



Motivated by our different religious traditions, we believe that attitudes, priorities, and institutions can be changed to reflect a just and democratic use of the universe's bounty; we believe in the value of work that contributes to the common good; and in the healing influence of respect for the differences as well as the commonness of human experience.

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Religious Socialism

THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM

A New Kind of Liberation Theology LIBERATING RELIGIONS FROM THEIR INSTITUTIONS

CEDRIC MAYSON

Cedric Mayson is a Methodist minister and the director of the Commission for Religious Affairs in the African National Congress. Always provocative, never complacent, he comes through once again with a challenge to institutionalized religion as well its adherents, from an African perspective well worth hearing and heeding. —RS

We need liberating from colonial religion. We are free of colonial politics. We are stamping our feet into globalized economics. But we are still trapped in imported religions. Millions reject them by voting with their bums: on the beach, in bed, in the shops—but not on the pews. We live in a post-religious age.

The heady days of Liberation Theology, the Kairos Document, and the Inter-faith potential have been forgotten. "The church has done no theology since liberation" said Bishop Mvume Dandala.

It was hoped that President Mandela's initiative leading to the establishment of the National Religious Leaders Forum would encourage South Africa to discover an inter-faith theology of transformation. It has not happened. Most religions seem stuck in "the formalities of mutual politeness." There is little vision of a God in the secular world "who makes all things new" enabling us to become a spiritual power house of new development in the secular world. Religions look backward not forward.

Prophets arose before religions were invented, when the world was still in isolated chunks of geography and history. They realized that communities needed ethical behavior: love, care, honesty, truth, justice and humility. People must love one another or they would kill one another, live in harmony or die in enmity. From the early Hindus to Jesus, and Moses to Muhammad, the prophets envisaged what is good for people and produced their own variations of the Golden Rule. The values came before the religions.

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co-editor's notes

Words fail to express the depth of feeling many of us have at seeing the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Yet if we do not find a voice at a time like this, then we probably don't deserve to have one.

For this writer, the problem is not so much a lack of words, but where to begin the discussion. Do we start with the storm itself, that which is beyond our control? Best to leave the teleology of hurricanes to Pat Robertson; Katrina herself is not the real source of those feelings we're all having when we look at our television screens.

Do we start with the abundant signs that this administration, more clearly than any other in American history, indicated from the start and has long demonstrated its total hostility to the idea that a government should come to the aid of people in need?

Do we trace it back to the attempt to dismantle Social Security in exchange for Homeland Security? Do we dare to start in 2000 with an stolen election?

Perhaps we should start with the asinine cries of suddenly shocked conservatives that the "federal government should do something," asinine because they come from the very same imbeciles who have systematically and ideologically destroyed the federal government for the past 25 years. "The government has no role..." that's what they've been telling us all this time. This past week they showed us all exactly what that means. They have finally reaped the bumper crop of their hateful selfishness.

Given that context, the response of this government is exactly what we all could have expected from it. We were all warned long ago, not only about the levees, but about global warming, about the National Guard being sent into war instead of doing what they were intended to do (to secure the domestic tranquility of the nation), about the consequences of dismantling a safety net which is meant to ensure that poor people do not fall through the kind of cracks that make it impossible for them to flee imminent danger. Yet we still put the Right in charge, over and over again, and they have kept telling us that there were and still are no problems that need to be addressed.

This is why, while people died, government officials debated the "states rights" component of sending in federal help to a state government during a clear breach of national security. (Conservatives should ask themselves how safe they feel knowing that it takes a week for the military to respond to a fatal threat to the entire Gulf Coast of the United States.) This is also why the United States does not have, as European nations do, a totally wireless communication system in place for first responders in the event of the failure of the normal communication systems. That would cost too much public money, just like the idea of public health care for all, funding to improve instead of destroy public schools, Amtrak... the list goes on ad nauseam, including things as petty as the seemingly ideologically-driven neglect of funds for grounds maintenance at the FDR Memorial in Washington.

Katrina has come down as a sickening indictment of almost every aspect of policy in the Bush regime, laying bare its flaws for the whole world to see. But the world already sees them; we are the ones who need to open our eyes.



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co-editor's notes

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Forty-three years ago, Michael Harrington wrote of the plight of America's poor in the landmark book *The Other America*. Much of the focus of that book was on the poor black population in the United States, which at that time was struggling for the most basic civil rights. The majority of faces in New Orleans shows that African-Americans have yet again been wronged by the same damnable system which has always accorded them lesser value than their white sisters and brothers.

Today, after one after another relentless assault on the gains made by that struggle, that other America was actually being murdered by the indifference of right-wing overlords who simply do not understand poverty, suffering, or hardship of any kind. Witness the comments of Barbara Bush — the oft-mentioned philosophical influence behind all of her children — on the matter of displaced people now living in the Astrodome and in other shelters across the country: "So many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this is working very well for them." Spoken just like the dowager empress of America's new Camelot.

Whether by killing poor Americans in Iraq, or leaving them to die in the streets of New Orleans, there is no longer any evasion of the fact that the Bush administration is a cancer on the American body politic, a cancer that must be removed before it kills every last cell of life in the collective American soul.

