

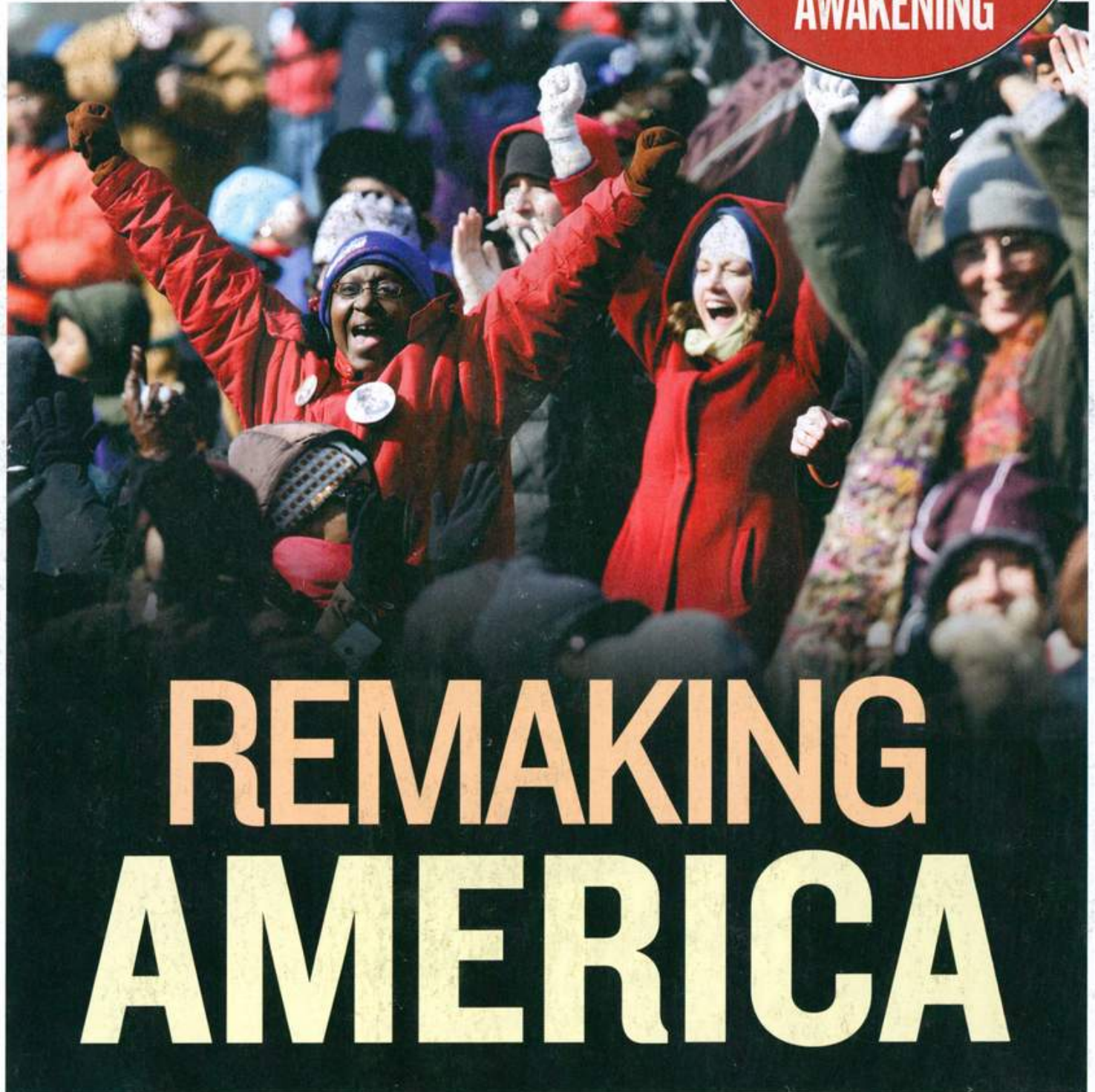
Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

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

MARCH/APRIL 2009

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The Palestinian Dead



AP PHOTO/EYAD BABA

One of five members of the Al-Batran family killed in Israeli military operations in Gaza, January 16, 2009.

The Israeli Dead



FLASH90/EDI ISRAEL

The funeral of Irit Shitrit, killed December 29, 2008, by a missile fired from Gaza.

Over 4,000 people signed the *Tikkun/NSP* ad calling for an international conference to resolve the basic issues of the Israel/Palestine conflict and to endorse a Strategy of Generosity. We seek to publish a similar but updated ad in the *Washington Post*—please check it out at www.spiritualprogressives.org/article.php/gaza. If you haven't signed the first ad yet, sign this second ad, and if you and others donate enough money, we will publish it in time for our Washington, D.C., conference to Support Obama to BE the Obama YOU Voted For.





3 LETTERS

8 THE CONTRARIAN: A Post-Capitalist World?

Editorials

9 Support Obama to Be the Obama You Voted For

We have a president who responds to his critics—so here's how to get his attention.

10 I Have Cancer

You can help me by taking the spiritual progressive movement into your own hands.

Politics and Society

REMAKING THE U.S. ECONOMY

33 **Spiritual Awakening, a New Economy, and the End of Empire** by DAVID KORTEN
Abolish Wall Street. Build Real Wealth.

38 **Justice and Injustice: Ancient Wisdom and the Modern Knowledge Economy**
by GAR ALPEROVITZ AND LEW DALY
In a knowledge economy, the rich don't deserve their grotesque riches.

41 **Rethinking American Capitalism** by THAD WILLIAMSON
Good Samaritan economics are good economics, period.

45 **The Cynical Psychology of Capitalism** by ALLEN D. KANNER
If our justice system isn't based on a cynical view of people, why is our economic system?

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

47 **Seven Principles about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict** by CHERIE R. BROWN
Beyond the blame game.

48 **A Perfect Moral Catastrophe: Just War Philosophy and the Israeli Attack on Gaza**
by JEROME SLATER
Putting the blame where it is deserved: Israeli policies.

54 **Gaza: A Just War**
A Response to Jerome Slater by DOUG LIEB
No. The violence in Gaza is Hamas's fault.

58 **An Israeli in Bil'in** by JOEL CARILLET
A young Israeli woman experiences life from the other side, and protests.

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Tikkun/NSP is looking for students and/or recent college graduates, people taking a break mid-career, and retirees who would like to work on changing the world now. Go to Jobs at WWW.TIKKUN.ORG for details and how to apply.

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Front Cover:
AP Photo/Evan Vucci

Rethinking Religion

- 14 Devout Women Say No to Their Second-Class Religious Status** by LEORA TANENBAUM
For Orthodox Judaism, or any traditional approach to religion, to be alive for women, they cannot be sacrificed to it. The author ventures into traditionally male territory as she deepens her connection to the Torah.
- 18 Sarti** by ABBY CAPLIN
A family's crab-sized miracle at Purim.
- 20 Raising Spiritually Healthy Children** by DEBRA W. HAFFNER
Other ways, apart from worship and education, to nurture children's spirituality.
- 22 The Ten Commandments Should Be Interpreted as Deliverance for the Vulnerable**
by GLEN STASSEN
Who knew how subversive and radical those traditional words really were?
- 24 Strange Affinities: Biblical Scholarship and the Rise of Racism**
by SUSANNAH HESCHEL
How theologians helped the Nazis Christianize their anti-Semitism, to kill Jews "for Christ."
- 30 Is There a Place for a Secular Person in the Network of Spiritual Progressives?**
by MITCHELL SILVER
Spirituality encompasses both secular and religious connections. But does the NSP?

Culture

FILM

- 61 Wrestling with Real Life**
Waltz With Bashir; The Class; The Wrestler; Synechdoche, New York; and Gran Torino
Review by DAVID STERRITT

BOOKS

- 64 Two Beautiful Books**
Dostoevsky: Language, Faith, and Fiction by Rowan Williams and *Sacred Attunement* by Michael Fishbane
Review by ROGER S. GOTTLIEB
- 66 When "Pro-Israel" Isn't**
Pens and Swords: How the American Mainstream Media Report the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by Marda Dunsky
Review by MARK LEVINE

POETRY

- 79 Grossman's Tooth**
by JAMEY HECHT
- 57 ceasefire in gaza**
by ELLIOT R. WOLFSON

HUMOR

- 80 Swami's 2009 State of the Universe Address**
by SWAMI BEYONDANANDA

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March 2: Raising Spiritually Healthy Children

Debra W. Haffner (see this issue p. 20)

March 9: The Israeli Attack on Gaza

Jerome Slater (p. 48)

March 16: Devout Women Rise Up

Leora Tanenbaum (p. 14)

March 23: Re-thinking American Capitalism

Thad Williamson (p. 41)

March 30: The Ten Commandments

Glen Stassen (p. 22)

See full schedule and listen to previous calls at WWW.TIKKUN.ORG



Readers Respond

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

As Tikkun and the Network of Spiritual Progressives function as a movement for social healing and transformation, our "Letters to the Editor" reflect responses not only to what has been in Tikkun or on our website, but also to articles and activities that we have promoted. For example, many of the letters below represent responses to an op-ed written by editor Rabbi Michael Lerner that appeared in the Times of London in early January, while the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza was at its peak. Other letters are responses to the full-page ad, signed by 4,000 people, that we ran in the New York Times (a copy of which was appended to this issue of Tikkun), or to articles derived from these, which appeared on a variety of websites. While these articles were critical of Israel's massive slaughter of civilians, they also criticized Hamas. In our ad in the New York Times, we purposefully stayed away from criticism of either side, focusing instead on what the terms of a solution might be. For a full presentation of the Tikkun perspective, we urge you to read two books authored by Rabbi Michael Lerner and published by North Atlantic Books: Healing Israel/Palestine (2003) and The Geneva Accord and Other Strategies for Middle East Peace (2004).

ON ISRAEL AND GAZA

MASS MURDER IN GAZA

RABBI LERNER, YOUR RECENT article has appeared in the Christchurch Press in New Zealand. I must say I find the opening sentence horrifying. "Israel's attempt to wipe out Hamas is understandable." What is "wipe out" supposed to mean? Mass murder? Because that's what is happening.

Then you went on to admit that Israel broke the cease-fire first with its assassinations. But it's not just assassinations. The stranglehold on the people of Gaza—no food, no medicines, no control of its aquifers, no fishing—that is deadly violence, too. Uri Avnery has described the blockade on the Gazans as genocidal.

I was born and grew up in the United States. I went to Africa with the Peace Corps where I met my English husband. We then settled in New Zealand. I couldn't bear to live in the United States now because the people with power and influence are so contemptuous of the rest of the world, especially the Muslim world.

A few years ago I met an Israeli writer, the late Tanja Reinhart. We bought her book *Roadmap to Nowhere*, which points out that every time there has been a sign of a possibility of peace—real peace based on justice—in Israel/Palestine, the Israelis have sabotaged it.

LOIS GRIFFITHS
New Zealand

BRILLIANT PROPOSAL

RABBI LERNER, YOUR FULL-PAGE Mideast proposal in the *Times of London* should not only be publicized around the world for consideration—to every home, individual iPod, and cell phone. It should also be offered as an example of how to do the impossible, being creatively "unrealistic." It is a shining example of an "impossibly complex" issue being treated to a fittingly complex solution: lushly true, all-accommodating, and overwhelmingly reasonable. That's its key flaw, unfortunately, as a public message. Proposals of this sort are virtually unprecedented in the media. They are too unfamiliar to compute. Viewpoints

can't affirm all conflicting sides in a singular and harmonious resolution, can they? That leaves no side to be against, no glaring oversight to point up, no exclusionary side to exclusively side with. It's an insult to prejudice.

BILL PUKA
Troy, NY

A DISGRACE

YOU ARE SO STUPID THAT IT BREAKS my heart to see you breathe. You call yourself Jewish? Let Hamas's rockets reach your home (I bet you are sitting in London, safe and pampered). Then you will know if Hamas is hassling or means business. You are a disgrace.

SAMEER P. SARKAR
England

TRAUMA IN ISRAEL

WHEN I READ YOUR ANALYSES about Israel/Palestine, and about the concept of legitimate versus illegitimate responses, there is always something missing. You keep identifying the number dead in each country as the measure of harm, and you address Gazan/Hamas fears, but not the fear of Israelis living under daily bombardment.

I can tell you that even though I actually suffered little harm during the Loma Prieta earthquake, the fear of building collapse in the hospital where I was while digging out patients from rooms, the fear that my son had been injured or killed until I found him six hours later, the fear of more death and destruction, the fear of overpasses falling on me as I drove under them the next six months made it one of the most fearful times of my life. Yet objectively, my PTSD response was "all out of proportion" to the events based on

actual harm experienced. All PTSD is.

I suggest you look to chronic PTSD with daily accretions as a way to help Israelis, and American supporters of Israel as the Remnant, not only to understand the Israeli reaction, but also to help us deal with our own levels of PTSD in America (both populace to 9/11 and fear of terrorism, as well as all combat returnees from the experience of the global war on terrorism).

Your contention that Israel is over-armed and powerful versus the under-armed Palestinians who have only "symbolic weapons" makes no sense to either the Israelis or those of us who see Israel as maintaining itself against surrounding hostile populations of over 60 million. Even though those populations are not monolithic, they are all united in their drive against Israel's existence. And, this reality serves as a source of the fear of destruction and a continuance of PTSD in Israelis, American supporters of Israel, and the Palestinian populace, which looks to

other Arab nations for material and support.

Until PTSD responses are recognized and validated on both sides, and not simply mentioned and dismissed, your analyses and suggestions will not be taken seriously.

HARRIET ZEINER
Palo Alto, CA

REALISTIC PROPOSALS

RABBI LERNER, I WOULD LIKE TO commend you for the balanced article published in today's *Times of London*. So often we read very one-sided "Poor Israel wants peace but the wicked Palestinians don't!" messages from members of the Jewish establishment. Only by recognizing the enormous injustice that the foundation of Modern Israel was, can there ever be hope for peace. Israel must face this: its very foundation was as a result of what it now calls terrorism, and it is going to have to make peace with its enemies.

Your proposals are the most realistic that I have read and in line with my own views. The problem will be persuading the Jewish lobby in the USA to back such a plan.

It gives me some hope that some Jews at least are prepared to speak out against the appalling tragedy that is Israel/Palestine.

HOWARD COGAN
via email

DISTURBING

RABBI LERNER, I HAVE JUST READ your apologetic and disturbing article in today's *Times of London*. As a practicing Jew and supporter of Israel, I feel great embarrassment and alarm that a fellow Jew and respected Rabbi such as yourself should adopt so strong an anti-IDF stance and play into the hearts and minds of those howling mobsters that have of late taken to our streets in supposed indignation at Israel's attempt to rid itself of this Islamic fundamentalist murdering

Tikkun

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Tikkun Passover Supplement 2009

FOR YOUR SEDER, here is a Haggadah supplement—not a replacement. If you don't normally do a Seder, you can use this supplement as the basis for an interfaith gathering in your home on April 8, the first night of Passover, or on any of the other nights of Passover until it ends on April 16.

AS WE SIT AT THE SEDER TABLE:

Seventy-eight percent of American Jews voted for Barack Obama in 2008, and a majority of non-Jewish Americans joined them. The message was clear: end the war in Iraq and let our troops come home, end the war on the poor and the environment, and stop favoring the rich and corporate interests.

Meanwhile, the proverbial chickens have come home to roost. After decades of profligate materialism and selfishness, our economic system has entered into deep crisis. As the suffering spreads from those who have been living in poverty, even in the midst of American affluence, to the rest of us, we suddenly become aware that our entire economic system is based on the dog-eat-dog, looking-out-for-number-one mentality that was hurting our souls all along, though we ignored that while the system was providing material goodies for many of us. The media, corporations, and their friends in government urged us to translate our spiritual and intimacy needs into consumption, and though that worked for some, it produced a huge global anger at our society from others around the world. Fundamentalisms of every sort sprang up as much to provide resistance to the ethos of globalized capital as to provide any serious spiritual life. And while most of us resisted that alternative, we have been hard-pressed to find other communities that could provide us with a framework of meaning and purpose to life to challenge the values that daily assault us from the media and make us feel unsuccessful unless we have an endless stream of things and distractions surrounding our daily lives. Not everyone has responded to this by joining right-wing religious movements, or drowning our pain in drugs or alcohol or sports or frenetic activity of one sort or another—yet many of us feel an inner ache corresponding to the outer immoral disorder.

No wonder, then, that we turn back to our own liberation-oriented religious tradition, hoping to find here a set of values that are neither the celebration of money,

power, fame, and sexual conquest that dominates in the larger society, nor the abandonment of our intellect and the embrace of sexism, racism, or homophobia that too often have accompanied fundamentalist and right-wing religious

communities.

Unfortunately, we in the Jewish world have had to face the set of distortions that have accompanied a blind and idolatrous worship of the State of Israel, manifesting in their most ugly form as Jews close their eyes to the suffering of our brothers and sisters, the Palestinians. Go into most synagogues or Jewish institutions in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, or France, and you'll find that you can denounce God, question the Torah, refuse to follow various Jewish practices, and still be met with a "ho-hum" response. But dare to question Israel and its policies, and you'll find yourself being denounced as a traitor, a self-hating Jew, an anti-Semite, or "an accomplice of Hitler." The blind worship of Israel has become the only contemporary religion of the Jewish people, a people still so traumatized by our long history of oppression and so angry at God for not being a big man in heaven who would intervene and save us during the Holocaust that we've come to believe in the religion of our enemies, the religion that says that we can only trust in our power, our army, our ability to wipe out our enemies.

To be sure, that celebration of violence and hurt against our enemies was always there in the Jewish tradition. But it was the compensation for our powerlessness, an empowering fantasy that made us believe that no matter what the others were doing to us, we would survive because there was a Force of Healing and Transformation in the universe: God. We believed that God would ultimately be there for us as God had been there for us in Egypt, when we had been utterly degraded as slaves. To see God as redeeming us when we could see no rational path to self-protection had a positive value. But today these very same thoughts have a very different meaning when it is we who are powerful, and when our Jewish community aligns with the State of Israel, even as Israel uses its power in heartless and cruel ways against another people over whom it rules.

Our Torah understood the problem, which is why the most frequently repeated command (mitzvah) is a variant of this: "When you come into your land, DO NOT OPPRESS THE STRANGER. Remember that you were



strangers in the land of Egypt." Indeed, it commands us positively: thou shalt love the stranger.

We cannot turn this Seder into a meaningless ritual by ignoring the way that the Jewish people itself has recently been acting as Pharaoh to another people. Unless we can use this Seder to strengthen our capacities to create a broad social movement that pushes our world toward peace, justice, and ecological sanity, we are likely to find ourselves in even deeper despair by this time next year. We must use this Seder and the days of Passover ahead not only to tell the stories of the past, thinking that somehow our past suffering gives us a moral "pass" to ignore the moral distortions of the present moment, but rather to plan a way to transform the present.

We don't live in Israel, but we can help the peace forces there by doing what we can to transform our own society, which is a much greater sinner and has been responsible for far more suffering, more unnecessary deaths in Iraq (and now in Afghanistan), more environmental degradation, and more championing of selfishness and materialism than the State of Israel.

Our task is to change it. What is really needed is a revolutionary transformation in our way of thinking and in our economic, political, and social arrangements. America will find security when it is perceived by the world as caring not merely for its own well-being, particularly that of its most wealthy citizens and global corporations, but as genuinely caring for the well-being of all of the people on the planet. Instead of relying on domination (either the hard, military kind advocated by everyone from the Republican Right to Senator Lieberman, or the soft kind espoused by Thomas Friedman and the moderate to liberal Democrats), we know both from our holy texts and from our real-world experience that it is Generosity, Kindness, Compassion, and Caring For Others that will be the key to our success and survival.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives has called for the United States to lead by example by creating a Domestic and Global Marshall Plan. Under this plan, the United States would use between 1 percent and 5 percent of its Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty years to provide funds for ending global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care, as well as to repair the environment. The United States would also encourage other G-8 countries to do the same. All of this could be paid for by a 1 percent tax on global financial transactions of more than \$1 million). This path is far more realistic than sinking trillions of dollars into a mili-

tarism that continually fails to provide security but

instead generates anger that will last for generations to come. It's time to end the war on terrorism by becoming the most generous force in the world. And one of the first places that such a Domestic and Global Marshall Plan should begin to operate is in Gaza and the West Bank and in Israel. Read more on the Strategy of Generosity

at www.spiritualprogressives.org.

This is the modern form that rebellion takes: not armed struggle but a new way of thinking about how to build a safe world. At a moment when taxpayers are dropping trillions of dollars into the coffers of the banks and the super-rich, it's time to propose large-scale plans that might actually head off the deepening global depression. The more that we can increase the purchasing power of the poor, if done in ways that encourage a new ethos of social responsibility and caring for each other, the more we can generate small businesses and jobs that will eventually lead to a recovery.

Telling the ancient story reminds us that the same Power in the Universe (YHVH or, in English, "God") that made the Exodus possible can, at this very moment, make it possible for the world to be transformed and liberated from all forms of oppression. No matter how overwhelming the global order of materialism and selfishness might seem at this moment, the power of God's goodness can again be enlivened in all of us, and we can act together to transform the world, just as the ancient Israelites did in their struggle with Pharaoh.

Inviting God's goodness to be enlivened within us takes inner work, as well as political organization. First and foremost, we need to overcome ego, quiet our minds, become aware of our bodies, rejoice in our opportunity to serve God and humanity, and recognize that beyond the self, beyond family and country, we are part of the ongoing unfolding and evolution of the consciousness of the universe as it moves toward higher and higher levels of self-knowledge, partly through us. So we pause now to close our eyes, to envision the universe and our place in it, and to affirm the meaning of our human mission as partners with God in the healing and transformation of all that is.

KIDDUSH

We are gathered here tonight to affirm our continuity with the generations of Jews who kept alive the vision of freedom in the Passover story. For thousands of years, Jews have affirmed this vision by participating in



the Passover Seder. We not only remember the Exodus but actually relive it, bringing its transformative power into our own lives.

The Hebrew word for Egypt, *mitzrayim*, means "narrow straits." Traditionally, *mitzrayim* has been understood to mean a spiritual state, the "narrow place" of confusion, fragmentation, and spiritual disconnection. Liberation requires us to embrace that which we have been taught to scorn within ourselves and others, including the split-off parts from our own consciousness that we find intolerable and that we project onto some evil Other. The Seder can also be a time to reflect on those parts of ourselves.

Israel left Egypt with "a mixed multitude"; the Jewish people began as a multicultural mélange of people attracted to a vision of social transformation. What makes us Jews is not some biological fact, but our willingness to proclaim the message of those ancient slaves: (*say together*) **The world can be changed, we can be healed.**

Blessing over the first cup of wine.

KARPAS

The saltwater on our table traditionally represents the tears of the Israelite slaves. The green vegetables we dip in the water suggest the possibility of growth and renewal even in the midst of grief.

The greens on the table also remind us of our commitment to protect the planet from ecological destruction. Instead of focusing narrowly on what we may "realistically" accomplish in today's world, we must refocus the conversation on what the planet needs in order to survive and flourish. We must get out of the narrow place in our thinking and look at the world not as a resource, but as a focus for awe, wonder, and amazement. We must reject the societal story that identifies success and progress with endless growth and accumulation of things. Instead we will focus on acknowledging that we already have enough; we need to stop exploiting our resources and instead care for the earth.

Dip the greens in saltwater and say blessing.

FOUR QUESTIONS: THE ADULT VERSION

Discuss as a group or in pairs at the Seder table:

1. Egypt, *mitzrayim* in Hebrew, comes from the word *tzar*: the "narrow place," the constricted place. In what way are you personally still constricted? Are you able to see yourself as part of the unity of all being, a manifesta-

tion of God's love on earth? Are you able to overcome the ego issues that separate us from each other? Can you see the big picture, or do you get so caught in the narrow places and limited struggles of your own life that it's hard to see the big picture? What concrete steps could you take to change that?

2. Do you believe that we can eventually eradicate wars, poverty, and starvation? Or do you believe that no one really cares about anyone but themselves, and that we will always be stuck in some version of the current mess? Or do you think that such a belief is, itself, part of what keeps us in this mess? If so, how would you suggest we spread a more hopeful message and deal with the cynicism and self-doubt that always accompanies us when we start talking about changing the world?

3. What experiences have you had that give you hope? Tell about some struggle to change something—a struggle that you personally were involved in—that worked. What did you learn from that?

4. When the Israelites approached the Sea of Reeds, the waters did not split. It took a few brave souls to jump into the water. Even then, the waters rose up to their very noses, and only then, when these brave souls showed that they really believed in the Force of Healing and Transformation (YHVH), did the waters split and the Israelites walk through them. Would you be willing to jump into those waters today—for example by becoming an advocate for nonviolence or for the strategy of generosity? Would you go to speak about this to your elected representatives? To your neighbors? To your coworkers? To your family?

MAGID (TELL THE STORY):

Tell the story of the Exodus, and identify the Pharaohs in your life today

Blessing over the second cup of wine.

We are descended from slaves who staged the first successful slave rebellion in recorded history. Ever since, our people has kept alive the story of liberation, and the consciousness that cruelty and oppression are not inevitable "facts of life," but conditions that can be changed.

THREE SYMBOLS OF PASSOVER

PESACH (the Bone or Beet): Our Seder plate includes a symbol of the ancient Passover sacrifice, which was brought each year to the Temple in Jerusalem. The



Hebrew word for sacrifice is *korban*, which comes from the root meaning "near." What could bring *you* closer to your highest spiritual self?

MATZAH: The Torah tells us that the Israelites had to take the uncooked dough with them, "For they had prepared no provisions for the way." Symbolically, the *matzah* reminds us that when the opportunity for liberation comes, we must seize it, even if we do not feel fully prepared—indeed, if we wait until we feel prepared, we may never act at all. If you had to jump into such a struggle tomorrow morning, what would you have to leave behind?

The *matzah* also stands in contrast to *chametz* (Hebrew for the expansive yeast that makes bread rise), which symbolizes false pride, absorption in our individual egos, and grandiosity.

MAROR (the Bitter Herbs): The suffering of the Jews in Egypt has been matched by thousands of years in which we were oppressed as a people. Our insistence on telling the story of liberation and proclaiming that the world could be and should be fundamentally different has angered ruling elites. These elites often tried to channel against the Jews the anger that ordinary people were feeling about the oppression in their own lives. But Jews are not the only ones to have suffered oppression and violence. We think of the genocide against native peoples all around the world, including in the United States. We think of the enslavement of Africans, and the oppression of Armenians, homosexuals, women, and many others. Yet, tonight it is appropriate for us to focus also on the suffering of the Jewish people, and to affirm our solidarity with victims of anti-Semitism through the ages. Anti-Semitism still persists in our own time in the use of double standards in the judgment of Jews, in acts of violence against Jews, and in refusing to acknowledge the history of Jewish suffering as equal to the suffering of other victims of oppressive social regimes in Christian, Muslim, and some secular societies, as well. Meanwhile, we Jews need to acknowledge the ways that such suffering has at times distorted our consciousness and made it hard to fully grasp the pain others feel. We must evolve a Global Judaism that compassionately embraces the Jewish people and all other peoples.

THE MEAL

The Haggadah says, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." Traditionally, this is understood to mean not only literally feeding the hungry, but also offering spiritual

sustenance to those in need. Both must go hand in hand. We live in a society of unprecedented wealth, yet we turn our backs on the hungry. Even the supposedly liberal and progressive political leaders are unwilling to champion any program to seriously address world hunger and homelessness.

There is also a deep spiritual hunger that must be fed. Though the cynical proclaim that "those who accumulate the most toys win," our tradition teaches that money, power, and fame cannot sustain us. Our spiritual tradition teaches us to be present to each moment; to rejoice in all that we are and all that we have been given; to experience the world with awe, wonder, and radical amazement; and to recognize that we already have enough and are enough.

Not just during the Seder, but also at every meal, it is incumbent upon us—the Jewish tradition teaches—to talk words of Torah, to study some section of our holy books, or to in other ways make God feel present at our table. Try this every night as you eat: bring God and God's message of love, generosity, peace, social justice, ecological sanity, and caring for others into every meal that you eat.

Enjoy the meal. Following the meal, say a blessing over the third cup of wine. Finish by expressing thanks to God for the food and by expressing a commitment to do what you can to redistribute food on this planet so that everyone will have enough.

WELCOMING THE MESSIAH

We open the door for Elijah—the prophet who heralds the coming of the Messiah and a world in which all peoples will coexist peacefully—acknowledging the Image of God in one another. To deny the possibility of fundamental transformation, to be stuck in the pain of past oppression, or to build our religion around memories of the Holocaust and other forms of suffering is to give the ultimate victory to those who oppressed us. To testify to God's presence in the world is to insist on shifting our focus from pain to hope, and to dedicate our energies to transforming this world and ourselves. We still believe in a world based on love, generosity, and openheartedness. We continue to affirm the Unity of All Being.

Now let us build together a communal vision of what messianic redemption would look like.

Close your eyes and let some picture of this appear in

If the approach to spiritual & religious issues evidenced in this Passover Supplement appeals to you, please join with us in fostering an interfaith movement that can take these ideas and act with others to transform our society—by joining Tikkun's Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) at www.spiritualprogressives.org, 510-644-1200. Also read Rabbi Michael Lerner's *The Left Hand of God* (Harper San Francisco, 2006).

rabble we know as Hamas.

Perhaps, you might have been better served if some sixty odd years ago you had written in defense of Adolf Hitler in support of his “Jew-free” Europe.

LAWRENCE BERG
London, England

CONDEMN THE ATTACKS

EVERY DAY I LOOK FOR LETTERS from the Maine Jewish community condemning Israel’s genocidal bombing of trapped, starving Palestinian civilians, mostly women and children. The Israelis are even bombing schools and hospitals.

Such barbarism must surely be repulsive to many in Maine’s Jewish communities, but I search in vain for a word from them.

I am so sickened by what the Israeli government has been doing since 1947 to the Palestinians—who have lived there for thousands of years—that I can scarcely bear to read or think about what’s going on now. But we must speak out when we know something is wrong, or we lose our humanity.

No more free passes for Israel.

Israel has caged in the Palestinians, cut off their food and electricity, smashed down people’s houses, killed United Nations and other aid workers, built a wall separating farmers from their land and built illegal Jewish settlements in Palestinian lands. Now it is attacking with white phosphorus (causing terrible burns), fully armored troops, and U.S.-built bombs dropped from U.S.-supplied fighter jets.

The American government gives Israel billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars every year. I say not one penny more, until Israel acts like a civilized nation and stop killing its neighbors—the Palestinians and other Arabs who are the Israelis’ close relatives, after all.

Israel brags that it runs our country, especially now that Barack Obama’s chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, has dual Israeli-U.S. citizenship. Where do his loyalties lie?

If American Jews do not speak out against the slaughter of children in schools and in their beds, they are complicit in those acts. The Israeli government purports to act for world Jewry, so Jews have a special responsibility to condemn atrocities committed in their name.

And yet we wait for Maine’s Jewish community to speak out.

NANCY ODEN
Jonesboro, ME

BLAMING THE VICTIM

ARE YOU SURE THAT ISRAEL HAS every right to respond? That is *Tikkun’s* claim—it only challenges *how* Israel responded to Hamas’s shelling of Israeli civilian targets, but not its right to respond. This does seem to be the present propaganda that allows assassination and massacre of Hamas leaders and Palestinian civilians alike.

If one looks at a map of Israel 1948 and compares it to a map of Israel 2008, it is evident that it is the Palestinians who are in need of security and defense. If it is legitimate to attack on the basis of defense and security, then what Hamas is doing is legitimate too. Israel is expanding while the Palestinian territories are shrinking. The rockets Hamas is throwing are a futile expression of self-defense too. However, the use of extreme force on the part of Israel to assure its security is not a written law that grants this right. Quite the opposite is true as, even in times of war, everything must be done to protect civilians. Israeli bombardments of hospitals and universities and many other civilian structures do not constitute “everything being done to protect civilians.”

A simple look at the shrinking map of Palestinian land since 1947 will clearly indicate that Palestinians are the ones who need defense and security, as they are being ethnically cleansed and colonized. Israel demands that Hamas recognize Israel’s right to exist. How can one expect the victims to recognize their aggressors? This would

mean recognizing that the victims have no rights or have to share the blame. There is no equality of suffering here that “both” are responsible for. As it stands now, almost 1,300 Palestinians are dead in the latest round of attacks.

The Israeli press gloats, publicly, that a Hamas leader has been assassinated. Imagine if Hamas killed Livni and publicly gloated over that fact? Would that be fine, then? What are we teaching our young? Is it fine to murder anyone one does not agree with?

TAMZIN JANS
Brussels, Belgium

DESTROY HAMAS

ISRAEL SHOULD DESTROY HAMAS in its entirety—one notices that America had no more problems with Imperial Japan after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Better a million dead Palestinians than a single dead Jew.

MARK WALLIN
Santa Monica, CA

RESPONSES TO TIKKUN ARTICLES

ARTSON ON THE BIG BANG

I READ RABBI ARTSON’S ESSAY THIS New Year’s day while eating my traditional southern New Year’s dinner of ham, collard greens, black-eyed peas, and ambrosia (a southern holiday dessert featuring oranges, bananas, and coconut—except I was out of bananas). I am a Christian and a scientist.

What Rabbi Artson wrote about the Creation and about our role as clay in the hands of the Master Potter touched my heart and my mind. I teach a lot of Bible classes at Auburn First Baptist Church, as well as science classes at Auburn University, to groups of differing levels of knowledge of both, and I have a feeling I’m going to be referring to and quoting from this essay a lot. In a country where so many religious people feel threatened by science,

I seem to be continually struggling to help people see there is no contradiction unless you insist on making one—and that goes as much for atheistic scientists as fundamentalist Christians. I have never seen my case stated more beautifully than as Rabbi Artson did it. Thank you.

CHARLOTTE WARD
Auburn, AL

PROP. 8 AND HOMOPHOBIA

A COLLEAGUE PURCHASED A subscription to *Tikkun* for our office, and I've really begun to look forward to reading it when it arrives. Thanks for all of your good work. This morning, I read the article entitled "Historic Election: Obama and Prop. 8" by Lynice Pinkard on p. 18 of your January/February edition. I'm a gay man who was involved with the marriage issue in Massachusetts, and I've had volunteer experiences where I saw or felt the fault line between the gay community and the African American community in New England. I was glad to see *Tikkun* address the perception that the African American vote passed Prop. 8.

I read the same *New Yorker* article that Pinkard cites that stated that Prop. 8 would have passed even with no black votes at all. This fact alone bears repeating over and over. And where Pinkard steps away from facts, she writes with passion and heart. When she writes that we should transcend "self-interests to create authentic bonds of solidarity across lines of difference," I'm with her. I'm with her when she states facts, and I'm with her when she passionately states a vision for an alternative future.

I can't go with her, however, when she states as facts broad assertions with no supporting references or explanation, specifically: "Homophobia among white working-class people is similarly an effect of class oppression." Her argument gets a little traction when she explains that a group that feels oppressed often in turn

oppresses another. With that said, I grew up in and came out in a white Southern working-class family, and I've hobnobbed a little with some well-to-do New Englanders. I know poor Southerners who weren't homophobic, even without any remedial efforts at transcendence, and I've known wealthy people who were implacably homophobic in the absence of oppression.

I would not deny that income level is one of several factors that predict or contribute to homophobic behavior. It's never been proved to be the main contributing factor and there's no evidence of a direct cause-and-effect relationship, however. Sorry to be nitpicking about one point in a single article, but when you state as fact something that is not widely understood to be a fact or can't be proved to be factual, you lessen the credibility of the article and magazine.

J.D. WILSON
Lexington, MA

CARING FOR ANIMALS

I AGREE WITH JOSEPHINE DONOVAN that caring about others is crucial, but I dispute her dichotomy between female humans who care and male humans who make abstract rules (January/February 2009). As historian Lynn Hunt shows in *Inventing Human Rights*, empathy is the basis of rights. Wealthy white males initially established them, but they protect all who've obtained them better than exhortations to caring possibly can.

Caring plays out differently in different circumstances, sometimes with negative results, as in spoiling a child or maintaining human-generated "breeds" of animals for human purposes, including love. Rather than continue forcing ourselves on nonhuman animals—that, not cruelty or lack of empathy, is the main source of human-caused suffering—let's work for their right to live free from human domination, though it will

take a long time and won't show signs of success in the short term.

DAVID CANTOR
Glenside, PA

Josephine Donovan replies:

I DON'T BELIEVE I IMPLIED THAT only women care and certainly didn't intend that. Indeed, in an article in *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics* (2007), I credit the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers (men) with developing the concept of sympathy, seen as a basis for ethical care.

I too oppose breeding for human-pleasing traits, and other dominative practices, but I believe that non-dominative—dialogical—relationships can exist between humans and nonhumans, obviating the need for blanket liberation, which does not seem practical, given the diversity of animals, and would surely lead to unintended negative consequences.

OBAMA

EDUCATION UNDER OBAMA

NOW THAT THE EUPHORIA OF THE Obama election has waned, it is time to put pressure on the next administration to address the higher education issues raised by Henry Giroux (November/December 2008). Obama's choice of Arne Duncan—whose pro-business, penal-based view of education has been devastating for the Chicago system—for secretary of education reveals that Obama's administration is unlikely (and probably unwilling) to champion the changes that we need. It is also hard to imagine how the Obama presidency will shake off the last seven years of a culture of fear during which we have suffered severe restrictions on civil and political rights. The post-9/11 environment has been fundamentally hostile to conceiving of the university as a space within which to promote democratic values. It is too easy to see these changes as

inevitable or intractable, as moved by market forces and global realities. But, in fact, these policies and the ideologies they depend on are vulnerable because they rest on an impoverished idea of learning and thinking; they relegate the student to nothing more than a market driven drone, faculty to technicians, and research to pro-U.S. propaganda. Now more than ever is the time for a forceful and clear articulation of a progressive agenda for higher education. And, thankfully, Giroux has inspired us to fight for one.

