



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.

WINTER 2000

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Religious Socialism

THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM

"We Shan't Give Up!" *The Story of Uganda's Abayudaya Jews*

DEBORAH KLEIN

In the Summer 1999 issue of *RS*, Rod Ryon raised the issue of music as an integral part of our struggle. ("How About A Socialist Hymnal?," pg. 13). A compact disc I had recently purchased instantly came to mind. "*Shalom Everybody Everywhere*" is a musical introduction to the fascinating story of the Abayudaya ("descendants of Judah"), a small community of Jews in eastern Uganda whom have only in the past few years begun to come out of their isolation through contacts with Jews round the world.



Two members of the Abayudaya in their temple.

The story begins in 1919, when Semei Kakungulu, a Bugandan tribal leader, decided to convert to Judaism after studying the Bible on his own. (Kakungulu had previously been converted to Christianity by British missionaries.) His long periods of study of the Tanakh brought him to the conclusion that he and his family should become Jews, so he circumcised his sons, was himself circumcised, and from that moment on lived as a Jew.

It would be another seven years before Kakungulu would actually meet anyone from the Jewish community. In 1926, as the elders of the tribe tell it, a Jewish trader named Joseph was invited to visit the Abayudaya, who had by now built a small temple and gained nearly two thousand converts. Joseph stayed with them for six months, helping to fill in the gaps in terms of living a Jewish life. He taught them the Hebrew alphabet, the calendar, and how to observe the dietary laws, or *kashrut*. After that, there would be a slight word here and there about this interesting community of new Jews, but until 1992 the Abayudaya would only have 15 visitors from the Jewish community.

During this period of near complete isolation from other Jews, the Abayudaya suffered religious persecution, most notably under the anti-Semitic regime of Ugandan dictator

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editor's notes

This issue is a blend of different styles and subjects, ranging from the personal to the theological. In a sense, it sums up the diverse nature of our own organization, an organization comprised on the one hand of people who are lifelong students of the intricate theoretical twists and turns of socialism, and on the other those who are seeing our particular vision of a better world for the first time.

We start off with the story of the Abayudaya Jews, a story of enduring against the odds and finding joy in the struggle. Then we start to deal with aspects of our own struggle. Tom Wakely's campaign for Congress is one way to struggle against the powers that be, particularly if one feels more than the usual amount of hopelessness about the so-called two-party system in this election year. We invite our readers to weigh in with their comments on Tom's challenge to "an Al Gore Democrat."

Another part of the struggle is how we communicate our ideas. "Outside the Box" is an interview with someone who is not "one of us," so to speak. My chat with Linnea Rawls, a child care worker, asks us to understand who we as socialists are really speaking to, by listening to the thoughts of someone outside our fold, who has never been a part of our movement. We have to learn not only how to speak to the people about our issues, but more importantly to listen to how working people see things.

For religious socialists, defining the nature of the relationship between faith and politics is an essential part of our struggle. Swiss religious socialist Urs Eigenmann has given us an extensive definition of that relationship from his own Christian perspective in his piece on "The Social Contract and the Kingdom of God."

Then after we have defined, communicated, and campaigned for our ideas, we're left with the stories and impact they have had on our personal lives. Richard L. Righter's piece on the personal-political battles of theologian Karl Barth asks us to reconsider popularly held conceptions of Barth's contributions as related to politics and social activism.

While we're on the issue of struggle, I would be remiss if I did not comment on the struggle to get out this issue of *Religious Socialism*. This was supposed to be the issue that got us caught up and back onto a more timely schedule. Clearly it's no longer winter, however this particular winter included a wedding and honeymoon (my own), an overloaded schedule of work, and some fatefully placed computer problems on top of that. No excuses are offered, just an explanation of the real world difficulties that can sometimes get in the way of a labor of love.

After talking with the other editors, we are going to make a real effort to adjust ourselves to the seasons and get back on track this year. Your ideas, articles, and other contributions are as appreciated as your patience with our merry but overworked souls.

-Andrew Hammer



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Religious Socialism (ISSN 0278-7784) is published four times per year by the Religion and Socialism Commission of the Democratic Socialists of America, and is produced by the Democratic Socialists of America Fund. Subscriptions at the basic rate are \$10.00 per year.