The very people who have waged an ideological war on the ability of government to serve people's needs have proven themselves to be the epitome of bureaucratic inefficiency in the nation's worst domestic crisis since the Depression. Maybe they're the ones who should have nothing whatsoever to do with governance, because they not only have so little faith in it, but have shown themselves to be absolutely inadequate with the responsibility of public office.

It is time, it has long been time, for a complete regime change in this country, by any and all legal, democratic means necessary. In a world of wishes, that would happen before 2008. In the real world, it is imperative that it happen then.

—Andrew Hammer

CORRECTION

In the Fall 2004 issue, I wrote, "Question: borrowing a metaphor from Masefield, is its stand on abortion a dead albatross around the neck of the Democratic Party. . .?"

Trouble is, it was Samuel Coleridge who wrote *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, not John Masefield. And me with a father, a sometime English teacher, who knew "The Rime" by heart and would sometimes fix us with his "glittering eye" and recite it, all 19 pages. Shame on me.

—J.C.C.

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Mayson

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When religious institutions were invented the focus often moved to what is good for emperors, priests, the wealthy and the powerful. Many religions became power hungry, imperialist, and oppressive. The prophets' emphasis on ethics to protect people was replaced by gods to protect kings. Religious institutions were infested by superstitions, divisions, power ploys, and oppressive attitudes.

That corruption often continues. Many say we should love our neighbors—but only after the demands of the wealth market, patriotism, or retribution. If you want your neighbor's oil, slaves, cheap labor, farm subsidies, jobs, or environment you can kill people in the name of your God. This is the terrorist doctrine from Washington, London, Tel Aviv, and the caves of Afghanistan.

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COLONIAL RELIGIONS.

Jesus, Isaiah, Amos, Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster, Muhammad were prophets of peace and harmony, service and compassion. They have often been usurped by corrupt, power hungry followers with violent political and economic aims. Oppressive anti-human teachings lurk behind many "main line" religions, behind the theological bankruptcy of many "evangelicals," behind the delusions of al Qaeda and militant Zionism, and often behind the self-centered cop-outs of modern mystics. We need to recover the values of the prophets.

Religions have a major positive role in society, but no prophet suggests religious institutions will save the world. The prophets were not priests. Transforming the political, economic and spiritual evolution of Earthlings to a higher plane was the business of fishermen and camel drivers, tent makers and

housewives, politicians and business men, civil servants and a carpenter's son. Lay people were the ministers putting spiritual guts into secular affairs.

Africa has a vital insight on Secular Spirituality. African Traditional Religion (ATR), like all primal human spirituality, is based on people values. It is holistic, not separating the spiritual from the rest of life. It has no religious structures, no priests, no estates, no churches, no competitive denominations, but it points to ethical values and a power greater than ourselves.

Like all religions, ATR needs liberating: from the inadequacies of its past; from the contemptuous caricatures of some imported religions; and from the snare of those who seek to manipulate it for their own benefit. Primal religion needs prophetic insight, but it has much to offer.

We need to liberate religion into a new secular spirituality which drives away superstition and fear, and empowers millions of agnostics and believers who are seeking a spirituality not wrapped in colonial religions. It means a new evangelism, a unity in diversity of people seeking values which change society, a new prophetic context which sees politics and economics as godly spheres.

Whatever our religious inheritance the winds of change are blowing over us. We need a rethink of religion to move liberation forward.

Liberating God

God is incognito: behind the scenes. Those who claim the only hot line to God are fooling themselves.

When the first Parliament of World Religions was held in Chicago in 1893 the Archbishop of Canterbury refused to go. He said: "the Christian religion is the one religion" and would not concede "the equality of other intended members and the parity of their position and claims." Many Christians still echo his views. But others raise questions.

Most of us grew up with the idea of a God in Heaven, up in the sky, but when sailors and scientists proved the Earth was round, where was up? Where was God?

Others think God is a sort of Father Christmas, but the recent tsunami waves threw that idea out of the water. The tsunami was real hard fact about the unfolding life we live. We are Earthlings. We are part of an evolving

and developing world, in which body mind and spirit grow as we face and conquer tsunamis together. God writes a shopping list of reality, not a wish list of if-onlys.

Many false ideas of God came from religious institutions seeking to glorify themselves or their political and economic masters. It is well illustrated in the wretched history of Christ-ianity, which rejected Jesus' proclamation of a loving compassionate Father, and invested God with the attributes of the Roman Emperor: the almighty, all powerful, omniscient, death dealing ruler of humanity.

Others conceived similar gods in their own image: demanding obedience under threat of deadly punishment, fearsomely masculine, warlike. It drove both Muslims and Christ-ians in the Crusades. It corrupted many Hindus, Jews and other religions from China to the Andes. The imperialist blood thirsty God ruled from the Vikings to the Incas, Queen Victoria, and P.W. Botha.

Many of us inherited this false colonial concept of an imperialist God, under threat of going to hell if we got it wrong. Like the Bushes, Blairs and al Qaedas, many worship this divine caricature, claiming God's blessing to destroy their enemies. In our hearts we all know that such a god cannot solve the problems of humanity. Militarism perpetuates terrorism; guns bring oppression not liberation; economic systems that make poverty do not make peace. Those modeling God on emperors and dictators are in desperate need of liberation.