SOPHIA A. McCLENNEN
University Park, PA

NO TIME FOR REALISM

IN YOUR MEMOS TO OBAMA section (January/February 2009), thank you for pointing out the necessity for moral vision even as President Obama pursues legislative goals in a political way. President Reagan was savvy enough to see that if he reiterated his main themes he was able to sway the entire country and get his basic vision implemented. Thus restoring patriotism and defeating communism, huge abstract goals, became a reality. Had Reagan tried to be more realistic, he probably would have failed. President Obama has a huge opportunity to use his victory to push forward all kinds of themes. Fairness, generosity, and humanity could become his presidential themes. Let's encourage him to state his progressive vision boldly!

AMY STORBAKKEN
via email

HEALTHY LEADERSHIP

JOHN WELWOOD'S CALL FOR NEW U.S. leadership grounded in the notion that a "sane society is based on healthy relatedness" (January/February 2009) could not be more eloquently insightful. He insists that "we need a new politics based on love and wisdom, one which cares for the web of life and works toward repairing the sacred, broken bonds of

interrelatedness that keeps us all healthy and sane."

Dr. Welwood's recognition of leadership in transpersonal psychological terms is not only on target, it offers the president and all of us a holistic strategy to move our country forward again as global leaders and citizens. We are all related to each other and to the environment we share. We have suffered much from our own divisive national and international policies, and we have often given our foreign counterparts valid reasons to reject us. I was pleased to read about the need for "toning down the rhetoric of war and promoting friendship." I am confident that this is the direction that we will be traveling; and many of those who opposed it, will so benefit by it that they will be forced to reconsider many of their political assumptions.

I found the concluding advice one that not only President Obama needs to heed, but we should all also take to heart: "embody well-being yourself." I am grateful for this extraordinary issue of *Tikkun*, and I hope that you will publish more issues that are filled with as much wisdom, love, and sage advice.

JOSEPH L. SABBIONDO
San Francisco, CA

OBAMA AND AFGHANISTAN

RABBI LERNER, YOU WROTE, "I wish [Obama] had not committed himself to 'forging a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan.'" I agree this sounds ominous, but it is a great improvement over what his website said during the campaign, which was "finish the job in Afghanistan." The only possible solution in Afghanistan is multilateral negotiation with all Afghanistan's neighbors; and hopefully "forging peace" can be interpreted to mean that. Even if those of us outside the administration have to encourage that interpretation.

PETER DALE SCOTT
posted on Tikkun's website

ON DISAPPOINTMENT WITH OBAMA'S INAUGURATION

WE [SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES] must not let our egos get us into an uproar. We must let go of any sense of offense that we have taken by not having our cause mentioned in one speech. We must remain outside the White House, on the blogs and on the radio and TV (when we can get on) as that voice crying in the wilderness ... we need to work in our communities, organizing and protesting and testifying in council chambers for laws that take burdens off the poor, advocating health care, end to war, end to executions, more just and open government on all levels, and a restoration to civil decency and compassion in our society. The fight is not over; we may not stop now. But in this and all things when it comes time for praise, we must say "Non Nobis Domine, non nobis. Sed Nomini tuo da gloriam" (Not to us, O Lord, not to us. But to your Name give glory). For we are spirit-driven people and should not be concerned about material things and ego things like praise.

We belong outside the halls of power and it would be a mistake (the one the Fundamentalists make) to believe that we should be "in power." Did Jesus take temporal power? He was offered it and clearly could have done so. But that was not his message. As a recent "convert" to Catholicism, I have been an avid reader of the Church's history. I feel it was clearly a mistake to make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. It was also a mistake for the Church to interfere in European and Middle Eastern political structures. These mistakes have laid the groundwork for the problems of today. Let us follow the example of the saints and the Buddha. We shall work in the slums, streets, allies, and swamps of the world. We shall have disreputable people as companions and we shall show them the way to hope, love, and peace. No matter what your faith.

JOHN DAVIS
Bristol, VA

A Post-Capitalist World?

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO, WITH THE FALL OF THE Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall, it appeared that democratic capitalism was triumphant in the great ideological battle of the twentieth century between communism and capitalism. As Francis Fukuyama declared, it was the “end of history.”

Yet, as we experience the first year of this century’s Great Depression, governments in the United States and Great Britain are buying ownership stakes in their banks and other critical sectors. As President Sarkozy trumpeted, “Le laissez-faire, c’est fini.” And Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan, with characteristic understatement, said, “The teachers now have some problems.”

Is history beginning again? Is the ideology of democratic capitalism being challenged anew?

Democratic capitalism is under attack from domestic critics, like those writing in *Tikkun*, who believe that the system is driven by money and greed and produces immoral outcomes. Yet, in my Contrarian view, democratic capitalism allows individuals the greatest liberty to choose their life direction; it allows investors the power to allocate capital to the best ideas; and it allows buyers and sellers to make their selections based on price and quality (which includes ethical quality). Efforts to organize those choices by juries, by vague criteria of “social value,” or by government or tribal fiat, either in a Jubilee Year or more generally, will prove to generate, not mitigate, inequality and injustice. The recent near collapse of the financial sector is persuasive evidence of the need for greater government oversight of the U.S. and global financial system, but it is not a basis for wholesale substitution of government for private choice.

Democratic capitalism is also being challenged on the world stage. The world’s economic system is migrating from largely independent national systems driven by private investment and consumption decisions of industrialized nations to a fully integrated global economic system with a growing mix of government-owned sectors motivated by national political goals. The sources of capital and enterprise ownership in such a global economy are not just private in character. China has become the world’s largest creditor; the sovereign wealth funds of the Middle East control enormous pools of investment capital; Russia uses its control of natural gas supply to increase its political control over Ukraine and Europe.

It is not clear whether private enterprises will be able to successfully compete with government-owned enterprises. If not, the United States may be compelled to take increasing ownership and control of key economic sectors in order to maintain our prosperity and economic independence.

Should we continue to seek to promote democratic capitalism in this new global order, and, if so, why?

Economic Considerations

WHICH ORGANIZING THEORY OF GLOBAL ECONOMICS PRODUCES greater prosperity? I believe the answer is clear: a system of private capital and ownership generates higher rates of innovation, productivity, and better economic performance than government-managed systems. In recent history, the United States—with 5 percent of the global population and the dominant share of economic output—has been the envy of the world. China’s recent increase in per capita wealth (created by opening its markets to private enterprise and private capital) reinforces that point. And, of course, other fast-growing countries like India and Brazil increasingly rely on private capital.

Social Considerations

WHICH APPROACH PRODUCES A GREATER DEGREE OF INDIVIDUAL freedom, economic opportunity, and social justice? A comparative examination of individual opportunity and economic equality in the United States, China, and Middle East would, I believe, lead one to conclude that the U.S. system is better at reflecting those values than government allocation of capital and enterprise ownership. Many criticize the degree of income and asset inequality in the United States, and appropriately so. Let them examine those measures (and freedom) in Saudi Arabia, Russia, or China.

Ecological Considerations

WILL GOVERNMENT-OWNED ENTERPRISES CONSUME FEWER natural resources and do less damage to the environment than private enterprise? There is no question that environmental damage due to “externalities” must be mitigated through regulation, as they are in the United States and Western Europe. But China’s government-owned coal-fired power plants produce ecological damage, whether privately or publicly owned. It is more likely that clean-tech innovation will occur here than in a government-managed system.

In my estimation, the global system of government control and management will produce less global prosperity, individual freedom and social equity, and environmental innovation. We will debate, within the U.S./European context, how best to tweak the line between government regulation and private decision-making. That line will no doubt move in the coming years, but, contrary to the majority of economists writing in this magazine and to the editorial views of *Tikkun*, this Contrarian believes that we should not abandon our fundamental reliance on an economic system based on individual freedom and private capital. ■

George Vradenburg is publisher of Tikkun, and often disagrees with our editorial opinions.

Support Obama to BE the Obama YOU Voted For

THE TITLE OF THIS EDITORIAL communicates the strategy we've adopted to deal with a complex political reality facing spiritual progressives. In my memo to Obama in the January/February issue of *Tikkun*, I explained why I had faith in President Obama but also promised that we would act as the prophetic voice of a religious Left, as opposed to those parts of the religious Left that are cuddling up to the president and imagining that they can have the greatest influence by avoiding confrontation with his policies.

Since then, the disappointments with the president's choices have grown in many parts of the liberal world. Instead of being "inclusive" in his cabinet picks and the selection of his top advisers, President Obama has primarily brought in recycled advisors from President Clinton's ill-advised center-right administration. He has given us economic advisors who played a major role in creating the worldview that generated our economic meltdown, and he has totally ignored the social change movements without whose backing he would never have won the Democratic Party primaries: the anti-war movement, the environmental movement, the human rights and civil liberties movements, and the civil rights movement. His decision to double U.S. troops in Afghanistan is a moral and political disaster. He has neither clearly articulated goals nor a plausible exit strategy; he continues the intellectually incoherent and morally perverse "war or terror"; and he guarantees the death of innocents.

During the 2008 election, Obama seemed courageous in rejecting Hillary Clinton's ludicrous charge that "negotiating with Iran" was somehow a gift to Iran's leaders. Yet now he rejects negotiations with Hamas until its leaders recognize Israel's "right to exist"—something that they will never do (nor need they in order for Israel to gain lasting security)—thereby tying the United States to the failed strategies of the right-wing governments of the State of Israel. And his economic bailout lacks vision or plausibility, while his willingness to give hundreds of billions more to the banks and investors who used the first part of this "bailout" giveaway to enrich themselves, and his refusal to insist on our rights as taxpayers to own and



This was NOT the foreign policy team YOU voted for. President Obama, Vice President Biden, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton listen to Defense Secretary Robert Gates speak. Next stop: Afghanistan quagmire.

SUPPORT OBAMA TO BE THE OBAMA YOU VOTED FOR

NSP CONFERENCE APRIL 29–MAY 2, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Obama needs your support—and the best way to support him is to provide a counter-voice to the inside-the-Beltway pressures.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

- A Spiritual Progressive Perspective on the Economic Meltdown and the Path to Recovery
- Why the Afghanistan Quagmire is Not a Smart Path to Peace
- The Global Marshall Plan and the Strategy of Generosity
- A Path to Healing for Israel/Palestine in Light of Israel's Election and the Rise of Hamas
- Meetings with Congress, spiritual practice, and strategies for building a spiritual progressive movement in the next year.

TO REGISTER

Register online at www.spiritualprogressives.org

To register by mail, make your check out to Tikkun and send it to: NSP Conference c/o Tikkun 2342 Shattuck Ave, Suite 1200, Berkeley, CA 94704

REGISTRATION FEES Add 1/3 more if you are not a member of NSP or if you are registering after April 1
 \$100 for anyone with family incomes under \$50,000 per year
 \$150 for anyone with family incomes of \$50,000 to \$120,000 per year
 \$250 fee for those with family incomes over \$120,000 per year
 \$45 fee for students with current student ID card

FINANCIALLY STRESSED? Tell us your situation and what you can afford, and we'll work something out (email pete@tikkun.org).

control these beneficiaries of our largesse, will be viewed by future generations as stupid at best.

Yet how do we make these criticisms without simultaneously acknowledging our joy at having in the White House an African American intellectual whose basic human decency has already led him to suspend some of the criminal activities of the Bush administration with regard to torture and denial of human rights? Well, for some the answer simply is, “keep quiet, be patient, and in his own time he’ll do all the good things liberals want.”

But that is not how Obama works. It’s obvious from his appointments and his policies that Obama responds more to those

making a ruckus outside his camp than to those whose support he takes for granted. To be politically relevant, spiritual progressives have to become visible critics where that criticism is morally required. Yet we must do so in a language that embodies our genuine respect for Obama and our genuine belief that he can be called back to his own highest values.

That’s why we need you to come to the Network of Spiritual Progressives’ conference in Washington, D.C., April 29–May 2. Your voice needs to be heard, your presence seen, and your willingness to support prophetic critique turned into a public presence. ■

I Have Cancer

... and yes, you can help me deal with it

A Personal Note from Rabbi Michael Lerner

IN LATE JANUARY THE RESULTS OF A BIOPSY SHOWED THAT I have a relatively rare form of lung cancer (I’ve never smoked). The doctors believe that this cancer may be “stage one” and hence could be treated through surgery, and I might be able to avoid chemotherapy or radiation treatment. So even though it is cancer, it is not necessarily a death sentence!

I’ll post updated information in the “Rabbi Lerner” section of www.tikkun.org, so you can go there if you want to know how I’m doing. You can also post a personal message for me there (for business messages, please send emails to will@tikkun.org; during my recovery period I will probably check the website but not my personal email).

People have started to ask if they can help me in some way. Well, yes, there IS something you can do that would be very helpful.

The first thing you can do is to pray for me, or if prayer is not your thing, you can use meditation, song, poetry, words, or actions to communicate to the universe your desire to support my recovery!

The next thing you can do is to support me in my efforts to make this health challenge an opportunity for deep inner growth, opening up higher levels of understanding not only through my head but also through my heart, so that I can be more fully aligned with the struggles and suffering on this planet, and more fully able to contribute at the deepest levels to the healing that is so badly needed everywhere, including in myself.

My doctors believe that the stress levels in my life are too high, in part because of being over-stretched as rabbi of Beyt

Tikkun synagogue, editor of *Tikkun* magazine, and chair of the Network of Spiritual Progressives. So, I think I need to ask your help in reducing the amount of work and worry I have in keeping the network alive.

The solution is to get much more help in running the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP). Those tasks have fallen largely on my shoulders, particularly after the growing financial crisis and consequent reduction in funds from memberships forced us to reduce the NSP’s staff size to one (me). I can’t do this without much more help from you.

I’d be delighted if you decided to help me renew and rebuild the NSP with your ideas and energy.

I’m particularly excited about anything you’d be willing to do to exert leadership in your own sphere (e.g. in your professional community, church, synagogue, mosque, or ashram) that doesn’t require time and involvement from the tiny staff at *Tikkun*/NSP or from me. Too often I get letters saying, “Rabbi Lerner, why don’t you do x, y, or z?” The ideas are often terrific, but my capacities are limited. But anything YOU can do—please do it! Make it happen—you hereby have my permission (the only restriction: that you do it in a kind, gentle, generous, loving, and compassionate way).

In case you’d like some specific ideas, I’m presenting loads of specifics here. But let me also be clear that you are already doing enough if you are a paid-up member of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, because that, in and of itself, makes a huge difference. It’s also appreciated if you are making donations at the highest level you possibly can afford. (If you forgot to renew, or if you would like to donate, you can do so now at www.spiritualprogressives.org.) And, yes, it would be even more terrific if you decided to donate even more (all tax deductible, of course) or if you consciously committed to one of more of the specific tasks below.

1. Help me spread the basic ideas of the NSP everywhere—to your friends, to your church, synagogue, mosque, or ashram, and to your coworkers or professional colleagues. Perhaps you are already doing that and could figure out a more systematic way to

do this every day, or three days a week, or once a week. Or perhaps you could write me and tell me how you are already doing this, so that I know what you are doing and hence can build up my own certainty that we have a nascent movement growing. But what do I mean by our basic ideas?

- A. We need a New Bottom Line such that institutions, corporations, social practices, our educational system, our legal system, and even our personal behaviors are judged efficient, rational, and productive, not only to the extent that they maximize material well-being, but also to the extent that they maximize love and generosity, kindness and caring for others, ethical and ecological sensitivity, and to the extent that they enhance our capacities to respond to the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur of creation.
- B. The war on terrorism is not going to work. War and domination as instruments of homeland security are the wrong strategies. It is through caring for and generosity toward others that we can most successfully provide security for our families, our country, and ourselves. People in most countries may not yet be ready to give up their militaries, but we may be able to convince them that each nation's military should stay inside the borders of its own country, and that every dollar spent on the military should be matched by another dollar to fund our alternative for homeland security: the Strategy of Generosity. We seek to achieve homeland security through overt caring about the well-being of everyone else on the planet. Our plan for a Domestic and Global Marshall Plan is a specific way to achieve this goal.
- C. The goal of liberals and progressives should not only be equality of material circumstances, but the creation of a global society in which love and generosity, ecological sensitivity, and awe and wonder at the universe permeate all human relations and determine our social priorities. It is this—not how many computers, cell phones, or other new technologies get produced—that is what we mean by *progress*. Saving the environment globally requires a shift to this concept of well-being and progress. This is what our schools must teach and what our corporations and legal system must embody. Only an economy organized around those principles will be practical in terms of global survival.
- D. We build for these goals in ways that avoid demeaning those with whom we disagree, but instead recognize that they too are created in the image of God. But we do not let our insistence that they are created in the image of God impede us from throwing our full energy into removing them from positions of power, overturning their economic system, or putting them in prison when they have violated basic human rights. (We could start there with the enablers of torture in the Bush administration.) Respect for the other is consistent with nonviolently resisting negative policies with all our strength, thereby rejecting the kind of nonjudgmental, nonconfrontational, “who am I to judge others or call others’ policies evil?” kind of moral relativism that sometimes permeates New Age spirituality. We need a

spiritual politics in which we encourage forgiveness and compassion, but not moral relativism or the inability to struggle to replace systems of domination. And simultaneously, our task is to speak to the part of every human being that really does want a new kind of world. We need to help each other overcome the fear that our desires are unrealistic or utopian, when in fact what is utopian is imagining that the planet is going to survive without a drastic and fundamental new orientation toward activities considered “efficient and productive.”

- E. We recognize that even in those with whom we disagree, or in those who are deeply cynical, there is a part that yearns for a different reality, wants real loving community, and values generosity and caring. It is actually these decent and good desires that lead them to seek “communities of meaning and purpose” of any sort they can find—which often turn out to be ultra-nationalist or fundamentalist religious communities. Our task is to uncover and help reconnect people to the legitimate part of their need structure that is not fulfilled in contemporary capitalist societies, and to help them find a different and more loving way to fulfill those needs.
- F. We refuse to accept global capitalism as the ultimate and only possible economic arrangement, but we also reject bureaucratic socialist solutions. Instead we insist on the possibility of building a new global economy that seeks to promote our New Bottom Line. For that reason, we also question “solutions” to the current economic crisis that assume the current economic system to be unchangeable and only seek to bolster and rebuild it. We are not advocates for repair of a system based on values that privilege materialism, selfishness, and the interests of the powerful, whether that system calls itself capitalism, socialism, democracy, or some kind of religious society. What counts for us is this simple question: when it comes down to the decisions being made on a day-to-day basis, how much do the values of the New Bottom Line determine the outcome? There is enough for everyone on this planet, and we can build an economic reality that shares what we have and also preserves the planet from needless exploitation to create unnecessary consumer goods.

I know you agree with some or all of these ideas. What I don’t know is whether you are yet willing to be a recruiter of others for these ideas and for the NSP. If you are, I’ll feel a lot less alone.

2. Help me build a campaign for the Domestic and Global Marshall Plan—to have all of the advanced industrial countries dedicate between 1 percent and 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty years to end global and domestic poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care, as well as to repair the global environment. Last year we had a congressional resolution introduced to support our plan, but it never got out of committee. In these next two years, you could help by getting your local city council, your state legislature, and your congressional representatives and

AFTER THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS

How could the Right lose, when all four of the leading parties were vying for who could be most extreme and militaristic?

Labor's Ehud Barak led the vicious and murderous attack on Gaza, imagining that the slaughter of 1,400 Gazans—including hundreds of children and hundreds more adult civilians—and the consequent revving up of jingoistic and militarist rhetoric would bolster his electoral credibility. He forgot that when people are led to think in those terms, they want the *real* militarists. So instead of strengthening Labor, Barak only increased the support for Likud's Netanyahu and his more explicitly fascist former ally, Avigdor Lieberman (who campaigned not against Israel's Palestinian neighbors, but against Israel's own Arab citizens). Former Labor voters may have jumped to Tzipi Livni to head off the far Right, ignoring the fact that she had been a chief cheerleader for the Gaza war and that her campaign did everything possible to show that she too would be tough on Palestinians.

There was no voice using the wisdom of the Jewish tradition to critique the militarist and racist consciousness that shaped the public discourse of the February elections—no voice that was close to presenting the ideas of reconciliation, atonement, reparations, and generosity that *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives believe are necessary for Israel to achieve lasting security. So don't expect those ideas to emerge from any likely Center/Right coalition government in the coming years.

senators to endorse the resolution. That way we can get serious attention from the Obama administration. And you could get endorsements of the Generosity Strategy and the core idea of the Global Marshall Plan (GMP) from your local churches, synagogues, mosques, civic organizations, professional organizations, etc.—even though they are nonprofits, they are legally allowed to back the core ideas and pass a resolution saying so!

I don't expect you to do this all by yourself. You could get a group of people to work with you. How to create such a group? Get a time and place, and then contact every media agency and every religious, political, civic, and charitable organization in your town and invite them to come to this first meeting. If you set it up,

we can a) give you names and addresses of people in your area who might be happy to receive a postcard from you telling them that you are organizing this process, b) send you a short video to introduce the topic to your gathering, and c) send you our brochures on the GMP.

3. National leadership. If you are someone with oodles of talent and experience as a leader or major organizer for a national organization or social change movement, or a dynamite fundraiser, or a person with fantastic contacts in the media or with oodles of access to political leaders, and you feel fully on board with *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives' approach, write a letter to will@tikkun.org introducing yourself, describing what you would like to bring to the Tikkun Community, and what kind of a leadership role you'd like to play. If you have the talent, but haven't used it yet in a way that has demonstrated past "wins," do that first on the local level where you live by organizing something for us, and then after that has happened, send an email to will@tikkun.org. If you are a clergy person *currently serving a church, synagogue, mosque, or ashram*, please join our Clergy Advisory Board.

4. Special talents. If you know how to use the web effectively, use it to get NSP and *Tikkun* better known, especially to younger people. If you are a filmmaker or videographer, make a film or video about NSP/*Tikkun* or the Global Marshall Plan. Or help us make a "training film" for people who want to become activists but need some help. If you are a writer, approach media to pitch a story about *Tikkun*, about the campaign for a Global Marshall Plan, about the campaign to support Obama to be the Obama we voted for, or about our unique approach to Middle East peace. If you are a grantwriter with lots of creativity, write a grant to help us get funded (read our websites thoroughly and come up with your own funding ideas and how you'd present them, then write for approval to will@tikkun.org)—either to a foundation or to a corporation that does corporate giving. If you are a songwriter, write a *Tikkun*- or NSP- or Global Marshall Plan-related song. If you are an artist, develop art for use on our website or in *Tikkun*. If you fluently speak and write a language other than English, translate our Global Marshall Plan and other key documents from the *Tikkun* and NSP websites into your language. Then we can create a website in that language so that more people can learn about the *Tikkun* and NSP perspectives. It would be terrific to have websites in Chinese, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian, Arabic, Hebrew, or any other language.

5. Come to our national conference April 29–May 2 in Washington, D.C. If the operation goes well, I should be able to be there, even though in a greatly reduced role. I want to meet face-to-face with people who could help take over the NSP and reduce my load within it. There will be four foci of the conference:

- A. Supporting Obama to be the Obama for whom we (and tens of millions of others) thought we were voting.
- B. The campaign for a Global Marshall Plan.
- C. Israel/Palestine.
- D. The building of a true network of spiritual progressives.

We are holding the conference in the middle of the week partly so that you can go to Congress, partly to coordinate with Christian Witness for Peace, which will hold its prayer session on the evening of April 29, and partly to make it possible for people who have to be in their synagogue or church on the weekend to be there with us during the week. Don't let money hold you back: while we can't subsidize your travel or accommodations, we can reduce the registration fees for anyone who needs that reduction, so please don't let the money be the obstacle, because I want and need you there. I would much prefer to lower or even waive the registration fee if that is the only way you can afford to come. But we can't do that at the door—you need to contact us by the end of March with such a request (email pete@tikkun.org). Help us spread the word to everyone in your religious community and in your professional or civic or social change organization, as well as to your neighbors, friends, and everyone on your email lists. Also tell anyone you know in college or graduate/professional schools, including young people who are the children of your friends.

6. Join or start a chapter. Join and activate an existing NSP chapter if there's one you like. Is there no local chapter in your area? Or did the chapter that got formed turn you off? Create a new one if there isn't one in your community or if the one that does exist feels like it's not going to be able to give you what you need. If you went to one and found that the people were not really energized to do something that excited you, this might be a time to help us recreate the chapter in your area or create a second one that would explicitly focus on the activities YOU choose to make happen. To help in this, please read my article about some of the problems we've faced in building the NSP. The article will be on our website under Current Thinking at NSP (www.spiritualprogressives.org).

7. Or, forget about the "chapter form" and create a monthly gathering of progressive religious or spiritual leaders in your community across denominational or religious lines. How? Well, you could write a letter to every clergy person or every church, synagogue, mosque, and ashram that you find listed under "churches" or "religious organizations" in your community. Tell them about our New Bottom Line and our ideas for a Global Marshall Plan. Tell them we're creating a safe place for spiritual progressives to get together and brainstorm, and then invite them to your apartment at a particular time and date (don't worry, if you send out a hundred such letters, you can expect a return of at most 5 percent or five people, so your apartment will not be too small for the first meeting).

8. Run a fundraiser for the NSP, maybe as small as an evening in your home in which you ask people to pay \$20 to help support the GMP. Or create a concert or some other fundraising event, or approach people with money or money connections to get them to use that money or connections to help fund NSP.

9. Challenge the media: send a daily email, or even better (because more effective, since people now understand how easy it is to just send an email) a snail-mail letter to media people. Your

letters could challenge how the media agencies are handling the issues of the economy, Israel/Palestine, the GMP, etc., or they could insist that the reporters consult and quote people from the NSP. You are hereby delegated to speak in our name, once you've read and agreed with the Spiritual Covenant with America, the Global Marshall Plan, and our *New York Times* ad, and once you've joined the NSP as a dues-paying member. We have great lists of media people to contact at our websites. And you can also write to your elected officials, frequently! If you can't figure out what to write, consult www.spiritualprogressives.org, and we'll have prototypes of the kinds of letters that need to be written.

10. Invite friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc. to come to your house some evening or weekend afternoon to watch some of the videos introducing people to the NSP perspective, and then get them to join (and write the check on the spot).

11. Send to your (or your friends') children or grandchildren a letter urging them to become (unfortunately unpaid) **interns at our Berkeley, California, office** for one academic year (September–June). Click on "Jobs" at Tikkun.org to learn more. And meanwhile, send them a gift subscription to *Tikkun* magazine (order it at www.tikkun.org).

12. Use your phone for Tikkun/NSP. We need people to make phone calls to welcome new people to our community, to find out why some specific people didn't renew their subscriptions or memberships, and to just keep in touch informally. You could be the caller from your phone if you're willing to pay the costs of long-distance calls. For more information, email kay@tikkun.org.

13. Join. If you haven't joined NSP yet, or haven't renewed your subscription to *Tikkun* (or never did subscribe), please do so now at www.spiritualprogressives.org.

Well, perhaps you have other ideas about what NSP needs. Again, DO IT—make it happen without depending on me or on much staff time. Not because you don't deserve it, but because we don't have it to give (at least at this historical moment). If you need specific advice, or to get materials from us, email pete@tikkun.org or will@tikkun.org—they will help.

Help make this whole NSP thing happen in such a way that whether I am alive or not, whether I am a leader or not, the whole thing is sustainable and sustained—in short, make me personally irrelevant. Take the ideas and make them yours. And finally, spread as much love, generosity, kindness, forgiveness, and joyful celebration of the grandeur and mystery of the universe (or as I would put it, of God) as you possibly can!

If you can do any of this, this cancer will turn out to be, like so much of life, a blessing in disguise. And if you can pick up the work in any of the above ways, I'll be able to do the thing that is hardest for me: step back, spend more time writing and teaching, and more time developing my own inner spiritual resources. What a gift you'd be giving to me! ■

Devout Women Say No To Their Second-Class Religious Status

by Leora Tanenbaum

WHEN WOMEN IN A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY DEMAND GENDER EQUALITY, they are often accused of trying to stir up trouble: critics say they have disavowed their femininity, they are not “really” religious, or they are feminist Jezebels.

Observant Judaism is central in my life, as is motherhood. Contrary to what people may say, my religiosity and motherhood strengthen rather than diminish my commitment to gender equality.

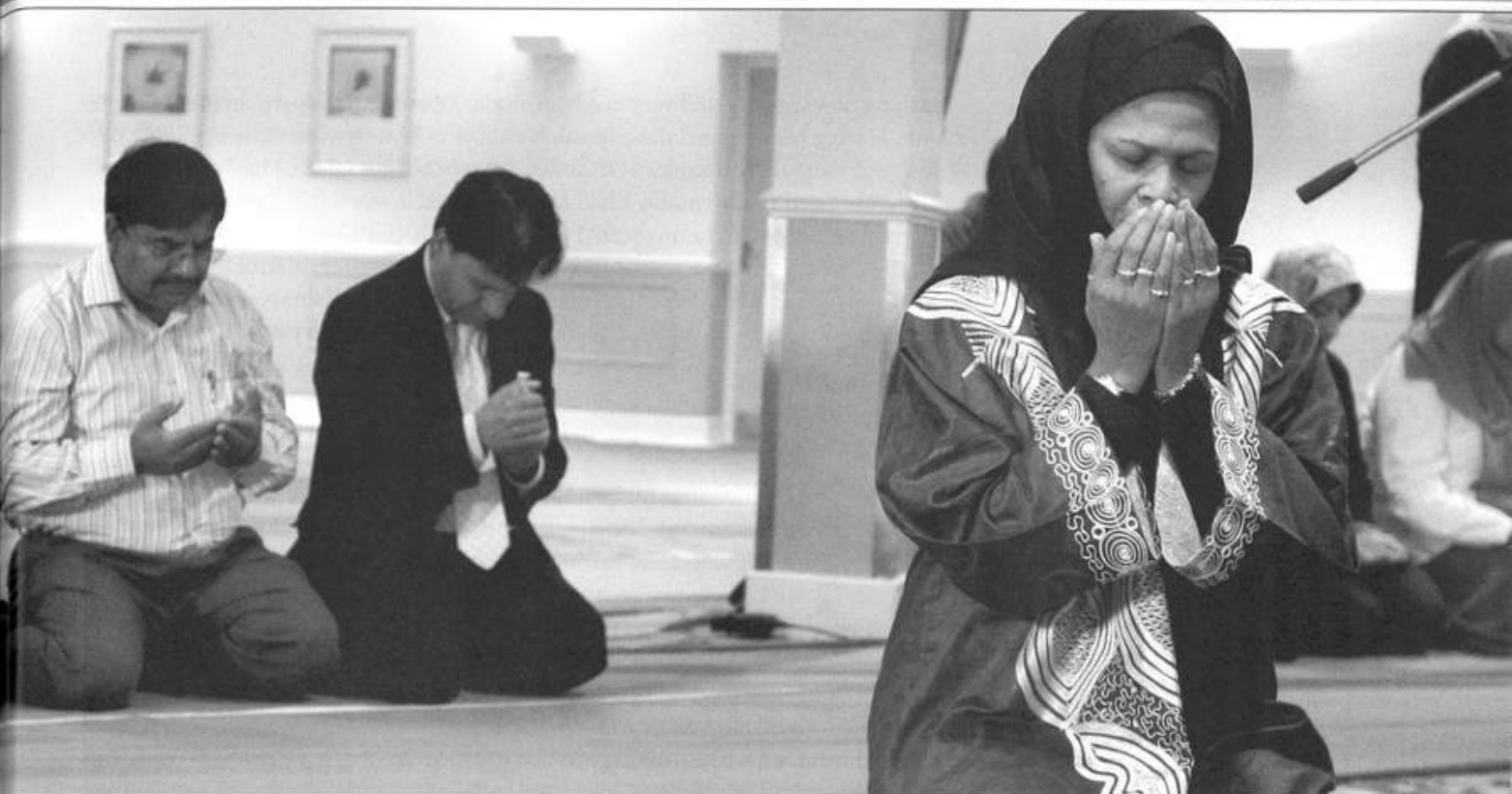
I respect halachah (Jewish law) and adhere to it to the best of my abilities. Jewish law guides many, if not most, of the small and large actions I take every single day. I observe Shabbat and Jewish holidays, observe *kashrut*, and believe that the Torah and rabbinic literature are holy. I raise my children and maintain my household in a way that is connected to centuries-old Jewish laws, customs, and culture.

Yet I also am committed to equal rights for women. The issue of women's status in halachic Judaism remains a sore spot for me, as it does for many other women. There is more work to be done in the struggle for women's equality, especially within the Orthodox movement, which segregates the sexes and assigns them different roles.

For the sake of remaining rooted to traditional Judaism, I'm willing to make some compromises to my feminist ideals. For example, although it goes against the grain of much I hold dear, I tolerate sitting in a separate women's section in my Orthodox synagogue, provided that the physical barrier is neither high nor obscures my view. I send my children (two boys) to Orthodox day school where only boys wear Jewish ritual garments, even though religious authorities admit that girls are permitted to wear them, too. In my household, I alone set aside my professional obligations every Friday to undertake “women's work”—the myriad domestic tasks that enable my family to enjoy a restful Shabbat, complete with delicacies we don't eat during the rest of the week.

But I'm not willing to compromise on everything, and there is one area in which I feel passionately that women must be given the same opportunities as men: religious leadership. When women are excluded from religious leadership positions solely because they are female, it's a very short step to excluding them from secular leadership positions and arguing that women are not as capable as men. This I cannot tolerate. Besides, when a woman is removed from leadership roles, it is all too easy for her to consequently become distanced from the tradition. This doesn't mean that she doesn't love her religion, but that she isn't given the chance to form as close a bond as her male peers and family.

Leora Tanenbaum is the author of Taking Back God: American Women Rising Up for Religious Equality (FSG 2009). www.takingbackgod.com.

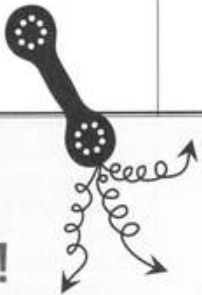


Several years ago, I began leading the weekday morning service on occasion at a Conservative synagogue where my children attended nursery school. In the beginning I took on this role because the synagogue had trouble finding capable lay people who were up to the task, and even though I had never led a service before, I knew I could do it. My only obstacles were stage fright, which to this day I still suffer from, and an intense self-consciousness about my singing voice, which I also continue to experience. But knowing that the community needed someone gave me the impetus to stand at the podium with my annotated prayer book and wobbly voice. And when that first service was over, after I had closed and kissed my prayer book, I realized that I was just as capable as my husband, who had led services many, many times. I could serve the community just as he and so many other men routinely do without giving it any more thought than they do to breathing.

As a parent, it's my job to show my children that women can be religious role models. I began bringing my sons with me whenever I led this service, planting them in the back with books and small magnet toys, so that it would appear natural to them that Ima, like Abba, has Judaic skills. But it began to gnaw at me that they were not being exposed to women chanting from the Torah or other sacred writings. I resolved that I would learn how to *leyn* (chant) the special musical cantillation (or *trope*) for the Scroll of Esther. I chose this text as my first because the story—about how Queen Esther, at great personal risk, saved the Jewish people—features a positive female role model and therefore seemed appropriate for my “coming out” as a woman who *leyns*. Again at the Conservative synagogue—because women are forbidden from doing this at Orthodox synagogues—I chanted the third chapter of this scroll. When my children ran up to me when I was done to show their pride by hugging my legs, I knew I was doing something right.

I also began attending a traditional monthly Shabbat service, called Yavneh, which had just been established in my neighborhood on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Strictly speaking, Yavneh probably occupies no denominational niche. I consider it Orthodox yet cutting edge. Women and men sit separately with a curtain between them; the prayer book is Orthodox; and the prayers themselves are recited according to Orthodox regulations. But at Yavneh, women may lead some parts of the service and also may *leyn*. The fabric that serves as a *mehitzah* (the partition between women and men) is pushed aside so that women and men can go up to the Torah, which is in the middle. I have *leyned* Torah at this service too. My husband has made sure that the boys are in the sanctuary, not the playroom, when Ima is chanting.

Professor Amina Wadud breaks new ground as the first woman to lead a public Islamic prayer service for both men and women in England (Masonic Hall, Oxford, October 17, 2008). Professor Wadud's first mixed-gender prayer service was held in New York in 2005.



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Learning how to leyn—still very much an ongoing process for me—is an incredible experience. Having been denied the education of how to leyn from an early age (only boys took classes in trope at the modern Orthodox day school I attended), I had never thought much about what it really entails. I had always figured it was a skill that either one was taught and one mastered, or one wasn't and one didn't. But I discovered that leyning is much more than a skill. It is a sensory way of experiencing the Torah. In order to leyn, one must crack a code of squiggly lines and markings, as well as vowels and punctuation, none of which actually appears in the Torah scroll itself. Therefore, when preparing to leyn, one learns by heart not only the words of the Torah but also its rhythms, as well as something intangible—its soul. When I am learning and practicing my leyning, I feel as though the Torah is inside my head, heart, and body. It is an organic part of me.

Why would anyone want to deny this experience to girls and women?

I have come to believe that the primary reason male religious authorities exclude women (and gay men) from full participation is that this act defines their faith in opposition to the contemporary world and to competing denominations. The exclusion of women (and gay men) is an identity marker that demonstrates authenticity. Orthodox Judaism staves off the individualism of the Conservative and Reform movements. Catholicism stands in opposition to Christian reformation. Evangelical Protestantism resists the liberalism of mainline Protestantism. Traditional Islam distances itself from contemporary culture and from other religious worldviews. Curbing women is a symbol, a shorthand communication of resistance to change. When you hear that a specific religious community does not allow women's ordination or men and women to sit together in worship, you know that it sees itself as the last distinctive holdout against a chaotic culture lacking in boundaries.