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•Articles in this issue are the opinion expressed by the writers, and not of DSA or the Religion & Socialism Commission or Religious Socialism. Contributions to the Democratic Socialists of America Fund are tax deductible.

•Writers may submit manuscripts via postal mail, e-mail, or on a 3.5" computer disk formatted to text files and a hard copy. Photos are encouraged.

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LETTERS

I was recently given a copy of your Autumn 1999 issue, containing Joyce Caggiano's comments on the Bread & Roses strike. While I have no particular quarrel with the argument she is making, some of the "facts" she cites are quite wrong.

No reputable historian has ever written that "No God, No Master" was the strikers' call in the IWW-led strike against the Lawrence textile bosses, or that 10,000 workers marched down the streets of Lawrence carrying signs bearing that slogan. Some workers — members of an Italian immigrant anarchist organization — did indeed carry such signs during a parade of striking workers, but they made no claim to speak for our union or for the strikers as a whole. The IWW has always held that religious belief is a question best left to individual workers; the union as a whole has never taken a position either for or against any religion, though we have often had occasion to criticize the hypocrisy of some of those who claim adherence to lofty principles but then slaughter and rob their fellow humans here on earth.

Nor is it accurate to say that Rev. O'Reilly's declarations in support of the employers were "a critical turning point" in the strike. The fact is that the IWW won that strike despite Father O'Reilly's preaching, and maintained a strong presence in Lawrence for years to come.

Today's IWW continues to fight for the abolition of the wage system, even as we continue to organize our fellow workers at the point of production in the struggle both for better conditions here and now and for a better future, one in which workers will take charge of the means of production. Our ranks include workers who are deeply religious (one member of our General Executive Board is a minister on the side), deeply anti-religious, and some who don't care much one way or the other. All we ask is that they share our commitment to organizing the working class into One Big Union capable of, and committed to, putting an end to the misery this capitalist system imposes on so many of our fellow workers around the world.

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Joyce Caggiano Responds:

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to Mr. Bekken's concerns about my article in the most recent issue of "Religious Socialism". The first point I would like to make is that my article was not a criticism of the IWW. The

questions I intended to raise were two-fold. First, the religious community of Lawrence found itself, at the point of real crisis in Lawrence in 1912, unable to support the striking workers. The "no God, no master" banner was a reflection of what some might call a justified sentiment on the part of the Wobblies. Articles in both the *Lawrence Evening Tribune* and also the *Lawrence Sun* (October 1, 1912) bear a references to the "no god, no master" sign carried during the parade that took place during the time of the trial of the two Italian I.W.W. leaders, Arturo Giovannitti and Joseph Ettor.

The second point of my article was to emphasize the power of religious leadership in order to strengthen the courage of religious leaders to speak out against injustice in the labor market today. It was Philip S. Foner, labor historian, who wrote: "The Roman Catholic clergy, led by Father James T. O'Reilly, began an all-out drive to convince the foreign-born workers that the September 30th parade proved that the I.W.W. was opposed to all religion. The Citizens' Association of Lawrence called upon all citizens to unite against the 'atheistical, anarchistical' organization that stood for 'No God and No Country.' There is no question that these campaigns had an effect among many foreigners who had been the backbone of the I.W.W. and had already been alarmed by the events of September 30th." One year after the strike the I.W.W. membership had dwindled to 700 members. There is no way to measure the direct impact of Father O'Reilly; however, he himself organized a parade called the "God and Country" parade that continues annually to this day in Lawrence. In 1912 the numbers who marched in that Columbus Day parade far outnumbered the Wobblies. A huge banner hung across Essex Street that read, "For God and Country; Against the I.W.W.; Red Flags Never, Stars and Stripes Forever." I would be happy to provide a picture of that banner.