It was the missionaries false conception of God that shocked Bishop Colenso of Natal, a century ago: "This country is already saturated with a corruption of Christianity, and the natives (sic) have acquired such a view of the character of God and of the Gospel as keeps them back from desiring to have a much closer acquaintance with it."

But the prophets, without exception, give a totally different picture. Evil is removed by goodness. Amos, Isaiah, the Buddha, Confucius, and Zoroaster all demonstrate that human victory comes through love,

compassion and self sacrifice. Muhammad called for peace, mercy, forgiveness and care for the poor. Hinduism gave us the Rig Vega and Gandhi.

Jesus' God pictures were of the Good Samaritan, the father welcoming the prodigal, the support of workers, the friend of sinners, healing poverty and disease. He was compassionate, caring, understanding, self-sacrificing, humble, and friends with women and children. The godly way to conquer the problems of life was through self-sacrifice.

Rediscovering the loving servant god of the prophets is the only model which will liberate us from the imperial god of oppressors, and save humanity from self-destruction. To be generous and compassionate is to be strong in the power that makes life. Those with faith energy based on a God working through love and peace-making have the clue to godly human-hood.

In the struggle against apartheid many sought unity with one another not power over others; they sought peace not war; campaigns of peaceful defiance not killing fields; the Kairos Document not the Inquisition; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission not Nuremberg Trials; to be enriched by diversity not destroyed by it.

In our country there is a growing realization amongst thoughtful people—and a gut feeling amongst millions—that 'God' must be liberated from colonial corruptions. 'Our theology must be brewed in African pots' says Bishop Ivan Abrahams.

Liberating Jesus From Christ-ianity

Jesus was not a Christ-ian. He did not say he was the Christ (Messiah) and his followers were not called Christ-ians until long after him. He made no claim to be God. He did not write the Gospels. He knew nothing of the creeds. He did not found a religion. He devised no rituals about a threatening, imperialist, almighty God demanding blood sacrifice for sin. So Jesus was wonderful, but we must differentiate between Jesus of Nazareth and later Christ-ian denominations.

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Jesus' fascinating group of followers included women, men, manual workers, administrators, civil servants, old and young. But no priests. After the Romans killed him for sedition (with the connivance of many religious), and amid highly conflicting stories that he had come back to life, his disciples formed a commune in Jerusalem. They pooled possessions, lived together, and continued to proclaim his message. People flocked to them, and the community spread.

The convert Paul preached throughout the Roman Empire to Jews and Gentiles, developed his own theological reflections about the Christ, and founded many "churches." But his letters say little about Jesus whom he never knew. John wrote his inspiring book not to tell the story, but to claim that Jesus was the son of God. Both men had different agendas from Jesus.

THE GLOBALISED WORLD
WANTS A RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY
CAPABLE OF PROVIDING AN ADEQUATE
MOTIVATIONAL FRAMEWORK
FOR LIFE...

Believers multiplied; church structures, priests and bishops were invented; writings were edited and distributed. Three hundred years after Jesus, the Roman emperor Constantine hijacked the churches, and changed the shape of Christ-ianity. He dressed its clergy in gorgeous robes like the priests of pagan gods, killed the bishops who criticized him, invested God with the attributes of the Roman emperor, approved creeds which speculated on who Jesus was but ignored what he taught, and re-focused religion on the life of souls after death. The Savior of the world became the Savior from the world, and Constantine ruled on Earth. Politics took precedence and the message was perverted.

Christ-ianity spread everywhere, following armies and trade, shaped by national, economic and theological demands, until in 1948 they tried to pull it together in the World Council of Churches, based not on Jesus of Nazareth, but on the Christ of Constantine.

So what did Jesus teach? The records used in the first three Gospels provide the most accurate picture of Jesus. A book of his sayings (now lost, but called Q by

scholars) and the Gospel of Mark, are followed closely by Luke and Matthew. Read them yourself!

In a world of militarism, corrupt business, lifeless religion and hopeless people Jesus proclaimed the Good News of a God working within them. The ruling principles of life were love, compassion, healing, understanding, forgiveness, humility and hope. People believed him with an energy of faith that was like being born again from contemporary ideas. Still is.

Success and happiness came through love and serving other people, not brute force and greed. The breadth of Jesus' vision (like all the prophets) has opened new vistas to people throughout history. His message survives because it is truly how humanity works.

Jesus' teaching has frequently been trampled underfoot by Christ-ianity, but it constantly re-emerges. Jesus revealed the true building blocks of human community, and the Way for human society to continue. Darwin demonstrated that physical evolution came through the survival of the fittest: Jesus showed the spiritual growth of human community comes through care for the weakest.

And today? In our world-come-of-age, people are no longer satisfied with a replay of colonial rituals. The globalized world wants a "religious philosophy capable of providing an adequate motivational framework" for life, writes Professor J.S. Kruger.

The struggle for liberation re-discovered many principles of Jesus: good overcoming evil; the quest for unity not power; the strength of unity in diversity; the role of compassion and self-sacrifice; faith-energy within us. The natural heartbeat of the struggle in ordinary people often reflects the human insight and holistic thrust of Jesus' vision.

Jesus saw faith as living and forward-looking so there is no permanence in it. It constantly moves on to new issues like a renaissance of Africa, the unity of diverse races, religions and cultures, ecology, emancipating women, wider education, banishing poverty, and a world of secular spirituality. The enjoyment is in the movement.