I understand and respect the need for a community to take a stand in favor of a particular worldview and to reject alternative worldviews. I support firm boundaries in many contexts, religious and otherwise. But it seems wrongheaded to put women in the crossfire. Women do not need to be sacrificed for the sake of tradition. It doesn't even make sense to deny full religious experience to women, since they are usually the ones with power in their homes and can determine the extent to which their families will adhere to religious tradition in the first place.

Besides, Orthodox women today are the best Judaically educated Jewish women in all of history. Over the course of the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first, there has been a surge of Orthodox girls and women seeking to study Torah and Gemara in depth. They know the halachah. They know which *mitzvot* they are permitted to perform. They can cite the Talmud upside down and sideways. And that is precisely what they are doing. They are speaking up, drawing from their extensive knowledge to collect their religious rights.

The movement of girls and women learning Torah at an advanced level was not motivated by rebellion against the contemporary world or established Orthodoxy. Those who want to rebel tend to leave Orthodoxy for another denomination or ditch the tradition altogether. Rather, the movement stems from a sincere and genuine desire to form a close connection with Jewish tradition. Nonetheless, according to theologian Tamar Ross, women's learning has become a "time bomb." Now that women have access to the inner sanctum of tradition, it's not possible, or desirable, to tell them they can only go so far but no further.

This phenomenon is hardly limited to modern Orthodox Jewish women. Religious women from different faith communities similarly embrace Bible and Qur'an study, which empowers them to become more actively involved in their faith. They are taking back their faith intellectually. The more they learn, the more they discover that they love their tradition and want to honor it as faithfully as they can—which means being full, active participants, if not leaders.

Among Catholics, there is a network of women becoming illicitly ordained as priests. The Vatican excommunicates them, but many Catholics nevertheless want to see a woman in a leadership role. In December, the National Coalition of American Nuns went public in

its endorsement of women's ordination and of Roy Bourgeois, a renegade priest who is facing excommunication by the Vatican because of his support for female priests.

Evangelical Protestant women are challenging scriptural interpretations that place husbands as "heads" over wives, who are instructed to be "subservient." They are protesting churches, schools, and seminaries that refuse to hire women to teach classes that include male students.

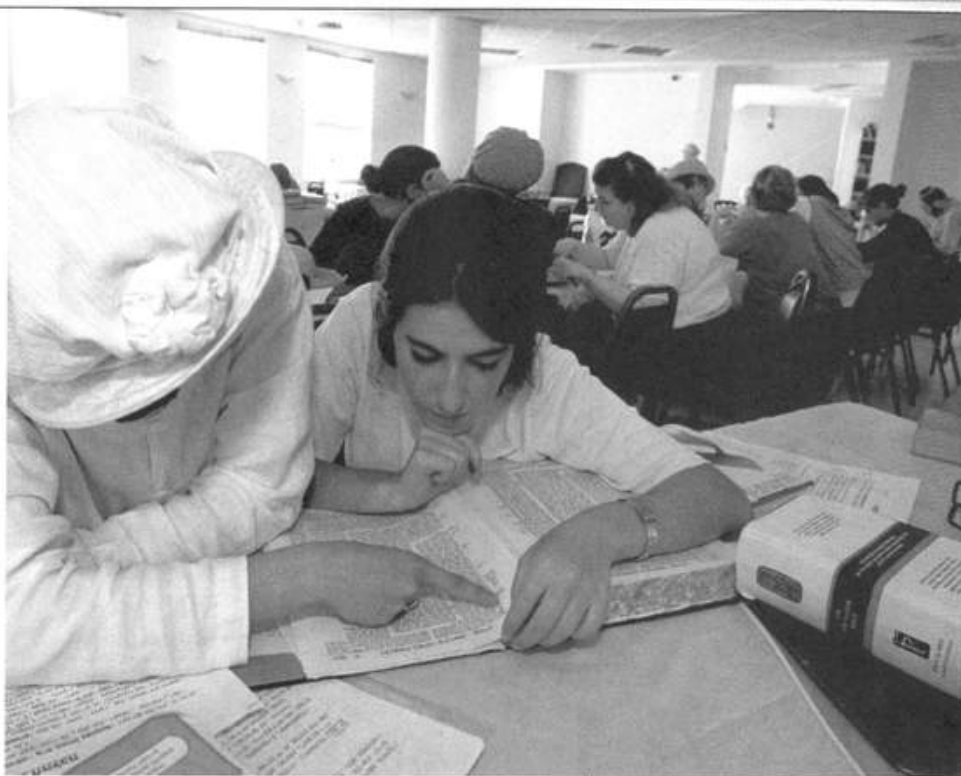
Muslim women are participating in prayer services in which a woman recites the *khutba* (sermon) and women pray adjacent to men, instead of behind them. An internationally publicized woman-led prayer was held in New York City in 2005, with scholar Amina Wadud serving as imam. Inspired by the power of that service, several other women occasionally serve as imam in Boston, as well as in Canada and South Africa.

In addition to Yavneh, there are over a dozen similar prayer groups—labeled "partnership *minyans*" by the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance—in Jerusalem, Los Angeles, Chicago, New Haven, Cambridge, Queens, the Bronx, Manhattan, and several other communities.

To the devout woman who wants to experience her faith to the fullest, here is my advice:

- Educate yourself about your religion. Self-assurance, independence, and empowerment flow from literacy. Join or start a Bible or Qur'an study group or other type of religious reading group. If you can, lead a group to educate others. Or read and learn by yourself. Don't feel ashamed or embarrassed if you know too little: no one, no matter how learned, fully understands divine truth.
- Press your religious leaders to be as innovative as possible. Schedule an appointment with them; email them; come up to them after worship. Although we need grass-roots pressure from lay women and men, we also need knowledgeable leaders unafraid to push against boundaries that limit us all. Leaders and lay people must work together.
- Put your money where your faith is. When you tithe, give *zakat*, or give *tzedakah*, choose the beneficiary of your money wisely. Many people unreflectively give their charitable dollars to traditional religious organizations that promote ideas about women they themselves do not hold. But there are many alternatives. Organizations such as the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance; Agunah International; *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives; *Lilith*; Call to Action; the Women's Ordination Conference; FutureChurch; Catholics for a Free Choice; the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus; Call to Renewal; *Sojourners*; Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual; Muslims for Progressive Values; Progressive Muslim Union; *Muslim WakeUp!*; the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity; the Foundation for the Advancement of Women in Religion; and many others endorse religious equality for women. Support the organizations, institutions, and publications that reflect your values about women and religion.
- Learn about other faiths; reach out to members of other faiths. The more we know about each other, the more connected we become, and the more we can learn from one another.

No one knows exactly what God intends. It is up to us to figure things out. We will always have multiple answers to our questions. And this is a good thing: wrestling with interpretation can only yield a richer understanding of our religion. ■



Young Jewish women pour over religious texts during a study session at Nishmat, the Jerusalem Center for Advanced Jewish Study for Women, July 14, 1999. Just a few years ago, women had little access to such classes since very few higher institutions of Jewish learning for them existed in Israel. Now eighteen such Orthodox seminaries for women thrive in the country.

Sarti

by Abby Caplin



The name "Sarti" comes from the Hebrew word "hasartan ham'soogar" (hermit crab), literally "closed crab."

IT WAS THE WEEK BEFORE PURIM THAT SARTI DIED. SARTI—THE TINY HERMIT CRAB we had brought home during Chanukah, an energetic, tough-minded, two-inch-long bundle of moving mouthparts and flirtatious eyeballs in a pearly shell—was no longer with us. Our nine-year-old daughter, Sarah, had just left for the weekend, kissing her "Crabby Boy" farewell and expecting to see him again soon.

We had noticed him slowing down, spending more time in his shell and burrowing into the gravel. But I was not prepared for the shock I felt when I picked him up and noticed a peculiar stillness. Hoping to wake him, I placed him gently near his water dish. Sarti's tiny body, pale and brittle, fell from its shell and broke into several pieces. I stepped back, horrified. How quickly he had died! I called for my husband; I couldn't look at the devastation.

He bravely gathered Sarti together with his shell and placed him into an empty cardboard Fuji film box, cushioning him with Kleenex. "Poor Sarti!" cried our four-year-old, Isaac. We decided to hold the funeral when Sarah returned.

Upon hearing the bad news, Sarah was overcome with shock and grief. I held her as she cried. After a while, she began to wonder. Had we cared for him improperly? Was he sick? How many "crab years" old had he been, anyway?

That night, our family solemnly gathered together in the backyard, dug a hole, and gently lowered the tiny coffin by flashlight. We took turns shoveling teaspoonfuls of dirt

Abby Caplin, MD, practices mind-body medicine in San Francisco, serving women with autoimmune disorders. She leads workshops for patients, physicians, and medical students on meaning in medicine and humanizing health care.

into the grave and used a discarded toothbrush as a headstone. In the windy dark, we told Sarti how much he meant to us in the short time that we knew him.

And then came Purim, the Jewish holiday when we recount the story of Esther. During Purim we remember how Haman plotted to kill the Jews, and how Esther concealed her Jewish identity from her husband King Ahashverosh, until she was able to expose the evil Haman. It is a time to laugh off danger, much as a person might enjoy a horror film once the lights have been turned on. Children and adults wear costumes and masks, disguising themselves as creatures of their own desire, temporarily shedding their constricted personae for a taste of unrestricted fantasy and mirthful laughter. But despite the costumes, treats, and carnivals, Sarti's absence remained heavy in our hearts.

The next day we left our synagogue's Purim carnival, carrying *hamantashen* (a three-cornered holiday pastry) and a boxed lunch of bagels, lox, and cream cheese, which had been prepared as a fundraiser by the synagogue teenagers. As we approached our car, we noticed a shabbily dressed old man on the grass, looking dazed and hungry. We decided that he was homeless and wondered how he would receive our offer of the boxed lunch.

"Excuse me, sir," I inquired with Sarah in hand. "Have you had breakfast yet?"

As he looked up, the man's elderly mask fell away, revealing the face of a twenty-year-old. "No, I haven't," he replied, gratefully accepting the food. As our car pulled away, we waved, and I hoped that the Purim lunch would help ensure his survival.

That night, we drove to a mountaintop to witness miracles in the sky: the Hale-Bopp comet and the partial eclipse of the moon. I felt insignificant and, at the same time, completely connected to the mystery of the Universe. We recited the traditional Hebrew blessing upon witnessing a wonder of nature. Then Sarah turned to me and unexpectedly asked, "Mom, are you *sure* Sarti died?"

Was I sure Sarti was dead? An image popped into my mind of seeing little crab legs, still and quiet, as Isaac had taken his last look. I had briefly marveled at how my husband had managed to stuff Sarti so neatly back into his little shell before burial. Doubt sent adrenaline coursing through me. Bits of information, long forgotten, began to crowd my brain. I suddenly recalled that hermit crabs must shed their hard exoskeletons in order to grow, and that people can mistakenly believe their pet crabs have died!

Had we made the same mistake? Fear gripped me. Had we buried a living animal? Was it too late?

I confessed my fears to my husband, who wondered at my runaway imagination. He expressed concern at the thought of desecrating the grave of our beloved pet. What would the children think if they looked out the window and saw their mother behaving like a common grave robber? Buried alive! Even if we had done this, how could Sarti have possibly survived being packed in Kleenex and underground for a week?

I couldn't sleep that night. When morning finally arrived, I counted the minutes until everyone left for school or work. Seconds later, I headed for Sarti's grave, a kitchen spoon trembling in my hand.

My heart was pounding. I pushed away the dirt and tore open the soggy Fuji film box, which Sarah had lovingly wrapped and decorated. I gently took his pearly shell into my hand and tapped at it. Incredibly, I thought I detected some movement.

With a few more taps and lots of prayers, "Crabby Boy" peered out, his black beady eyes inquiring about all the commotion. As he pulled his body further out of the shell, I admired his colorful and fresh new physique. He did not notice my tears and relief as he stretched his legs and energetically scuttled across the palm of my hand.

For our family, Sarti and the holiday of Purim will forever be linked. Like Esther's story, Sarti's is about hidden identity, survival, self-revelation, and growth. It is about miracles and salvation. Like Esther's, it is a story in which God's presence is everywhere but never mentioned. ■

Raising Spiritually Healthy Children

by Debra W. Haffner

THE WORDS "SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS" KEPT COMING TO MIND AS I READ THE findings of the recent Pew Forum survey on American religious beliefs and practices. We are indeed a spiritual people: nine out of ten Americans say they believe in God, and nearly 60 percent of us pray every day. But you won't find a majority at the local synagogue or church. Only 39 percent of Americans attend worship services once a week.

There are all sorts of ways to nurture our spirituality outside a faith community, of course. But as a parenting expert, and as a parent myself, I wonder how other parents manage to impart their spirituality to their children. In my work with parents over the past twenty-five years, I have written a good deal about how to raise physically, emotionally, and sexually healthy children. As a minister, I know that raising them to be spiritually healthy is just as important.

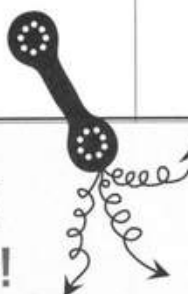
Children have an innate curiosity about spiritual things. As parents, we have a responsibility to guide them in their search for meaning, in understanding how to make ethical decisions, in developing compassion and good moral character. For many of us, involving our children in our faith communities is essential. The Pew survey also revealed that six in ten parents with children at home pray with them, read Scripture with them, or send them for religious instruction. But there are still more ways of nurturing a child's spirituality that don't involve worship or education. Here are some possibilities:

Explore life's big questions in your home. When I work with parents on sexuality issues, I often reassure them that the sex questions that have scientific answers ("where do I come from?" or "how did the baby get in there?") are much easier to answer than the theological questions ("how come I was born?" or "why do bad things happen?"). Parents often shy away from these types of discussions because they mistakenly believe their children are too young to understand them. It is important to honor your children's questions and take them seriously. That means you need to think about what you believe and to share your own questions (and doubts) with your children.

Too often, parents supply children with answers, cutting off discussion or telling them what to believe. A better approach is to encourage your child's sense of faith and wonder, understanding that these types of questions are an opportunity for dialogue and discussion, not lectures. Parents would do well to acknowledge the mysteries of life ("no one knows for sure") while sharing parts of the answers they have found helpful ("it comforts me to believe in heaven").

These types of conversations need not only be about the big questions of life and faith but also about moral decision making, respect, empathy, and justice. Just as with sex and drugs, "teachable moments" arise every day that can help you address moral issues with your children. The news, television, movies, and their experiences at school provide seemingly endless opportunities to address your family's ethics and values about diversity, tolerance, and

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equality. Discussions around moral quandaries and topical issues help children develop the ability to make their own good moral and ethical decisions.

Create rituals. Rituals nurture a child's sense of spirituality. How your family celebrates religious holidays is part of it, and these holidays help give children a sense of faith security. But there are everyday rituals as well, such as moments of gratitude before meals or blessings at bedtime. Parents might have a special way of saying good night and affirming their love that children learn to count on. You can keep delivering those special words in text messages or on the telephone as your children begin to spend time away from home.

We can also develop rituals for secular events. How do you mark birthdays, report cards, the first day of vacation? Do you do something special the first day of school each year? What happens in your family when your child loses a tooth? Is there something special you do on the last day of school? I have held "last carry" ceremonies with each of our children. Around age five or six, they became too heavy for me to pick them up. I wanted to mark this particular transition from toddlerhood to childhood, so with each of them, I picked them up for the last time, carried them around their rooms, and placed them down with a blessing for the "last carry."

Promote an ethic of action. *Tikkun olam*—or "repair of the world"—can be kindled in every child's upbringing. You can teach your children that spirituality, ethical treatment, and social action are intimately connected, whether or not your family practices a particular religion. Providing your children with opportunities to be of service is one way to develop their sense of compassion and good character. Two Hebrew terms—*mitzvah* (good deed) and *gemilut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness)—sum up the sense of responsibility that we can nurture in our children.

Children learn their responsibilities to the world in their homes. If you are involved in social action, share it with your children. Even the youngest children can accompany you to a soup kitchen or a visit to an elderly neighbor or family member. Signing your family up for a night at a homeless shelter or helping with a Habitat for Humanity project provides opportunities for family connection and service. For teenagers and children in upper elementary school, the list of social action options includes many possibilities: tutoring, providing free babysitting services, collecting food, running recycling drives, painting murals in vacant lots, planting trees and community gardens, organizing neighborhood cleanups, and more. Synagogues and churches may provide volunteer activities for youth, but so can 4-H, Scouts, and Boys and Girls Clubs.

The lesson for all parents, both religious and nonreligious, is the same: it is our job to nurture our children's spiritual well-being. How we talk with our children, the milestones we celebrate, and the compassion we model for them are among the ways we ensure that they become the faithful adults we want them to be. ■

Adapted from *What Every 21st-Century Parent Needs to Know*

by Debra W. Haffner.

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Alexander Sinclair, 6, spreads bark with a rake, June 20, 2008, at Kiwanis Park in Post Falls, Idaho during Windermere Community Service Day, on which employees and their families volunteer to benefit their communities through local neighborhood projects.



The Ten Commandments Should Be Interpreted as Deliverance for the Vulnerable

by Glen Stassen

THE HEADLINE AT THE BEGINNING IS THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING ALL TEN OF THE commandments: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Exodus 20:2).

The name of God throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, YHWH or YHVH, is represented in Christian Bibles as "the LORD." That's not a translation; it's a substitute for the holy, unpronounceable name. But what does it mean?

Scholars don't know where the word "YHWH" came from. When they guess its meaning based on the origin of the word, or its connection with Exodus 3:14, variously translated as "I AM WHO I AM" or "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE" or "I CAUSE TO BE," they offer a variety of suggestions. I propose instead to ascertain its meaning by how it functions in context, in Exodus 3 and 6.

Moses was keeping his father-in-law's flock on the mountain, just minding his own business, when suddenly God gave him a job—to lead the people out of oppression. It wasn't Moses's idea. Moses said: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? If they ask me, what is his name, what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am," and instructed him to say, "YHWH has sent me to you.... This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations." This revelation of the name of YHWH in Exodus 3 and 6 is so important that three different biblical traditions come together here. We can ask if any clues to the meaning are repeated in all three traditions.

All three traditions say YHWH is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Each got in a jam, and God delivered them. Abraham was about to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Jacob was coming back home after hiding out for fourteen years, afraid his brother, Esau, would kill him. God delivered them, and made a covenant with each of them. Five times God tells Moses he will be faithful to his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:25; 3:6; 3:15; 6:3; 6:8). Five times God tells Moses, I will be with you, I will deliver you from the oppression of the Egyptians (3:8, 10, 12, 17; 6:6-8). So God's name connotes "I will be present with you, I will be faithful to my covenant with you, and I will deliver you."

Five times Exodus 3 and 6 tell us God experiences the suffering of the oppressed with compassion: "Their cry for help rose up to God and God heard their groaning ... and God took notice of them.... I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings" (Ex 2:23-25; 3:7; 3:9; 3:16; 6:5). So God's name also means "I am present to hear the cries of the oppressed and see their misery, and I know their sufferings with compassion."

Moses removes his shoes, for this is holy ground. And he hides his face, for he is afraid to look at God. YHWH is mighty and majestic; holy both in the sense of having compassion for the oppressed and delivering them, and in the sense of having the might to deliver them. We notice that when the psalms address YHWH, they often say, "Hear me," "Do not turn your back on me," "Have compassion on me," "Deliver me." It seems clear that YHWH connotes the One who hears our cries, sees our needs with compassion, and brings deliverance to those in need. Or as the prophet Isaiah often says, "the holy One of Israel, our Deliverer."

Glen Harold Stassen is the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. His Kingdom Ethics won the Christianity Today award for best book of 2004 in theology or ethics.



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We are delivered from legalism and self-righteousness if we interpret each commandment not as a legalistic rule based on an authoritarian God. They are based on a delivering, compassionate God:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.

People in the ancient culture didn't think those idols were literally gods. They thought the idols *symbolized the character* of the gods. The point is that *the character of YHWH is revealed in the Exodus*. The antidote against idolatry is to say God is revealed in the Exodus, not in some idol.

You shall not misuse the name of YHWH your God.

As Jesus interprets this commandment in Matthew 5:33-37, it concerns swearing by heaven (a stand-in for the name of YHWH), or by some other holy thing to deceive someone into believing you are telling the truth or will carry out a promise. It uses the name of YHWH—who cares especially about the vulnerable—in order to make someone trust you and become a victim of deceit.

Remember the Sabbath day, by keeping it holy.

Exodus 23:12 states the reason unmistakably: "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien [immigrant] may be refreshed." The reason is rest for the weary, especially the powerless weary, most vulnerable to exploitation.

Honor your father and your mother.

The Ten Commandments were given primarily to adults whose parents were elderly, who did not have social security, who were dependent and vulnerable to abuse by their offspring's greed. How you treat your elderly parents is probably a measure of how you treat orphans, widows, immigrants, and the poor.

You shall not kill.

Can there be any question that the potential victims of murder are vulnerable and in need of deliverance?

You shall not commit adultery.

The adultery of a married man with a married woman victimizes two marriages, and their community. Anyone who has been the victim of adultery committed by his or her spouse knows the pain of this breach of trust, loyalty, and deep covenant with the spouse and with God.

You shall not steal.

By contrast with the Texas man who murdered two burglars as they tried to enter his neighbor's house, despite urging by the 911 operator to wait for the police to arrive, and by contrast with our market-driven culture of possessive individualism, the Bible places a much higher value on persons than on property. The penalty for killing was death, but not for stealing. But being robbed is nevertheless an experience of being victimized.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

The context is a legal trial, and your neighbor will be unjustly victimized if you bear false witness against her or him.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

To focus your desire on how you can steal from your neighbor is to violate the core nature of YHWH, who will hear their cries, come to deliver them, and bring you to judgment.

Conclusion

The Ten Commandments are not arbitrary commands. They are unified by their heading—the character of YHWH, whose name means: "I am present with you to hear the cries of the oppressed and see their misery and know their sufferings with compassion. I will be faithful to my covenant with you, and I will deliver you." YHWH is compassionate and mighty. This can connect for Christians: The name of Jesus is the Hebrew, Yeshua or Joshua. It means YHWH delivers. Jesus heard the cries of the outcasts, the poor, the dominated, the victims of violence, and acted to deliver.

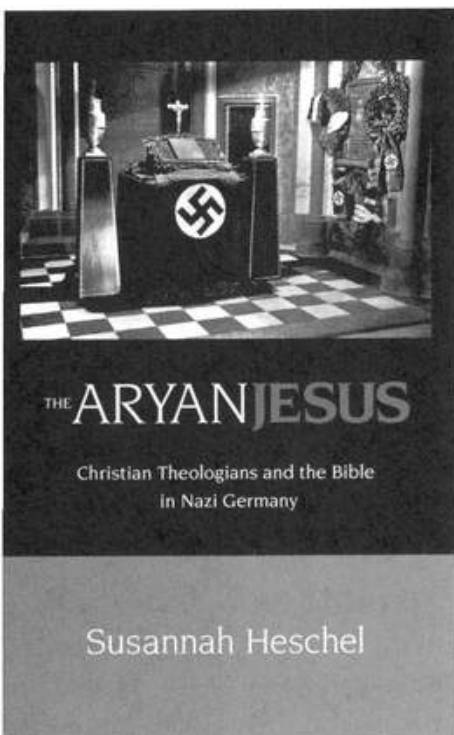
So when some politician pushes to put the Ten Commandments in a government building, you ask whether that politician is an advocate of an ideology or party that stands for deliverance of the weak and vulnerable from oppression by the privileged and authoritarian, or whether that politician is an advocate of an ideology or party that stands for the privileged, the wealthy, and the authoritarian, in their victimizing of the poor, the immigrants, the weak. ■

Moses was minding
his own business
when God gave him
a job—to lead the
people out of
oppression.

Strange Affinities: Biblical Scholarship and the Rise of Racism

A Speech to a Protestant Seminary in Germany

by Susannah Heschel



Editor's note: In January the Pope welcomed excommunicated anti-Semitic Bishop Richard Williamson back into the church, and then, after Jews expressed extreme outrage, claimed that he did not know that Williamson was a Holocaust denier. We suspect that if Williamson had been performing gay marriages, that would have been on the Vatican's radar, and we wonder why anti-Semitism was not. Jews were also deeply offended by the Pope's reintroduction in March 2008 of a Good Friday Latin prayer for the conversion of the Jews as part of the revived Tridentine Mass. Susannah Heschel's research on German Christian anti-Semitism suddenly acquires new relevance. We are proud to present this speech, which she gave to a German Protestant seminary in 2008.

HITLER DID NOT ACHIEVE MOST OF HIS POLITICAL AND MILITARY GOALS, but on the Jewish question he succeeded remarkably. If his anti-Semitic propaganda found resonance, its success can be credited in large measure to the unrelenting anti-Jewish Christian theological discourse that linked Nazi propaganda with the traditions and moral authority of the churches. That link was proclaimed with enthusiasm by Nazi Christians: "In the treatment and decision of National Socialism against Jews, Luther's intentions, after centuries, are being fulfilled" (Wolf Meyer-Erlach, *Juden, Mönche Und Luther*, 1937). Anti-Semitism was the *lingua franca* of the Nazi era and was employed by church leaders to gain credibility with their own adherents—but also out of sincere anti-Semitic conviction. Anti-Semitism was also a tactic in the rhetorical battles among the different Christian factions, Deutsche Christen and Bekennende Kirche, with each accusing its opponents of being "Jewish" while positioning itself as the true Nazi believer.

Already in 1971 the late historian Uriel Tal challenged the entrenched view that racist anti-Semitism is a new phenomenon that repudiates Christianity by arguing that it was actually utterly dependent on Christian anti-Judaism for its success: "It was not the economic crises that brought about this new political, racial, and anti-religious anti-Semitism, but completely the reverse, it was precisely the anti-Christian and anti-religious ideology of racial anti-Semitism which hampered the first anti-Semitic parties in their efforts to utilize the economic crisis for their political development ... [because] what

Susannah Heschel is the Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College and specializes in the history of Jewish-Christian relations in Germany. This speech was given when she received an honorary doctorate from the Augustana Hochschule in Germany in April, 2008, and is based on her new book, The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany, published by Princeton University Press.

still attracted the masses was the classical, traditional Christian anti-Judaism, however adapted it may have become to the new economic conditions." (For citations for this and other statements, see the footnoted version of this article at www.tikkun.org). Tal demonstrated that Germany's anti-Semitic, *völkisch* movements that arose in the nineteenth century had to abandon their initial anti-Christian stances in order to win supporters who found Christian anti-Jewish arguments politically appealing.

Even within the so-called "church struggle" between German Christians and the Confessing Church for control of the Protestant church, anti-Semitism became the glue that united the otherwise warring factions. Similarly, however much Hitler made use of images of messianism, redemption, and other Christian motifs, the most useful and consistent aspect of Christianity for the Nazi movement was its anti-Judaism, just as the single most consistent and persistent feature of Nazism was its anti-Semitism.

While seeking to undermine the political power and moral authority of the churches, Nazism simultaneously appropriated key elements of Christian theology into its own ideology, both in order to win adherents used to Christian arguments and to give its own message a coherence and resonance with the age-old Christian teachings that had shaped European culture. The Deutsche Christen reversed the process, appropriating Nazi rhetoric and symbols into the church to give its Christianity a contemporary resonance. Both the Nazis and the Deutsche Christen identified Hitler as Christ's second coming. That gave Hitler the status of a supernatural being and gave Christ renewed glory as a contemporary figure of enormous political significance.

Meanwhile, Jews were not simply despised, but also seen as a danger to be eradicated. In this as in so many other issues, theologians anticipated and suggested anti-Jewish policy before it was formulated by the Nazi regime. On February 24-25, 1936, a few months after the proclamation of the Nuremberg Laws, but long before Jews were being deported and murdered, a group of theologians, some of whom subsequently became leaders of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Religious Life, met in Dresden to discuss a merger of the German Christian factions of the state churches of Thuringia and Saxony. During the course of the meeting, Siegfried Leffler, a German Christian leader, official in the Thuringian Ministry of Education, and, by 1939, official head of the Institute, stated:

"In a Christian life, the heart always has to be disposed toward the Jew, and that's how it has to be. As a Christian, I can, I must, and I ought always to have or to find a bridge to the Jew in my heart. But as a Christian, I also have to follow the laws of my nation [*Volk*], which are often presented in a very cruel way, so that again I am brought into the harshest of conflicts with the Jew. Even if I know "thou shalt not kill" is a

PASSIONSSPIELE OBERAMMERGAU

27. MAI - 16. SEPTEMBER 1934



A poster advertising the 300th anniversary of the Passion Play at Oberammergau, Germany, 1934. The caption reads: "Germany is calling you!"



Anti-Semitic cartoon published in Kurt Plischke, *Der Jude als Rassenschaender*. Susannah Heschel writes that the image depicts "the crucifixion as the Jewish rape of Germany."

commandment of God or "thou shalt love the Jew" because he too is a child of the eternal Father, I am able to know as well that I have to kill him, I have to shoot him, and I can only do that if I am permitted to say: Christ."

The Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, while perceived by many German Jews as a relief from the fear of far worse legislation, were viewed as an encouragement by the *Deutsche Christen* to take even more radical positions. Legal cases in German courts, brought in the wake of the Nuremberg Laws' criminalization of sexual relations and marriage between Jews and Aryans, and widely reported in the German press, implicated Jews as sexual predators of Aryans. That further encouraged Christian theologians to insist on protecting Christian purity by eradicating Jewishness with even more radical measures. The imagined penetration of Christian bodies by Jews reiterated a typical motif of racist rhetoric, the dangers of miscegenation, and reinforced fears that Aryanism was not immutable, but subject to destruction by Jews. Anti-Semites had long insisted that German Aryan women were vulnerable to Jewish predation, and Jesus, whose gentleness and suffering were viewed as effeminate by *Deutsche Christen*, was depicted in one Nazi caricature as an Aryan woman on a cross with a lecherous Jewish man in the foreground: the crucifixion as the Jewish rape of Germany.

The use of laws and court procedures to control sexual relations within Germany and thereby create the Aryan racial nation was not in contradiction to Christian teachings; after all, as Jennifer Knust points out (in *Abandoned to Lust*, 2006) the apostle Paul, Justin Martyr, and other early Christian writers asserted that those who reject Christ are by definition sexually repulsive, licentious, and "unnatural" in their sexual behavior. Among the post-apostolic writers, the physical, and especially sexual, purity of Christians was the safeguard of moral and religious purity. Thus the Nuremberg Laws could easily be read as upholding classical Christian values and calling forth the sort of theological action that Leffler proposed just months after they were announced.

Why was it so easy to racialize Christianity? What made anti-Semitic ideas so appealing to Protestant theologians in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century? What are the affinities between theology and racism?

Numerous historians have traced the origins of racist thought to the period of the Enlightenment and blamed its emergence on the decline of religious belief. Colin Kidd, however, has argued (in *The Forging of Races*, 2006) not that race emerges as a consequence of the undermining of religion, but that race is implicated as a major factor in bringing about the "unraveling of Christian certainties." Starting in the eighteenth century, race, according to Kidd, helped undermine the foundations of Christian belief: the universalism of its message, the uniqueness and historicity of its teachings, and the reliability and coherence of its Scriptures. By the Nazi era, however, race played the opposite function: in its specific iteration as anti-Semitism, race was used by some theologians as a restorative force of coherence for Christian theology and for interpretations of the New Testament. Racism was viewed by many theologians not only as a political tool, but as an avant-garde method for understanding society and human nature.

By making use of racial arguments in their presentations of Christianity, members of the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Religious Life thought they could bolster the appeal of Christianity to its Nazi despisers. Racism's

argument that distinct and immutable orders exist in society lent support to a "theology of creation." One Institute member, Wilhelm Stapel, attempted to demonstrate that racism supported Christian claims to divine creation: Just as God had created societal orders—marriage, family, hierarchy, property, and so forth—God had given each Volk a task and place on earth. Believers in racial hierarchy could see it as an extension of the biblical account of God's creation of hierarchical orders within nature and society. Christians were told that racial hierarchies were an extension of the divine order. In both cases, the subservience of women to men, and the dominance of animals by humans eased the acceptance of racism.

Within the field of theology, racism was thought to restore the uniqueness, historicity, and significance of Jesus and his teachings, which had supposedly been undermined by historicism. Even if Jesus's teachings did not seem different from those of other Jews of his day, he was seen as distinct in his race—seen as an Aryan and not a Jew. His racial identity was then used to read his teachings not as reflections of Judaism, but as repudiations of it. The goal of the Institute was to use racial theory to eradicate all traces of Jewishness and restore the "original and authentic" teachings of Christianity. That goal was simultaneously political: Institute publications argued that the Jews were violent people who sought the destruction of Jesus and continue to strive for world domination and the subjugation of all Gentiles. The Institute presented the war as a defensive life-and-death struggle against the Jews, and also as a Christian war in the name of the authentic non-Jewish Jesus, the Christianity he sought to bring into being, and the battle to destroy Judaism that he failed to win. Like the German military, the Institute presented its cause as a total eradication of the enemy, Judaism, and not simply its segregation or expulsion from the Reich.

The deJudaization effort of the Institute has to be examined not only in terms of Third Reich politics, but also as a Christian theological phenomenon that engaged a vast number of pastors, bishops, and academic theologians. Christianity came into being by resting on the theological foundations of Judaism, and the relationship of Judaism to Christianity has often been described as a mother-daughter one. Nearly every central theological concept of Christianity rests on a Jewish foundation, from messiah to divine election. Affirming what is central to Christian teaching usually entails an affirmation of a Jewish idea or a text from the Old Testament, so that attempting to eradicate the Jewish was a kind of "theological bulimia."

Ridding Christianity of everything Jewish was racism at the theological level. The appeal of racism to theologians remains a widespread problem not only in Germany and not only in the modern period. Theologians have long placed themselves at the service of racism, even as many have mustered religious arguments to combat it. The specific question raised by this study is how German Protestantism benefited from Nazi racism. Why were a sizable number of German Protestant theologians and pastors so drawn to racial theory that they created a form of racial theology? What theological benefit did they derive from racism?

The affinities between German Protestantism and racial rhetoric lie still deeper than similarities in particular teachings regarding Jews because race is ultimately concerned not with biology but rather with the human spirit. That was recognized by the racists themselves, who were concerned to define the spiritual natures of those they studied. Walter Wüst—a professor of linguistics at the University of Munich and rector of that university from 1941–1945, and later head of the Ahnenerbe, a research center established by SS Chief Heinrich Himmler to study Indo-Germanic origins—made the link between race and religion clear: "Today we know that religion is basically a spiritual-physical human activity and that it is thereby also racial." Indeed, in the SS context, religion could survive only by being redefined as a racial phenomenon.

Long before the Nazi era, the concern of racists was not so much the inferiority of certain peoples' bodies—the shape of the nose or the cranium—as the degeneracy of their morality and spirituality and the alleged threat posed by such degeneracy to superior

racism. The body was presented as the physical representation of moral and spiritual qualities. Physiognomy was interpreted by philologists as signifying linguistic ability, language differences were taken as indicators of cultural levels, and "culture" was often interchangeable with "race."

Indeed, scientific measurements of the body were rejected by leading race theorists, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain, as irrelevant to Aryans, for whom knowledge was intuitive, an argument revived by Grundmann in his claim that Jesus knew God's wishes intuitively, through his heart, in contrast to Jews who know God through reason. What became key to racist thinking was developing the proper hermeneutics: knowing how to "read" the body to learn what sort of moral and spiritual qualities are incarnate in it. The Jewish nose and hair, for example, are not dangerous by themselves, but anti-Semites see the Jewish body as the carrier of a degenerate Jewish morality. Training its readers in the proper hermeneutics for interpreting the Jewish body and knowing its inherent danger was the goal of anti-Semitic texts.

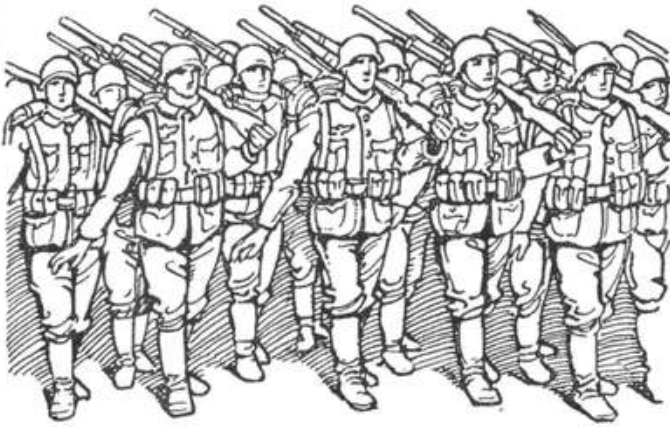
Thus, if physiognomy was described at length as signaling racial difference, it never stood alone. Rather, modern race theorists saw the body as a carrier of the soul, of moral and spiritual potencies, making race theory a kind of theology. As Richard Dyer writes in his study of whiteness (*White*, 1997), "For all the emphasis on the body in Christianity, the point is the spirit that is 'in' the body. What has made Christianity compelling and fascinating is precisely the mystery that it posits, that somehow there is in the body something that is not of the body which may be variously termed spirit, mind, soul, or God." It is the moral and spiritual threat of lesser races—such as Jews—that racists worried about; the inferior bodies of those races were carriers of their corrupt spirits, not causes of the corruption.

The tired argument that racism is about biology fails to recognize that racism emphasizes the dangers posed by the body to the spirit. Flesh is crucial to racist thinking because the body is not simply a symbol of the degenerate spirit; rather, moral degeneracy is incarnate within the body and the two cannot be separated. The Jewish nose, for instance, is not dangerous in itself, but incarnates a moral decadence. The fundamental relationship between body and soul characterizing modern racist discourse is a mirror of the body-soul dilemma at the heart of Christian metaphysics, and is precisely the stamp that Christianity has placed on Western philosophy. Race additionally reinscribes the classical Christian distinction between the carnality of Judaism and the spirituality of Christianity.

