, giving up one kind of freedom for what seems like another. With this one choice, existential questions are answered. There is an admittedly voyeuristic aspect to this intimate view, but the true pleasure of this film comes from experiencing this timeless place, existing only in the present moment. In its run at the Film Forum in New York, *Into Great Silence* drew large crowds and enlisted the help of a live monk to explain the great deal left unsaid. The surprising popularity, especially in type-A New York, suggests a yearning for stillness, even if only for three hours.

In the more straightforward, PBS-style documentary *A Zen Life*, filmmaker Michael Goldberg illustrates the life of D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966), a scholar and teacher of Zen Buddhism. Suzuki trained monastically using silent, inward meditation, and consciously chose the life of a lay practitioner, married, and devoted his life to writing and helping westerners experience a non-intellectual understanding of Zen. Suzuki saw Western thought as overly enamored with scientific studies, and continued to destroy any ideas his students had of using Zen as a commodity, something they could get to change their lives. Suzuki taught Zen as fundamentally ungras-



Dr. Suzuki—author of books and essays on Buddhism, Zen, and Shin that were instrumental in spreading interest in Far Eastern philosophy in the West.

pable, an eternal negation; any cherished idea had to be destroyed, and any thought of accomplishment had to be abandoned. But as he lived between Japan and the United States, he understood the special amount of psychological discomfort these concepts caused in the West. The idea of finding the freedom of *satori* (awakening) within the form was, and continues to be, a balance. If there is too little freedom, form becomes dogmatic; too little form leads to relativism, an unlivable philosophy. His teachings were traditional but radical, and influenced many, including Jung, Fromm, Ginsberg, Merton, and Heidegger. And Suzuki's long life, explored through archival footage and interviews, exemplifies a path of both inner stillness and answering life's call.

Across vastly divergent traditions, from Quaker prayer meetings to Sufi devotional texts, the call to silent prayer or meditation allows for openness to the mystery of the divine, or simply to the way things are. Clearly, monastic life is not appealing for most, but as life outside becomes not only faster but louder, the choice to step in from the clamor is always a possibility. ■

Katje Richstatter is a fiction and culture writer whose work has appeared in the *Utne Reader*, *Punk Planet*, *SOMA*, the *SF Bay Guardian*, and *Tikkun*. She is on the editorial board for *Turning Wheel*, the magazine of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

SOME WORDS IN PRAISE OF MY FRIENDS

I have been in want of many things, never in want of good friends.

And some are growing fat or bald,
or gray and old like me,
and some are slim and bushy haired
as in the photographs.

I don't remember them all,
don't always think of them.
Sometimes I even forget them for a while,
even for a long while.
But when I return to them
I find them there.

I had good friends who loved life
but didn't always know how to live it.
Some had time to learn;
some, hardly any time at all.

They ran and ran in fields or orange groves or woods
between silence and commotion,
and had hardly stopped for breath
when they were called for. In a hurry
to be on the spot, take part, they went.

I had friends who knew how to smile
and what to take from the women around them,
who knew how to climb into their beds
and do them good.

I had friends who didn't know these things,
who were too shy or didn't dare or couldn't manage,
who remained outside with flowers in their hands,
flowers that dropped slowly from their loosening fingers
and were scattered over them.

I had friends who, on winter nights around a fire
or on summer nights under the stars,
knew how to laugh and tease and joke
and tell tall stories
they swore were true.

I had strange friends.

When they laughed you saw them and heard them,
when they wanted to cry they hid their faces
or turned aside.

I had dangerous friends.

And I had friends who were deaf.
One volunteer called for,
ten came. They hadn't quite heard.
Told to step back, they stayed—
like Uriah the Hittite.

And I had friends who were dumb,
who sometimes, unable to utter a word,
asked me to speak for them;
who said, "Never mind, it's OK,"
and moved away
to lean against a tree or a wall.

Many of my friends were liars.
When you asked them if they were all right
or needed anything,
they'd say, "Everything's fine."
They had bloodshot eyes and week-old beards
and were almost too tired to stand.

I also had alchemist friends
who could turn water into wine
and long roads into song,
weariness into iron
and youth into an open wound.
I had foolish friends,
madmen of spirit.

I had rich friends.
All of this land was their home.
They slept in Olive groves, in smoky caves,
on windswept hills.
Like Jacob, they knew how to dream dreams
that took them out of themselves.