Faith energy fires the evolutionary process of humanity, bursting the old colonial bonds. Freedom is a creative ambiguous space for a country and continent moving forward, step by step, not knowing where and when we shall arrive, but sure we will. Fun, isn't it!



bigmouth strikes again

...why pat robertson should just shut up.

"We will be here with the grace of God and the help of Christ, my commander and Lord. God is with us! Who is against us? We walk along the path of God..."

"Yes, we do want peace, but we don't want the peace of the graves; we don't want the peace of the gag; we don't want the peace of slaves; the only peace—so said Christ—the only peace possible is through justice..."

The man who said those words is the man televangelist Pat Robertson wants to assassinate. This becomes even more ironic when it is noted that just a few days ago, taking a page from his would-be assassin, Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez announced on national television—he has a regular show as well, entitled *Hello President*—that the global capitalist model was responsible for the recent spate of natural disasters, in particular the earthquake in Pakistan.

So both men apparently share a common faith (at least in name), and a desire to attribute geological trauma to whatever sins they abhor most deeply, but only one wants to kill the other. In a style evoking the worst of institutionalized religion, it would have to be the minister, wouldn't it?

Robertson's comments opened up an ugly wound in the American memory, from a time not too long ago, when, well, that was just how the U.S. government dealt with anyone it didn't want in power. Almost anyone with a middling aptitude for political history can roll off a sizable list of CIA-deposed heroes and villains from the past fifty years, but we're all supposed to believe that the official policy on such operations has been consigned to the past. Not so fast.

Reminiscent of that old phrase among criminals about the problem lying not in the offense itself, but rather in getting caught, one can surmise that the sentiments of the Virginia minister are not too far away from those actually held by the current administration when it comes not only to Chavez but any number of issues.

Many would argue that the current mess in Iraq, while lacking in the intrigue of covert ops and assassination plots, is an exact reflection of the previous policy of simply removing any governments one does not like by force, in order to get a new one that is more compliant with American interests. In the eyes of those interests, Saddam was fine until he wasn't (read: until he wanted to own his own oil), and then he became the ultimate enemy. This is where we remind the reader that Venezuela owns Citgo, which Hugo Chavez wants to sell off to gain revenue for his country. That move could affect oil distribution in the U.S., which explains one of the reasons why Chavez has attracted so much interest from the Right.

Granted, Mr. Chavez is not any sort of model democrat. He's just acceptable enough to be preferred by a few of us over his nation's shamelessly corrupt social democratic elite, but not enough to gain the confidence of those of us on the democratic left who have legitimate concerns over tactics that show quite a bit more of a strong arm than we would like when it comes to the rules of governmental play. There is no doubt that Venezuela deserves better, but so does the United States, particularly when one of its former presidential candidates advocates assassination as a method of political transition in modern society.

Just like the fool who whacks a hornet's nest with a stick, and then complains about *cont'd on page 16*

Robertson's tirade only continues the absurd lie of the most powerful nation on earth being fatally threatened by small impoverished nations because they happen to think they have the right to control their own economies.

DANCING WITH THE WOLVES

Palestine's Struggle for Internal Stability



KHALED DUZDAR

Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise. —Gray

Deeds not words. —Chaucer

A few months ago I gave warning about the local lawlessness and anarchy in Palestine in a piece I wrote entitled "It's now or never." I said that if the Palestinian Authority would not take serious actions immediately, the situation would deteriorate to the level of total chaos. Today the situation is in a quandary, the Palestinian territory is under anarchy which is leading to the level that can be described as the "Somalia model." Political factions and militia do as they please; the cities and towns are divided into vandalizing feudal lords with the absence of law and order. The Palestinian security forces do not control and in some cases they were themselves involved in a number of incidents of misused force only adding to the sense of total chaos.

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

—Shakespeare

The worst of the worse in this situation is when the Palestinian security forces carry out acts that violate laws and contravene their responsibilities and duties. A case in point is when members of the Security forces broke into the Palestinian Legislative Council in Gaza city during a formal session to protest the absence of security and chaos, they themselves acting in a gangster like style. There are no logical reasons or excuses for this kind of behavior by the security forces. They are supposed to prevent acts of armed protests and anarchy. They are supposed to protect the immunity of the Council. Adding insult to injury, the majority of these "protesters" were not even in

uniform, indicating that while on duty they might be providing security, but while off-duty they are busy violating laws that they are supposed to enforce. Moreover, a few days ago, members of one of the security forces broke into a civilian house shooting and injuring the civilians, menacing women and children, over a minor dispute regarding parking a car.

Judge not, that ye be not judged. —Matthew 7:1-2

Anarchy in Palestine has reached its highest chaotic level now. Armed forces in Gaza are now even adopting the Iraqi model of bedlam and kidnapping, without distinguishing between the targets, even foreigners working in assisting the Palestinian community are targeted. This is being done to blackmail the Authority to answer their demands. The perpetrators of these crimes have never been arrested and have never paid for their crimes. They move and act freely, with confidence that they can achieve what they want through their criminal acts. There are absolutely no justifications for the claim of "armed resistance" when these arms are used to target their own people.

Ill weeds grow apace.