Both racism and theology furthermore present themselves as discourses of morality, with particular attention to sexual morals. It is therefore not surprising that in its early years National Socialism professed support of Christianity, with Hitler portraying himself as a religious man defending Christian faith against the enemies of the church—Leftists and Jews. Hitler's use of Christianity was encouraged by the emergence of racial theology; for some Nazi propagandists, Christianity was a wonderful wellspring of anti-Semitism in creating what Richard Steigmann-Gall has called "The Holy Reich." In this sense, too, the Institute's theology might be seen as treating Christianity as the body, National Socialism as the spirit—that is, making the church the bodily carrier of a Nazi soul, thus attempting to make Nazism incarnate in Christianity. At the same time, Nazism itself sought a supersessionist position in relation to Christianity, incorporating its key teachings into its own, more elevated political ideology, exploiting its language and ideational framework rather than trying to destroy it.

Only in the past fifteen or twenty years have historians begun to unearth this troubling history. What to do with its legacy remains a matter of conscience for us all.

I am deeply moved by the honorary doctorate you are presenting to me today, but even more by what it represents: your identification, as Christian theologians, with



335

Adolf Daum, 1936

1. Die Fah-ne weht im Feld, du und
ich im Glied, der Tag gilt uns-er
Ehr, und wir mar-schie-ren mit. Und
fällt der Tag auch hart wie Stein in un-ser
jun-ges Blut, und muß noch heut ge-stor-ben

sein, Ra-me-rad, Gott rich-t es gut.

2. Wir haltens mit der Treu, du und ich im Glied!
Die Treu ist unser Herz, das singt ein tapfer Lied.
Und zählt der Feind wie Sand am Meer, die Herzen
in die Glut! Hell funkeln sollen Treu und Ehr! Kame-
rad, Gott rich-t es gut.

3. Der Tag der geht zu End, du und ich im Glied!
Wir reichen uns die Händ, und wir marschieren mit.
Und macht der Tod uns stumm und bleich, hell ström,
du junges Blut. Ob rot, ob tot, das heilige Reich,
Kamerad, Gott rich-t es gut. Hermann Ohland, geb 1888

336

Ernst Daum, 1935

1. Es brennt ein Feu-er am Ran-de der Zeit, das
brennt den Leib und brennt das Leid. Die
Seel a-ber geht mit füh-nem Schritt durch die
Glut und reißt das Le-ben mit.

the critique of Christian anti-Judaism. When I was writing my talk, a passage from the Bible kept coming to mind: 1 Kings 18-19, the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Elijah mocked the hundreds of false prophets as they worked themselves into an ecstatic frenzy, calling upon Baal and declaring their loyalty to the wicked King Ahab, whipping themselves until their blood poured out. In the end, Baal did not answer. Although these false prophets were defeated and put to death, Elijah did not rejoice. Instead, in deep despair and fearing Ahab's wrath, he fled into the wilderness and longed to die. Gently, God sent an angel to feed him, but that was not enough. Elijah hid in a cave for forty days and nights at the foot of Mount Horeb. And then God appeared to him—not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in a still small voice that gave him the courage to return and continue his prophetic struggle.

In Germany, too, the false prophets were defeated. You were not alive at that time, but the Nazi theologians were your teachers and the teachers of your teachers; their influence extended well beyond 1945, as we know. For some, there is despair, for others, silence; for all of us, horror. Yet Elijah shows us that evil is never the climax of history. In the midst of his despair, he recovered his vision and his prophetic courage. At the end of his life, he left a school of prophets, gave his mantel to Elisha, and ascended to heaven. My prayer is that we remember Elijah, hear that still small voice, overcome our despair, gird ourselves with courage, and take up the prophetic mantle of justice and truth. ■

This hymn, "Die Fahne weht im Feld" ("The Flag Flies in the Field"), is a song of war, proclaiming loyalty to the "holy Reich" and promising that "if death makes us silent and pale ... God will make it right." From "Großer Gott wir loben dich," Weimar, 1941.

Is There a Place for a Secular Person in the Network of Spiritual Progressives?

by Mitchell Silver



NSP members from New York State meet with an aide of Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) on Capitol Hill during an NSP conference, May 2006.

THE HARNESSING OF THE "RELIGIOUS" VOTE TO A right-wing agenda has been one of the most disheartening political developments in recent decades. For all those hoping for a more humane world, nothing has been more destructive of those hopes than this association of religious values with an oppressive moralism, which was then allied with militarism and unrestrained corporate avarice. In that light, the emergence of a movement to reorient religious people to a politics of social justice, and in particular, the formation of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, should be welcomed by all progressives. The question I wish to address in this essay is whether progressive secularists should view the Network of Spiritual Progressives as an institution that they can comfortably call home. Is there a place for *secularists* in the Network of Spiritual Progressives?

Before we can usefully get to substance, we need some semantic ground-clearing. Neither "secular" nor "spiritual" is easily or uncontroversially defined. Under some definitions "spiritual secularist" is a completely unproblematic and well-populated category; under other definitions, it is a logical impossibility. Neither set of definitions serves a fruitful discussion. Rather, we want definitions that give robust con-

tent to both terms—content that suggests a tension, but that doesn't automatically preclude compatibility.

Although "secular" can, and has, been used to mean "concerned with this world," or "non-religiously observant," or "unchurched," I will use the term to refer to those who consciously reject theism and any form of supernaturalism. Of course there are volumes to be said about what constitutes "theism" and "naturalism," but for our purposes, I'm

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hoping we can get away with thinking of theism as the belief that there is a cosmic intelligence (benign?) that is somehow responsible for, or permeates, all of being, and whose existence is relevant to our lives. I take naturalism to be a family of doctrines, prominent members of which include the belief that all things behave in regular, lawlike ways (whether statistically or causally determinant), the belief that miracles don't happen, and the belief that knowledge claims should be tested by applying universally valid logic to observations available to anyone. In crude summation, secularists are atheists who don't believe in magic.

"Spiritual" has acquired even more connotations than "secular." At the narrow end of the spectrum are those who reserve "spiritual" to speak only of experiences of God or of the supernatural. Under that definition, secular spirituality is ruled out of court before any evidence need be considered. By definition, secularists could not be spiritual. At the capacious end of the spiritual semantics spectrum, any highly valued aesthetic or moral experience qualifies as spiritual. Your best feelings are spiritual, and so are you, as long as you've had some really good ones. Others would focus on uncanny or not easily articulated experiences. Here, your weird feelings are spiritual, and so are you, so long as you have weird enough ones often enough. Since beautiful, morally profound, and strange feelings are quite compatible with atheistic, rational empiricism, "spirituality" so defined results in an abundance of uninteresting "secular spirituality."

I shall define "spirituality" in terms of connectedness; connections beyond yourself that provide your life with meaning, value, and purpose are spiritual. The more such connections you have, the more spiritual you are. Experiences of such connections are spiritual experiences. The strength of those connections determines spiritual intensity. Secularists are godless naturalists. Spirituality is constituted by valuable, meaning-giving connections. So much for semantics.

Employing these definitions, we see that there are *kinds* of spirituality that secularists are cut off from. Secularists have no connection to a belief in God or beliefs in a transcendent supernatural realm. Connections to such faith are an important part of the spiritual life of many theists and supernaturalists. Many would claim that their faith in such things is the most beautiful, morally significant, and meaning-giving element in their lives. Indeed, they would claim that without their faith in God and a supernatural realm they would fall into despair—that their lives would not be worth living. This is such an important area of spirituality that some conclude there is no spirituality worth mentioning outside it.

Secularists, however, do experience connections with the natural, godless world that give their lives meaning, value, and purpose. Their friends and family, their clan and culture, house beetles and The Beatles, pacifism and Pleiades, rivers and Rembrandt, the Yankees and Yiddish, the abolitionist movement and Aurora Borealis—all are potentially spiritual objects. The most spiritual of secularists would feel that their connections with all of history, all of life, and all of nature provide their lives with purpose and value. But anyone, secularist or not, who experiences any meaningful and valuable connection, is, to that extent, spiritual. *Spirituality encompasses secular and religious connections.* Religious people usually experience both kinds of spirituality, although often their secular spirituality is intertwined with their religious spirituality, e.g. meaningful relations to other people are interpreted in light of their relationship with God. Secularist spirituality is less expansive.

So whether secularists can find a home in the Network of Spiritual Progressives will depend on whether that network makes room for exclusively secularist spirituality. The Network of Spiritual Progressives will undoubtedly happily accept those who value their connections to the environment and social justice, but will it fully accept those who do not have, in fact make a principled denial of, any connection to God or a supernatural realm? Here the evidence is mixed.

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In a self-description of the Network of Spiritual Progressives we find the following:

We in the Tikkun Community use the word "spiritual" to include all those whose deepest values lead them to challenge the ethos of selfishness and materialism that has led people into a frantic search for money and power and away from a life that places love, kindness, generosity, peace, nonviolence, social justice, awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation, thanksgiving, humility, and joy at the center of our lives. We believe that many of the secular movements that exist in the world today actually have deep spiritual underpinnings, but often they are themselves unaware of those foundations, unable or unwilling to articulate them, and sometimes even holding a knee-jerk antagonism to explicit spiritual or religious language. This antagonism limits their effectiveness, though it derives from legitimate anger at the way that the language of spirituality and religion has been sometimes used to justify war, oppression, sexism, racism, homophobia, ecological indifference, or insensitivity to the suffering of the poor and the homeless of the world.

To a progressive secularist's ear, the first part of this description is inviting. Most progressive secularists so value their connections to others and to the natural world that a rejection of "selfishness" and an embrace of "love, kindness, generosity, peace, nonviolence, [and] social justice," does permeate their ethical outlook. Moreover, the natural world, although literally disenchanted for secularists, can still fill them with awe and elicit wonder. Just because I believe that the Bach Cello Suites, as well as the planet Saturn, are completely the creation of natural processes, doesn't mean that I am not awe-struck at their existence, nor that I am not puzzled at just how nature achieved these wonderful effects. And if "humility" means an acute awareness that we will never figure it all out, nor will we ever be able to fully live up to our highest ideals, and we should therefore act and judge others accordingly, then secularists can count themselves among the humble.

"Thanksgiving" is a little trickier for the secularist, because it is not clear that gratitude makes sense without someone to be grateful to. But secularists can surely feel that many of the good things in their lives (what the religious call "blessings") came to them through no merit of their own. Consciousness of this fact should not only make secularists feel lucky but should also color their attitudes toward those who, through no fault of their own, have been less lucky. If the practical import of being "thankful" is a readiness to return the favor, this sense of unearned good fortune, which leads secularists to help the unfortunate, makes secularists functionally "thankful."

Finally, you don't need God to make "joy," rather than "a frantic search for money and power," a central value of your life; you just need a sane appreciation of what is really valuable. So far, the secularist can feel right at home in the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

However, then come some troublesome statements. Secularists agree that many secular movements have "deep spiritual underpinnings," but bridle at the claim that they are "unaware of those foundations." That secularists don't acknowledge *religious* spirituality as the foundation of their political or moral commitments, does not mean that they are unaware of the *secular* spiritual foundations of those commitments. Religious people may find their anti-racism grounded in their religious faith. Secularists are not less conscious of the foundation of their anti-racism merely because it is grounded in their belief in the moral worth and equality of all humans, a worth and equality derived (as the secularist sees it) from human nature, not from God. A cursory glance at the literature of moral and political philosophy, or at op-ed pages for that matter, demonstrates that secularists are hardly "unable or unwilling to articulate" the "spiritual underpinnings" of their commitments. It's just that when articulated, they are different from the religious "spiritual underpinnings." It makes secularists nervous when their unwillingness to assert religious forms of spirituality is mistaken for a general unwillingness to claim any spirituality. It's as if either their (continued on page 78)

NETWORK OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESSIVES

(continued from page 32)

secularist spirituality isn't real spirituality, or, at least their understanding of it is defective. Lastly, although there may well be "knee-jerk antagonism to explicit spiritual or religious language," there may also be a thoughtful opposition to endorsing such language, and not only out of "legitimate anger" over the right-wing abuse of religious language for reactionary purposes (although there is that), but also out of concern that such language does not reflect the secularist's understanding of reality, human experience, or moral life.

What this means is that if the Network of Spiritual Progressives is to become a comfortable home for progressive secularists, it must broaden and deepen its spiritual pluralism. The pluralist ideal goes beyond tolerating the Other, and beyond mere formal inclusion. The pluralist ideal asks us to be sensitive to the Other's self-understanding and respectful of the Other's experience. Including the Other fully requires mindfulness that she is part of the group. The pluralist ideal is not achieved when a straight institution allows gays to join, but rather when the institution either becomes completely neutral regarding sexual orientation or it honors and respects all sexual orientations equally. That demands, for example, avoiding language in institutional life that assumes heterosexuality. Likewise, an institution that aspires to spiritual pluralism should avoid practices that tacitly exclude or show disdain for any spirituality, including principled secular spirituality.

Within the world of religious spirituality, progressives have made great advances in implementing pluralism. We've learned how to speak of God in general enough terms so that worshippers of Brahman, Yahweh, Jesus, and Allah can all feel included. The challenge now is to find spiritual language and practices that are as respectful and inclusive of the godless naturalist as they are of the religiously faithful. Just as Americans had to learn that to include Jews as full and equal members of American religious life, Jesus

had to be kept out of pluralistic religious institutions and events, or relegated in those institutions to a role of just one, not especially privileged, manifestation of genuine religion, so too spiritual progressives must learn that if we are to have fully inclusive, pluralistic spiritual institutions, God must be relegated to the role of one among many possible bases of spiritual life.

I'm certainly not saying that God, indeed some very specific gods, shouldn't be central to the life of many spiritual groupings. It is good that there are institutions serving different scopes of pluralism. There should be churches that assume that all of their members are Trinitarian Christians. If those who held Trinitarian beliefs only had access to institutions that tried to serve equally all Christians—let alone Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, and atheists—then their communal spiritual life could never be authentically expressed in its full specificity. When such Christians join an ecumenical Christian organization, there is loss and gain. They cannot sing the songs they sing in their own church—songs which give precise voice to their spirituality—but they can sing Jesus' praises with a lot more people.

If the Network of Spiritual Progressives stretches to include spiritual secularists as equals, there will be loss and gain for its religious members. The inspiration generated by institutional talk of God and faith would have to be saved for less pluralistic settings, and therefore its religious members would find that the Network of Spiritual Progressives could only be a vehicle for part of their spiritual lives. On the other hand, that part of their spiritual lives served in the Network of Spiritual Progressives would be significantly enriched by adding to their fund of meaningful connections, enlarging their community of common purposes and shared values, and working with more people for peace and justice. All of this growth serves to enhance spiritual life.

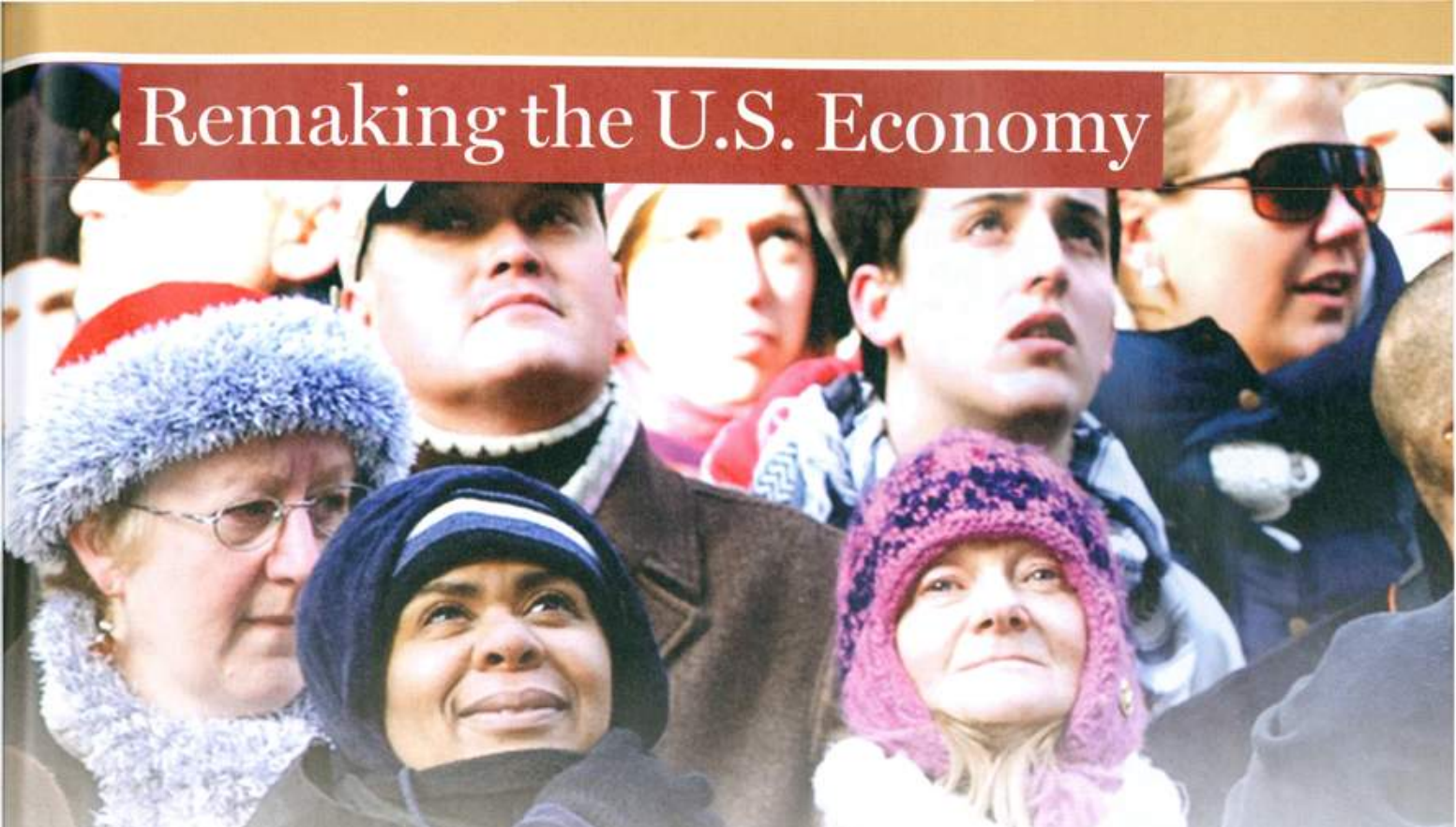
Participation in the Network of Spiritual Progressives would also require constraints on the expression of secularists' spirituality. The Network of Spiritual Progressives is not a place where the

secularist can celebrate the marvelous creativity of blind nature, nor a place for communal contemplation of humanity's heroic struggle for justice in an indifferent, amoral universe. But, like the religiously spiritual, the secularist is well compensated for joining a spiritual organization that limits her spiritual life.

First, of course, there is the non-spiritual compensation of increased political effectiveness that comes from broad coalition work and strategic alliances. That is an important benefit to both the religious and secular. Regardless of the kind, or extent, of one's spirituality, all progressives benefit from working together to advance a progressive agenda. Greater numbers and coordinated effort usually bolster effectiveness. Moreover, (still staying on the instrumental level of political effectiveness), the deployment of spirituality, as the Religious Right has shown, adds a depth to political commitment that energizes political action. Progressives who can unite on spiritual ground will be more effective political actors.

But the Network of Spiritual Progressives, as a spiritual organization, offers another, purely spiritual, benefit. Besides being a political home for progressive secularists, the Network of Spiritual Progressives can be a spiritual home for them. There is an intrinsic spiritual satisfaction of working for one's vision of the good with the widest group of people who share that vision, and participation in the Network of Spiritual Progressives can give secularists that spiritual satisfaction. Naturally, just as Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and religious Jews in the Network of Spiritual Progressives will need additional, more specific spiritual homes, so too will secularists.* Still, like her religious brothers and sisters, the secularist can lead a richer spiritual life for being in the Network of Spiritual Progressives. But for that to happen, we all, religious and secular alike, need to broaden our ideas of the spiritual. ■

* For example (to name only a few), *The Ethical Culture Society*, *Humanist Society of Friends*, *Society for Humanistic Judaism*, *The Center for Naturalism*, *American Humanist Association*, and *The Workmen's Circle/Arbetering*.



Remaking the U.S. Economy

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A New Economy and the End of Empire

by David Korten

*There must be some prophetic minds at Trinity Wall Street, an Episcopal church in the heart of New York's financial district. For its thirty-ninth theological conference this January, the Trinity Institute chose the topic "Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability." The institute booked David Korten, a well-known critic of corporate America, as one of its speakers. Then the economy melted down. In response to the meltdown, Korten wrote an analysis of the economy that became the cover article for Tikkun's final issue of 2008. Prompted by a fast-working publisher, Korten developed that article into a book, which was published in time for the late January conference at Trinity. This article is an edited version of the speech he gave when launching the book, *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*. Videos of the conference presentations may be viewed on the Trinity Wall Street Institute website: www.trinitywallstreet.org/education/?institute-default.*

Part I. Inner Spirit vs. Public Myths

OUR NATION TODAY STANDS ON THE BRINK OF A GIANT STEP FORWARD. WITH A NEW LEADER OF GREAT PROMISE WHO embodies our multicultural society, we are poised, perhaps as never before, to shed our historical adolescence and move on to a new national maturity. We must declare our national independence from Wall Street and set about to build a new economy devoted to meeting the real needs of life.

That advance can only be achieved through the co-leadership of religious institutions that are once more driven by their informing inspirations. Outmoded assumptions and false values must be put aside and replaced by a rededication to the nation's founding ideals of universal liberty and justice, as well as to the core teachings of the world's great religions.

Many problems confront us, but they ultimately come down to two defining issues. One is our wanton destruction of God's creation—of the living earth that sustains us and is our home in the vastness of the cosmos. The second is the unjust division of what remains of that abundance between the profligate and desperate in our society—a division perpetuated by widespread, ongoing, and self-destructive violence.

*David Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule the World* and *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, is cofounder and board chair of YES! magazine and a board member of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies. See davidkorten.org.*



*Visions of the future:
green community ...
or empire?*



Both are crimes against God. Both are crimes against ourselves. Both are by our own collective hand.

It is a curious thing. As individuals, we generally appear reasonable and intelligent, but, collectively, our actions are often pathologically suicidal. Today, we have no choice but to resolve that contradiction in favor of intelligence—collective intelligence. Given the path we are on, we must either heal our collective self or perish as a species. A necessary centerpiece of that project is to replace the culture and institutions of a failed economic system with the culture and institutions of a new economy.

The Myth of “Lifting All Boats”

OUR PROBLEM BEGINS WITH A PERVERSIVE CULTURAL STORY—CONTINUOUSLY REINFORCED by the corporate media—that would have us believe our economy is functioning splendidly, even when it is quite literally killing us.

All of us have heard this story many times:

Economic growth, as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), creates the wealth needed to provide material abundance for all, increase human happiness, end poverty, and heal the environment. Since this rising tide lifts all boats, the faster we consume, the faster the economy grows and the wealthier we become.

The story is familiar, but have you ever suspected there is something not quite right about it?

What’s wrong is that GDP does not in fact measure our progress toward a better life for all. Instead, it tells us the rate at which the economy is extracting useful resources from nature, running them through the economic system, and then disposing of them as toxic waste in our air, water, and soil. I was stunned when I first realized the truth that our current economic policies and institutions are all based on the stupid idea that the faster we convert useful resources to toxic garbage, the richer we are. It is rather like burning down our house to keep warm and fanning the flames to make it burn faster. As individuals, only the terminally insane would make this foolish error, but as a nation and as a species we seem not to notice.

We have yet to translate our individual intelligence into an effective collective intelligence.

The only true beneficiaries of our current collective order are a small group of very rich investors who reap the financial gains generated by large corporations. They are positioned to benefit financially from every economic transaction—irrespective of whether the transaction is beneficial or harmful to society.

Here, in summary, is the big picture: we are taught to believe that economic growth is making all of us better off; in fact, it is only benefiting the people who are already rich, while impoverishing us all by destroying the environment. The result is a growing class divide that is destroying both the social fabric and the moral foundation of society. The economic growth system is a failed system.

Economic Transformation

WE CANNOT RESOLVE THE ISSUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION AND EXTREME inequality by treating the symptoms. In most countries—particularly the most profligate, such as our own—it is necessary to reduce overall consumption; redistribute available resources from rich to poor; and transition from destructive and non-essential uses of resources to those that are essential and beneficial.

This requires turning our present economic system upside down and inside out. It requires ending war and converting to a peace economy; eliminating automobile-dependence in favor of compact communities that bring home, work, recreation, shopping, and other aspects of our lives into close proximity; curtailing advertising and redirecting those creative resources to education; ending financial speculation; and redirecting investment to productive sustainable enterprises devoted to meeting community needs. This list is just a start.

Serving Two Masters

IT COMES DOWN TO A BASIC QUESTION: WHAT PURPOSE DO WE EXPECT THE ECONOMY TO serve? The answer is ultimately spiritual. The choice is framed in this well-known scriptural verse from the Sermon on the Mount:

No one can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24).

Mammon refers to wealth as an object of worship; the worship of a false god; a form of demonic possession; an evil force in opposition to the God of Life.

Nothing in our world personifies the worship of the false god of mammon more starkly than the Wall Street financial institutions. Money is their only value, and the pursuit of money their only purpose. Controlling our access to money in a world in which most every aspect of daily life and survival depends on money, these institutions rule the world. They are the masters to which we yield our allegiance, the agents of the destruction of God's creation. They house the moneychangers who, in Jesus's day, defiled the temple of God by turning a spiritual ritual into a quest for unseemly profit. Jesus, in his one reported act of violence, sought to drive them out.

The financial implosion of Wall Street in 2008 has exposed the corruption of our modern moneychangers for all to see. We now bear the consequences of their immoral philosophy—which holds that greed is good and the interests of society are maximized when we each relentlessly pursue our own financial advantage without regard to social or environmental consequences. We have given the institutions of Wall Street the power to decide the values by which we will live and to make the decisions about who will prosper and who will live in desperation. The result has been the devastation of millions of lives in our own country and billions around the world.

We face a choice: We can accept the status quo of an economic system devoted to the worship of money and the pursuit of individual greed. Or we can create a new economy devoted to the service of life. More than an individual choice, it is a choice we must make as a society, a community, a collective body.

The Fundamental Questions

WHY HAVE WE GIVEN OVER CONTROL OF OUR GOVERNMENT, OUR LIVES, AND OUR collective future to institutions devoted to the service of mammon? I suggest it is because we really haven't thought through as a nation and as a species the answers to three questions that should be at the center of any theology: What is real wealth? What is our image of God? And what is our human nature?

1. What Is Real Wealth?

As defined by our public culture, wealth and money are largely synonymous. Conflating these two concepts leads us to easily believe that those who make money are creating wealth and that financial and housing bubbles are engines of wealth creation. You surely recall that, as housing prices were inflating, we were regularly told how much wealth or value the rise in market price was creating. As housing prices deflated, we heard regular reports on how much wealth or value was being destroyed.

Curious, isn't it? Absolutely nothing about your house changed except the price: no difference in space, location, functionality, or state of repair. It was just a change in price—the number of dollars the house would fetch in the market. It's actually nothing more than a form of inflation. Money increased, but real wealth remained the same.

And what is money? Most money in circulation isn't even represented by a number on a piece of paper. It is an electronic trace in a computer file. Aside from the metal in coins, what we call money has no meaning or existence outside the human mind. It has value only because, by social convention, we agree to accept it in return for things of real value: our labor, knowledge, and natural resources.

Most money is an accounting chit created from nothing with a simple bookkeeping entry when a bank issues a loan.



Trinity Church, where David Korten gave the January 23, 2009, speech from which this article is adapted, is located in upper Wall Street. The statue of George Washington overlooks the New York Stock Exchange. The theme of the conference at which Korten spoke was "Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability."



Which kind of wealth do you want? A castle like Hearst's, or friends who will picnic with you?

When you take out a loan from a bank, the bank opens an account in your name and enters the amount of the loan. That becomes a liability on the bank's accounts, offset by the corresponding asset of your promise to repay with interest. With two simple accounting entries, money magically appears from nowhere. That simple process makes it possible for the institutions of mammon—the institutions of Wall Street and its global counterparts—to rule the world. As the economist John Kenneth Galbraith once famously observed, the process is “so simple it repels the mind.”

Money, consequently, can be defined as *phantom* wealth. It has no substance or intrinsic value, particularly when it is created from nothing and is not used for the creation of anything of corresponding value.

But what, then, is *real* wealth? In diametric contrast to *money*, it can be defined as anything that has true intrinsic value: land, labor, knowledge, food, education.

Most valuable of all are those forms of wealth that are beyond price: love; a healthy, happy child; a job that provides a sense of self-worth and contribution; membership in a strong, caring community; a healthy, vibrant natural environment; and peace. In a national poll, 93 percent of adults agreed with the statement, “We are too focused on working and making money and not focused enough on family and community.” Generally, this insight remains our unspoken personal truth. It is not what we hear in public discussion. So collectively we act to increase phantom wealth even at the cost of destroying the real wealth of the earth's abundance.

2. What Is God?

Some years ago I was privileged to share a conference platform with Jesus scholar Marcus Borg. I will never forget his defining statement: “Tell me your image of God, and I will tell you your politics.” Borg explains that the many scriptural images of God are of two basic types. One is the patriarch with the flowing beard: the God we visualize in human form, the God of Michelangelo's famous painting in the Sistine Chapel, who lives in a distant place we call Heaven. The other image of God is as a spirit manifest in all being.

The *patriarch* image sets up a hierarchy of righteousness and domination running from those closest to God to those most distant. It leads to a competitive individualistic politics of separation, domination, favor seeking, and wealth accumulation. It is the foundation of the Calvinist belief that the rich and powerful are by definition God's most favored, and that financial success and Earthly power are marks of special righteousness. Within this belief system, the world is whatever God the patriarch wishes it to be, and it is beyond our means to change it for better or worse.

By contrast, the *spirit* image—by which we recognize the face of God in every human being, animal, insect, and grain of sand—leads to a politics of community, shared purpose, and mutual service. Everything in creation is both manifestation and agent of a great spiritual intelligence seeking to know itself through the creative exploration of its possibilities. Within this belief system, to do harm to another being is to harm oneself. We see ourselves as agents of that creative journey and find our ultimate fulfillment in devoting ourselves to it.

There is a striking difference between the image of God evoked by the language of public discourse and the image of our inner understanding. The God of our public discourse and of most formal religious liturgy is the male patriarch to whom we pledge our faith and obedience in hope of winning favor now and in the afterlife. Because the very word “God” so strongly evokes this image, I generally prefer to discuss matters of faith in the language of spirit or creation. This may well be, in any case, the way most people see things.

Bob Scott, director of the Trinity Institute, recently sent me the results of a national survey he commissioned in his earlier capacity as editor-in-chief of *Spirituality and Health*

magazine. The findings suggest that most people's private beliefs align much more closely with the spirit image of God than the patriarch image.

Eighty-four percent of Americans view God as being "everywhere and in everything," rather than "someone somewhere." Given a list of characteristics and asked to pick the one that describes God best, 71 percent chose "loving." Only 5 percent chose "remote," and only 2 percent chose "judging" or "controlling." I find quite stunning the contrast between what these results reveal of our private images of God and the image evoked by the language of our public discourse and liturgy.

3. What Does It Mean to Be Human?

Finally, in preparing ourselves to demand a life-serving economy, we need to come to grips with the meaning of "human nature." We have become by now so accustomed to cultures and institutions that reward and celebrate our pathologies of individualism, greed, hubris, deceit, ruthless competition, and material excess that we have come to doubt even the possibility that we humans, as a species, might have the capacity to cooperate in the interest of a common good. We may even fail to notice that most people daily demonstrate an admirable capacity for caring, sharing, honesty, cooperation, compassion, peacemaking, service, and making do with what they have.

Scientists who use advanced imaging technology to study brain function report that the healthy human brain is wired to reward the positive traits. An act of cooperation and generosity triggers the brain's pleasure center to release the same hormone that's released when we eat chocolate or engage in good sex. In addition to producing a sense of bliss, it benefits our health by boosting our immune systems and reducing our heart rates. These findings are consistent with the pleasure that most of us experience as a member of an effective team, or in extending an uncompensated helping hand to another being.

On the other hand, merely thinking about another person experiencing harm triggers the same reaction in our brains as that of a mother who sees distress in her baby's face. Negative emotions suppress our immune systems, increase our heart rates, and prepare us to fight or flee.

It is entirely logical. If our brains were not wired for life in community, our species would have expired long ago. We have an instinctual desire to protect the group, including its weakest and most vulnerable members—its children. Caring, cooperation, and service are the healthy norm and wonderful tonics—and they are free. By contrast, behavior contrary to this norm is indicative of serious social and psychological dysfunction. While it is true that aggressive violence, greed, and destruction in disregard of others are all within our human capacity, they should be understood as the pathologies they are—not part of our inherent nature. It is our human nature to love and create.

Public vs. Private Understanding

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN OUR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNDERSTANDINGS OF WEALTH, God, and human nature offers a great source of hope for the human future. The views promoted by our public culture affirm the mammon economy of Wall Street. But our private understanding affirms the spiritual unity of creation and the human potential to create an economy dedicated to the service of life, love, and spirit. This is the understanding implicit in the message of Jesus, who sought to drive the moneychangers from the temple.

How different our societies would look if our economic cultures and institutions were based on the truth we find in both our inner experience and the teachings of Jesus! We need only replace the fallacies of our public culture with the inner truth shared by nearly all humans to radically change the human course. Given the possibilities of electronic communication, it may be far easier than we might imagine. The steps to take are clear. We have to break the silence, make our private beliefs public, and then join in common cause to align our institutions with our true values.

For perhaps the first time in history, we now have both the imperative and the means to do these things. It is an epic opportunity.

(continued on page 71)

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Justice and Injustice:

Ancient Wisdom and the Modern Knowledge Economy

by Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly



The digital and social divide in the "knowledge economy": job seekers flood local libraries to get on the internet (above, Cincinnati, January 2009), while a few become insanely rich (opposite). The moral question is, who owns knowledge?

TODAY THE TOP 1 PERCENT GARNERS MORE income than the bottom 120 million Americans taken together. The top 1 percent owns nearly half of all individually held investment capital—roughly as much as the entire bottom 99 percent taken together. Traditional religious tenets in general—and Jewish tradition in particular—offer a powerful challenge to such inequities. What is striking is that new economic and historical studies provide new affirmation of ancient moral wisdom in ways particularly appropriate—and of great political relevance—to today's knowledge economy.

Consider Leviticus 25, which provides for a jubilee every fifty years to restore broadly distributed ownership of the commonly inherited land. "In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property.... The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Lev. 25:13, 25:23). Under this law, a property right is always a temporary entitlement. While it may be traded and the land sold, "in the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned" (Lev. 25:28). God's original gift of the

land, Leviticus 25 holds, instills in all productive resources the moral imperative of common access if not equal benefits. Extreme inequalities of ownership and economic well-being can only mean that we have defaulted on the debt owed God for his original gift of Creation.

Although land was once the primary basis of all wealth, modern studies show that knowledge is now the primary driver of economic growth, and further, that this makes traditional moral arguments more, not less, relevant today. To understand why—and what it means both morally and politically—we need to grasp some basic facts about economic growth and how we accumulate wealth.

Economists have traditionally taught that economic growth depends primarily upon the inputs of land, labor, and capital. After World War II, however, new studies overturned the traditional tale. A pioneer in this work was MIT economist Robert Solow, who, in a brief but now-famous paper published in 1957, made a startling discovery (he later won a Nobel Prize for this work). In contrast with the then-dominant assumption that increases in the supply

*Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, and Lew Daly, a Senior Fellow of Demos, are coauthors of *Unjust Deserts: How the Rich Have Taken Our Common Inheritance and Why We Should Take it Back* (The New Press, 2008), upon which this essay is based.*

of capital (factories, machines, etc.) were the main engine of economic growth, Solow found that less than 13 percent of growth in the first half of the twentieth century could be attributed to capital accumulation or increases in labor supply (in fact, labor supply per person had been diminishing as the forty-hour week became the norm).

Most of the growth was not coming from the conventional inputs of labor and capital, which workers and employers supply. The nearly 88 percent of growth that remained unaccounted for—the portion that became known as the “Solow Residual”—could only be attributed, Solow concluded, to something broader and deeper than the everyday economic activity embodied in labor effort and capital accumulation. Solow defined this as “technical progress in the broadest sense,” or, in other words, the cumulative knowledge and technological capacity of our society.

We have also traditionally been taught that there is no “free lunch” in the economy: nothing is achieved without a cost. And yet, most of the knowledge currently driving our economy is the product of decades and even centuries of socially nurtured and socially transmitted advances in mathematics, physics, chemistry, agronomy, metallurgy, and many other sciences and technological fields—all of which come to us as the free gift of the past. Nobel Laureate economist Kenneth Arrow puts it this way: technical progress is one area in which nothing can “take the place of history,” and the “set of opportunities for innovation at any one moment is determined by what the physical laws of the world really are and how much has already been learned and is therefore ‘accidental’ from the viewpoint of economics.” One of the nation’s leading economic historians, Joel Mokyr, explains what this means: in fact, there is a free lunch in economics—the knowledge created by previous generations and inherited at no cost or at very low cost by people living today.

The moral question is, who owns knowledge? Or who should own knowledge? Put another way, if most of our wealth comes from inherited knowledge—not what we do “today”—then isn’t this part of our wealth, this knowledge, something which rightly should belong to everyone as a common inheritance?