— Haim Gouri
Translated from the Hebrew by Robert Friend

Swami Beyondananda Calls for Impeachment

"It's Time for We the People to Put the 'Decider' Through the Decider Mill"

As a devout FUNdamentalist (accent on "fun") dedicated to bringing about Nonjudgment Day, I try to avoid judging and blaming. In fact, I think people who judge are terrible, and those who blame are the cause of all the world's problems.

And as a Swami—even a fake one—I feel obliged to be above politics. But no

matter how high I try to rise above it on my magic carpet, the smell is unavoidable. The perpetrations of this Administration stink to high heaven.

Now we know the whole idea of impeachment is tinged with partisanship, particu-

larly in light of the Bill Clinton affair. Indeed, Clinton publicly lied about a private matter and the Republicans gleefully made his privates public. But now even Republicans must face the sad truth that America has traded one lie-about for another who will lie about anything and everything. Not to excuse cheating on Hillary, but our current lie-about has been unfaithful to the Constitution and the rule of law. Bush and Cheney have been cheating on all of us. (And yes, both must be impeached. If we want justice to be done, we have to go right up the Cheney-of-command).

In addition to producing and directing The Iraqi Horror Picture Show—and using G-rated trailers to hide X-rated content—the Bush-Cheney Administration has instituted a disturbing policy of "ethic cleansing." This cleansing of ethical people from positions of power not only has caused our entire moral compass to go south, but also has allowed "psy-

chopathogens" (opportunistic organisms with a poisonality disorder) to infect the body politic, and the political discourse. Meanwhile, the "fear-gnomes"—little gnomes of gnawing fear—the Administration injected into the mainstream lowered our resistance to Mad Cowboy Disease, an affliction we're still suffering from.

But, as the saying goes, the truth shall upset you free. George Bush has been an enlightening rod to enlighten and awaken a slumbering body politic to an issue that is bigger than politics—the rule of law vs. the overrule of law. And now, after being abused by the abuse of power, the American people are starting to disabuse themselves. They are waking up and wising up, and that's good because we could use a good upwising in this country. Despite a massive media impropaganda machine that feeds the public "babblum" (strained B.S. made digestible for a simple child's mind), more and more Americans are reading between the lyin's and peering behind the Irony Curtain.

We are awakening to realize that we the people are the "deciders," and ultimately we get to decide who our Decider will be ... and who to put through the decider mill. And the issue is bigger than Democrats vs. Republicans. The real issue is "buy-partisan." Parties in both parties are being bought, and our public servants are serving up huge chunks of the commonwealth to help gold collar criminals become uncommonly wealthy.

The good news is we don't need a revolution in this country. We already had one. Now we need an American Evolution to reconstitute the Constitution from the grassroots up and reestablish the dream of our Founding Fathers—government of the people, by the people, and for the people where the government does our bidding, not the bidding of the highest bidder.

How do we start the evolution? By firing the first big shots.

It's time for Left and Right to come front and center to stand for our highest values instead of falling for the lowest common dominator. It's time to impeach the entire impeachable system where the rule of gold has overruled the Golden Rule. And the time to act is now. Why? Because it is too late to do it sooner.

I have a dream. Imagine going to the voting booth and casting your vote for ... the greater of two goods. Oh, and impeachment has another benefit. If we are successful, we will have a woman President—without having to elect Hillary. ■

Swami Beyondananda is the comic alter ego of Steve Bhaerman and can be found online at www.wakeuplaughing.com.

Fiction, nonfiction, art, and poetry by E.M. Broner, Marilyn French, Ruth Stone, Sandy Boucher, Paula Gunn Allen, Jane Lazarre, and others.

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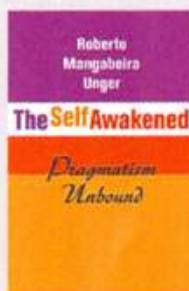
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An Online Literary Magazine
by Older Women

THE SELF AWAKENED

Roberto Mangabeira Unger
Harvard U. Press, 2007

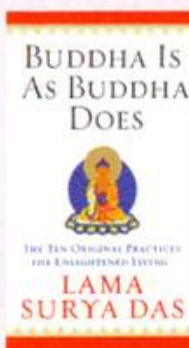
ONE OF THE LEFT'S MOST CREATIVE social theorists, Roberto Mangabeira Unger takes on the central flaw of scientism: its inability to provide an account for the experience of human freedom, which is the prerequisite for rational thought. Engaging with and simultaneously transcending contemporary pragmatism (Unger subtitles his book *Pragmatism Unbound*), he presents a serious attempt to address an account of the moral world from the standpoint of a sophisticated secularist.