I am an Episcopal priest and very much involved and interested in promoting the interests of labor. Today I find myself on the extreme margins of my own religious community. My article was intended to encourage my colleagues in the ministry to lend their voice in support of those who labor, not to spurn the Wobblies as irreligious. ■

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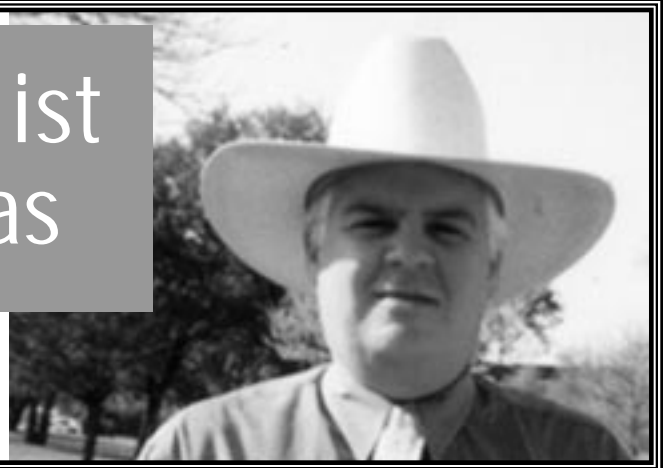
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A Religious Socialist Candidate in Texas

TOM WAKELY'S RED-GREEN CAMPAIGN IN TEXAS' 10TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT



In an election year where once again, the issue of the religious right has gained more attention than it is due, it's nice to know that at least somewhere, a religious leftist is on the hustings. The following statement was sent to us by the Tom Wakely campaign.

"The year 2000 marks a great spiritual milestone and offers an important civic challenge. For Christians, this year represents the coming of the Great Jubilee, marking the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. For U.S. citizens, this year brings the election of those who will lead our government into a new century and a new millennium." And so begins, the U.S. Catholic Bishops Statement - *Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium*, issued in September 1999.

Taking the Bishop's statements to heart, Thomas Wakely, former Chicago DSA organizer and long-time Religion & Socialism Commission member, decided to bring this vision into the political debate in Texas. He is an independent candidate for the Texas 10th Congressional District, endorsed by the Travis County Green Party. He is challenging incumbent Democrat Lloyd Doggett, an Al Gore democrat.

Wakely's political campaign themes are rooted in biblical orientations and reflections on ecumenical religious traditions. Traditions of thought and action. These traditions call all members of the faith community, rich and poor alike, Jew and Gentile, Muslim and Hindu, to work to eliminate the occurrence and effect of poverty, to speak out against injustice, and to shape a more caring society and a more peaceful world.

"The work for social justice is first and foremost a work of faith, a profoundly religious and spiritual task. It is the prophets who call us to this mission, not any political or ideological agenda." Wakely says.

The men and women who are part of the Greens 2000 campaign are called to bring the healing hand of God to those in need; they are the courageous voices of the

prophets to those in power; and they bring a message of love, justice, and peace to an often suffering world.

Some of the key themes that are addressed by the Greens 2000 Common Ground Political Campaign include: Economic concerns, the role of workers and owners, the rights to private property and its limitations; employment and unemployment; economic rights and initiative, debt and development; poverty and wealth; urban and rural concerns; the common good, political responsibility, and solidarity.

They are further defined as follows :

Link of Religious and Social Dimensions of Life

The social (the human construction of the world) is not secular in the sense of being outside of God's plan, but is intimately involved with the dynamic of the Reign of God. Therefore faith and justice are necessarily linked together.

Dignity of the Human Person

Made in the image of God, women and men have a preeminent place in the social order. Human dignity can be recognized and protected only in community with others. The fundamental question to ask about social development is: What is happening to people?

Option for the Poor

A preferential love should be shown to poor people, whose needs and rights are given special attention in God's eyes. "Poor" is understood to refer to the economically disadvantaged who, as a consequence of their status, suffer oppression and powerlessness.

Wakely's political campaign themes
are rooted in biblical orientations
and reflections on ecumenical
religious traditions.

Political and Economic Rights

All human persons enjoy inalienable rights, which are political/legal [e.g., vote, free speech, migration] and social/economic [e.g., food, shelter, work, education]. These are realized in community. Essential for the promotion of justice and solidarity, these rights are to be respected and protected by all the institutions of society.

Link of Love and Justice

Love of neighbor is an absolute demand for justice, because charity must manifest itself in actions and structures which respect human dignity, protect human rights, and facilitate human development. To promote justice is to transform structures which block love.