As Solow’s growth data indicate, the inheritance of the past is far more important economically than what any of us can possibly contribute as individuals today. Another highly respected economist, William Baumol, argues that “nearly 90 percent ... of current GDP was contributed by innovation carried out since 1870.” Although many technical issues are still debated, there is no longer significant dispute about the trend: modern prosperity is largely the result of expanding knowledge.

We work no harder today than our ancestors did in 1800 or in the ancient past, and we are no more intelligent in terms of basic brain capacity and reasoning ability. The cave paintings of earliest human culture are works of roughly the same basic intelligence as the theory of relativity. And yet our economy is more than 1,000 times larger than it was in 1800, and the best measure of prosperity, per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—the amount of output the economy generates for every person—is twenty times higher today than it was in the early nineteenth century (it was \$42,000 in 2006, the equivalent of almost \$170,000 for a family of four). The key to such growth, experts agree, is rising productivity, usually measured in terms of the amount of output per hour of work, which rose more than fifteen-fold since 1870.

It is these productivity-driven gains, largely fueled by expanding knowledge, that bring the traditional ethical concerns into clear focus in the modern economy. The key moral question is, are we more productive as individuals, or as a society? Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest men in the world, argues that “society” is in fact “responsible for a very significant percentage of what I’ve earned.” To make his point, he asks how much money he would have if he were in Bangladesh, or if he were born in North America in 1700. His point is that the individual qualities we usually associate with “success” are in fact far less important, and far less morally significant, than the knowledge and technological capability available to those



If most knowledge is our collective inheritance and creation, the authors ask, how come a few people like Bill Gates (above, at the 2008 World Economic Forum) by adding a little to that knowledge, are allowed to profit hugely from it? Our ideas of what is justly deserved are out of date.

Rethinking American Capitalism

by Thad Williamson



BARACK OBAMA ASCENDS TO THE PRESIDENCY IN THE MIDST OF THE MOST severe crisis American capitalism has faced since the Great Depression. Resolving that crisis will almost certainly require dramatic public action on a scale not seen since the 1930s. But dramatic action that fails to address the fundamental structural issues driving the crisis—and in particular the generation-long trend toward rapidly growing inequality—is unlikely to be successful.

Hence, the time is ripe to reconsider the institutional structure and moral assumptions of American capitalism, from the bottom up. While Obama's advisers are likely to exercise better judgment than the free market ideologues who have run the show in recent years, progressives should not count on people like Larry Summers and Timothy Geithner, establishment figures with deep ties to the corporate establishment, to address the deeper questions. They may have the technical expertise to contain the fire and calm

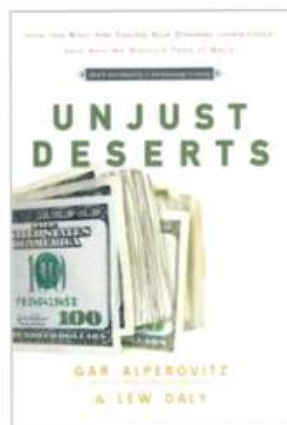
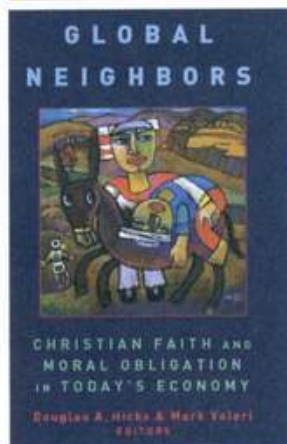
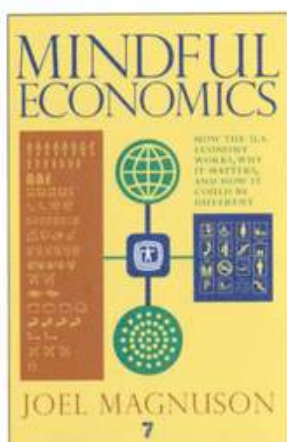
George Washington helps out at a rally against the Wall Street bailouts in front of the New York Stock Exchange, September 25, 2008.

Thad Williamson is an assistant professor of leadership studies at the University of Richmond. He coauthored Making a Place for Community: Local Democracy in a Global Era (Routledge 2002) with David Imbroscio and Gar Alperovitz.

Mindful Economics: How the U.S. Economy Works, Why it Matters, and How it Could Be Different by Joel Magnuson (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008).

Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy by Douglas A. Hicks and Mark Valeri (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008).

Unjust Deserts: How The Rich Are Taking Our Common Inheritance and Why We Should Take It Back by Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly (New York: The New Press, 2008).



the markets down, but they are not going to push for a fundamentally new set of economic priorities.

Already the \$819 billion stimulus package the administration aimed to push through Congress in its first month has been criticized for relying too much on tax cuts and lacking an overarching vision for its public investment components. Other liberal economists believe that the scale of the stimulus package, while huge, is still inadequate to the task at hand. In the meantime, questions about whether (or when) the federal government will pursue nationalization of banks grow louder with every passing week. And still others question whether Obama's goal must be not simply ramping up the economic growth machine again but moving toward a different kind of economy, an economy that places human needs, respect for community, and ecological sustainability ahead of GDP growth.

Obama's Inaugural Address showed that the president understands the need to move toward new barometers for measuring economic health. Obama flatly stated that we must judge the economy not on its size but on the extent to which it delivers opportunity to all. Obama has also moved to make "green jobs" and energy efficiency a centerpiece of his recovery plan.

Calling for a bold change of direction and actually taking meaningful steps in that direction are two different things, of course. It's up to progressive social movements to take advantage of the historic opportunity the Obama administration represents by pushing for a fundamentally new set of economic priorities. But if spiritual progressives and our allies are to become a credible, forceful voice, we will need to pay close attention to the hard-headed realities of how our existing system works (and fails to work), and to directly challenge dominant ideologies justifying the status quo.

Fortunately, three important new books—Joel Magnuson's *Mindful Economics*; Douglas Hicks and Mark Valeri's edited collection, *Global Neighbors*; and Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly's *Unjust Deserts*—have arrived on the scene to help show the way. Together these books provide a well-timed critique of the fundamentals of our economic system, in each case connecting the critiques explicitly to ethical and in some cases theological conceptions of what makes for a good human life and what makes for a just society.

These books each do what religion does at its best: they break through the dominant economic discourses and provide an alternative way of viewing social reality. They then describe measures for improving our economic system that would help much more than corporate bailouts.

To Get Good Government, Voters MUST Understand Economics—So Read This Book

MUCH DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC POLICY IS WRAPPED—ARGUABLY QUITE DELIBERATELY—in a shroud of mystery. When former Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson forcefully demanded that Congress approve a \$750 billion bailout this past September, the strongest argument offered was "because we say so." Few members of Congress, let alone ordinary citizens, were equipped to understand in any level of detail either the causes of the financial crisis or the nature of the institutions involved in the crisis and subsequent bailout.

There is no hope of holding political elites (be they Republican or Democrat) accountable on economic policy if ordinary citizens do not understand the nature of the institutions governing American capitalism. Joel Magnuson's *Mindful Economics* thus provides an enormous service by explaining, step-by-step, the basics of capitalism and the specifics of its American incarnation.

Magnuson's book describes all of the following (and more): corporations as legal and financial institutions; labor law and the core national laws regulating the American economy; the origins of the U.S. national currency; the role of banks and financial institutions; the Federal Reserve System and how it controls money; Wall Street, investment banks, stocks, and bonds; international trade and America's growing indebtedness; a short history of postwar business cycles; and a clear discussion of why financial markets

are prone to instability. A principal accomplishment of his book is simply allowing readers to make sense of the maze of institutions governing our political-economic system.

But Magnuson does much more than this; he also provides a well-informed critique of how the system works. For instance, he shows how the semi-public Federal Reserve System is fundamentally undemocratic and geared toward protecting the interests of a small class of business owners first. The Fed has enormous power over the management of the economy, but it is not democratically accountable to ordinary Americans in any meaningful sense.

Magnuson is also effective and accurate in describing the nature of America's contemporary economic problems: our crushing household and national debts, the huge trade deficit, and the long-term trend toward heightened inequality and social polarization. He also provides a cogent description of the real estate bubble.

The book was published before the financial crisis hit this fall, so it's noteworthy that Magnuson explicitly predicted that the real estate bubble would soon burst and that a federal bailout would be required to deal with the aftermath of the collapse.

Magnuson's writing serves as an essential reference work

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The Cynical Psychology of Capitalism



downright cynical. It assigns humanity to a low and easily attained level of moral, social, and emotional development and offers scant hope of collective improvement. Proponents of free enterprise argue that it is futile to attempt to alter our self-serving nature. Rather, the marketplace should organize itself based on the premise that everyone is out for her- or himself.

This brings us to the second key assumption we challenged in our article. The free market has as its primary goal the ongoing accumulation of wealth, which is supposed to provide the best opportunity available for attaining happiness. Yet there now exists a large body of cross-cultural research that shows that after people's survival needs are met—housing, food, clothing, and the like—the relationship between wealth and happiness is negligible. In fact, aspiring to be rich can be harmful. Cross-cultural studies also indicate that the adoption of materialistic values is associated with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, poor social skills, low self-esteem, psychosomatic symptoms (headaches, sore throats, etc.), and diminished life satisfaction. Materialistic values are also related to anti-social behaviors such as cheating and petty theft, racism, and environmental abuse. Materialistic individuals are less empathic and have shorter, more conflictual relationships with friends and lovers than their less materialistic peers. This is not good.

These developmental, clinical, and research-based insights might give us pause as to the psychological wisdom that underlies our nation's economic system. But even if we allow that there may be some validity to capitalism's model of the human psyche as selfish and materialistic, we still have to contend with its cynicism, which is built into the system.

The laws and regulations that form the structure of capitalism mandate selfish and materialistic behavior. For example, by law corporate CEOs have to put profit above all else, including the social good. The corporate culture that emerges from such a structure regards greedy behavior as heroic and compassion as foolish. It aggressively opposes the moral, social, and emotional development necessary to move beyond radical self-interest.

In contrast, other American institutions have been more optimistic about the human condition. Consider the legal principle that all citizens are equal under the law. Of course, it is the rare individual who is without prejudice or bias. But the justice system is not organized on the assumption that people are fundamentally prejudiced and incapable of collective change. Rather, it is structured around the democratic ideal of equality. This is a "practical" ideal in that people are capable of becoming more egalitarian. The system is designed, therefore, to encourage human development.

Historically, Americans have called on many of their institutions to promote individual and social advancement. It is exactly this kind of practical idealism that we need at the foundation of our economic institutions. ■

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION TO THE ISRAEL/PALESTINE SECTION: Normally *Tikkun* tries to publish articles that reflect a progressive middle path, but in the heat of the violent struggle that erupted in January 2009, that proved difficult to find. In our *New York Times* ad, which we've attached to this issue of the magazine, we avoid the discussion of who is really to blame for what happened in Gaza. As you can see by looking at this issue's letters to the editor, which include a representative sample of responses, many of our readers came down heavily on one side or the other. We decided that instead of presenting our perspective once again, we would present two partisans, neither of whom reflects the compassionate tone and attempt to understand the other side that we believe is essential if we are ever to move from the "blame game" to the healing. We hoped thereby to document the extent of each side's inability to hear the suffering of the other side. It is this inability that makes real, tikkunish healing impossible. This healing would be better achieved through the approach outlined by Cherie Brown and is reflected in the proposals that you can read in our ad (go to www.tikkun.org and click on "Gaza Cease-Fire Now") or in the introduction to our "Israel at 60" issue from May 2008 (see tikkun.org/archive/backissues/tik0805/politics/israel/lerner).

Seven Principles About The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

by Cherie R. Brown

1. Every situation, including the current conflict in Gaza, can provide us with new opportunities to think, take leadership, and move the conflict forward, if we are able to act outside of hopelessness and discouragement. Even as the violence continues, new opportunities arise for us to mobilize others, put out correct information, and gain allies for good policies.

2. A just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is taking longer than any of us want, and we need to grieve about the horrible loss of lives on all sides. In particular, we need to grieve about the current setbacks, which are real. But even with these setbacks, there are also important new opportunities for increased dialogue, leadership, mobilization of others, and action.

3. No one group or country deserves to be targeted as the sole perpetrator of the current conflict. Not the Israelis who feel threatened by continued rockets landing in Israel and then seek safety and security by striking back. And not the Palestinians who send the rockets when they feel besieged by an occupation that has lasted way too long.

4. Even if no one side is totally to blame, it is still each side's responsibility—and obligation—to stop wrong actions and to reach for rational policies and solutions that take everyone's long-term needs into account.

5. It is not helpful for Diaspora Jews to attack Israelis for the difficulties they have in being able to think clearly under conditions of hopelessness and terror. It is not helpful for Israelis to attack Diaspora Jews when they seek to find their own independent voice and articulate the role that the U.S. government can and should play in moving the current situation forward.

6. Any solution that is found to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will need to take all historic injustices into account but not be bound by them. Both peoples (and their allies) put out narratives about the current situation that have correct information in them—but these narratives also contain distortions that are a result of a history of mistreatment and painful emotion. One narrative says Israel is being besieged: Hamas is primarily a terrorist organization, and there is no choice now but to engage in a long protracted war in Gaza until Hamas is totally defeated. Another narrative says Hamas is primarily a liberation organization, working to free the Palestinian people from occupation by Israel, and therefore should not be blamed for sending rockets into Israel. Any narrative that portrays one side only as a victim and the other side as worthy of all or most of the blame for the conflict does not have the full picture. Any narrative that describes the current situation needs to take into account the history of mistreatment of both peoples; both sides' hunger for peace, justice, and security; and the need to prevent outside forces from pitting one side against the other for purposes of greed and exploitation.

7. There are no military solutions to this conflict that will achieve lasting peace and justice for Israelis or for Palestinians. Any solution will require the engagement of all Israelis and all Palestinians, including Hamas, in dialogue and negotiations. No people in the current situation can ultimately be destroyed, expelled, or beaten into submission. Attempts to do so will, in the long term, only engender further violence and retaliation, as well as increase the length of time it will take to reach a negotiated settlement. ■

Cherie Brown is the executive director of the National Coalition Building Institute, an international leadership training organization dealing with anti-oppression issues, and she has been involved in Jewish Middle East peace groups for 35 years. She is currently on the board of Brit Tzedek V'Shalom.



A PERFECT MORAL CATASTROPHE

Just War Philosophy and the Israeli Attack on Gaza

by Jerome Slater

Israeli soldiers, one holding an Israeli flag, celebrate together as they return to Israel from the northern Gaza Strip, January 18, 2009, the day that Israel declared a unilateral cease-fire in Gaza after three devastating weeks of war.

EVEN STRONG CRITICS OF THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON GAZA HAVE GENERALLY prefaced their criticism by saying, in essence, “of course Israel has every right to defend itself against Hamas rocket attacks, but its methods are disproportionate.” Or, as it is sometimes put, “no country can ignore attacks on its territory and citizens.”

There are two problems with these arguments. The first is that calling Israel’s attack on Gaza “disproportionate” falls well short of revealing the full dimensions of its behavior: the Israeli way of war—including in most of its previous wars, not just in Gaza—is worse than merely “disproportional,” or even “indiscriminate.” Second, a nation does not have a “right” of self-defense if attacks on its soil are triggered by—or are acts of resistance against—its own aggression, colonialism, occupation, or repression.

Jus ad Bellum, or the Justice of Going to War

THE ANALYSIS AND ARGUMENT OF THIS ARTICLE WILL BE BASED ON JUST WAR PHILOSOPHY, the dominant Western framework for moral discussions of war. The central principles of just war philosophy are *jus ad bellum*—the justice of going to war—and *jus in bello*, or just methods of warfare. The most important of the *jus ad bellum* constraints are that states must have a *just cause* for going to war, that war must be a *last resort*, and that the war must have a high enough *probability of success* (in attaining a just cause) to offset the inevitable devastation of war.

Further, even if all the *jus ad bellum* criteria are met, a state must not resort to morally unacceptable methods. The three major constraints within *jus in bello* are *proportionality*, meaning that there are limits to the amount of force that is morally allowable, even for a just cause; *distinction*, meaning that every effort must be made to distinguish between soldiers

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and civilians; and *noncombatant immunity*, meaning that there may never be deliberate attacks on civilians.

The Israeli attack on Gaza violated every one of these principles.

Just Cause and the Israeli Attack

BEGIN WITH JUST CAUSE: DID ISRAEL HAVE A MORAL RIGHT TO GO TO WAR AGAINST HAMAS in order to end its rocket attacks aimed at the Israeli population? The standard argument of those who believe that Israel was merely exercising its right of self-defense is that in 2005 Israel ended its occupation of Gaza, allowing the Gazans to peacefully govern themselves and develop their economy, but was met with continued terrorist attacks whose purpose was to destroy the state of Israel.

No part of this argument can withstand serious analysis. First, it is widely argued in Israel that the real purpose of Ariel Sharon's withdrawal of the Jewish settlements in Gaza in 2005 was to ease the overall burden of the occupation on Israel rather than on the Palestinians, and to allow Israel to consolidate its occupation of the West Bank—which is far larger, more economically productive, and contains more invaluable water aquifers than Gaza—as well as its occupation of East Jerusalem, which is religiously and symbolically important to both sides.

In any case, there was no true end to the Israeli occupation even of Gaza, for Israeli forces retained control over Gaza's borders, coastline, and airspace; continued to wield overwhelming power over its economy and external trade; continued to control Gaza's telecommunications, water, and electricity networks; and reserved the right to launch incursions at will—which, of course, it has done. As a 2004 Human Rights Watch report put it, "The removal of settlers and most military forces will not end Israel's control over Gaza.... Israel plans to reconfigure its occupation of the territory, but it will remain an occupying power."

Moreover, even if Israel had genuinely withdrawn from Gaza and also ended all other means of repressing Gaza's residents, that hardly would have met the need of the Palestinians as a whole for a viable independent state of their own. The Palestinians living in Gaza are not a separate nation from those living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; to believe otherwise is the equivalent of believing that if in the 1770s the British had withdrawn from New Jersey but continued to occupy New York, the residents of New Jersey would no longer have the right to take up arms in support of American independence.

Consider the extent of Israeli repression, as it repeatedly has been described by the most important international human rights organizations; by western media, including even the *New York Times* (which typically downplays Israeli repression); and above all by Israeli human rights organizations, academics, journalists and newspapers, and even by disillusioned former Israeli politicians, military men, and intelligence officials.

• **The killings.** According to studies by the United Nations and Israeli as well as international human rights organizations, from 2006 through the end of 2008, Israel killed about 1,000 Palestinians, up to half of them civilians and as many as a quarter of them children. During the recent rampage in Gaza, Israel killed more than 1,300 Palestinians—two-thirds of them civilians *by the Israeli army's own analysis* (*Haaretz*, January 25, 2009).

Beyond the outright killings, surely by now it is obvious that Israel has followed a deliberate policy of collective punishment and impoverishment of the Gazan people, the clear purpose of which is to intimidate them and induce them to turn away not only from Hamas terrorism, but from all forms of resistance to Israeli control, including nonviolence. As Yitzhak Laor, the Israeli poet, author, and political columnist recently wrote: "If they launch a missile, we destroy families, neighborhoods, streets, towns.... If they protest peacefully, we fire tear gas at them."

• **Economic warfare.** In carrying out what has been widely termed the siege of Gaza, since 2006 Israel has regularly blocked Gazan trade and commerce with the outside world; bombed and shelled Gazan factories, farms, and olive orchards; and destroyed Gaza's main power plant. Consequently, even before the latest attacks the economy of Gaza was on the verge of collapse, unemployment ranged from 45 percent to 60 percent, 80 percent of Gazans were estimated to be below international poverty lines (according to a number of

NOTE: A longer version of this article, expanded to include, among other related issues, a discussion of the actions of Hamas in light of just war theory, has been posted to our website, www.tikkun.org. That version has been extensively footnoted, so please read it before responding to this article, especially if your concern is the nature of the supporting evidence for Jerome Slater's statements. The author of the response to this article, printed on the following pages, did not have access to the longer piece, which was not finished when this issue went to press.



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A Palestinian woman reacts over relatives moments after they were killed in an Israeli missile strike outside their home in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza Strip, January 8, 2009. Five Palestinians were killed in the strike, Palestinian medical sources said.

studies, among the worst such figures in the world), and malnutrition was rampant, even if outright starvation was averted by a small stream of Israeli food supplies and extensive outside assistance.

One can only imagine how much worse this already intolerable situation has become in the aftermath of the recent attacks: roads, bridges, factories, agricultural lands, and the electrical system were destroyed or badly damaged. Further, about 4,000 homes were destroyed, 21,000 damaged, and 100,000 people left homeless (*New York Times*, January 25, 2009).

- **Destruction of Palestinian government.** In its recent attacks on Gaza, the Israeli forces have repeated their deliberate and extensive 2002 attacks on the governing institutions of Yassir Arafat's Palestinian Authority in the West Bank: the Gazan parliament, the main government ministries, and nearly all police stations were reduced to rubble.

- **Destruction of public and private health systems.** As in the earlier attacks in the West Bank, Israel cut off supplies of desperately needed medicines and equipment. It also struck hospitals and ambulances. Moreover, the attacks on the Gazan electrical system have resulted in even greater devastation to the sewage system, food production and distribution systems, and even of supplies of drinking water.

- **Destruction of Palestinian education.** Both in the West Bank earlier and in the recent Gazan attacks, Israel has deliberately attacked many Palestinian schools and universities, and in other ways made normal education impossible. According to one United Nations study, the combined effect of direct attacks on schools and universities, widespread malnutrition, and the consequences of all the other Israeli forms of repression has resulted in "the collapse of the education system in Gaza."

For all of these reasons, the Israeli attack on Gaza cannot be considered a legitimate act of self-defense, for its main purpose, as Henry Siegman has put it, is "to protect its right to continue the strangulation of Gaza's population."

Last Resort

NONETHELESS, FOR THE SAKE OF ANALYSIS LET US SUPPOSE THAT ISRAEL REALLY HAD withdrawn not only from Gaza but also from the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Let us suppose, further, that it had truly ended its occupation and repression, and therefore had earned a genuine right of self-defense against Hamas attacks. Even in these (purely hypothetical) circumstances, Israel would still not have had the moral right to attack Gaza unless it also had met the last resort criterion.

The last resort principle requires that every reasonable effort to seek a political solution must be tried before going to war. Israel also failed this test, for it made no attempt at negotiations before attacking Gaza, despite a number of indications that Hamas was becoming increasingly amenable to a reasonable political settlement.

If so, Hamas would be following in the footsteps of Arafat's PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) and those of many other radical movements that became much more moderate when they had countries to run. Beginning in the 1980s, the PLO gradually but steadily moved away from its early ideological and uncompromising rejection of the existence of Israel and effectively abandoned its dream of creating a Palestinian state in all the historic land of Palestine. Today, no one doubts that the goal of the PLO and Mahmoud Abbas, Arafat's

successor and the West Bank prime minister, is limited to the creation of a small state in the 23 percent that remained of Palestine after the 1948 war, living in coexistence with its far more powerful Jewish neighbor.

Granted, there are no guarantees that Hamas will duplicate the evolution of the PLO, for it has remained committed—at least verbally—to its anti-Semitic founding ideology and 1988 charter, which explicitly states that it is a religious obligation to eliminate Israel and the Jews from the Islamic holy land. It is clear that there are internal divisions within Hamas—particularly between the relatively more moderate Hamas officials in Gaza, led by Ismail Haniyeh, and Hamas officials in exile, led by Khaled Meshal—over the extent to which this ideology must give way to practical realities.

A Political Settlement with Hamas?

REGARDLESS OF THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION, by 2006 there were a number of indications of emerging Hamas flexibility, even among the hard-liners. In January 2006 Hamas published its official platform for the upcoming Gazan elections; it included no language calling for the destruction of Israel and the creation of an Islamic state in all of Palestine. To be sure, the apparent change in Hamas's position was ambiguous, for it continued to proclaim that it did not reject any means, "including armed resistance" if that was necessary to "end the occupation" and "establish a state whose capital is Jerusalem."

As Israeli analysts noted, the Hamas platform did not specify whether such a state would be limited to the West Bank and Gaza and did not clarify whether "the occupation" to be ended referred only to the post-1967 Israeli expansion or to the entire Jewish state. Even so, the very ambiguity greatly differed from earlier Hamas extremism and even suggested that the operational, if not the ideological, goals of Hamas now might not substantially differ from those of Abbas and other Palestinian moderates.

Moreover, the Hamas leaders were surely aware that they won the 2006 Gaza parliamentary elections not because of their ideology but despite it: as Henry Siegman has pointed out, post-election polls showed that 73 percent of the Gazan population favored a peace deal with Israel and a two-state solution. As nearly all observers agreed, Hamas won because the Gazan people were tired of Fatah's incompetence and corruption.

It has now been revealed that, after the elections, Haniyeh, the new Gazan prime minister, sent a written message to George Bush offering a truce for many years in exchange for a compromise political settlement; the Bush administration did not reply to this and additional overtures (*Haaretz*, Nov. 10, 2008). Soon after that, Hamas began to go public with its new position. For example, in May 2006, Haniyeh told *Haaretz* that the Hamas government would agree to a long-term truce with Israel if it withdrew to the 1967 lines. Shortly afterward, a joint statement of senior Hamas and Fatah members who were imprisoned in Israel went further; the highly important and prestigious "Prisoners' Declaration" cleared up previous ambiguities by calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state "in all the lands occupied in 1967," and would employ armed resistance *only in those territories* (*Haaretz*, May 11, 2006; emphasis added). In an even more significant indication that Hamas was moving towards Mahmoud Abbas's position, in March 2007 Hamas and the Palestinian Authority formed a national unity government to negotiate with Israel; Hamas officials stated at the



A relative reacts in front of the bodies of three children killed by an Israeli tank shell, Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, January 5, 2009.

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time that they agreed that Abbas should play the leading role in such negotiations.

Israel and its ally the United States ignored all these overtures, or contemptuously dismissed them as “tricks.” Nonetheless, throughout 2008 Hamas’s political position continued to evolve; even Meshal publicly announced his support for a ten-year “truce” if Israel withdrew to the 1967 borders.

It is undeniable that the Hamas position still contains a number of ambiguities and inconsistencies. First, it calls only for a truce rather than a permanent settlement—but sometimes suggests that the truce can be extended indefinitely. Second, sometimes Hamas officials say that they accept Israel as a “fact” but will “never recognize its legitimacy”; on other occasions they strongly imply that their formal position has no practical importance and could eventually change. One day a Hamas official sounds particularly conciliatory, and the next day other officials back away. Sometimes Hamas stresses its commitment to the return of all Palestinian refugees to Israel, perhaps the most difficult obstacle to a permanent settlement, but at other times it downplays the issue. And so on.

Yet, the general direction is clear, and in historic terms the evolution has been rapid. A number of factors account for this evolution, including the realities of governing, especially when most Gazans continue to favor an end to the conflict and a two-state solution; the fact that most Arab governments today—particularly Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and probably Syria, the most important of the Arab states—also support a compromise settlement solution and fear Islamic fundamentalism; the economic sanctions imposed by Israel, the United States, and European countries after the Hamas takeover of Gaza; and, no doubt, the unending Israeli assassinations and other attacks.

For these reasons, many Israeli analysts today—including past and present intelligence and other government officials—now argue that the Hamas evolution is meaningful and that the organization—unlike al Qaeda—is becoming a movement fighting for limited national goals rather than uncompromising religious ones. Some have even suggested that Hamas’s anti-Semitism just might have something to do with the decades of Israeli occupation and repression rather than being simply an *a priori* and immutable product of religious fanaticism.

In the final analysis, the key point is that the only way to resolve the ambiguities is through negotiations with Hamas—no serious peace proposal requires Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories until a reasonable and enforceable political settlement is reached. That the Israeli government has refused to take this obvious path of exploring Hamas’s true intentions strongly suggests that it is Israel at least as much as Hamas that is unwilling or (for domestic reasons) unable to accept a genuine two-state solution.

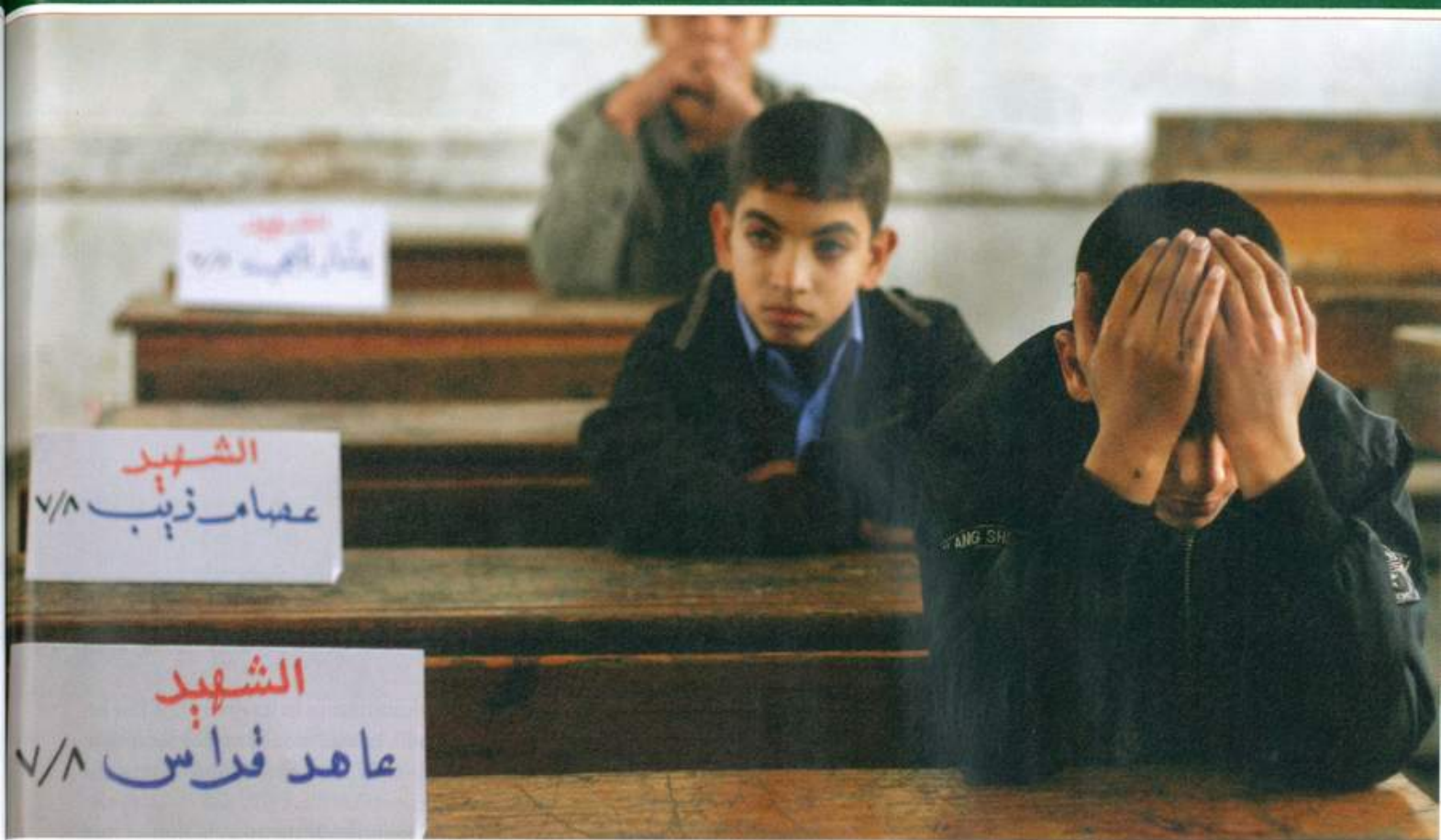
A Cease-Fire

EVEN IF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WITH HAMAS—FOR WHATEVER REASON—IS PRESENTLY out of reach, Israel could have come closer to meeting the principle that force is justified only as a last resort had it not ignored a number of Hamas cease-fire proposals as well as complied, in good faith, with several recent cease-fires that were either negotiated or unilaterally proclaimed by Hamas. Thus, contrary to the widespread view that it was unprovoked Hamas rocket attacks that gave Israel no choice but to attack Gaza, the chronological evidence overwhelmingly shows that Israel was primarily responsible for the continuation of the violence.

- According to ex-Mossad Chief Ephraim Halevy, in 1997 King Hussein of Jordan conveyed to Israel an offer from Khaled Meshal, the chief Hamas leader, to reach an understanding on a cease-fire to last thirty years. Israel not only ignored the offer, but a few days later, Israeli operatives also tried to assassinate Meshal in Jordan.

- According to Matti Steinberg, former head adviser on Palestinian affairs to the Shin Bet (Israel’s internal security agency), Hamas refrained from attacking civilians inside Israel until Baruch Goldstein’s February 2004 murder of twenty-nine Palestinians in a Hebron mosque. When Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin refused to withdraw the settlers from Hebron in the aftermath of the massacre, Hamas then retaliated with suicide bombings of its own.

- Sporadic terrorist attacks on Israel in the ensuing years typically followed Israeli undercover operations that killed Hamas members or other militants, and often civilian



bystanders, as well. Beginning in February 2005, Hamas unilaterally declared a cease-fire; while Israel then temporarily suspended its assassinations in Gaza, it continued to target Islamic Jihad activists inside the West Bank, who then retaliated with rocket attacks.

- In January 2006, Israel assassinated a senior Hamas leader; however, Hamas did not retaliate and continued to press for a far-ranging, long-term cease-fire, during which it would not only take no violent actions against Israel but would also prevent other Palestinian organizations from doing so.

- In November 2006, following an Israeli artillery attack in which a shell struck several homes, killing 19 people, most of them women and children, Hamas retaliated with an attempted suicide bombing in Israel, its first such attack in nearly two years. Following that, however, in the next year there were few attacks inside Israel, whether by Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

- Nonetheless, throughout 2007 Israel continued its assassination attacks on militants inside Gaza, killing more than 100 Palestinians, many of them civilian bystanders, including women and children. There were a few retaliatory rocket attacks, but only three Israelis were killed, the lowest number since 2000.

- In April 2008, Meshal stated that Hamas was ready to stop attacking civilians if Israel did the same, and in early June a new six-month truce went into effect. During the next few months there were few if any Hamas rocket attacks; although there were several Islamic Jihad retaliatory attacks in response to Israeli military actions in Gaza or the West Bank, they resulted in few casualties. A *Haaretz* correspondent wrote: "Hamas leaders have spoken out vehemently and unequivocally against the rocket fire and ... [have] even threatened those who violate the lull with arrest."

- In September and October, there were two Islamic Jihad rocket attacks but none from Hamas. Nonetheless, Israel greatly tightened its siege of Gaza, sharply limiting the movement of food supplies, medicines, fuel, and repair parts for water and sewage systems; moreover, six Hamas men were killed in a November 5 Israeli raid on a Gazan tunnel. Following that attack, Hamas fired rockets into southern Israel and announced it would no longer abide by the latest cease-fire agreement when that pact expired in (continued on page 68)

Palestinian boy Mohammed Kutkut, 14, right, covers his face as he sits next to the name sign of his slain friend, Ahmed Qaddas, in the Fakhoura boys school in Jebaliya, northern Gaza strip, January 24, 2009. Three friends in his class were killed when the Israeli army shelled Jebaliya in the past weeks.

GAZA: A JUST WAR

A Response to Jerome Slater

by Doug Lieb

THE TITLE OF JEROME SLATER'S "A PERFECT MORAL CATASTROPHE" PRETTY well sums up this comprehensive brief against Israel.

For Slater, Israel doesn't just suffer from bad policymaking. It is rotten to its core. Slater's Israel deliberately blows up hospitals, violates every principle of just war theory, and endangers "the entire world." Its leaders are not to be believed when they say they want peace, nor are its adversaries when they say they want to destroy it. Those looking for the shades of gray of a complex reality should look elsewhere.

To be fair, however, Slater's essay is original and illuminating in its own way. For he has the courage to argue explicitly what most of Israel's critics would rather let linger under the surface: that unless Israel withdraws completely to its pre-1967 borders, Israeli civilians should be allowed to die.

This erroneous, counterproductive, and unethical view has little to do with just war theory, and much in common with those who just want to wage war on Israel.

Slater begins with the question, "Did Israel have a moral right to go to war against Hamas in order to end its rocket attacks aimed at the Israeli population?" He says no, as "it is widely argued" that Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza was just a ruse to consolidate its control over the West Bank.

Many things are widely argued, of course, but that does not make them true. In reality, Israel left Gaza because it was not in Israel's interest to continue ruling 1.5 million Palestinians there. The scrupulously balanced European Union welcomed "the historic progress made on Israel's withdrawal from Gaza," believing that "disengagement should be a significant step towards implementing the Quartet Roadmap."

After Hamas won the January 2006 Palestinian elections, the United States and European Union refused to directly fund a government run by a terrorist organization, but funds were transferred to humanitarian groups instead. The Rafah crossing to Egypt was open. Goods moved back and forth to and from Israel—except when Hamas tried to launch a massive attack on the Karni border crossing in April 2006. Gaza hardly enjoyed the economic openness of Singapore, but there was no blockade.

So why were there 946 rocket and mortar strikes on Israel from Gaza in 2006? Why was an imported Katyusha rocket fired deep into Israel in March 2006? Why, indeed, has southern Israel been indiscriminately fired upon for the last eight years?

Slater would answer that, blockade or not, Hamas was responding to constant Israeli "repression," including the destruction of Gazan institutions during the 2002 confrontation with Yasser Arafat. Of course, if Hamas were really concerned about the shortage of schools, hospitals, and administrative offices in Gaza, one might wonder why it did not just renounce violence, acquire international assistance, and build some. In reality, Hamas prefers to exploit rather than fix Gaza's deprivation, as evidenced by its theft of blankets and food parcels from a UN warehouse on February 3.