Today, the territories are controlled by thousands of myriad armed militia, who are proliferating and growing daily. They defy the Authority and endanger not only Palestinian unity, but the Palestinian people themselves. Violence and acts of anarchy in all Palestinian cities are massively spreading. These warlords cannot legitimize their claim that they are resistance groups. They cannot justify their violent acts against the Authority. There is no justification for intimidating the public. These people are not resisting occupation. Their acts are damaging and dangerous.

They are a direct threat to Palestinian national interests and to national security.

Corruption of the best becomes the worst.

Fatah is the leading source for the proliferation of these warlords. These gangs, using the name of Fatah have turned into gangsters and warlords. They have descended the situation in the Palestinian cities to a gangster's battlefield. The PA must begin dismantling and disarming these so-called Fatah affiliated armed groups. The PA must enforce the law by banning all those who are committing crimes against the Palestinian people and those who challenges the Authority on a daily basis. These warlords think that they are the Authority or that they are acting on behalf of the Authority. But the truth is that they are causing damage to the legitimate Palestinian cause through their abuses. They are not defending Palestinians by committing crimes of killing, wreaking havoc on the Palestinian people; intimidating, abducting and racketeering, extorting protection money from innocent civilians and acting illicitly as the judge and the executioner.

If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.
—Matthew 15:14

It is clear that in the unremitting clashes between Hamas and the PA forces Hamas is challenging the Authority and is working toward the creation of an authority over the Palestinian Authority. Their hidden plan is to create a parallel body, shadowing the Palestinian Authority, acting as if they are the only authority in Gaza. They are trying to appear as the conquerors of the Israeli occupation in Gaza. They sell the public the notion that their resistance forced Israel out of Gaza. They have no regret that the missiles they fired into Israel ended up causing civilian casualties and losses of lives for innocent people, the same people that they are claiming justification in protecting them.

Example is better than precept.

There is no reciprocal situation between the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas. There is not a situation of a clash between two armed movements. It is a clash between the Authority and opposing individuals who are acting outside of the law. Moreover, as we now know without any doubt, the accusations of Hamas against the Authority and the Minister of Interior as being responsible for the

explosion during a Hamas parade in Jabalya were false; Hamas itself was guilty of this crime. Denouncing the internal fighting is not enough; there should be an end to the phenomena of armed civilians and militias, especially in Gaza. There are no longer any reasons left for the militias to carry arms, because the occupation forces are no longer present in Gaza. What are the needs for armed militias and for militant parades?

Practice what you preach. —Shakespeare

The loss of hope and the current feeling of insecurity is worse than at the time of occupation. Palestinian civilians are not secure; they lost their confidence in the Authority and its security forces. They perceive the security forces and their senior commanders as being the leaders of corruption. The public believes that these so-called security commanders are only interested in serving their own narrow interests.

Know thyself.—Thales

Is the new cabinet the solution, “A transitional government?” Who could run such a cabinet, and what purpose would it serve if elections are ahead of us in three months? Could any new Minister of Interior bring changes for the coming three months before the elections?

Dancing with the wolves.

It seems that the Palestinian president is “dancing with the wolves” by trying to negotiate and mediate between them to end the lawlessness, while the wolves are attacking his flock at night. President Abbas should reconsider this tactic. If the wolves attack and threaten his flock, he should find a way to protect them from the disobeying wolves and not to appease the wolves. Ultimately he has to fight those who oppose law and order. He has to work on putting an immediate end to the lawlessness. He must be adamant in enforcing the law and ending all signs of anarchy and armed militias. Enforcement of the law should not be negotiable. President Abbas has to end this situation immediately; with no more procrastination. If not, the rapid disintegration and chaos will turn his period in government into another Palestinian experience in failed governance from which the Palestinian people will continue to suffer.

Khaled Duzdar is the Palestinian Co-Director of the Strategic Affairs Unit of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information.

Israel After Disengagement

COLETTE AVITAL

With the Israel Defence Forces having completed a total pull-out from Gaza (and Northern Samaria) and the settlements totally evacuated and dismantled, the occupation of Gaza is, at last, over.



Carried out in the face of violent opposition at home, hailed abroad, the disengagement has plunged Israel into a deep political crisis. Challenged by his own base, by the “rebels” in his own party, led by former Prime Minister Netanyahu, P.M. Sharon succeeded in winning the vote on a seemingly procedural matter: whether to hold an election for the party leadership next April, or to move it up to November this year.

Yet much more was at stake: Had Netanyahu succeeded, this would have been the first time for an incumbent Prime Minister to be ousted by his own party. It would have split the Likud, cut short its rule, resulting in early elections. Moreover, the Likud led by Netanyahu without Sharon would have been free to represent the lunatic right in Israel, become a fringe party and drive over the cliff. Good for Labor, one may think, but essentially bad for Israel and for any prospect of peace. In this case the Prime Minister would have been free to form his own party, attracting politicians from various parties including Labor. Good for the country – perhaps, but bad for Labor, no doubt.

While Prime Minister Sharon won this first round, the battle is by no means over. When the Knesset, Israel’s Parliament reconvenes on October 31, the parliamentary season promises to be “hot.” Sharon’s opponents within the ranks of the Likud may join the opposition in its attempts to topple the Government. Will the Government survive, based on Labor’s support alone? Sharon will, no doubt, attempt to broaden his coalition.