Promotion of the Common Good

The common good is the sum total of all those conditions of social living—economic, political, and cultural—which



The work for social justice is first and foremost a work of faith, a profoundly religious and spiritual task.

make it possible for women and men to readily and fully achieve the perfection of their humanity. Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good. There is also an international common good.

Subsidiarity

Responsibilities and decisions should be attended to as close as possible to the level of individual initiative in local communities and institutions. Mediating structures of families, neighborhoods, community groups, small businesses, and local governments should be fostered and participated in. But larger government structures do have a role when greater social coordination and regulation are necessary for the common good.

Political Participation

Democratic participation in decision-making is the best way to respect the dignity and liberty of people. The government is the instrument by which people cooperate together in order to achieve the common good. The international common good requires participation in international organizations.

Economic Justice

The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth are to be shared contemporary social questions. Labor takes precedence over both capital and technology in the production process. Just wages and the right of workers to organize are to be respected.

Stewardship

All property has a social mortgage. People are to respect and share the resources of the earth, since we are all part of the community of creation. By our work we are co-creators in the continuing development of the earth.

Global Solidarity

We belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the rights and development of all people across the world, irrespective of national boundaries. In particular, the rich nations have responsibilities toward the poor nations and the structures of the international order must reflect justice.

Promotion of Peace

Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among humans and among nations. The arms race must cease and progressive disarmament take place if the future is to be secure. In order to promote peace and the conditions of peace, and effective international authority is necessary.

"This year, the Jubilee Year, provides all of us, especially people of the word, with an unprecedented opportunity to put our faith into action," says Wakely. "We can no longer limit ourselves, in the political process to the choices offered to us by the Democrats and Republicans. It is a time to look beyond the boundaries and embrace both candidates and political parties that have consistent moral and ethical visions of justice and equality."

"However, we cannot escape the fact that the cards are stacked against us. Power does not give itself up easily, it will require us as members of DSA, to work together, to unite behind candidates working outside the two party system. Whether those candidates are challenging liberal democrats or conservative republicans, DSA needs to support them as an organization. We need to mobilize our resources, financial and intellectual, to support DSA members who are on the front lines, putting their reputations and families in the heat of the political spotlight." Wakely says. ▀



The Little Known Battles of Karl Barth

became the foremost twentieth century theologian. Yet, most American theologians and pastors incorrectly understand him as an orthodox, otherworldly, non-activist, transcendent recluse. But the facts during his long pastorate belie this Barthian interpretation. For during this ten year plus pastorate Karl Barth established the genesis of his controversial theological life filled with an activism fighting for social justice.

The controversies began before Barth completed his first year as pastor of the Safenwil church. He had been meeting with

and lecturing to the local workers association. Then on December 17, 1911 the first bombshell struck. The socialist newspaper printed his full lecture. On February 13, 1912 Walter Hussey, the owner of the woolen mill in a nearby town, responded in the establishment newspaper at length with a harsh critique of Barth. One week later Gustav Hussey, Walter's cousin, resigned as the President of the Safenwil church council. The battle lines were set but Barth did not retreat. He continued his support of the workers attempting to organize in the local factories. Tensions moved right into the church but Barth continued to pastor faithfully. By the end of his first year in Safenwil Karl Barth found himself in the dual role of worker advocate in the community and pastor of change in the congregation.

One response to the Barth/Hussey controversy was a statement Barth made from the pulpit six months later. Here are some of his words from the his a September 1912 sermon: "The pastor should speak the truth, but he should not say anything against the business man or against the manufacturer or against the teacher or against the trade unions or against sports clubs or above all against me! Believe me, I love you all equally." Barth appears to have lived by this rubric. Never did he preach against these parties. He kept up a reconciling ministry within the context of union advocacy. This policy of limiting pulpit confrontation enabled Barth to be a change agent in the church while still keep good relationships with the majority of the congregation.