Israel is so committed to repressing Palestinians, Slater argues, because it wants to

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crush "all forms of resistance to Israeli control, including nonviolence." This argument is absurd in light of Israel's full-throated embrace of today's Palestinian Authority, which nonviolently resists Israeli control of the West Bank by seeking to negotiate its end as quickly as possible. In fact, the premise of Israel's strategy toward the Palestinians is to strengthen the PA leadership and to demonstrate the practical rewards of moderation.

President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad work cooperatively with Israel, but they also do not hesitate to criticize its occupation and advance hostile initiatives at the UN and in foreign capitals. They are precisely the nonviolent adversaries that Slater claims Israel cannot abide. Yet if Hamas relinquished one of its thousands of rockets every time a senior Israeli bolstered Fayyad's excellent credentials, Gaza would be quiet within a week. (And if Fatah's armed wing foreswore martyrdom and became the Al-Aqsa Sit-In Brigade, Israelis would be nothing short of ecstatic.)

Clearly, then, Hamas violence cannot be explained by "repression" that forecloses any alternative. In fact, judging by its pervasive (and underreported) torture and execution of Fatah members in Gaza during the recent conflict, Hamas is not only well aware of the nonviolent Palestinian alternative, but also finds it threatening.

The better explanation for Hamas terrorism is its ideology. Slater attempts to explain why we should not believe Hamas when its charter defines all of Palestine as an Islamic *waqf* that cannot be relinquished. Or when it welcomes the sixtieth anniversary of the UN Partition Plan by declaring: "Palestine is Arab Islamic land, from the river to the sea, including Jerusalem. There is no room in it for the Jews." Or when Khaled Meshaal travels to Tehran after the Gaza conflict and, according to NPR, tells Iranian leaders that Hamas "is preparing to liberate all of Palestine, retake Jerusalem, and ensure the return of all Palestinian refugees."

Slater contends that Hamas will cater to the 73 percent of Gazans who support a two-state solution, not the 1 percent who want it to implement Islamic law. Even assuming that the percentages are accurate, this logic is belied by Hamas's effort to implement a sharia penal code, as reported in December 2008 by the London-based *Al Hayat*. More important, if so many Gazans support a two-state solution, and if Hamas listens to them, why wouldn't it have proudly announced its own support a long time ago?

Unless Hamas is just historically inept at responding to obvious political incentives, this facile picture of a democratic Hamas catering to peace-loving Gazans must be false.

An Israeli woman lays on the floor and covers the heads of her two children as an alarm is heard warning of incoming rockets fired by Palestinian militants in Gaza, in Kfar Azza, southern Israel, near Israel's border with the Gaza Strip, January 7, 2009.



A Palestinian carries a wounded boy to Shifa hospital in Gaza City on January 6, the day that Israeli mortar shells killed at least forty Palestinians in the Jebaliya refugee camp. The author notes that many newspapers incorrectly described the shelling as having killed people inside a UN school, when in fact the fatalities took place outside the school. Regardless, the shells killed dozens of civilians.

Lest anyone be misled, Musa Abu Marzouk, the “deputy chief of the Hamas political bureau,” wrapped up the Gaza conflict by inveighing against the “settlers of Sderot” in a blog for *The Guardian*. For Hamas, all of Israel is a colony to be liquidated.

Thus, negotiations cannot be reasonably expected to yield a deal, unless Israel is expected to negotiate the terms of its own disappearance. And even if an agreement could be reached, it would not be implemented—as Slater acknowledges, to his credit—unless Israel is assured that it is “enforceable.” How could Israel trust a ten-year truce with a group that resolves to destroy it once the ten years are up? This is why the Quartet insists that Hamas recog-

nize Israel before negotiations commence. Otherwise, they have no purpose except to reward Hamas’s intransigence.

Of course, the fruitlessness of seeking a comprehensive agreement did not prevent Israel from agreeing to a *tahdiya*, or calm, with Hamas in the months before the Gaza operation. This did not halt the rocket fire. Excusing these attacks as Islamic Jihad retaliation against Israeli actions in the West Bank, as Slater does, is insufficient. Hamas is responsible for what happens in Gaza, and the Palestinian government of the West Bank did not resist the Israeli actions in question.

Israel’s operation was, therefore, a legitimate response to attacks by a hostile government. It might have even been the only viable option.

Nor should Israel have been dissuaded by a “predictable” lack of success. While Slater may think that Israel should have foreseen its own failure, his opinion is rendered irrelevant by the fact that Israel sees its operation as successful. The senior military and political officials to whom I spoke when I visited the country in January were uniformly convinced that they had achieved key objectives. They believe that Israel has significantly reduced the attacks, diminished Hamas tactical capabilities, introduced new fissures within the Hamas leadership, strengthened international resolve to address weapons smuggling, and sent a clear signal to Iran that Israel’s military capacity remains strong.

The justice of Israel’s tactics in Gaza still remains an open question. Curiously, Slater does not actually argue why Israel’s actions were disproportionate. He simply asserts that it is an “easy” call, repeating his earlier claim that Israel was the aggressor and citing the lopsided death toll. It’s not easy for me to respond to an allegation of criminal behavior that doesn’t even attempt to make the case.

As Michael Walzer, who literally wrote the book on just and unjust wars, argued in January: “How many civilian casualties would America’s leaders think were ‘not disproportionate to’ the value of avoiding the rocketing of New York? The answer is too many.... The question ‘Is it disproportionate?’ isn’t hard at all for people eager to say yes, but asked honestly, the answer will often be no, and that answer may justify more than we ought to justify.”

The proportionality principle applies to states, which have special obligations to protect their citizens. How special those obligations are—that is, how much harm to citizens of other states can be accepted in order to meet them—is a subject for complex moral and legal debate. A theory of just warfare that simply says “it’s disproportionate because 1,300 deaths are too many” is no theory at all.

Slater then discusses two more obligations derived from the laws of war: to distinguish

combatants from civilians, and to immunize noncombatants from being targeted. These laws assume that states will separate their own military installations from civilians. Even then, they do not prohibit attacking military targets when civilians are present. Yet Hamas, like other guerilla movements, deliberately blurs the military-civilian boundary. It stores weapons in mosques, fires from residential buildings, and hides out in tunnels beneath civilian infrastructure. If a Hamas fighter has been allowed into an apartment to shoot out the window, is the apartment's owner a civilian or a combatant?

Regardless, the IDF uses a rigorous process of approval when determining what targets to strike, including review by legal counsel. It leaflets neighborhoods and calls houses before bombing them in order to encourage evacuations. And the most notorious allegation of civilian targeting during the Gaza operation was the claim, spread around the world by screaming headlines, that Israel deliberately shelled a UN school used as a civilian refuge. The UN has since clarified that "the shelling and all of the fatalities took place outside and not inside the school."

Neither Slater nor I can adjudicate whether a particular commander was right to fire on a particular building, given the information and intelligence he had at the time. If evidence suggests impropriety, as U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice has said, Israel can be expected to investigate. Indeed, it has already begun to do so. This is consistent with its commitment to the rule of law, its self-scrutiny after previous wars, and its obligations to the international community. Let's not hold our breath waiting for Hamas to do the same.

Ultimately, this theoretical debate over past decisions only goes so far. Slater's argument, however, would have deeply troubling implications if people actually used it to guide their future decisions.

Slater believes that "a nation does not have a 'right' of self-defense if attacks on its soil are triggered by—or are acts of resistance against—its own ... occupation." Indeed, an occupying power has no right to defend its citizens "even when the form of resistance—terrorist attacks intended to kill civilians—is itself morally wrong." In other words, civilians are fair game.

This is bad news for citizens of the United States, which arguably continues to occupy Iraq by maintaining effective control over much of that country. Playing by the rules that Slater wishes to enforce on Israel, the United States would have no right to strike back if the Mahdi Army or Sunni insurgents bombed a mall in San Francisco.

Thinking about Afghanistan, where polyglot NATO-led forces control whatever areas are under control at all, only expands the list of permissible terrorist targets under Slater's logic. Paris? Sydney? Warsaw? Nor should we overlook the horrific human consequences if this proposed impunity were granted to Greek Cypriot refugees who bombed Istanbul, Georgians who targeted Moscow, or Azeris who fired on Yerevan.

And then there is Iran's patronage of Hamas, which is apparently so irrelevant to Slater's calculus that he does not even mention it. Not only is "resistance" permitted to take the wrong "form," but third-party sovereigns are evidently permitted to supply the firepower.

Talk about "a perfect moral catastrophe." This is no way to advance the cause of peace and justice. One need not support all of Israel's policies, or even its prosecution of this fight in Gaza, to recognize that this notion of just warfare is grossly distorted.

Fortunately, there is a more sensible way to see the issue, which European, Egyptian, American, and peace-seeking Palestinian leaders have embraced alongside Israelis.

The ongoing firing of rockets and mortars at cities in southern Israel is not merely an imperfect means to an acceptable end. It is not "resistance" to be glorified. Hamas's continued efforts to kill the "settlers of Sderot" resist nothing except Israel's existence, and achieve nothing except too many funerals on both sides of the border.

This terrorism should be condemned—and stopped. Sometimes, sadly, peace takes a tough fight. ■

ceasefire in gaza

O come,
emmanuel,
come
ransom
israel
stumbling
on stones
gleaming
with blood
and banter
plastered
like night
at dusk
iridescent
specter
on vine
withered
whispering
coincidence
dissembling
pretense
pledged
on bridge
broken,
glittering,
rejoicing,
O israel
come
stumbling
with stones
of majesty,
misery,
tyranny

- Elliot R. Wolfson

An Israeli in Bil'in

by Joel Carillet



Israeli student Olga Ginsbourg and two residents of the Palestinian village of Bil'in protest at the barrier constructed by Israel that separates the village from its land. They are shouting to the Israeli soldiers on the other side of the barrier. The man with the flag is the father who, in this story, invited Olga on her first visit to Bil'in to eat with his family and meet his daughter.

IT IS A FRIDAY AFTERNOON IN NOVEMBER 2006 AND OLGA GINSBOURG, a twenty-one-year-old student majoring in economics and sociology at Tel Aviv University, isn't doing homework. Instead, she is visiting the West Bank village of Bil'in, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Palestinians protesting the route of Israel's separation barrier.

Bil'in, site of the longest running demonstration against the barrier in the West Bank, is home to 1,600 Palestinians. Since early 2005, Israeli and international activists have converged here each Friday just after midday prayers, joining forces with village residents opposed to the separation barrier. Today, in 2009, the demonstrations continue. On February 6, for example, two demonstrators were injured and dozens suffered tear gas inhalation. This story, however, is about the day I attended the protest in 2006 and the young woman I met there.

Beginning in the village center—and accompanied by journalists wearing helmets and bullet-proof vests—the demonstrators, led by a tractor, set off on foot for the barrier, about fifteen minutes away. There is no way to know what will happen in the hours ahead—who will be wounded or arrested, how precisely

the soldiers will respond. But what is certain is the goal.

The weather this day is unseasonably warm and the sky a delightful blue. But the landscape, dissected by the barrier, is clearly scarred, and thousands of olive trees belonging to Bil'in are visible in the distance but beyond reach.

In some parts of the West Bank, the barrier is a hulking twenty-four-foot-high concrete wall. More often, however, as in Bil'in, it is a three-meter-high electrified fence, augmented by razor wire and electronic sensors. But whatever the form, it separates people from their land, and this is why the demonstrators are here.

The procession has stopped in front of a yellow metal gate built into the barrier. Between the marchers and the gate are extra coils of razor wire and, a few feet beyond the wire, Israeli soldiers stand in full riot gear. The demonstrators are demanding passage to their fields, but nobody here is operating under any illusions. As always, the demonstrators' demands will be rejected. The only question is how heavy-handed that rejection will be.

More than half of the village's land—mostly agricultural fields devoted to olive cultivation—now sits on the "Israeli" side of the barrier. Israel argues that the barrier is necessary for security. But others, including the International Court of Justice and human rights groups like Israel's B'Tselem, criticize its illegal placement. Rather than follow the Green Line, the internationally recognized boundary between Israel and the West Bank, the barrier often juts deep into Palestinian territory. "In setting the barrier's route," B'Tselem writes, "Israeli officials almost totally ignored the severe violations of Palestinian human rights. The route was based on extraneous considerations completely unrelated to the security of Israeli citizens."

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To the Palestinians whose land has been lost due to this illegal routing, the barrier is not about security; it is about an occupying power taking the fields upon which their communities depend. It is about oppression.

Enter Olga Ginzbourg. In the course of the next two hours—in which demonstrators will attempt to pull back the razor wire, and soldiers will respond with stun grenades and batons—one young woman will stand out.

In part, it was her light brown hair in a sea of dark hair and helmets that caught this writer's attention. But what most drew me to her was the sincerity written upon her face, both as she interacted with the villagers and as she engaged the soldiers.

I had intended to interview Olga in Bil'in, but during the clashes that followed the demonstration—even if the demonstration ends without much violence, a clash between soldiers and stone-throwing Palestinians inevitably erupts on the village outskirts—Olga and I were separated. But with the help of both Palestinians and Israelis, three weeks later I was able to track her down in Tel Aviv, where we met for an interview.

Born in the Ukrainian port city of Odessa, Olga immigrated to Israel with her family in 1990, when she was five years old. She was young when she left Ukraine, but not so young that she hadn't already encountered prejudice. "In kindergarten in Odessa, some kids called me a 'stinking Jew,'" she said. "Anti-Semitism was strong."

Olga is a member of Israel's 1 million-strong Russian immigrant community. The political base for many of the country's far-right politicians, it includes among its number Israel's former Deputy Prime Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, who in November 2006 called for the execution of any Arab Knesset member who met with representatives of the Hamas-led Palestinian government. Lieberman is well known for his hard-line politics, but Russians in general have a bad reputation among Palestinians. It isn't uncommon, for example, to hear a Palestinian say that Russian immigrants serving in the IDF or Border Police are more aggressive than their peers.

There are, of course, exceptions to every stereotype, and Olga is certainly one. Until 2006, she was like many Israelis: impatient with criticism of her country, and quick to defend its policies. And like many Israelis, she had reason to be angry with Palestinians. In 2001, at a Tel Aviv hangout popular among Russian youth known as the Dolphinarium, twenty-one people were killed when a Palestinian stood at the entrance to the club and blew himself up. Most of the dead were teenagers, and two were people Olga knew.

But while studying in Spain in the spring of 2006, Olga met people who challenged her views of the conflict. They talked about what happened in 1948 and what was happening even now in the Occupied Territories. While not convinced of their perspective, she returned to Israel mulling over the challenges they had presented to her. When later in the year she saw a poster in Tel Aviv announcing a large demonstration to be held in a troubled Palestinian village called Bil'in, she decided it was time to go see the situation for herself.

In October 2006, for the first time in her life, Olga would visit the occupied West Bank. The experience would transform her.

"I was so shocked," Olga told me of that October day. "The soldiers were so violent. When a citizen who lives in a democracy comes and sees what is happening, he is shocked. The police and soldiers just don't see what they are doing." We were talking now in a swanky restaurant in Tel Aviv. The atmosphere of the establishment—nice clothes, flirting couples, peace—offered



The Israeli soldiers have now crossed over the barrier. Olga is pleading with them in Hebrew. "I was not telling the soldiers to go home," she says, "because they can't. I was merely asking them to not shoot at kids, to know what they are doing by guarding a barrier that keeps people from their own fields."

a stark contrast to Bil'in.

"People don't want to know. Ignorance is bliss," Olga said as a waitress brought our drinks. "If people looked at all the information, they wouldn't stand by. I don't know ... this is what I believe." Olga picked up her glass, taking a sip before adding, "Palestinians ask for far less than Israelis do." Her gaze then shifted from me to the glass. "I want a strawberry martini; they want less."

Olga's experience in Bil'in led her to embrace what her friends in Spain had told her: the idea that Israel's military occupation is often brutal and self-serving. In Bil'in, she said, "I saw things as they are, heard the history of Bil'in from the activists and from the people of Bil'in, saw the way the village people were treated by the military. My eyes were opened to a very unpleasant reality of my country." After this initial visit to the West Bank, she used the internet to learn more about life in the Occupied Territories. "What I found did not get any easier to digest," she said. "It got worse."

Remembering the pained look on Olga's face in Bil'in as she pleaded with soldiers, I asked what she had told them. "I was not telling the soldiers to go home," she said, "because they can't. I was merely asking them to not shoot at kids, to know what they are doing by guarding a barrier that keeps people from their own fields. The soldiers have to build a reason for why they are there. Sometimes they tell me: 'We're here to defend you. You can protest because of us. Because of this wall you have fewer terror attacks. This is for your protection.' I tell them I love Israel as much as they do, but *use your mind*."

Like most Jewish children, Olga explained, she was raised to believe that "if you put a Palestinian and Israeli child together, the Israeli will want peace, but the Palestinian will want to kill the Jew." But in Bil'in that stereotype quickly crumbled, unable to withstand the weight of actual encounter. After the demonstration, she was invited to the home of a villager who also had been protesting. The man—who during the week worked as a taxi driver in Ramallah—was proud of his seventeen-year-old daughter, who studied English, and he wanted Olga to meet her. At the home Olga was touched by the family's hospitality, and the next time she came to the village she in turn brought a gift of her own. In addition to her onion—which many protesters carry to cut the sting of tear gas—Olga carried an English-language copy of Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. It was for the driver's daughter.

When asked about her own parents, particularly about what they think of their only daughter's new interest in the lives of Palestinians, Olga said they are terrified for her. "You could lose your life for nothing," her dad says. But Olga counters, "How can I not do something when I am privileged, when Palestine is only a few kilometers from my house?"

It is impossible to stand by, she says, once you've seen the human face of the men, women, and children who suffer because of your country's policies. "If I can't change something—even the smallest thing—it's not worth living."

Olga and I talked about other issues during our two hours together. She criticized the United States for what she called its blind support of Israel. She lamented that so few Israelis know even the basic details of what happened to Palestinians in 1948. She also talked about the Holocaust book that Israeli students are required to read in high school, arguing that the way the subject is taught leads young people to think that Jewish suffering is all that matters. "They poison you with this," she said.

For all of her criticism, though, she also made clear to me what she had explained to the soldiers in Bil'in. "I love my country," she said. "And if Israel didn't exist, I believe the Holocaust would repeat itself."

Years ago Robert F. Kennedy said: "It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope."

In listening to Olga—a woman beautifully able to both love and criticize, able to venture across a political divide to see the other side—I sensed anew that the way the world is, is not the way the world has to be. Even more, I saw a ripple of hope. ■

POSTSCRIPT, FEBRUARY 2009

Olga finished her degree at Tel Aviv University and now works for a high-tech company in Israel, where, she says, she is making good money and saving for a long trip abroad, perhaps to Tibet. "I must say that I am in a quite difficult spot right now in life," she says. "The [Gaza] war brought so much desperation and grief, I haven't even got the words to describe it—the way that we take others' lives, as if they carry no value, as if I who live inside the borders of country X am so different from those in country Y. Don't we all want fair lives, to make a living, to see our children grow?"

Olga looks back at the time of this article, at the very beginning of her life as an activist, as an easier time for her than she is experiencing now. She explains that she can no longer say she loves her country as easily as she did in 2006. Her experiences have left her more radicalized and despairing, and she half jokes about "joining a monastery and quitting this life."

But in the end, she insists, she is committed to keeping on the path she began then, trying to change the consciousness of her own people. She says, "I have opened my eyes to this new and not-so-shining world, and I can't go back."

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

Wrestling with Real Life

WALTZ WITH BASHIR,
Sony Pictures Classics, 2008

THE CLASS, Sony Pictures Classics, 2008

THE WRESTLER, Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2008

SYNECDOCHE, NEW YORK,
Sony Pictures Classics, 2008

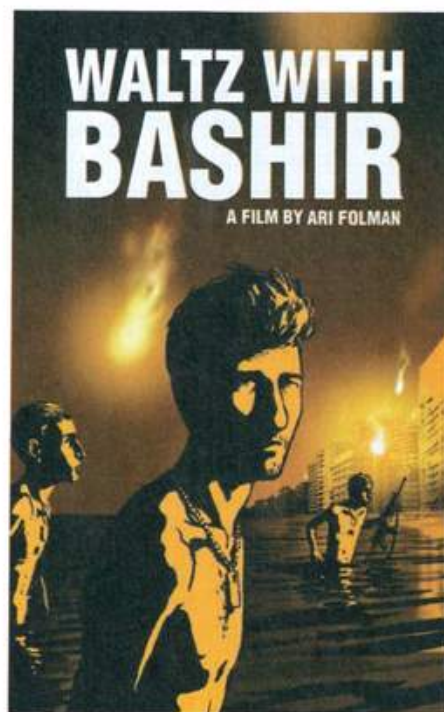
GRAN TORINO, Warner Brothers, 2008

Review by David Sterritt

spend the entire story ogling, acquiring, and drooling over.

In this atmosphere, the best hopes for constructive filmmaking often lie far from Hollywood studios, in state-subsidized movie industries abroad (where box-office grosses don't reign supreme) and in independent companies. This helps explain why the best recent picture to open on American screens began as a low-budget project for Israeli television and expanded into a theatrical feature with financing from Germany, France, and ITVS, an independent American outlet. *Waltz with Bashir* is so original and unconventional that simply describing it means putting together words not usually spoken in the same breath—it's an animated documentary made up of historical facts, intimate memories, psychological reflections, and nightmarish visions. Such a multifaceted hybrid could easily have disintegrated on the drawing board, but thanks to the talents of Israeli writer-director-producer Ari Folman, the finished film is emotionally rich, psychologically true, philosophically compelling, and historically urgent.

The events that begin the story have disturbing parallels to the mayhem that erupted in the Gaza Strip late last year. Reacting against Palestinians who'd been firing rockets into northern Israel, the Israeli army invaded southern Lebanon in June 1982, hoping to eliminate threats from the north by occupying Lebanon all the way to Beirut and installing the Christian Phalangist leader Bashir Gemayel, a favorite of Israeli officials as well as Christian militias, in the Lebanese presidency. Two months later a deal was struck whereby Palestinian



fighters would leave Beirut and Israeli forces would stay outside the city in return. But shortly after this Gemayel was assassinated in East Beirut, whereupon Israeli soldiers entered the city and Phalangist forces followed, descending on the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps—which were empty of fighters by now—and slaughtering some 3,000 men, women, and children in two days of collective revenge for Gemayel's murder.

This is explosive material by any standard—morally, historically, dramatically—and Folman has made it into indelible cinema via three highly creative ideas. First, he decided to build the story around his own efforts to recover repressed memories of fighting in the Lebanon War as an

THIS IS A TIME WHEN MOST American movies have as much to do with the real world as a Beverly Hills chihuahua, and the situation shows no sign of improving. Hollywood's spring lineup is dominated by the usual blitz of fantasies and farces, and even the much-awaited *Watchmen*, based on the sophisticated graphic novel by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, takes place a quarter-century ago when cold-war geopolitics divided the world into orderly ideological slices. The overwhelming majority of movies work from the premise that their job is to take us *away* from the real, complicated, chronically ailing world, when their function should be to plunge us intensely *into* it so we can better understand how it might be fixed. Films are ephemeral things, made of nothing but light bouncing off a screen; but the flimsy daydreams they habitually peddle are controlled so completely by the profit motive and the marketplace mentality that they've become, along with television, the most materialistic medium of our time. And this naturally spills over into movie content—for a hair-raising example, see last year's *Sex and the City*, where the nominal stars are actresses from the TV show but the actual stars are the luxury-priced objects they

Israeli soldier; he himself is the main character, and he sets off to interview former comrades after a friend describes a recurring nightmare that appears to be linked with that period in their lives. Next, he wrote an intensely concentrated screenplay based on the most revealing of those interviews, and recruited the men who spoke the words to do so again on the soundtrack. (Five agreed to do so, while two are dubbed by actors.)

Folman's most daring decision was to make *Waltz with Bashir* an animated film. (He uses some of the same techniques that Pixar employs for its blockbuster cartoons, although a less Pixar-ish movie is hard to imagine.) Using animation allows Folman to heighten the impact of documentary elements (the events, the interviews, the voices) by imbuing them with the expressive properties of unfettered visual art. It also prepares the ground for the film's overwhelming conclusion, which no one this side of the late Primo Levi could adequately capture in words. I even see the animated format as a signal of the movie's freedom from cinematic materialism, since its avoidance of photographic imagery—which always lends a touch of seductive magic to people, places, and events—underscores the unique nature of its burningly important subject. Every sentient moviegoer should see *Waltz with Bashir*. It is irrefutable and irreplaceable.

The Class

THE CLASS, DIRECTED BY FRENCH filmmaker Laurent Cantet, comes to theaters with such impressive credentials—the top prize at Cannes, opening night at the New York Film Festival, and so on—that audiences might fear it's too arty to be much fun. Au contraire, it's as lively and engrossing as anything Hollywood has cooked up in ages, and it packs a political wallop to boot. If you don't spend much time in schoolrooms, this movie should be mandatory homework.

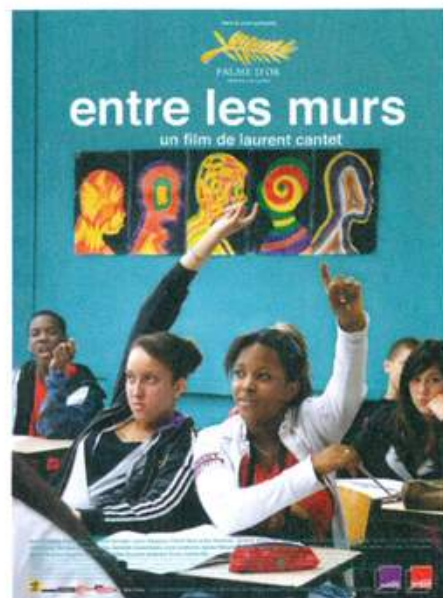
The action takes place in a Paris school that serves an ethnically diverse, working-class area. There a thirty-something teacher named François copes with a roomful of utterly unpredictable adolescents. Shooting in docudrama style with

handheld cameras, Cantet makes a surprisingly large number of them into fully three-dimensional characters, and in a balancing act that only a world-class filmmaker could pull off, he builds equal sympathy for the (mostly) boisterous kids and the (usually) easygoing man whose job is keeping them under control and drumming some learning into their heads.

The movie gets its unwavering sense of authenticity partly from Cantet's filmmaking savvy and partly from the fact that François is played by François Bégaudeau, who cowrote the screenplay from his own autobiographical novel about teaching in this kind of classroom. The kids who play the kids are equally genuine, and the dialogue they speak is as fresh as if they'd improvised it while the camera rolled.

What strikes me most strongly is how vividly the film portrays the dance of multicultural diplomacy that goes on ceaselessly between teacher and pupil and, on subtly different levels, among the students themselves. When a feisty boy decides to bait François by asking if he's gay, for instance, François has to enter a tricky psychological contest without a moment's notice, being fair to the question—he has no choice about that, since he's assigned the kids to write candid self-portraits about themselves—without giving them the idea that privacy and discretion are meaningless words. On the flip side, even the spunky kid who opened this hot topic is careful to keep saying it wouldn't *matter* if François were gay, there's nothing *wrong* with that. What's fascinating here isn't the boy's (questionable) sincerity but the way that even a high-spirited troublemaker knows there are some lines people never cross unless they want to make real trouble.

Real trouble also happens in *The Class*, and by the final scene you feel like Colvin and Pryzbylowski must have felt after supervising students in season four of *The Wire*. Everyone survives in the end, but it's clear that some of the kids have fulfilling lives ahead of them and some just don't, despite the best efforts of the truly caring adults who want to educate them. The film's French title is *Entre les murs*, meaning "between the walls." Its English-language title is better, since *The Class* is about

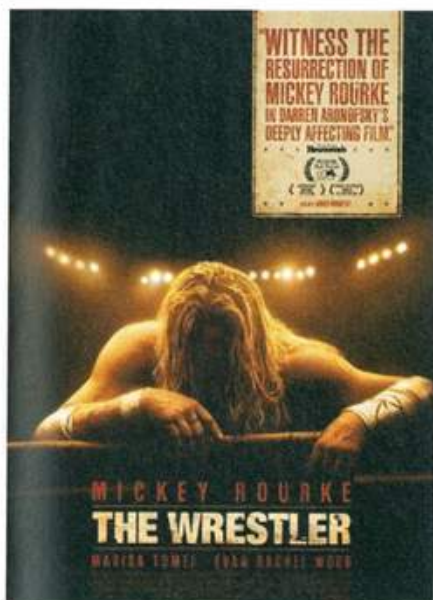


socioeconomic class as much as it's about anything. The movies it most resembles are documentaries such as Michael Apted's long-running *Up* series and Frederick Wiseman's great *High School* films. But like Folman in *Waltz with Bashir*, the makers of *The Class* use fiction-film techniques to infuse their lifelike material with all the more force and credibility. It's a brilliant achievement.

The Wrestler

A SIDE EFFECT OF TODAY'S MOVIE materialism is a tendency to see people in terms of groups and stereotypes, losing sight of each person's individuality. *Waltz with Bashir* avoids this by portraying wartime events through subjective memories, and *The Class* overcomes it by according full attention and concern to the individual students it singles out. *The Wrestler*, directed by the American independent Darren Aronofsky, keeps its story on a scrupulously human scale by zeroing in on a scrupulously human subject—the inherent worth of a man so damaged, defeated, and dispirited that his very presence would be off-limits to most big-studio productions.

This man is Randy "The Ram" Robinson, a professional wrestler who was famous long ago but now lives on a precarious routine of bottom-drawer matches and small-time fan events that barely pull in a living wage; things get even worse when he suffers a heart attack that could put him out of the business for good. Seizing on slim hopes for renewed



happiness, he reaches out to his estranged daughter, who is acutely suspicious of him, and to a good-hearted stripper he knows, who fears harming her own future by entangling it with his. The film's humane values emerge in its tireless respect for Randy's spasmodic efforts to dig out from an error-ridden past, and they're underscored further by Aranofsky's choice of Mickey Rourke to play the beaten-down protagonist. Rourke's once-promising career has been sabotaged by so many setbacks, from out-of-control interviews to cosmetic-surgery calamities, that now he "doesn't look like a movie star playing a battered wreck, but like the genuine article," according to one critic. That overstates the case, but Rourke's portrayal of *The Wrestler* has an irresistible compassion that bespeaks intimate familiarity with the role's inner truths. There but for the grace of God go all of us.

Synecdoche, New York

A DIFFERENT KIND OF COMPASSION arises in *Synecdoche, New York*, which illustrates how difficult it is to live an examined life in a culture where "creativity" and "self-knowledge" are buzzwords instead of calls to action. The film's ostensible setting is the city of Schenectady in upper New York State, but the actual setting is somewhere inside the melancholy skull of one Caden Cotard, a theater director played by Philip Seymour Hoffman with his customary insight.

Caden's family life, physical health,

and existential sanity are going to pieces before his helpless eyes, and his only solution is to confront this sea of troubles through his art. In a stroke of rare good fortune, he wins a MacArthur "genius grant" and uses the money to embark on a stage production that will plumb the endless depths of his suffering soul. Seventeen years later he's still in rehearsals and figuring out what the title should be; in fact, he's still figuring out what the *subject* should be, and he's lost all track of where reality ends and creativity begins.

Synecdoche, New York is the ultimate Charlie Kaufman movie, carrying his mirrors-within-mirrors imagination (he wrote *Adaptation* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) as far as I think it will ever be able to go. Lest you think Caden loses touch with reality because he's obsessed with his play, note that time and causality are already scrambled in the movie's first moments, and it's far from certain that anything we see is really happening at all. Or should I say "is" "really" "happening," as Kaufman might prefer? At first I thought the film might be an exercise in eccentricity for its own sake, but I changed my mind when I felt the depth of its sympathy for the hero's Sisyphean effort to understand the place of the soul in a world obsessed with commodity and fame. Caden goes about things all wrong, and his ending is tragic. But his inward odyssey is unlike anything I've ever seen on film.



Gran Torino

AND SPEAKING OF UNPRECEDENTED FEATS, we've now seen Clint Eastwood release two major productions in a year—first *Changeling* and then *Gran Torino*, in which he also stars—while approaching the indisputably old age of eighty. Once a sexy superstar who specialized in frontier gunplay and vigilante violence, he's now a senior citizen who philosophizes on morality (*Mystic River*), death (*Million Dollar Baby*), war (*Letters from Iwo Jima*), and other big questions. *Gran Torino* is less imposing than those pictures, but in its way it's a thought-provoking tale.



Eastwood plays a cranky Korean War vet named Walt Kowalski, the last remaining Anglo in a Detroit neighborhood now filled with Asian-American immigrants. Walt spends his days scowling at the Hmong family that lives next door—Clint's a great scowler—and when a teenage boy auditions for gang membership by trying to steal his vintage car, he decides to shape the whippersnapper up with tough-love discipline. This puts him on the gang's enemies list, paving the way to a classical Clint-movie showdown.

According to a plausible theory about Eastwood, his later movies are acts of atonement for the Neanderthal lunkheadedness of his *Man With No Name* and *Cop With No Rulebook* years. *Gran Torino* can

be Exhibit A for this argument, since everything is designed to counterpoint the reactionary persona of Eastwood's younger days—A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do! Go ahead, make my day!—with the kinder, gentler Clint who's emerged with the mellowness of age.

The grand finale clinches the case. It's corny and overdone (the Christ-on-the-cross symbolism is *way* over the top) but it's fascinating as a political reverse spin on Dirty Harry by the guy who gave us Dirty Harry in the first place. A scrubbed-up Dirty Harry after all these years? There may be hope for Hollywood after all! ■

David Sterritt, chairman of the National Society of Film Critics and professor emeritus at Long Island University, was film critic of The Christian Science Monitor for decades. His latest books are Guiltless Pleasures and The B List.

[BOOKS]

TWO BEAUTIFUL BOOKS

DOSTOEVSKY: LANGUAGE, FAITH AND FICTION

by Rowan Williams,

Baylor University Press, 2008

SACRED ATTUNEMENT

by Michael Fishbane,

University of Chicago Press, 2008

Review by Roger S. Gottlieb

IN A FIELD OVERFLOWING WITH books that repeat ideas we have encountered many times before, it is a special treat to come across two extremely intelligent, inspiring, and beautiful original works.

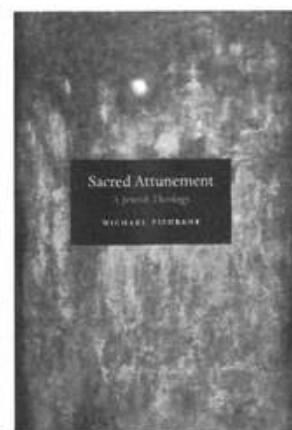
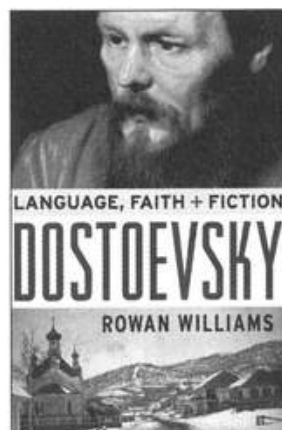
Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was an academic theologian before he became informal head of the Anglican Church. In this study of Dostoevsky's major fiction, he presents us with a compelling and relentlessly focused account of moral relationships. Williams explicitly disavows Dostoevsky's flawed ethnic chauvinism, but he otherwise inhabits his subject's worldview so fully that I will treat the book's ideas as belonging to both of them. Whatever the source, the book contains one of the most profound expositions of a truly spiritual

existence that I have ever read. Whether it would be as affecting to someone who has never read Dostoevsky, and who was not (as I was) profoundly shaped by the novelist from an early age, I cannot tell. But if an encounter with Williams leads you to the world of *The Idiot* or *Crime and Punishment*, that will be gift enough.

Dostoevsky's world is filled with humiliation, loss, crushing poverty, physical and mental illness, casual cruelties, the sexual and physical abuse of children, despair, meaninglessness, political terrorism, and murder. (Sound familiar?) No one is compelled to commit the crimes that are responsible for this pain, and we are free to take the pain seriously, make it worse, or try to avoid it. The key moral question is thus how to be decent human beings in a world of suffering and freedom.

By displaying spiritual questions in fictional form, Dostoevsky shows us many ways to fail at being decent in this way. Williams suggests that the characters who fail all share a refusal to accept the freedom of a true human relationship, as well as a desire to either escape relationships or control them. Demonic obsessions with control or escape take a variety of forms: political violence and the willingness to sacrifice a hundred million innocents to usher in a world of perfect happiness; hyper-rationalized social planning that ignores human freedom; pseudo-religious totalitarianism in which the masses must obey, while those in power have actually turned their backs on God; violent and prideful religious asceticism; egotistical sensuality; or a drawn-out hosanna of joy at the beauty of God's universe, a hosanna which has forgotten the long line of children abused by their parents.

Dostoevsky's alternative to all of these is, as portrayed by Williams, simple, profound, and very, very difficult. It is to respond to others with compassion and sensitive attunement, to attend to others' needs not by substituting your own understanding or knowledge or strength for their own, but by a quality of loving



attention that allows them to continue to develop, choose freely, and come to a better, truer life. Loving attention is never a substitute for freedom, and it is something that can change *both* people in the relationship. Like characters in these novels, we all construct ourselves in time, through the process of talking, listening, and responding freely to the demands of mutual responsibility. This process is never-ending. Therefore we must resist the great temptation of wanting to end it prematurely, to have the last word, to control what the other says, or to retreat to a place where we are talking only to ourselves.

What is particularly powerful about Williams' book is its relentless relationality, in which our connection to other people is absolutely central to our moral and spiritual development. This may seem to resemble other versions of spiritual life, but in fact it is distinct. In Buddhism, for example, moral development is a product of individual meditative and reflective development—the real work is done before the relationships, which will work out fine as long as you keep your own head together. In Judaism, ethics is first a response to God's call, which instructs us to attend to the neighbor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger.