BUDDHA IS AS BUDDHA DOES

Lama Surya Das
Harper San Francisco, 2007

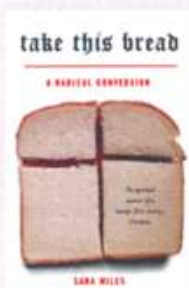
LAMA SURYA DAS PRESENTS *The Ten Original Practices for Enlightened Living*. If you think you've already read all these suggestions, chances are you're right: this writer has a strong capacity to synthesize the best and most insightful ideas and put them together in a way that has depth and yet is easily accessible. While lacking integration with politics or a practice of social healing and liberation, Das beautifully presents some of the best insights of the Buddhist tradition.



TAKE THIS BREAD

Sara Miles
Ballantine Books 2007

SARA MILES, A LEFTWING lesbian parent and journalist, was a former war correspondent in Central America who had no use for religion, until she wandered into a communion service one day and, in her words, "Ate Christ." Her new faith has given her great energy for providing food in both senses, edible and spiritual, and without any obvious divide between the two, for all who come to her church's food pantry. This is a highly engaging memoir, recommended for nonbelievers and believers alike, because it brings alive the "physicality of spirituality" rather than the dogmas of a religion.



YOU NEVER CALL! YOU NEVER WRITE

Joyce Antler
Oxford U. Press 2007

YIDDISHE MAMAS

Marnie Winston-Macauley
Andrews McMeel Publishing, LLC 2007

ALL OF US WHO HAVE WORRIED about the denigration of Jewish women, especially mothers, that takes place in their characterization either as Jewish American Princesses, or as neurotic and super-intrusive, will rejoice in the publication of these books that focus respectively on the history (Antler) and truth (Winston-Macauley) about "the Jewish mother." Antler's is a scholarly yet engaging account, and Winston-Macauley's is accessible, cute, and a fun read when put together with Antler.



DREAM

Stephen Duncombe
The New Press 2007

Stephen Duncombe has written a guidebook aimed towards "Re-Imagining Progressive Politics In an Age of Fantasy." Instead of rejecting the way that mass culture uses fantasy to manipulate consciousness, Duncombe picks up on the positive aspects of imagination and fantasy as potential paths to deep liberation from the stultifying and life-denying fantasies that are sold to us by the capitalist marketplace and the media. Duncombe would have loved the spectacles that the counter culture created in the 1960s, from The Summer of Love in San Francisco to Woodstock, and even more so the spectacle of shutting down Washington DC on May 1st, 1971 (the largest non-violent resistance ever recorded on a single day in American history) that ended in 50,000 arrests. Duncombe is aware that the Left's spectacles must be governed by an ethical vision, a constraint the media and the ruling class do not face. His appeal to the Left to think outside the box is a refreshing voice.



THEY ARE ASKING FOR YOUR MONEY AND YOUR VOTE.

ASK THEM TO PUBLICLY ENDORSE THE STRATEGY OF GENEROSITY AND THE GLOBAL MARSHALL PLAN AS A PATH TO HOMELAND SECURITY.



And while you are at it, how about getting your local city council, state legislature, and members of Congress to endorse the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan?

START WITH THIS FORMULATION:

We, the people of _____, call upon the Government of the United States to recognize that Homeland Security is best achieved when the United States switches from a Strategy of Domination of other countries to a Strategy of Generosity toward others, recognizing that our economic, political, and environmental well-being is dependent on the well-being of everyone on the planet.

As a first step in this direction, we call upon the president and the Congress to fund a Global Marshall Plan that would allocate 1-2 percent of the gross domestic product of the United States each year for the next twenty years to eliminate global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, inadequate healthcare, and to repair the global environment.

Aware that aid programs fail when they indiscriminately drop money into the laps of dictators and irresponsible bureaucracies, or when they are administered in ways that are insensitive to local sensibilities and environmental needs, we call upon our elected representatives to implement the Global Marshall Plan by working with NGOs, religious communities, educators, environmentalists, and an international organization set up solely for the purpose of delivering this support in the most intelligent and socially conscious ways that can be developed, in cooperation with local communities, and utilizing the talents and skills of the recipients as well. More info: www.spiritualprogressives.org