Labor too, faces its own internal struggle for leadership. Come November 9th, four candidates, Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Science Minister Matan Vilnai and Head of the *Histadrut* (Israeli Trade Union Federation) Amir Peretz will compete for the chairmanship of the Party in primaries among the 120,000 registered members. Should none of them obtain the needed majority, there will be a second round of elections within a fortnight. It is therefore only after November 9th (at best) that the leadership and the members of Labor will have to consider and decide what our next steps should be.

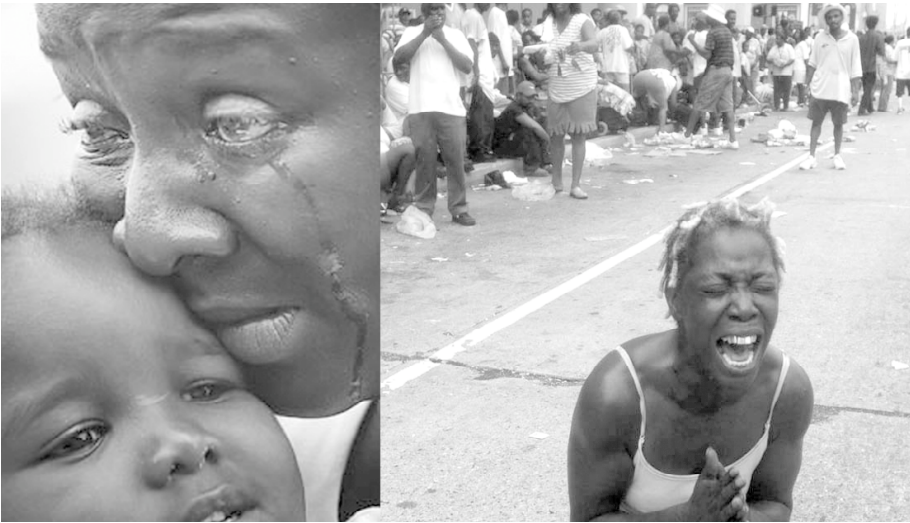
Our positions are clear: we support a continuation of the political process, a renewed, meaningful dialogue with our Palestinian partners, the immediate dismantlement of the illegal outposts, and further “redeployments,” and an all-out effort to ensure that Gaza is economically prosperous and politically stable. We demand from the Government a total change in its social and economic policies and see the

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struggle against growing poverty and inequality as our first priority. To this end Shimon Peres has presented a comprehensive plan to the Government.

Our members will have to decide whether our partnership in Sharon’s Government should continue or whether we should pull out. Such decisions will largely depend upon Sharon’s own intentions and acts: will he be willing and able to pursue the political process (he has now twice postponed his scheduled meetings with President Mahmoud Abbas), will he be

cont’d on page 14



After Katrina: Some Hard Questions

■ JOHANN CHRISTOPH ARNOLD

In the catastrophic wake of Hurricane Katrina, America is no longer the same, and should never be the same again. Watching the news and hearing the chilling firsthand accounts of people who were trapped in this tragedy, how can one not be affected? All of a sudden, our country has been faced with a calamity we cannot keep at arm's length—the sort that, up till now, only happened to people in far-off Asia, Africa or Latin America.

One could say plenty regarding our government's response (or lack thereof), and about how many more lives could have been saved if those in power had been more on the ball. But this is not the time to point fingers: we have been struck, unprepared, by a mammoth refugee crisis, widespread lawlessness, martial law and a degree of public panic practically unknown in the United States.

Not surprisingly, the news media has been obsessed with the economic consequences of Katrina: the skyrocketing cost of gas, the instability of the real estate market, and the weakening of the dollar, to name just a few. As usual, it seems that the financial and material aspects of the disaster are of paramount importance. For many people, the biggest question seems to be, "How long will it be before the price of gas goes down again, and I can return to 'life as usual'?"

Very few people seem to be asking what sort of a spiritual impact this disaster will have on our consciences and on our collective soul. Will it lead to a spiritual renewal and a new era of justice and love?

Over the past week I found myself thinking of the Old Testament story of Nineveh, and of Jonah, whom God

sent to preach repentance there. At first Jonah refused, but when he finally obeyed, the people of the city listened to him and proclaimed a fast—everyone put on sackcloth, including the king. When God saw the change of heart that had occurred among the people, he changed his mind about the calamity he had

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threatened to bring on them, and showed them mercy. This story ought to speak to us now, in the wake of Katrina. We too should be on our knees, asking God to change our hearts and show us mercy.

Over the last century, America has, for the most part, been immune to disaster on its own shores. Wars, famines and epidemics that have killed millions of people in the Third World have had no lasting effect on us. American soldiers were killed or wounded in action, but the vast majority of us were never in harm's way.

We have made an idol of our invincibility and our status as an economic giant and a military superpower. We have made an idol of our high standard of living, and our supposed closeness to God.

Until Katrina blew in, we thought we could handle any and every crisis that came along.

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Shepherds of Voiceless Creatures

Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust

By Charles Patterson, Ph.D.