Further, to the extent that religious moralities stress the centrality of acting ethically, they tend to represent the suffering other as someone simply in need of help. The moral agent is set in his/her ways, knowing what needs to be done, able to rise (or not) to the moral challenge. In Williams' vision the moral actor is not so finished or settled. To live morally or spiritually is always to be in the process of expressing ourselves, listening to others,

trying to understand and being misunderstood, and facing moral choices that can never be settled in advance. There is never any safe place—socially, spiritually, or religiously—from which we can avoid these demands and dangers.

Yet for Williams and Dostoevsky there is in God a foundation for the spiritual outcome of the process, and in particular a Christian version of a God who allows a divine aspect to enter history and suffer rejection, pain, and death. The God who came to earth gives us loving attention without removing our freedom to assent or reject, and in doing so provides a model of how we can offer that kind of attunement to others. What is key here is the combination of transcendent love and earthly suffering. The Christian God is the one, Williams says, who can be spat on.

Just as Christ's divinity didn't prevent his crucifixion, so no religious insight, saint, or text will necessarily receive a welcoming response. Like everything else in spiritual life, there is never any experience so compelling or definitive that it relieves us of the responsibility to reflect, respond, and choose rightly.

University of Chicago theology professor Michael Fishbane writes from an Orthodox Jewish perspective and has constructed what he calls a "theology" of Judaism for the modern age, one he hopes will avoid the twin dangers of sterile repetition of the past and rootless innovation. His "theology"—or what many might call his spirituality or religion—begins with the eruption into ordinary life of some intimation of divine reality. But this eruption—an eruption that for Fishbane is always in stark contrast to the everyday worlds of desire, business, politics, science, or the proclivities of human nature—is only the start of theology, not its goal. That goal is to adapt every moment of our lives to the divine reality. While Williams sees morality as an endless, self-and-other-changing conversation, Fishbane envisions a kind of spread of our initial sense of the divine into all aspects of our action and experience.

Rooted in Jewish tradition, Fishbane describes this process with reference to both the Written and the Oral Torahs, but also to the primordial reality of God that

precedes and underlies them. What he calls the "Torah Kelulah" is a caesural opening in which God's creative power issues forth into a manifest universe that includes a system of natural law and the moral reality of human existence. It is the "kiss of divine truth on the vastness of world-being."

Not surprisingly for a Jewish theology, Fishbane takes Jewish textual traditions as central. But it is one of the creative gifts of this book that he presents a dialectical interplay between text and world in which various attunements to texts correspond to various ways of relating to other parts of our lives. The better we read, the better we live; and the more we attend to the actual conditions of our lives, including our specific historical situation, the more richness we will find in, and create out of, the texts. As we read scripture for its plain meaning, its spiritual inspiration, its philosophical profundity, or its ability to lead to that place of silence in which we approach the Divine Mystery, our connections to nature, social relations, and God become deeper and richer.

This approach is embedded in a book characterized by a passionately poetic devotion to the ideal of religious living, one that is serious without being preachy. When Fishbane tells us that the reality of God erupted into Jewish consciousness at Sinai, and that we have been trying to make sense of and respond to that event ever since, it is clear that he has been doing this in his own life for a very long time. And his concentrated prose and often poetic and illuminating eloquence help the reader come to grips with this task in a fresh and powerful way. As one example, his account of silence as a spiritual mode of preparation to hear and to speak is one of the finest descriptions of quiet, focused attention I have ever read.

Despite my enormous enjoyment of both these books, they both leave me with a little uneasiness.

My difficulty with Fishbane's book is that it tends to glide over the dark side of life and faith. In terms of Jewish tradition, we do not see much of Abraham arguing with God about Sodom's fate, Moses trying to evade God's call, Job's pointless pain, or Chasidic Master Levi Yitzchak of

Berdichiv telling God that forgiveness on Yom Kippur had better be a two-way street—for surely we have as much to forgive of God as God does of us. Not to mention Elie Wiesel, who was willing, for all his piety, to imagine putting God on trial for His sins. Fishbane believes suffering needs to be responded to ethically, without certainty of success, but that does not seem too difficult for him. Yet here I side with Dostoevsky, for whom *the* essential religious question is how any mystical sense of the divine is to coexist with the reality of tortured children. Even in his discussion of despair, this basic problem does not feel particularly threatening to Fishbane. There seems little doubt that faith will triumph without breaking a sweat.

Like all superb books—and Williams's is one of the best I've seen in years—*Dostoevsky* also leaves me with unanswered questions. Two of these concern the possibility of politics and the necessity of God.

Dostoevsky was painfully prescient about the possible abuses of progressive politics. From his critique of liberal social engineering (*Notes from Underground*) to his devastating portrait of "revolutionaries" as soulless, manipulating, hypocritical, and demonically violent (in *The Devils*), he reveals how the idea of revolutionary social transformation guided by a radical elite can devolve into (or hide at the outset) a lack self-restraint, real concern for others, or even basic moral sensibilities.

But surely we have seen similar problems in religious organizations and personalities. While Dostoevsky himself describes them, his response is not to negate religion, but to hold up an image of an authentic, loving version of it. Is no such version of politics possible? Can we not do politics as Williams wants us to do face-to-face human relationships: express love and concern with a basic nonviolent respect for human freedom? Can we not include in our political conversations a willingness to be changed as much as to change others? If like Dostoevsky Williams thinks this is not possible, he does not tell us why—nor why he thinks that religion, with its long history of sin, should still be considered possible, while transformative politics is not.

The question of the reality of God is at the heart of Dostoevsky's last and greatest work, *The Brothers Karamazov*. If there is no God, suggests a character in the book, "everything is permitted." Dostoevsky is sure we need a sense of God in our lives to avoid this amoral conclusion. Only thanks to God are we able to distinguish between what we want and what is right and know that moral limits are rooted in a transcendent reality. Without God we have no limit but our own will, which ultimately leads either to meaningless violence, passive withdrawal, or mindless self-indulgence. And only with a vision of a truly selfless, all-accepting love that God alone can provide do we have a template for our own attempt to love that way on earth.

If Williams does not endorse this view, he does not challenge it either. Perhaps it is part of the job description of the leader of a major world religion to believe such a thing. Yet to me it does not ring true. A sense of love can be gotten from other places, including the beauties and generosity of nature. Many environmentalists believe that the earth is heaven enough for any of us, and this belief leads them to love and care for all of life, without the slightest necessity of God. And ethical guidance can also be found in a purely human world: in the self-given rules of a Kant, the existential commitment of a Camus, or the emotional connectedness described by feminist theorists.

If Williams has more to say on this subject, I would love to hear it, and to exchange views with him. As Holden Caulfield might have said, he's the kind of author with whom I'd love to go out and have cup of tea. That would be a spiritual delight for me, and would confirm the beautifully evoked understanding of truly human relationships he has offered us in this wonderful book. ■

Roger S. Gottlieb is 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.

WHEN "PRO-ISRAEL" ISN'T

PENS AND SWORDS: HOW THE AMERICAN MAINSTREAM MEDIA REPORT THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

by Marda Dunsky, Columbia University Press, 2008

Review by Mark LeVine

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION has made no bones about the fact that it wants to return to the kind of aggressive diplomacy to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that characterized the last years of the Clinton administration. Can Obama succeed where Clinton failed, especially when almost every mid-level and senior official in the new administration working on the peace process was part of the unsuccessful Clinton-era negotiations?

Sadly, none of Obama's statements during or after the campaign suggests he will pursue a truly progressive policy toward Israel/Palestine, since that would inevitably involve putting far more pressure on Israel than any administration has been willing or able to do since President Eisenhower intervened in the Suez Crisis more than fifty years ago.

But even if Obama wanted to change the principles behind U.S. policy toward the conflict, it would be almost impossible to do so. And it's not AIPAC and the organized Jewish community that would play the largest role in frustrating that attempt. Instead, according to a recent book by former *Jerusalem Post* reporter Marda Dunsky, it's the seemingly "liberal" mainstream media that has betrayed the public's trust by failing to provide fair and comprehensive reporting of key events and issues.

Dunsky's book, *Pens and Swords: How the American Mainstream Media Report the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, reflects her extensive experience covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in both the United States and Israel. It is undoubtedly the

most detailed and well-argued exploration yet written of how the mainstream corporate media has shaped U.S. foreign policy toward the conflict, and toward the Middle East more broadly. It should be required reading for all journalists and policy-makers who deal with the issue.

Dunsky begins with the provocative assertion that while journalists like to "see themselves as writing first drafts of history," they also have the power to shape the discourse that can influence, directly or indirectly, how those events continue to unfold. Dunsky explains that the magnitude of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict's importance for America is matched by the "remarkable information deficit" in the mainstream media about its history, present dynamics, and future trajectory.

Pens and Swords provides a comprehensive account of just how difficult it is to offer a "fair and balanced" narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the United States-Israel relationship. There are three levels at which this failure is produced. First, there is the regular failure at the highest levels of the print and broadcast media to report accurately and evenhandedly on the conflict. Whether it's the *New York Times* discussing the Right of Return without mentioning the fact that Israel accepted this right when it was admitted to the United Nations, or *60 Minutes'* Lesley Stahl reporting about the veracity of the "Arafat Papers" without bothering to challenge Israeli officials on their claims that Iran and Iraq were directing the Intifada or to provide an opposing Palestinian view, the highest levels of the mainstream American media participate in what *Haaretz* has dubbed a "unique word-laundering system" governing reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.* The grammar of this special language systematically obscures how much messier—and usually uglier—the reality on the ground is compared with the official portrayal of the Israeli government and the organized Jewish leadership.

So, for example, mainstream U.S. reporting on Israeli settlements rarely questions how, directly or indirectly, American

* *60 Minutes* recently went a long way toward redeeming itself when it ran a story narrated by Bob Simon on January 26, 2009, titled "Is Peace Out of Reach?" The piece went further than any other mainstream news story in showing the often brutal realities of Israel's settlement enterprise in the West Bank.



Access to senior news editors gives Israeli politicians and Jewish leaders a strong voice in editorial policy. A 2002 meeting between CNN executive Eason Jordan, right, and Israeli Communications Minister Reuven Rivlin, left, prompted an apology by CNN for giving Palestinians too much airtime.

aid has contributed to Israel's ability to absorb the cost of building, enlarging, and defending the settlements. More broadly, reporting rarely goes beyond "the parameters of the U.S. policy mirror" to discuss their status under international law. By refusing to accept the basic illegality of the settlement enterprise and instead discussing it as if the issue remains in dispute, the media make it almost impossible for Palestinian or critical Israeli voices to have the weight they warrant in the public sphere.

Similarly, by so often restricting themselves to the Israeli point of view when it comes to discussing violence, or speaking for rather than to or with Palestinians when it comes to telling their stories, mainstream media agencies in the United States make Israeli views seem far more acceptable and rational than those of Palestinians. In one representative example, Dunskey points out that media outlets such as CNN have become so unconsciously biased that they refer to settlements such as Gilo as "Jewish neighborhoods" of Jerusalem rather than as occupied territory.

The argument that the mainstream media narrative of the conflict is partial and biased toward the official Israeli position will not come as a surprise to most *Tikkun* readers, or critics of Israeli policy more broadly. What makes this book so important, however, are Dunskey's impeccable credentials within the system she's criticizing and the huge amount of detail she's amassed, which make this book the reference guide for anyone seeking to rebut the standard argument by "supporters" of

Israel that the media is actually biased against it. Among the many useful incidents that Dunskey brings to light is a 2002 report on supposed anti-Israel bias commissioned by the Jewish Federation of Chicago, which reached the exact opposite conclusion. The federation would not release the report, and the researchers were forced to publish it in an academic journal that could not

possibly achieve the same press recognition.

The second and third levels of Dunskey's analysis are related to the "Israel Lobby," the conglomeration of Jewish and conservative Christian organizations whose primary goal is to advocate on behalf of Israel, regardless of the moral or political merits of its policies. Here Dunskey demonstrates in great detail how the lobby succeeds in wearing down most reporters who try accurately and fairly to describe Israeli policies or the United States-Israel relationship.

On the one hand, the deep relationships between senior news editors and leaders of the community allow the latter unparalleled opportunities to voice complaints over alleged "anti-Israel" reporting. Since Jewish and Palestinian critics of Israeli policies have much less access, the view of senior editors becomes by default closer to that of the Israel Lobby, which makes it harder for reporters to publish or broadcast critical stories.

As important, however, are the grassroots letter-writing campaigns sponsored and coordinated by "pro-Israel" organizations, which put relentless pressure on editors and journalists who print or broadcast stories that are critical of Israel. According to Dunskey, even journalists such as Stahl or CNN's Christiane Amanpour, who have a record of being uncritical of Israel, are regularly attacked by groups such as CAMERA. This is very useful information, as it points to the importance of grassroots activities of groups such as the Network of Spiritual Progressives, Jewish Voices for

Peace, and *Tikkun*, to counter what Dunskey shows to be the huge volume and viciousness of the hate mail that reporters and editors receive any time they run a story that is perceived to be critical of Israel. It also points to the importance of these groups meeting regularly with leading journalists who cover the region to help improve their understanding of how the mainstream media functions when it comes to Israel/Palestine, and how best to change the internal culture of fear and self-censorship that clearly pervades the corporate media establishment.

In a real sense, a counterculture needs to emerge from within the mainstream of the journalistic profession—a counterculture that can help journalists and editors who have experience on the ground to report the truth about the conflict. Helping foster such a culture is one of the greatest imperatives of the peace and justice community, one that will require close coordination among progressive media outlets such as *Tikkun*, *Sojourners*, and *The Nation*; activist organizations; and sympathetic members of the mainstream media.

For those who think that the mainstream media's failures are limited to Israel/Palestine, Dunskey demonstrates how reporting on Israel in the mainstream media resembles the one-sided coverage of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. We might wish to believe that the lack of accurate and thorough reporting on Israel doesn't have a larger impact on America's public or political discourse. But the reality is quite the opposite. The inability of the mainstream media to discuss Israel/Palestine or the United States-Israel relationship accurately and honestly is corruptive, creating a precedent that can be called into play by the American political elite whenever it has to manage a foreign or domestic crisis in which the truth, and reality, are so obviously against it.

In the end, in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the pen has become as important a weapon as the sword. ■

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A PERFECT MORAL CATASTROPHE

(continued from page 53)

December but would be prepared to negotiate a new one if Israel agreed to ease its siege. Israel refused, but even so, no Israelis were killed until after the full-scale Israeli attack on Gaza that began on December 27, 2008.

In short, Israel has had many opportunities to bring about a negotiated end to missile or other terrorist attacks from Gaza, if that had been its true goal. However, the evidence makes it apparent that its underlying purpose is to destroy all resistance to its continued occupation of the West Bank and external control over Gaza. Using both economic siege and military force as its weapons, Israel has repeatedly provoked Palestinian terrorist retaliation.

Probability of Success

JUST WAR PHILOSOPHY PROHIBITS THE use of force unless the probability of success is sufficiently high as to offset the destructiveness of war. Israel's attack also fails this principle.

Even if Israel's purpose had been only to end terrorist attacks, the war was unlikely to achieve that purpose so long as Israel continued its occupation policies and various forms of oppression in the Palestinian territories, for it was clear that Hamas (let alone Islamic Jihad) would not indefinitely refrain from resisting or retaliating with whatever weapons they had at their disposal. That Israel would not be able to destroy Hamas's military capabilities nor its will to use them was predicted in advance by a number of Israeli analysts, and the predictions are already coming true: only a relatively small number of Hamas fighters were killed during the war, the tunnels are being rapidly rebuilt, the Shin Bet has warned the Israeli cabinet that Hamas plans to resume its arms smuggling into Gaza within a few months, and rockets are again falling on Israel.

The Israeli attack also failed to attain its deeper purpose, the destruction of Hamas or at least the undermining of its support among the Gazan population. Many Israeli as well as U.S. news stories have pointed to indications that the hatred engendered by the devastation of Gaza has led to more,

not less, Palestinian popular support for Hamas. Indeed, the history of previous Israeli attacks against Arab populations intended to undermine their support for militant movements has already demonstrated the futility, let alone the immorality, of such behavior: the rise of Hezbollah was the direct consequence of the massive 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and Hamas was created after Israel repressed the first Palestinian uprising in 1987.

Even more importantly, it was perfectly predictable that the devastating attack on Gaza would greatly intensify the hatred of Israel in the Arab world as a whole and undermine the moderate Arab governments that support a compromise peace settlement. Already Turkey, long Israel's most important ally in the Arab world, is changing its stance; King Hussein of Jordan is distancing himself; and Mubarak in Egypt is under severe domestic pressures. Consequently, even if Israel had destroyed Hamas, the Arab battle against Israel almost certainly would have been transferred from inside Palestine to Arab militant groups or even states that are beyond the effective reach of the Jewish state. Thus, in the absence of a settlement acceptable to the Palestinians, including Hamas, sooner or later there are likely to be far greater terrorist attacks on Israeli cities, whether from inside or outside Palestine.

In short, in terms of Israel's long-term security, the attack on Gaza could not have

been a greater failure: "One more victory like this," said ancient Greece's King Pyrrhus after his armies defeated the Romans in a particularly bloody war, "and we are ruined."

Jus in Bello, or Just Conduct of War

JUST WARS MUST NOT ONLY HAVE A JUST purpose and meet the other conditions or constraints already discussed, but also must be fought justly, according to the principles of proportionality, distinction, and noncombatant immunity.

Proportionality

THE PROPORTIONALITY PRINCIPLE, OR constraint, requires that even in a just war, the military measures that are employed must in some sense be proportional to what is at stake. The application of this criterion in many cases is difficult, ambiguous, and a matter of judgment over which reasonable people may disagree; in particular, it would be absurd to believe that the proportionality principle prohibits the victims of an armed attack from inflicting more military casualties on the aggressor than it has suffered itself.

The Israeli attack on Gaza, however, is not one of the difficult cases, in the first instance because in its conflict with Hamas it has been more the aggressor than the victim. In any case, as already noted, even the liberal commentators who accept the idea that Israel was only defending itself agree



Israeli Arabs and left-wing activists wave a Palestinian flag and banner during a demonstration of thousands protesting against Israel's military operation in Gaza, in Tel Aviv, Israel, January 3, 2009.

that its methods were disproportional; the sheer scale of the Israeli attacks on Gaza makes that an easy judgment to reach. From early 2005 until the Israel invasion at the end of December 2008, eight Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinian attacks, while during that same period over 1,000 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces. As noted earlier, in the war itself the Israelis killed over 1,300 Palestinians and inflicted vast economic and property damage. The Israelis suffered almost no property damage and lost three civilians and thirteen soldiers.

Distinction

THE ISRAELI ATTACK ON GAZA WAS AN even greater and more obvious violation of the principle of distinction. According to that principle, soldiers are morally required to make every effort to distinguish military from civilian targets before they attack. To be sure, in some circumstances some unintended but unavoidable harm to noncombatants ("collateral damage") may be acceptable, but only so long as the military value of the target is high, the harm to civilians and their infrastructures is relatively low, and the attacking military forces are willing to accept casualties of their own in order to keep that collateral damage as low as possible. As with the principle of proportionality, then, judgment and the rule of reason are required, and there may be close cases.

Once again, however, the Israeli attack was not one of them; indeed, high Israeli military officials openly admitted that they paid no attention to either proportionality or discrimination. Several months before the war, a leading Israeli general told the *Haaretz* military correspondent that in the next war the army was *planning* to violate both rules: "We will wield disproportionate power against every village from which shots are fired on Israel, and cause immense damage and destruction.... Efforts to hurt [rocket] launch capabilities are secondary" (*Haaretz*, October 5, 2008).

And so they did. On January 7 *Haaretz* reported that a senior Israeli officer told journalists that the war was causing a great deal of damage to the Palestinian civilian infrastructure, saying: "It will take many years in order to restore this area ... when

we suspect that a fighter is hiding in a house, we shoot it with a missile and then with two tank shells, and then a bulldozer hits the wall. It causes damage but it prevents the loss of life among soldiers." (Note: *suspicion* is sufficient cause for attack, and even when the target is a single Hamas fighter.)

Finally, it bears repeating that if you don't have a just cause, you are not morally allowed to attack even the other side's *soldiers*, let alone its civilians.

Noncombatant Immunity and the Israeli Way of War

THE LAST *JUS AD BELLUM* PRINCIPLE IS noncombatant immunity, and it is even stronger than the principles of proportionality and discrimination, for it categorically prohibits deliberate attacks on civilians, regardless of circumstances. Israel has repeatedly violated this rule throughout its history—so much so that systematically attacking crucial civilian infrastructures, and often civilians directly, can be said to be the Israeli way of war.

Thanks to the work of Israeli, Palestinian, and independent historians, there is no serious doubt that during the 1947–1948 war of independence, Israeli forces sometimes deliberately attacked civilians in order to drive many if not most Arabs out of the areas designated by the United Nations partition plan for the Jewish state. That, of course, is what created the refugee issue that still plagues the conflict: the historical consensus is that most of the estimated 700,000 Palestinians who fled into neighboring Arab countries did not do so "voluntarily" (as the Israeli mythology has it), but either because they were driven out or fled in understandable fear that they would be killed if they didn't.

Subsequently, on a number of occasions Israel has attacked Arab—that is, not just Palestinian—civilians and their infrastructures, in order to intimidate them, or to punish them for their alleged support of Israel's enemies, or in an effort to induce them to turn against their own governments or internal militant organizations. The most obvious examples, well-documented and often cited in Israel, were the attacks on Jordanian villages in the 1950s; the use of massive airpower against

Egyptian cities during the 1970–73 "War of Attrition"; and in the air and ground force power employed in a number of attacks against Lebanon in the 1970s, in 1982 (when at least 10,000 Lebanese civilians were killed), in 1996, and in 2006, when an estimated 900 civilians were killed.

In all of these cases, as has been repeatedly documented in great detail by historians, journalists, and international as well as Israeli human rights organizations, much of the civilian destruction was not merely the consequence of the use of massive and inherently indiscriminate firepower, but deliberate. Space does not allow for the dozens of supporting citations, but here are just two of them—and not from "leftists," journalists, international organizations, or human rights groups, but from pillars of the Israeli establishment:

- In July 2006 Yossi Alpher, a former deputy head of the Mossad and now a prominent centrist political commentator, wrote: "Some of the humanitarian suffering in Gaza and Lebanon is a deliberate act on Israel's part ... it is intended to generate mass public pressure on the respective governments to force the Islamic militants to release three IDF soldiers snatched from Israeli territory and end rocket attacks."

- Even before the recent Israeli attack on Gaza, Moshe Arens, a high-ranking Likud official and well-known hard-line *rightist*, a former ambassador to the United States in the Menachem Begin government, the foreign minister in the Yitzhak Shamir government, and a three-time defense minister in Likud governments since the 1980s, wrote the following: "The 'leverage' theory—which holds that the destruction of enemy infrastructure and attacks on the enemy's civilian population will produce pressure on decision makers to cease their attacks against Israeli civilians—... did not work in Lebanon, and it certainly does not work in Gaza. Quite the contrary, it only increases the support that the terrorists receive from the civilian population.... [Such measures are] counterproductive, [and are] impermissible by our moral standards."

Where Do We Go From Here?

PALESTINIAN ROCKETS AND SUICIDE bombings are the consequence of over

forty years of continued Israeli occupation, repression, killing, destruction of governmental, societal, and educational institutions and infrastructures, and the deliberate impoverishment and humiliation of the Palestinian people. Consequently, Israel is not engaged in "self-defense" when it uses force to crush resistance to its repression, *even when the form of resistance—terrorist attacks intended to kill civilians—is itself morally wrong.*

Moreover, Israel has refused to end its siege of Gaza, has broken a series of cease-fires with Hamas, and has refused even to explore Hamas's offers for a long-term settlement. Worse, Israel's punitive attacks on Palestinian civilian targets, as well as on other Arab peoples in the past, are not merely disproportionate or even indiscriminate—they amount to state terrorism.

How can Israel, a state founded not only to ensure the survival of the Jewish people but also to serve as a moral exemplar to the world—"a light unto the nations"—have gone so wrong? The explanation is clear enough: the Israelis genuinely see themselves as victims, determined to do whatever is necessary to prevent a "new Holocaust" at the hands of the Palestinians and their Arab supporters.

That explains how the Israelis see the world, but it doesn't follow that that's the way the world really is, for most Palestinians and the most important Arab states support the international consensus two-state solution that is entirely consistent

with—indeed is a *sine qua non* for—genuine Israeli security: the withdrawal of Israeli settlers and armed forces and the creation of a largely demilitarized Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank, with East Jerusalem as its capital. (To be sure, there continues to be ambiguity over the refugee issue. Officially, both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas continue to insist that the refugees must have the right to return to their former homes and villages in Israel; however, there have been numerous indications that in the context of an overall settlement, most Palestinians would agree to separate the principle of return from its practical implementation.)

What if the Guarantees Fail?

MICHAEL LERNER HAS ASKED, IN EFFECT, a reasonable question: suppose the international guarantees fail and Hamas reverts to fanaticism and continues its struggle to destroy Israel? As he has suggested, Israelis fear that, even if Hamas temporarily welcomes a truce or cease-fire, the group's real position is, "We'll wait 'til we have adequate military power, and then we'll use that power to wipe out Israel."

The likelihood that this could happen is extremely small. First, there is growing agreement in Israel, Palestine, Europe, and the Arab world that international peacekeeping forces should be sent to the region to back a political settlement. More importantly, once a settlement is reached,

Israel, America, Europe, and the neighboring Arab states would have at their disposal an enormous range of carrots and sticks to ensure continued compliance. In that context, the vast majority of the Palestinian people would surely oppose fanatical irredentism, for their lives in every way would be transformed by a compromise settlement that *already* has their strong support (between 60 percent and 70 percent in recent polls), and who would stand to lose everything from lunatic attacks on Israel that had no chance of success.

Still, suppose the worst does occur, however unlikely. In such a circumstance, Israel would truly have the right of self-defense and would have no other choice but to take whatever steps were necessary to ensure its well-being, indeed its survival. Long before Islamic fundamentalists in Palestine could become a serious military threat, the Israelis would surely—and rightly—move against them with irresistible force even, if necessary, by reoccupying the Palestinian territories, ending the experiment of Palestinian statehood, and permanently destroying the fanatic organizations. Moreover, in such circumstances the international community, including most of the Arab world, would explicitly or tacitly accept that Israel genuinely would have the need and the right to take definitive military action. Not that the attitudes of other states, in those circumstances, would matter much: it has been repeatedly demonstrated that the international community can't stop even *illegitimate* Israeli attacks.

Morality aside, it is hard to understand what Israelis think will be the long-term consequences if they continue to occupy or otherwise repress the Palestinian people. Given the continuing spread of Islamic fundamentalism, the intensified hatred of Israel, and the likely prospect that terrorist fanatics will one day come into possession of biological or nuclear weapons, the probable outcome is all too easy to predict. In that light, the continuing Israeli oppression of the Palestinians is not merely immoral, it is—no other words will do—almost unfathomably stupid. Israeli leaders are endangering not only themselves but also this country, if not the entire world. ■



Palestinian schoolboys happily began the first day of school at UNRWA's (UN Relief and Works Agency) primary school in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on January 24, 2009. Some 200,000 Gazan children returned to school for the first time since Israel's offensive, many having lost family members, their homes, and their sense of security. The main UNRWA center and several schools were destroyed by Israeli bombing during the twenty-two-day war.

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

(continued from page 37)

Part II. From Empire to Community Empire: Its History and Dynamic

WE HUMANS HAVE A 5,000-YEAR HISTORY of organizing societies by dominator hierarchy, with a few folks on the top and most on the bottom. We can call it the Era of Empire, and we're still in it. In an earlier time, the rulers were kings and emperors. Now they are corporate CEOs and hedge fund managers. Wall Street is empire's most recent institutional stage, and hopefully the last, in a tragic drama we need to stop repeating.

Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Rome were three of history's most celebrated empires. They were led by vain and violent rulers who played out the drama of empire's inexorable play-or-die, rule-or-be-ruled, kill-or-be-killed competition for power. Each of these powers had its moments of greatness, but at an enormous cost in lives, natural wealth, and human possibility.

During this time, the creative energy of the species was redirected from securing the well-being of the tribe to advancing the technological instruments of war and the social instruments of domination. Resources were expropriated on a vast scale to maintain the military forces, prisons, palaces, temples, and patronage for retainers and propagandists on which imperial rule depends. The underlying dynamic favored the ascendance to power of the most ruthless, brutal, and mentally deranged.

Much of this troubled history remains familiar still. But 5,000 years is enough. We now have the imperative and the means as a nation and a species to bring forth new cultures and institutions that affirm our human co-inheritance, our interdependence, and our devotion to the service of life—the world of our shared human longing.

The World We Want

IN 1992, I PARTICIPATED IN THE CIVIL-society portion of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This was a gathering of some 15,000 people representing the vast variety of humanity's races, religions, nationalities, and languages. Our discussions centered on defining the kind of world we

would create together.

Out of our conversations emerged a vision of a world in which people and nature live in dynamic, creative, cooperative, and balanced relationship. The Earth Charter, which is the product of a continuation of this conversation, calls this vision "Earth Community."

I have lived in places with starkly different cultures: Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Indonesia, the Philippines, California, Massachusetts, Florida, Virginia, Washington State, and New York City. I have learned that we humans are a lot more alike than we generally realize. Most of us want to breathe clean air and drink clean water. We want tasty, nutritious food uncontaminated by toxins. We want meaningful work, a living wage, and security in our old age. We want a say in the decisions our government makes. We want world peace.

It is a stunning convergence. The world we must now create, if we are to survive as a species, is the world we want—the world our brains are wired to create, and the world that religious prophets down through the ages have sought to inspire us to create. Bringing it into being will require, among other things, replacing an economy devoted to the service of mammon with an economy devoted to the service of life. Fortunately, we have a positive base on which to build.

From Wall Street to Main Street

WE HEAR FREQUENT reference these days to the distinction between the Wall Street economy and the Main Street economy. The difference is crucial.

The Wall Street economy is devoted solely to the use of money to make money. It has no other purpose than to make people who have money richer, without the responsibility to produce anything of value to human life in return. It is a world of financial bubbles, speculative gains, sophisticated Ponzi schemes, corporate asset stripping, monopoly pricing, deception, fraud, and the

generation of unearned claims against the real wealth of the rest of society.

The Wall Street economy and its institutions are corrupt beyond repair. We had best use this opportunity to replace them with new institutions, as we reclaim and restructure their useful bits to serve the new economy we must now build.

The Main Street economy is composed of local businesses and people who work within a framework of community values to meet community needs. Some local businesses may be as predatory as any Wall Street corporation, but these tend to be the exception. The Main Street economy has been battered and tattered by the predatory intrusions of Wall Street corporations, but evidence abounds that it is now in the beginning stages of revival. All across the nation, communities are declaring their independence from Wall Street and rallying to rebuild the community-serving economies they once knew. Main Street is the logical foundation on which to build a new real-wealth economy based on green jobs, responsible community-oriented businesses, and sound environmental practices.

Here are some of the measures we can take now to hasten the fall of Wall Street and advance the building of a new,



U.S. building and gambling kingpin Donald Trump holds up a plan for his new club house at Aberdeen airport, Scotland, April 28, 2006. Trump will visit the site of his planned 300 million pound (\$542 million) golf development, where he wants to create the "best golf course in the world" on the 800-acre site at the nearby Menie Estate.

life-serving economy on the foundation of Main Street. These measures are elaborated in detail in my new book, *Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth*.

1. Measure What We Want

The first item on our economic transformation agenda is the creation of new performance indicators. The only legitimate function of an economic system is to serve life. At present, however, economic performance is evaluated solely on the basis of financial indicators—think GDP and stock prices—while social and environmental consequences are disregarded. It is not a wise choice. We get what we measure: phantom wealth in the hundreds of trillions of dollars at the expense of the real wealth of people, community, and nature.

We can instead evaluate economic performance against indicators of what we really want—healthy children, families, communities, and natural systems. This would place life values ahead of money values, and dramatically reframe both our public and private economic decision-making.

2. Manage for Fairness and Equity

Most corporate profits and excessive executive compensation are funded by externalized social and environmental costs, and by direct public subsidies in the form of direct payments, unfair tax exemptions, and special access to public services. To have a healthy economy, we must eliminate the subsidies and assess compensating fees to recover the public cost of substandard wages and working conditions, the expropriation and contamination of environmental resources, and excessive use of public services. Predatory businesses will be forced to close their doors. That will open space for responsible businesses serving real community needs to prosper.

In alliance with the Federal Reserve, Wall Street players have used a combination of control over the money supply, predatory lending practices, and lobbying and campaign contributions to suppress wages, dismantle social safety nets, capture the benefit of productivity gains and tax cuts for financial speculators, shift the

tax burden to working people, and reduce the poor to debt slavery. To help repair that damage and rebuild the middle class, we must restore progressive tax rates, increase the minimum wage, implement public funding of elections, establish a universal single-payer health system, use the tax code to make financial speculation unprofitable, and direct the benefits of productivity gains to the people who produce them. This project is of course immense, but it is not without a prophetic foundation. It can be thought of as our American equivalent of the biblical Jubilee—a time to restore balance to our society by forgiving the debts that hold the poor in bondage to the rich.

The Living Economy of Main Street

A HEALTHY MAIN STREET ECONOMY IS A living economy that mimics the dynamics of healthy, locally rooted ecosystems. It is about people and community, efficient use of energy, and the restoration and maintenance of a healthily functioning natural ecosystem. Profit and money are seen as means to these ends, not as ends in themselves.

In living economies, the most important return to local business people is the benefit they derive from being part of a healthy local community with a healthy natural environment. The performance of such economies is properly evaluated, in part, by the role they play in building the relationships of trust and caring that are the foundation of healthy communities.

Evidence suggests that living economies do in fact help build trust and caring. One study has found that people shopping at a farmers' market have ten times as many conversations as those shopping at a supermarket. I experienced it when I lived in New York City and did most of my food shopping at the Union Square farmers' market. I got to know the farmers who grew my food—and my neighbors. I also patronized the small local hardware store across the street from my apartment and the small local pharmacy around the corner. I got to know the clerks and the owners. I had no need of a car because most of what I needed was within walking distance and there was great public transportation.

As the Wall Street economy disintegrates, the communities with the best future prospects are those that have been rebuilding local supply chains; supporting local, low-input family farms; developing local financial institutions; reversing the trend toward conversion of farm and forest lands; concentrating population in compact communities that bring home, work, shopping, and recreation in easy reach by foot, bicycle, and public transportation; and retrofitting their buildings for energy conservation to become substantially self-reliant in regard to food, energy, and other basic essentials. This is what organizations such as the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies and the American Independent Business Alliance are about—building a people-friendly, earth-friendly new economy of locally rooted businesses.

The Unsustainable Wall Street Money System

NOW LET'S TURN TO THE MONEY SYSTEM. Wall Street bankers have diabolically created a money system designed to crash if the economy does not continuously grow their profits. Recall my earlier mention of the bookkeeping entry by which banks create new money when they issue a loan. That entry creates only the *principal* of the loan; it does not create money for the interest the borrower must pay in addition to repaying the loan principal.

This means that in order for the financial system not to fall into default and thereby collapse the economy—much like we are now experiencing—the economy must continually expand fast enough to generate a demand for new loans that will be sufficient to create the money required to make the interest payments on previous loans.

The demand for the eventual repayment with interest of nearly every dollar in circulation virtually ensures that the economy will fail unless the GDP is constantly growing. The consequences of that growth are ever-increasing debt, increasing income inequality, and the destruction of the natural environment and the human social fabric.

It is illogical and deeply destructive to maintain a financial system that creates an artificial demand for perpetual growth on a finite planet. If evil is that which is destructive of life, then our existing money system is profoundly evil.

A Money System for a Life-Based Economy

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE WITH FAR LESS pernicious consequences: a system run by the federal government in the interest not of bankers, but of the people.

Most Americans already assume that money is created by the federal government. In fact, it is not. But it should be. As new money is required to maintain an adequate and stable money supply, the federal government can and should spend it into existence to fund public infrastructure and meet other public needs. Publicly issued money would reduce debt, taxes, inequality, and environmental harm—and increase financial stability. The Wall Street moneychangers would lose power and profits. I'd call this choice a "no-brainer."

So how do we make the changes necessary to turn our economy away from service to mammon and toward service to life, when the world today is ruled by the agents of mammon?

To answer that question, we need to go back to the earlier observations about the stark contrast between our public and private images of wealth and God. In fact, the transition to the service of life has already begun—through thousands upon thousands of conversations that are bringing our public culture into line with our private beliefs. We are slowly replacing a culture fabricated by the rulers of empire to legitimate their rule, with a culture grounded in authentic values of caring and compassion.

This is a tall order, but it can be done. *YES!* magazine, for which I serve as board chair, spotlights the people and organizations that are demonstrating our human possibilities through their actions.

Breaking the Silence: The Power of Conversation

SO HOW DO WE BRING DOWN THE WALLS that hold us captive to false stories? How do we cast out the moneychangers from the temple of life? How do we put an end to Wall Street's imperial tyranny? My answer: through the power of conversation and a new story.

It is a simple, but rarely noted truth that every movement for transformational social change begins with a conversation.

Take the women's movement as an example. Not long ago, the prevailing

cultural story maintained that the key to a woman's happiness was to find the right man, marry him, and devote her life to his service. Any woman for whom that story was not working was conditioned to believe she was at fault.

When a few courageous women came together in small groups in their living rooms to share their personal stories, they came to realize both individually and collectively that the flaw was not in themselves, but rather in the story. By making this personal truth public, through an ever-expanding conversation among thousands and then millions of women, they eventually changed the public story, liberated themselves, and unleashed their power as a force for social transformation.