A second response to Hussy was to study economics. Hussey's 1912 public statement had called upon Barth to express himself in public only about "matters which he has fully mastered." Barth evidently quietly took that critique to heart, for during the next year he concentrated all his research and study in the field of economics and unions. All his notes

RICHARD L. RIGHTER

Nelly, married to Karl Barth for only seven months, cared for the garden. When she tried to obtain manure from a local farmer, she finally canceled the order because of the high five franc delivery charges. This twenty year old woman then gladly agreed when the farmer volunteered to bring the manure to the garden himself. Upon delivery, Nelly gave him a small token of her appreciation. But the farmer then attacked her in the *Letters to the Editor* section of the local establishment paper in November 1913. After all, "Each worker is worth his wages," wrote the farmer. He criticized Nelly for not practicing the socialist ideals of her prominent husband "comrade pastor Karl Barth." The farmer was clearly accusing Nelly and Karl of hypocrisy.



The local Socialist paper editorialized against the farmer forgiving the young housewife for not understanding rural customs. Nelly Hoffman grew up in the city of Zurich and then Geneva where she met Karl during his one year pastoral assignment. They became engaged in May 1911 just before Karl accepted a call to a village church in Safenwil, Switzerland. They married in March 1913, after Karl had already become controversial. This attack of Nelly was not the first attack of the twenty-seven year old pastor, whose battles with local manufacturers and the establishment newspapers had begun two year earlier. Now the attacks were coming close to home!

The attacks continued to come for the next ten years because Karl Barth was an active socialist, an agent for change in the church and a committed labor advocate. Later, Karl Barth

have been published in a book. One can see from them that he gained a proficiency in these areas rivaling his theological knowledge. In fact, so expert did Barth become through these eleven years in the economic arena that he said he could have become a union organizer instead of accepting his Gottingen theological appointment. Barth did his homework in economics and on unions. It was crucial for Barth's effective and defensible ministry to labor.

In addition to his economic studies, Barth also actively involved himself with the Swiss Religious Socialists. These Swiss leaders, Leonhard Ragaz and Hermann Kutter, led the world religious socialist movement. But, eventually, they became more divided in their thinking. In addition, Barth found himself developing a position different from both of them. So he began to withdraw from the organization. But then he was asked to serve as the President as a compromise candidate. Barth accepted and served the year, but by 1916 he completely dissociated himself from the organization. He had joined the Swiss Social Democratic Party in 1915 and by 1916 had been elected a delegate to the national convention. 1915 was also an important year for Barth in other ways. One year into World War I, Barth found himself very discouraged with his institutional ties. The socialists in nearby Germany endorsed the war. Also most of his treasured German theological faculty members endorsed the German war effort. These were big jolts in his life. He turned for support from his good friend Eduard Thurneysen who led him to Christoph Blumhardt. Blumhardt had a message of Christian hope which meant much to Barth. He was shored up and carried on with his pastorate and his intensive support of the community workers association. By 1916 he started his study of Romans. Despite these experiences with socialism, Barth continued to reaffirm his socialist commitments but they were now non-ideological.

This period also included a new encounter with a church member and businessman, Fritz Hochuli. It started with a church-related problem, a "scandalous" wedding reception. Children from the confirmation had been invited. Some of them drank liquor to the point of intoxication. Barth was furious and his next sermon indirectly communicated that fury. Hochuli also was furious with Barth and called for his retraction of his personal criticism of him at a special church council meeting. Barth denied any direct critical statements and refused any retraction. Hochuli threatened a lawsuit. But it all cooled down. The Hochuli family had been responsible for the Safenwil church being established. So Barth took on

another powerful man. And again, he did not retreat. In fact, during the strike in 1917, he supported the knittery workers (all women) at Hochuli's factory. He even had a unsuccessful crisis meeting with Hochuli in regards to strike. He saw it similar to Moses meeting Pharaoh. Nevertheless, Hochuli stayed as a member of the church and Barth stayed as pastor! In fact, despite a strong minority vote, the congregation in June had just reelected Barth (189 to 85) for a second six year term. The congregation affirmed Barth's union advocacy and church leadership by reelecting him for another six year term

Despite all of this public and church tension with key leaders, Barth maintained his leadership in the community by supporting other projects less controversial. In fact, he was so prominent in the village that after the war he was appointed President of the Emergency Commission to assist people with food and clothing during the flu epidemic. The money to fund the commission came from the business leaders! Such an assignment shows how Barth's ministry successfully balanced his establishment community ministry with his strong support for change through his support of the union movement.