New York: Lantern Books, 2002. 312 pp. \$20

■ RICHARD H. SCHWARTZ

When I first learned that Charles Patterson was going to write a book about "our treatment of animals and the Holocaust," I had some misgivings. I was aware that some animal rights advocates had made superficial, misleading comparisons between the treatment of animals on factory farms and the treatment of Jews and others in the Holocaust, and I knew that this had hurt the vegetarian/animal rights cause by giving people an excuse to avoid considering the many negative effects of animal-based diets. However, I was an early endorser of Patterson's project because I felt that we needed new, creative ways to alert people to the horrors of modern intensive livestock agriculture, and my knowledge of his character, sensitivity, and background convinced me that he would be an ideal person for this project.

Charles Patterson's first book—*Anti-Semitism: The Road to the Holocaust and Beyond*—received much acclaim. *Judaica Book News* stated, "It deserves a place in every home, school and public library...excellent background reading in Jewish history and the history of western civilization." He is a Holocaust educator with a certificate from the Yad Vashem Institute for Holocaust Education in Jerusalem, who has reviewed books and films for 18 years for *Martyrdom and Resistance*, a publication of the International Society of Yad Vashem (Israel's Center for Holocaust studies). Patterson reviewed major histories of the Holocaust by Yehuda Bauer and Martin Gilbert and Holocaust films such as "The Partisans of Vilna" and "The Wannsee Conference." His review essay—"Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka"—was included in *A Legacy Recorded: An Anthology of Martyrdom and Resistance* (Harvey Rosenfeld and Eli Zborowski,

editors), a book that is dedicated to "the survivors of the Holocaust, whose Spirit and Soul are embodied in this book."

Now that I have read the completed book, I feel that my confidence in his ability to sensitively carry out this project was well placed. The book is very well researched (with almost 700 end notes), and it is written with great sensitivity and compassion. *Eternal Treblinka* does not equate animals and people. Rather, it shows how the frequent vilification of people as rats, vermin, pigs, insects, beasts, monkeys, etc., dehumanizes people and makes it easier to oppress, enslave, and murder them. He documents many examples of this process, relating it to the treatment of slaves, native American Indians, Japanese people during World War II, Vietnamese people during the Vietnam War, and other examples.

The book carefully shows how the enslavement ("domestication") of animals became the model and inspiration for all the oppressions that followed. In particular, he documents a trail from slaughterhouse production lines to Henry Ford's assembly lines for the mass production of automobiles to Hitler's methods in the extermination of Jews during the Holocaust. He also discusses the myth of Hitler's "vegetarianism"—his diet of little or no meat he often followed to reduce his chronic health problems.

Throughout the book, Patterson is sensitive to the views of Holocaust survivors. Lucy Kaplan, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, has contributed an eloquent Foreword. An entire chapter profiles animal advocates who are Holocaust survivors, children or grandchildren of survivors, people who lost relatives in the Holocaust, and those who have given thought to the lessons of the Holocaust. Another chapter, "The Other Side of the Holocaust," discusses German and German-American animal advocates who began their lives in Nazi Germany. There is also a chapter on the exploitation and slaughter of animals as a major theme

in the writings of Yiddish writer and Nobel laureate, Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904-91), many of whose characters were Holocaust survivors. The title of the book comes from a statement by one of Singer's characters: "...for the animals, it is an eternal Treblinka."

This book has helped me understand how the exploitation and oppression of animals has been a major part of human history and how the degradation of humans by vilifying them as animals has justified horrific treatment of people. It has inspired me to try to increase my efforts to promote vegetarianism and animal rights. Patterson's extensive and positive discussion of Jewish teachings about *tsa'ar ba'alei chayim*, the Torah mandate to avoid causing "sorrow to living creatures," is very welcome.

A problem is that in the opening chapter Patterson states that some historians and environmentalists blame the Genesis verse, in which God grants people dominion over the earth, for western civilization's destruction and despoliation of the environment. By failing to mention traditional Jewish interpretations of this verse that define dominion as responsible stewardship rather than as domination, he may leave the mistaken impression that the exploitation of animals and the environment is religiously sanctioned. To his credit, once alerted to this omission, the author has agreed to correct the matter in future editions of the book and has added my article giving traditional Jewish sources on this issue to the book's web site (<http://www.powerfulbook.com/overview>).

The biblical teaching that humans are granted dominion over animals does not give people a warrant to wantonly exploit animals. It certainly does not permit us to breed animals and then treat them as machines designed solely to meet human needs. Jewish tradition interprets "dominion" as guardianship, or stewardship: we are called upon to be co-workers

with God in improving the world. This view is reinforced by the fact that immediately after God gave humankind dominion over animals (Genesis 1:26), He prescribed vegetarian foods as the diet best suited to humans (Genesis 1:29). This mandate is almost immediately followed by God's declaration that all of Creation was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Perhaps this indicates that Adam and Eve's original vegetarian diet was consistent with the stewardship that God entrusted to them and to all humanity. Another indication of the true interpretation of dominion is the Torah verse that states that God put Adam, the first human being, into the Garden of Eden to "work it and to guard it." (Genesis 2:15)



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While not discussed in this book, a second error of some animal activists (as well as those who exploit animals) is the presumption that the biblical teaching that only people are created in the Divine Image means that God places little or no value on animals. While the Torah does state that only human beings are created "in the Divine Image" (Genesis 5:1), it also makes it clear that animals are also God's creatures, possessing sensitivity and the capacity for feeling pain.