Many other social movements, such as the "voluntary simplicity" movement, have also been the products of widening conversations among people who were motivated to share their stories about what made them truly happy. As we go public with the truth of our private stories, we help to expose as fabrications the false values of the public stories that hold us captive to empire.

Thus liberated, our individual intelligence becomes the intelligence of the group, which, in turn, allows us to act as communities and societies to declare our independence from Wall Street, refashion our institutions to put service to life ahead of service to mammon, and break the self-replicating spiral of competitive violence of 5,000 years of empire. Our charge is to bring this conversation to the national foreground, beginning with conversations in our homes, churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples.

Spiritual Awakening and the Institutions of Religion

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR ECONOMIC crisis is spiritual, not financial. By sharing life-affirming stories of possibility and working together to restore the essential bonds of community, we humans can bring forth the life-affirming cultures and institutions of a new era and align ourselves with the sacred purpose revealed in creation's grand trajectory.

We have been living in a trance in a world of illusion. We have lost sight of our

spiritual nature, just as we have lost sight of the distinction between money and real wealth. We have lost sight of ourselves as manifestations of the spiritual force of creation.

It is now within our means to unleash our positive potential and create the world of which we have dreamed for millennia. Success depends on an awakening to the truth that we humans are spiritual beings having a human experience. As our primary institutions for the examination of values, purpose, spirit, and the human place in creation, religious institutions of all faiths have a special and essential role in this awakening.

Today, our spiritual awakening is already underway, sometimes within our religious institutions, but more often beyond them—sometimes in spite of them. It is essential to our collective future that our religious institutions refashion themselves as centers of spiritual inquiry and community-building dedicated to drawing from the whole of human knowledge and experience to deepen our understanding of ourselves and our relationship to the larger whole of Creation. No other human institutions are comparably positioned to facilitate this awakening, give it visibility in the public discourse, and help it find coherence and direction.

For 5,000 years, we humans have wandered through the valley of the shadow of death. Perhaps it was part of our necessary learning, preparation for the next step in our own evolution as a self-aware species to which Creation granted the power to choose its own future. It is now ours to choose whether we take the step to species maturity and learn to share earth's abundance for the good of all, or suffer potential self-extinction in a daring but failed evolutionary experiment, and thereby turn back the evolutionary clock by millions of years.

We are privileged to live at the most dangerous but also the most exciting moment of creative opportunity in the whole of the human experience. There is no wall too tall. We have the power to turn this world around for the sake of ourselves, our children, and Creation's grand journey. It is up to us. We are the ones we've been waiting for. ■



Open source versus copyright: An unidentified demonstrator flashes a sign calling for "Free software, Open source" as he rushes across the stage following a speech by Microsoft Corporation Chairman Bill Gates at Beijing University, in China's capital city, April 20, 2007. Advocates of the open-source tenet say that users should be allowed to view and edit the software's code.

born later in the development of a society rather than earlier.

Recent developments in cognitive science also illuminate the workings of knowledge-based growth. In his influential book *Origins of the Modern Mind*, Merlin Donald explains the great advance that came with writing, which is the externalization of memory. The use of writing led to the invention of books, journals, libraries, databases, and other systems of symbolic storage, which constitute an essential (and still expanding) "hardware" change in humanity's cognitive architecture. Essentially, knowledge now accumulates outside of the limits of biological memory.

Only with this external capacity can human thought advance to what Donald calls "theoretic culture," the mind's increased capacity for the integration of knowledge at higher and higher levels of abstraction. And this, in turn, is the basis of collaborative, cross-

fertilized and cumulative innovation. Without it, there can be very little progress.

Economic historian Douglass North emphasizes the central role of external memory as "mental scaffolding" that is essential to economic growth. It is the "transmission belt" that passes cumulative knowledge down through the ages as an inheritance available for productive use in our own time. Moreover, there could be neither the widespread passing on of the many, many contributions that make up what we call knowledge, nor external memory itself, without the development of, and our inheritance of, very specific institutions that make this possible.

Again, the point is clear: society at large is rightly the inheritor of that which society at large has created over long periods of history. In a recent book urging taxation of large estates like the one his own son will ultimately leave, Bill Gates Sr. (along with coauthor Chuck Collins) writes: "Success is a product of having been born in this country, a place where education and research are subsidized, where there is an orderly market, where the private sector reaps enormous benefits from public investment. For someone to assert that he or she has grown wealthy in America without the benefit of substantial public investment is pure hubris ... what is it worth to operate within this marvelous system?"

Gates's statement also raises an important point about the role of invention. It is commonly assumed that great geniuses and innovators make contributions that society would not otherwise have had—and because of this, their often very large rewards are morally justified. In fact, examples of such heroic invention are exceedingly rare. A more accurate picture is a cumulative process of tinkering until the available knowledge, or the "state of the art," as Thorstein Veblen termed it, reaches a point where the next step is all but self-evident. In these "breakthrough" moments, we commonly witness the phenomenon of "simultaneous invention"—multiple independent discoveries or inventions of the same thing at the same time. Alexander Graham Bell and Elisha Gray filed patents for the telephone on the same day in 1876. The person deemed the inventor is often simply the one who gets to the patent office first. Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace conceived the idea of natural selection simultaneously. Newton and Leibniz both invented calculus.

It is also well documented that numerous fundamental technological developments resulted from government funding and support, from agricultural techniques and transportation systems to the Internet and cutting-edge biotechnologies. Together these insights unveil a process of innovation, the legacy of which is a truly social inheritance, rather than the claim of a small set of individuals. If so, there is a clear argument that society, the ultimate source, should receive most of the benefits it creates.

It is admittedly a disturbing point. We are trained to view success as an individualistic process of some people achieving more than others because they work (continued on page 74)

JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE

(continued from page 40)

harder or are smarter. But if much of what we have comes to us as the free gift of many generations of historical contribution, there is a profound question as to how much can reasonably be said to be "earned" by any one person, now or in the future. This is especially true in connection with inherited knowledge. An equally profound question arises as to how to return to society a fair share of the gains that—over many generations—society as a whole has created.

The long history of Western philosophical reflection on economic justice, reaching back through the major religious traditions of humanity, also comes back time and time again to the distinction between "earned" and "unearned" gains, a distinction ultimately based on the principle of individual deservingness

or "getting one's due." We find a classic statement of this principle in Justinian's Institutes (535 C.E.), defining justice as "the set and constant purpose which gives to every man his due." But this logic is deeply embedded in both testaments of the Bible as well. In Galatians (6:7) Paul declares, "Whatever a man sows, that is what he shall reap." When God brings "new heavens and earth," Isaiah writes, "you will not build houses and others live in them ... or plant trees and others eat the fruit."

The contemporary knowledge economy is booming with wealth, but it is concentrated in the hands of a small elite to an unconscionable degree. Long ago, in *The Vested Interests and the Common Man*, Thorstein Veblen suggested that the fundamental reason why modern wealth became concentrated in so few hands was that traditional moral views of entitlement had not been sufficiently adapted

to the modern industrial system. In fact modern understanding of the sources of wealth points in the direction of ancient wisdom, bringing renewed importance to a long-developing moral tradition. As Nobel laureate George Akerlof put it, "our current standard of living," is something we "owe" to the past. The fruits of current labor or current savings "are due almost entirely to the cumulative process of learning that has taken us from stone-age poverty to twenty-first-century affluence."

A famous American president named Roosevelt once suggested that the survival of civilization depended on eliminating unearned wealth. Progressive taxation was the remedy he proposed, and he was the first American president to truly advance that cause. John McCain might be surprised to learn that the Roosevelt in question was his Republican hero Teddy, not Barack the Distributor's oft-slandered "socialist" role model, Franklin.

Looking forward, the most obvious areas for reform appropriate to the new economic and moral understanding include increasing the income taxation of the top 1-2 percent, raising the current cap on Social Security taxes, increasing corporate taxes (and especially on wind-fall gains in connection with oil industry profits), and increasing inheritance taxes on large estates. Private inheritance of large amounts of capital in particular violates the principle that what one "deserves" should be related to what one contributes and "earns"—both because an heir does nothing directly to earn her inheritance; and because that inheritance itself, like all wealth, derives overwhelmingly from the contributions of inherited knowledge.

Proceeds from new taxation might be allocated to a variety of public purposes ranging from universal health care to the maintenance and development of the nation's failing infrastructure. Particularly appropriate uses might be to support educational and research institutions that generate and pass on knowledge at all levels; to offer tuition relief (and possibly something akin to a new GI Bill to expand opportunities for

Bruce Ackerman Anne Alstott

the
Stakeholder
society

AGRARIAN JUSTICE,
OFFERED TO
AGRARIAN LAW,
AND TO
AGRARIAN MONOPOLY

BEING A PLAN FOR
MELIORATING THE CONDITION OF MAN,
By Creating in every Nation,
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Person now living of the Age of FIFTY YEARS, and
to all others when they shall arrive at that Age, to
enable them to live in Old Age without Wretched-
ness, and go decently out of the World.

By THOMAS PAINE,
AUTHOR OF COMMON SENSE, RIGHTS OF MAN,
AGE OF REASON, &c. &c.

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How do we increase equality of opportunity? In *The Stakeholder Society*, Ackerman and Alstott advocate giving a "capital stake" of \$80,000 to every American citizen when he or she reaches adulthood. It's a radical idea with a history: in 1797 Tom Paine argued for £15 for every 21-year-old in his book *Agrarian Justice*.

college education); and to provide much more generous underpinnings for low and moderate incomes—perhaps modeled on a greatly expanded version of the current Earned Income Tax Credit (as suggested, for example, by Jerome M. Segal in *Graceful Simplicity*).

In addition to these and other related policies, a number of newer progressive strategies do not involve traditional forms of redistribution. Among the most important are “asset-based” approaches that emphasize the wealth people accrue, “have,” and invest—as opposed to the income people “receive,” and spend or save. In the *Boston Review* of December 1996, Harvard economist Richard Freeman writes:

Our main strategy—be we left or right—for fighting income inequality under capitalism, should be to assure a fair initial distribution of physical and human capital themselves. Equality of income obtained in the first instance via greater equality in those assets, rather than as an after-the-fact (of earning or luck) state redistribution of income from rich to poor, would enable us to better square the circle of market efficiency and egalitarian aspiration.

A forward-looking proposal that also alters ownership has recently been put forward by Yale law professors Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott. This would allocate a “capital stake” of \$80,000 to every citizen on reaching adulthood—to be used for any purpose an individual chooses (most will likely choose a college education). The program would initially be financed by a 2 percent annual wealth tax, thus simultaneously challenging the top beneficiaries of the current system with a strategy that could provide large numbers with the means of acquiring knowledge. The capital stake would be recouped at death through an inheritance tax.

Another promising, rapidly growing, asset-based approach is the employee-owned firm, which is currently encouraged by certain federal tax policies. When properly structured, such enterprises (especially small and medium-sized firms)

are demonstrably more, rather than less, efficient than comparable privately owned traditional firms. An obvious reason is that people tend to work better and harder when they have a stake in the outcome. Though little noticed by mainstream media, there are, in fact, more than 10,000 firms now operating in the United States that are wholly or substantially owned by employees. Policies to provide further support for such firms could both help broaden the ownership of wealth and simultaneously achieve greater economic efficiency.

As the ongoing advances of the knowledge economy continue to teach us the extraordinary possibilities—and sources—of this nation’s bountiful development, the question of precisely why so few deserve to benefit so greatly while so many are in pain may well become impossible to evade. If so, the ultimate gift that comes to us as an inheritance from the past may be the renewal of traditional economic teachings like those of the Hebrew Bible and, with this, a renewed moral and political understanding of the responsibilities that come with a simple acknowledgement of the immensity of our common inheritance. It is an understanding particularly appropriate to the new Obama era. ■

RETHINKING AMERICAN CAPITALISM (continued from page 44)

he knows that he will be judged harshly by his neighbors if he does so, and because he could not stand to think of himself as a bad person.

Peters points out that we have traveled a long way from the pre-capitalist world of Smith to the global, corporate-dominated capitalism of today, and that a close reading of Smith shows that it’s folly to believe Smith would have endorsed or even recognized contemporary corporate capitalism. What’s worse, it’s a mistake to think that Smith thought that economic growth and expanded consumption were good for their own sake. Rather, increased consumption is a good thing only insofar as it contributes to human happiness and well-being. An economic mechanism

capable of ending poverty and putting shoes on feet should be admired. One that causes us to work endless hours in order to generate needless trinkets need not be.

Failing to recognize this, and assuming that economic development is a “value-free” process, can cause even well-intentioned people to pursue wrong-headed strategies. Peters cites the example of former World Bank head Robert McNamara, who felt a keen moral obligation to help the global poor but assumed the best way to do so was through massive capital investment projects (dams and the like), in which the affected parties had little if any say.

Why Moral Arguments Are Not Enough and Theory Is Critical

MAKING A POINT DEVELOPED AT FURTHER length in her forthcoming book *Another World Is Possible*, Peters notes that the McNamara case shows that a simple desire to help the poor is necessary but not sufficient for effective action to end poverty and empower the oppressed. Well-meaning people can and often do promote development strategies based on wrongheaded economic theories; many people sincerely believe that corporate-led capitalism is the only model that can liberate humanity from poverty.

Critics of the status quo thus must do more than present moral arguments about why the developed world should do more to help alleviate poverty; they also must critically engage dominant economic theories and offer alternative strategies of their own. Peters thus reaches a similar conclusion to Magnusson: we cannot hope to change the world without getting serious about understanding and assessing political economic structures.

In this light, it’s reasonable to think that Peters and most if not all of the other contributors to *Global Neighbors* would be supportive of the Network of Spiritual Progressives’ proposed Global Marshall Plan, which aims not only to devote between 1 percent and 2 percent of U.S. GDP to fund global development but also offers some careful thinking about how to use the money in ways that



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economies from the standpoint of Christian social ethics in *Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy*. (Full disclosure: Hicks is a colleague of mine at the University of Richmond.)

These essays all address the question of what it means to be a conscientious Christian amid a world of stark global inequalities and rampant corporate-dominated capitalism. While most of the essays draw explicitly on scripture and on Christian theology (historical and contemporary), one need not be a Christian to find these essays useful and insightful.

The touchstone for several of these essays is Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan. As Thomas Walker points out, the force of that parable—told by Jesus in response to the question “Who is my neighbor?”—is not so much in defining what a good neighbor is, as in radically upending conventional expectations that “neighbors” are those with whom we are proximately connected by geography, religion, or nationality. Persons conventionally defined as “strangers” can act as neighbors; it follows that we have moral obligations too to people outside our immediate circle.

Figuring out what a neighborly obligation means in the context of a global economy is not a straightforward question. Eric Gregory observes that a long tradition of Christian thought dating to Augustine holds that while faithful Christians have a general obligation to love everyone, we have a particular obligation to love those nearer to us, with whom our lives are most centrally intertwined. Hence it is appropriate we devote most of our attention to loving our families and contributing to our local communities. This is the case even though we also (as the Good Samaritan parable shows) have an obligation to aid the stranger who appears in our midst, as well as those among us who are shunted aside by dominant social conventions. Augustine, Aquinas, and other figures thus translated Jesus's injunction of universal love into a realistic ethic that takes account of our situatedness as human beings and the fact that human beings cannot love everyone equally.

The reality of globalization unsettles this understanding, however. In a global economy, the consumption habits of the professional middle class of rich countries directly and indirectly affect the livelihoods of persons thousands of miles away whom we do not know and have little incentive to think about. But “out of sight, out of mind” is not an acceptable ethic for just living. Finding ways to expand the moral imagination of Americans so they can see the connections between our affluent lives and those of the much less affluent is an urgent practical and theological task. The reasonable assumption of the assembled authors is that biblical texts and theological traditions may have something useful to contribute to that task.

For instance, Kent Van Til returns to the book of Genesis to construct what he terms a “biblical anthropology.” Human beings are created in God's image, Genesis tells us. Part of being made in God's image is that we continue God's creative work on Earth. This means working and tilling the land, and creating wealth and knowledge. The Bible also articulates a conception of social justice; at various points the Bible indicates that helping the poor is akin to helping God.

Van Til shows how sharply these conceptions contrast with the image of humanity generally employed by mainstream economists, who depict human beings as rational maximizers of individual satisfaction. (Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, who has developed a much richer account of human capabilities giving a central role to our creative capacities, is an extremely important exception.)

In a similar vein, Rebecca Todd Peters shows how the patron saint of free-market economics, Adam Smith, was actually a highly sophisticated moral thinker who saw markets as being helpful within a particular social context marked by individuals with strong ties to one another and strong social norms mandating proper and just behavior. While it is true that the butcher supplies us our dinner out of his own self-interest, it is equally true that the butcher does not try to defraud his customers because he knows that he will be judged harshly by his neighbors if he does so, and because he

(continued on page 75)

enhance development and autonomy rather than undercut or ignore the desires and needs of poor people in the developing world.

The Democrats' Lack of Good Arguments for the Justice of Egalitarianism

GIVE MONEY TO HELP THE POOR OR downtrodden at home and abroad? But that's our money you're trying to take away! Isn't that the socialism John McCain, Sarah Palin, and Joe the Plumber were warning us about?

A striking feature of recent Democratic presidential campaigns is the seeming unwillingness or inability of Democratic candidates, who all generally support more progressive taxation structures that increase the degree of redistribution carried out by government, to explain the philosophical underpinnings of their position. Even Barack Obama shied away from offering a principled argument challenging the enormous concentration of wealth. Obama instead simply pointed out (rightly) how modest his proposals for increased taxes on the very rich are, while telling Joe the Plumber (again rightly) that the economy will do better when more people have money to spend.

Such arguments had a pragmatic usefulness in the campaign, but they don't get Democrats and liberals off the back foot when it comes to arguing about the morality of redistributing wealth. This is a problem with serious political consequences; as political scientists Michael Graetz and Ian Shapiro pointed out in their important 2005 book about the politics of the estate tax, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, Democratic policymakers over the last decade have had no principled answer to conservative activists' claim that inheritance taxes are an immoral tax on death.

Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly provide progressives with some welcome and fresh ammunition for fighting back and for justifying a redistributionist agenda in their new book, *Unjust Deserts*. Alperovitz and Daly are attempting nothing less than to shift the entire framework for our thinking about

distributive justice.

(Full disclosure, part two: I have coauthored a book with Alperovitz and I attended graduate school with Daly.)

Yet Alperovitz and Daly's work is not just another brief against the extraordinary concentration of wealth characteristic of contemporary American society, with the top 1 percent of citizens owning over one-third of all wealth (including over one-half of all stocks).

Rather, Alperovitz and Daly turn on its head the most common justification for massive inequality: that such inequality is a just result of individuals getting to keep the wealth and economic value they themselves created. In Alperovitz and Daly's view, that claim is fundamentally wrong, precisely because it fails to recognize that the production of knowledge and wealth is a communal activity that stretches across generations. Most of what we have and know today is due not to our own superior genius or superior effort, but to the fact that we stand atop a long train of technological development and evolution.

To see the significance and novelty of this argument, it will help to compare it to the leading secular liberal account of egalitarian social justice, which was provided by the late Harvard philosopher John Rawls. According to Rawls, theological views of the kind discussed in *Global Neighbors*, whatever their merits, cannot serve as the basis of a public philosophy for a diverse, pluralistic society.

Instead, we should seek an account of social justice that is as neutral toward conceptions of the good life (including theological conceptions) as possible and that diverse people can endorse, whatever their own philosophical and theological views.

Rawls then builds an argument for egalitarian social justice using the expository device of the "original position." The idea is simply that a just social structure is one that free, rational individuals who knew nothing of their own particular circumstances would choose, given the chance to set up the rules of society in an "original position." Because people are at least mildly risk averse, no

one would agree to a set of rules that created the possibility that one (and one's family and children) might be permanently disadvantaged; hence the parties to the agreement would choose a set of rules limiting inequalities to just those that actually increase the well-being of the disadvantaged.

An important feature of Rawls's account of justice is that it makes no room for traditional moral judgments about character, effort, and desert. The fact that one works harder or smarter than another does not entitle one to a greater share of goods in Rawls's view. If we tried to link distribution to effort and other personal characteristics, we'd be forced to endorse a particular conception of the good life (one that values hard work) and impose that framework on persons who might happen to think that a life that maximized peaceful contemplation (or time spent watching wrestling on TV) was the best sort of life.

Rawls thus aimed to de-link distribution from desert. But while the philosophical case he makes is formidable, his position is at odds with popular thinking about economic justice. Empirical studies of how Americans think about distributive justice consistently show that Americans stubbornly believe that there should be some correlation between effort and earnings. Indeed, as philosopher David Miller has pointed out, that linkage can often lead to support for progressive economic conclusions: many people believe that hard-working low-wage workers should be paid better because they are working so hard, and that it's not fair that one can work as hard as one can and still not be able to afford a standard of living that meets basic needs and allows one to function as an equal citizen.

Other liberal theorists such as Ronald Dworkin have tried to correct Rawls's view by making a distinction between misfortune resulting from one's own choices and those due to circumstances beyond one's control. But as writers such as Elizabeth Anderson have pointed out, it's very difficult to separate out those factors in practice, and trying

to do so could encourage not social solidarity but a familiar form of judgmentalism in which the relatively well-off blame the poor for their woes.

All this leaves secular liberal advocates of egalitarian social justice in something of a dilemma. Americans simply don't believe that there should be no connection between effort and earnings, but any attempt to distinguish between the "deserving" and "undeserving" is likely to produce an unattractive, judgmental politics antithetical to egalitarian social solidarity.

Why the Wealthy Have Not In Fact Earned Most of Their Wealth

ALPEROVITZ AND DALY'S ARGUMENT that most of what we claim as the fruit of "our" efforts is in fact a gift of the past offers a way out of this conundrum.

Alperovitz and Daly note that as early as the nineteenth century, classical economists such as David Ricardo made a distinction between earned and unearned income. Thinkers such as (among many others) Thomas Paine, John Stuart Mill, Henry George, J.A. Hobson, L.T. Hobhouse, and G.D.H. Cole all developed arguments to the effect that society should receive an explicit return for its contributions to increasing economic value attached to rising land values and to industrial development. The idea that society makes economic growth possible and that the desert-based moral claims of individuals should be situated against that larger reality is not so much a radical new idea as a forgotten truth that Alperovitz and Daly are helping us to recover.

Indeed, Alperovitz and Daly are able to enlist support for their argument from a seemingly unlikely source: economists and scholars of technological development such as Robert Solow and Simon Kuznets, who recognize the centrality of knowledge and its collective creation to the production of new wealth. Alperovitz and Daly, drawing on this body of literature, conclude that "perhaps as much as 90 percent of the twentieth-century productivity gains that lie behind our common prosperity

may derive from knowledge broadly understood."

If it turns out that little of what the wealthy control now is attributable to individual effort, how can large fortunes such as that accumulated by Bill Gates be justified? Alperovitz and Daly argue that they can't. To be sure, there is a pragmatic case for continuing to permit patents and for providing other incentives to stimulate further research and creative activity. But we must reject the idea that the person who happens to add the last increment of value to a vast, collective creation produced over many generations is thereby entitled to the whole.

If we were to take seriously the reality that our affluence is primarily the result of the accumulated knowledge and capital of the past and not our personal efforts, we would be forced to reject the assumption that the highly unequal distribution of wealth we witness both nationally and globally are in any way the byproduct of just economic arrangements. (Importantly, recognizing this point does not require abandoning the moral intuition that there should be some connection between economic reward and effort.) Those who claim a disproportionate, lion's share of economic wealth are not simply claiming their just deserts; rather, they are usurping the common inheritance of humanity, while excluding the vast majority of the national and world populations from a fair share of that inheritance.

Alperovitz and Daly thus (like Magnuson) call for a fundamental rethinking of how wealth is distributed, and for developing new forms of ownership that are democratic and that "spread the wealth around," as Barack Obama has put it. Alperovitz and Daly's argumentation and practical proposals offer progressives a chance, after a generation of playing defense, to again assume the initiative in challenging the grotesque distribution of wealth and resources and explaining why, not as a matter of charity or expedience but of moral desert, wealth should indeed be spread around.

A Moral Argument Obama Will Have to Use

NOTE ALSO THAT THE LOGIC OF THE tight constraints facing Obama as he assumes the presidency will almost certainly force Obama in this direction: if the resources needed to carry out health care reform and other expensive proposals are to be garnered, the natural place to start is with the incomes and estates of the super-rich. But Obama will not be able to tap that vast well of resources too often so long as he appeals only to pragmatic arguments to explain why.

At some point, he must exercise the same kind of leadership he carried out with respect to America's racial divide during the primary campaign, and explain to the American people that the vast fortunes accumulated by America's wealthiest are not the product so much of their holder's individual virtues but of the supportive environment provided by the United States and by the long accumulation of human knowledge that undergirds our current wealth. There is no reason, Obama might argue, why continued expansion of our technological capacities should have the effect of hardening economic inequalities, rather than being harnessed toward the common good and (as called for in his Inaugural Address) the extension of "the reach of our prosperity" to "every willing heart."

The very rich will not like it, and the right wing will predictably cry "socialism." But a President Obama willing to withstand the criticism and make the case would not only bolster his prospects for getting the resources needed to fund his programs; it would also help alter our public understanding of wealth and how it is created, steering us away from the myth that individuals create wealth simply through their individual efforts and toward recognition of the central role of community, extending across both time and space, in making prosperity possible. ■

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Grossman's Tooth

One day Grossman's upper right front tooth fell out.
 It was one of four incisors he had used for centuries
 To hold his pipe in place while he explained to us
 The mysteries of love, death, warfare, poetry and life.
 One day he sent me out for Captain Black, the blue bag,
 Which puzzled me because I'd only seen him smoke
 The Captain's white bag in the past. "This," he said,
 Pointing to the navy plastic-coated paper, "is what
 I smoke." The tooth, the fluid in his lungs, dementia:
 Prices he paid for a thousand thousand afternoons
 Thoroughly entranced in his tobacco's royal cloud
 That filled the corner office, six great walls of cases
 Floor to ceiling: Loeb's both red and green, Penguins,
 FSG, and seven feet of hardback New Directions
 Of which he had written five. Across the quad
 A manhole in the middle of the path was at all times
 Spewing steam, where each absurdly narcissistic boy
 Paced over in a greatcoat like the strong old man's,
 To see the ghost of water rise and pool about his knees;
 To feel like Merlin while one had the chance, reciting
 Blake or Shakespeare to the freezing stars, sad envy
 Eating at one's insides like a parasite because so far
 One had no book, no job, no students, no degree,
 While he enjoyed, it seemed from further off than Mars,
 Grandiosity beyond the dreams of avarice: the suits,
 The neckties loose to make the knot look huge; a voice
 Like thunder over Minnesota's parched infinity of dust;
 An angel's power to explain each letter of the law.
 It took them a week to fit him with a new one, so
 For seven days the Oracle of God spoke whistling
 Sibilants: *Augusstine*, *Wittgensstein*, and *Yeatsss*.
 How we little birds competed for his love! The few
 Grad students grown-up-enough to sit it out looked on
 Us desperate orphans with a mix of pity and contempt.
 What did we want from him? *This is my anointed,*
My only begotten son, in whom I am well pleased.
 When the new tooth came it was off-white, like ivory,
 Not brightly blank like an actor's nor tawny like his
 Genuine other teeth, that hung on in his jaw like trees
 Half-rooted in a flooded field, or piles beside the pier
 No longer vertical, listing in the tide a million days.
 Twenty-two, I wanted the tooth his head had thrown.
 I'm forty now. His giant mind is gone. Half of mine
 Is back there in the steam, still searching for the tooth.

-Jamey Hecht

Swami Beyondananda's 2008 State of the Universe Address

Welcome to the Sane Asylum

BY SWAMI BEYONDANANDA

The shift has hit the fan!

Humanity has shifted its karma into surpassing gear, and political climate change has come to America. Thanks to a grassroots up-wising, we the people huffed and puffed together in the same direction, and the winds of change blew in a breath of fresh air—and a new president: Barack Hussein Obama. After eight years of insanity, we can proclaim to the world, "America has a President Hussein!"

So now, we must face the awesome truth: We are living in a world gone sane.

Welcome to the sane asylum.

The vote in November was more than a vote for a new president. It was a vote for a new *precedent*—to overgrow the "lowest common dominator" paradigm and take a step toward government of the people, by the people, and for the people, where the government does *our* bidding, not the bidding of the highest bidder. It was a vote for a society where the Golden Rule finally overrules the rule of gold. In the short term, the up-wising has been successful, and the American Evolution has begun. The first big shots have been fired, and we are on the road to recovering from an eight-year bout with Mad Cowboy Disease and Electile Dysfunction.

But now, if we want to heal the body politic of conditions like Deficit Inattention Disorder, Truth Decay, and the deadliest one of all, an unchecked Military Industrial Complex, we must elect ourselves.

Heartland Security and Purple People Power

So ... how do we do this? How do we go from an "every cell for itself" consciousness to acting on the evolutionary truth that we are in reality "all cells in the body of humanity?" How do we shift from survival of the fittest to thrival of the fittingest?

First we must move from the fear-based Homeland Security to the love-based Heartland Security, and realize our one true security is in the land of the heart. While the beliefs in our head fool us all the time, the love in our heart is foolproof. When we face up to love, we can face down the fear.

What this means in practical reality is that we must step across the "red-blue" political divide that has kept us separate, and show our true colors as one purple people. Yes, we have all been wounded by polarizing politics, so let's give ourselves a purple heart, and take the next courageous step to cohere around our shared "heart-core" values and become ... we, the purple.

I have a dream ... that the rednecks shall lie down with the blue necks, and that we shall tune out the polarizing mainstream media, which is sadly a brainwashing machine stuck on spin. More than ever, we need forums, not againstums, and dialogue instead of debate. When the body politic stops mass-debating and chooses to have healthy, pleasurable intercourse, we will finally



create a healthy brainchild together.

This February, we celebrate Abraham Lincoln's bicentennial, and our friend Richard Lederer (the anagram master known as Riddler Reacher) tells us that when we scramble the letters in "Barack Hussein Obama," we get "Abraham is back: one U.S."

You don't have to be a Barack-backer to see that instead of relying on leaders from above, the next evolutionary step is for us to become the leaders we have been waiting for. In other words, I am Lincoln. You are Lincoln. We are Lincoln. And by linkin' together, we free ourselves from slavery to the divisive beliefs in our minds, and form a more perfect union in the land of the heart.

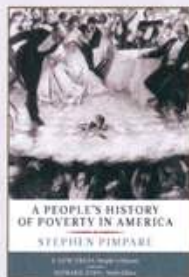
Sure, these ideas may seem far-fetched, but we are nearer to fetching them than ever before. Remember, we are now living in a world gone sane. Change is ahead, change is afoot, and everything is changing from head to foot. Like it or not, we are destined to have heaven on earth. Might as well get used to it. ■

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

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF POVERTY IN AMERICA

Stephen Pimpare
New Press, 2008

STEPHEN PIMPARÉ'S HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS the ways in which the poor have not always been powerless and passive. People in need have taken institutions and programs that sought to control them, or sought to aid them on the institutions' terms, and have turned them to their own purposes. By focusing on the lived experiences of the poor rather than on the noble intentions of those who sought to slightly alleviate this suffering, Pimpare shows us the great truth in Amartya Sen's notion that poverty is the lack of freedom to live the kinds of lives that people have reason to value. It is not just money, but also the deprivation of well-being that is at the core of poverty, and its alleviation requires moving from powerlessness, insecurity, material poverty, and physical weakness to freedom of choice and action, good social relations, security, and the availability of the resources necessary for a good life and physical well-being.



SAVING JESUS FROM THE CHURCH

Robin R. Meyers
HarperOne, 2009

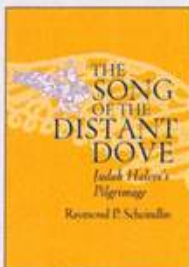
THE MINISTER OF MAYFLOWER Congregational Church in Oklahoma City has written a powerful guidebook on "how to stop worshipping Christ and start following Jesus." The Bible, Meyers tells us, is "a conversation inspired by God," but it is neither infallible nor the final conversation, and we are charged by its prophets "to go on listening and then go on speaking truth to power." Instead of a focus on belief, the key is to build a Christian practice in personal life and to build a beloved community in which I-Thou relationships predominate and the task of the church is to "slay the self in service to Something More." This is an exciting read that will challenge and upset even those members of the Christian Left who think they can simply add onto traditional theology a preferential option for the poor while remaining committed to a theology that emerged from a fear-dominated consciousness.



THE SONG OF THE DISTANT DOVE

Raymond P. Scheindlin
Oxford University Press, 2007

THIS IS A BOOK ABOUT THE MOST BELOVED of medieval Hebrew poets, Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141), whose poetry danced between the secular, pleasure-oriented celebration of daily life that had been made possible in a tolerant Spain, and a sacred pull that led him to pilgrimage toward Jerusalem. Raymond Scheindlin is a particularly spiritually sensitive literary scholar and translator, and his book captures as none has before the complexity, beauty, and wisdom of Halevi's poetry.



A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN CRY FOR RECONCILIATION

Naim Stifan Ateek
Orbis Books, 2008

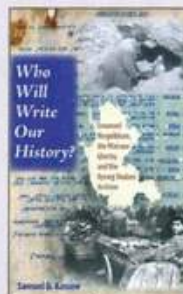
IT'S NOT EASY TO BE A CHRISTIAN PALESTINIAN among a people overwhelmingly oppressed by the Occupation on the one hand and by a growing Islamic fundamentalism on the other. Ateek's refuge? "God in Christ is there with us. Christ is not in the tanks and jet fighters.... God dwells in the Jenin camp and in the old cities of Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah, and Bethlehem, suffering with the oppressed." Nor is God with the suicide bombers. Ateek pleads for a *Tikkun*-like path of healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness. His book alternates between passionate Christian theology and practical remedies to encourage that healing. Once Palestinians have achieved justice, and Israel achieved security, Ateek hopes for a new open-heartedness that may prevail. "Many times," he opines, "those who have suffered most on both sides are the first to forgive."



WHO WILL WRITE OUR HISTORY?

Samuel D. Kassow
Vintage Books, 2009

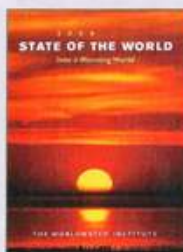
HISTORIAN OF EASTERN EUROPE SAM KASSOW tells the story of Oyneg Shabes, the scholarly organization established by the Polish historian Emanuel Ringelblum to record the experience of the Jewish ghetto of Warsaw as it first grew and then was destroyed under Nazi rule. The records were buried during the great Warsaw uprising and then found many years later. Kassow has mined the archives and thwarted the attempt of the Nazis to wipe out of history the story of the 500,000 Jews crammed into the Warsaw ghetto. Kassow places the stories in the larger historical context and creatively moves from the stories Ringelblum's group preserved to the fate of Ringelblum himself. Without the faux romanticism or faux spirituality that often accompanies Holocaust historiography, Kassow is able to bring to life the tragic and moving story of these Jews doomed by Nazi fanaticism.



STATE OF THE WORLD 2009

The Worldwatch Institute
W.W. Norton & Company, 2009

THIS YEAR'S REPORT IS FOCUSED ON HOW TO deal with global warming. It's going to take a huge and concentrated effort on the part of the entire human race to save this planet from ecological destruction, and the resistance to even the most minimal steps (e.g. banning autos that spew destructive carbon dioxide into the atmosphere) gives us little reason to hope that President Obama can succeed unless he makes this a defining aspect of his presidency. The State of the World book offers an indispensable guide to saving the planet, but it will only be useful if there is the political will to make use of it. Unfortunately, what it lacks is the political or psychological or spiritual foundation for such a campaign—that is our task. But to be on strong ground when engaging in discussions of the current reality, you must read this book!





SUPPORT OBAMA

TO BE THE OBAMA YOU VOTED FOR

CONFERENCE APRIL 29–MAY 2, WASHINGTON, D.C.

The inside-the-Beltway logic has proved overpowering to President Obama.

How else can we understand his decision to surround himself with people from the center/Right, whose policies led to the current economic meltdown? Obama has given almost no voice to the peace and justice movements that made it possible for him to win the Democratic Party nomination. Meanwhile he is giving hundreds of billions more to the banks while they dole out \$20 billion in year-end bonuses; escalating the war in Afghanistan, with no clear goals or exit strategy; refusing to negotiate with Hamas; returning to the failed strategy of the Clinton years (imagining that Israel and the United States can impose a settlement on the Palestinian people that a majority of them would not be able to live with); and failing to launch a single-payer health care plan.

One fact is clear: President Obama seems more responsive to those who critique him from the outside than to those who support him from the inside.

The obvious conclusion: the president needs to hear the voice of prophetic critique—not the voice of a religious Left that is his loyal “choir” and serves as a cheerleader, but the voice of those who call him and the Democrats back to their own highest vision.

That’s why YOU have got to be there.

In addition, we will use the conference to strengthen the “network” part of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, so that we have more actual connection among spiritual progressives around the country on a more regular basis.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

Day: A spiritual-progressive perspective on the economic meltdown and the path to recovery.

Evening: A Christian Witness for Peace prayer service.

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

Morning: We go to Congress to share our perspective on the economy and to educate lawmakers about the Global Marshall Plan and the Strategy of Generosity.

Afternoon and Evening: How to help Obama reclaim the vision.

FRIDAY, MAY 1

Day: Developing the campaign for the Global Marshall Plan. Building the actual network part of the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Reconfiguring the organization.

Evening: Shabbat service followed by interfaith intercultural event, music, dancing.

SATURDAY, MAY 2

Morning: Wisdom from our spiritual traditions, spiritual practice, Shabbat service, and Torah study.

Afternoon: Healing Israel/Palestine as a focus for spiritual progressives.

Eveing: Concluding celebration.

TO REGISTER, GO TO WWW.SPIRITUALPROGRESSIVES.ORG. FOR DETAILS, SEE P. 9 INSIDE THIS ISSUE.