God is concerned that they be protected and treated with compassion and justice. In fact, the Jewish sages state that to be "created in the Divine Image," means that people have the capacity to emulate the Divine compassion for all creatures. "As God is compassionate," they teach, "so you should be compassionate." Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, a leading 19th century Jewish thinker, discusses this concept: "You can know God only through His acts of love and justice; and, in turn, you too are called upon to act with love and justice."

Concerning the biblical concept that human beings were created to "serve and safeguard the earth" (Genesis 2:15), Rabbi Hirsch states that this actually limits our rights over other living creatures. He writes:

Schwartz

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"The earth was not created as a gift to you. You have been given to the earth, to treat it with respectful consideration, as God's earth, and everything on it as God's creation, as your fellow creatures' to be respected, loved, and helped to attain their purpose according to God's will....To this end, your heartstrings vibrate sympathetically with any cry of distress sounding anywhere in Creation, and with any glad sound uttered by a joyful creature." So, as the Lord is our shepherd, we are to be shepherds of voiceless creatures. As God is kind and compassionate to us, we must be considerate of the needs and feelings of animals. Thus, when properly conceived, these biblical verses actually endorse the struggle to improve conditions for animals. If only they and other Jewish teachings on compassion to animals were correctly understood and applied, it would have prevented the

many examples of human and animal abuses that Patterson so cogently considers.

The connections between the mentality and methods behind the oppression of animals and the oppression of human beings that are documented in this important and timely book have great potential to stir Jews (and others) to start to apply these verses in Genesis and other Jewish teachings on the proper treatment of animals, and thereby to help shift the world from its present perilous, inhumane path. I hope that *Eternal Treblinka* will be widely read, that its message will be extensively applied for the benefit of both humans and animals, and that it will help lead to that day when, in the words of Isaiah (11:6), "no one shall hurt nor destroy in all of God's Holy mountain."

Richard H. Schwartz is author of Judaism and Vegetarianism, and president of the Jewish Vegetarians of North America.

Arnold

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But in five short days, some of our most cherished ideals—take "government for the people," for instance—have been exposed as illusions. To the despairing and the dying in New Orleans—and thus to everyone—all our glorious American achievements mean absolutely nothing.

This should not depress us. It is a chance for us as a country to learn that suffering can bring us closer to each other. Most other nations have suffered war, famine, diseases and natural disasters. It has humbled them, and now it is our turn. That is good, because we are not as big and strong as we have made ourselves out to be.

Americans have long been known as a nation of generous do-gooders. But it is easy to be generous when one has plenty of money and food. Now, in the aftermath of Katrina, we are finding that our safety nets have gaping holes. The big infrastructures we believed in seem to be collapsing around us. We are floundering.

If we took this warning seriously, we could find out what role we really ought to play in today's world. If we were ready to admit that we need the help of other nations and cultures, we might find out that all people around the globe are really one family.

Tremendous things could happen if we used this opportunity to rediscover the significance of all human beings. So let us not miss this chance to band together in solidarity with those who are suffering.

Johann Christoph Arnold (www.ChristophArnold.com) is an author and a pastor with the Bruderhof Communities (www.bruderhof.com).

Avital

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willing to change his economic course and join forces to fight against poverty?

At the beginning of this new Jewish Year 5766, the challenges facing us are great. A political standstill, the lack of hope, could lead us to renewed violence. The opportunities after disengagement exist, and if we seize the moment, we can make a big stride toward peace.

Colette Avital is a member of the Knesset and the International Secretary of the Israeli Labor Party.

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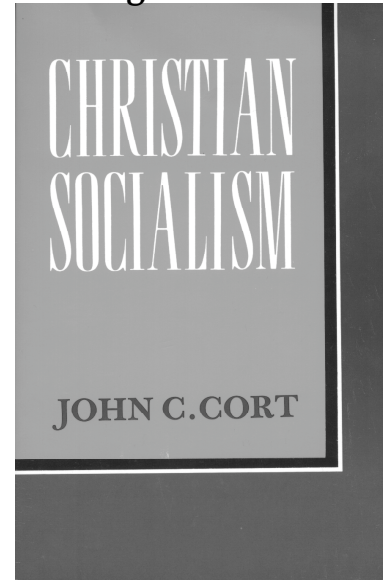
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Robertson

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those nasty hornets attacking him, Pat Robertson's tirade only continues the absurd lie of the most powerful nation on earth being fatally threatened by small impoverished nations because they happen to think they have the right to control their own economies.

His total disregard of the degree to which the deeply held Christian faith of poor Venezuelans has played a part in the "Bolivarian revolution" (so much that Chavez now openly considers himself to be a Christian Socialist and is aggressively promoting his initiatives under that name) makes Robertson one of the most disingenuous and least qualified to opine on developments in that nation.

Unfortunately, his retraction amid howls from conservatives—who hated having their agenda exposed in such an overt manner—does not indicate that he truly changed his mind on the matter, or that he will refrain from similar bursts of hate-filled ignorance in the future.

But that's no surprise coming from a man who created his own version of the Bible when he decided that the text needed editorial comments, based upon his patrician world view. The Sadducees would be proud.

—AH

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To you, our readers, for your generous response to our appeal for both funds and contributions.

Your continued involvement is necessary in order to keep this publication alive, and for that we are deeply grateful.

Our next issue will feature a number of book reviews, closing out the year with ideas on what to read in the coming winter months.



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