Along with the success of the union movement, the socialists were also gaining power in the town council. In the midst of this change, Barth continued to support these movements. Church leaders urged him to stop his controversial work and heal the church. But he continued and opposition continued under another Hussey's leadership (Arthur). Membership and attendance dropped. But not for long for Barth's trust by socialists resulted in more socialists attending church. Eventually socialists controlled the church council. Yes, change was

happening in the church which reflected the community change. The congregation kept up with the times.

The final straw that broke the back of this business-dominated church came in November 1918 with the nation-wide general strike. Although Barth did not publicly support the strike, he later marched to Zofingen, on May Day 1919, with the union and the socialists behind the red flag. That was enough for Hochuli. They had not stopped Barth. So Hochuli and his followers left the church and started a worshipping association. It was also during this year that Barth gained a much needed salary increase, despite civic opposition. He got it but with 99 dissenting votes in the civic vote. After this vote the Hochuli group left. But Barth continued as pastor for two

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"We Shan't Give Up!"

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Idi Amin. In recent years, however, the main problem for the Abayudaya has been the same problem that has plagued all of modern Africa: lack of adequate health care and social services in general, lack of education, and an inability to build a strong economy. While the responsibility for these difficulties does fall at the feet of Uganda's dictators, a larger part of the reason that Uganda has been unable to develop a stable democracy is due to the strangling policies of the IMF and World Bank, which have served to undermine both democracy and development throughout the Third World.

Nevertheless, the Abayudaya struggle onward, and one of the ways that they are sustained in that struggle is through their music. In 1995, the Jewish organization Kulanu ("all of us"), which works to locate and make contact with both lost groups of the Diaspora as well as "new" Jewish groups like the Abayudaya, went to Uganda to meet the congregation. Among other things, they discovered that this special community had crafted an approach to Jewish liturgical music that was not only distinctly African, but also a wonderful addition to the variety of different melodies which comprise Jewish services.

One of the running jokes about traditional Jewish music is summed up by the often heard expression among klezmer musicians, "I can play anything you like, so long as it's in D minor." Jewish music is notorious for its attachment to the sad minor keys which in some ways reflect the historical suffering of the Jewish people. The striking difference with the music of the Kohavim Tikvah Choir of the Abayudaya is that with the notable exception of Hatikvah ("The Hope"), there are no minor keys to be found.

Of the 16 selections on the CD, there are both traditional prayers and songs unique to the Abayudaya. The melodies are all in joyous major keys, sung by children and adults alike, in a strictly African style. With the prayers, the result is transforming in a way that has to be heard in order to be fully appreciated. Those familiar with traditional melodies for the *Sh'ma* and *Hinei Ma Tov* will not believe their ears as they hear the joy of the words actually matched by a joyous, happy melody which celebrates the Jewish faith in the midst of their own struggle to continue.

The voices are in places imperfect, the instrumentation simple, and some of the songs are more repetitive than the Western ear has become accustomed to. But that only serves

to make the offering more human, more genuine, because it is truly from the soul.

Of their own compositions, two stand out. Their "motto song" — "We Shan't Give Up" — is the kind of song that could have been sung by civil rights activists in the 1960s. With its simple lyrics, it can be sung by religious socialists today, inserting "the people" or our own groups where the Abayudaya are mentioned:

*We shan't give up
However few we shall be, never never shall we
We the members of Abayudaya
We have the hope to prosper...
Every day, every night...
We shall never give up
The Lord is my shepherd...
Come on, come on join the struggle
The struggle continues...*

The Abayudaya
now number
about 500 in
villages near the
eastern Ugandan
city of Mbale.



The other song, "Mirembe Mirembe" (Peace, Peace), is equally simple, and is both a call of friendship from the Abayudaya to the world around them, as well as a call for peace among all people.

Most of the history of religious interaction between the Third World and the industrialized nations has been a one way relationship, with either Europeans or Americans bringing their ideas to Africa, Latin America, or Asia (regardless of whether or not the beneficiaries of these ideas wanted them). Even with the Abayudaya, it's still the result of an outside idea coming in, but the way that this people has taken that idea and found their own way with it is inspiring. What is even more inspiring is that in my home, we have begun to use the melodies of the Abayudaya in our own services. I like to think of that as one instance where the direction of ideas has been reversed. This time, the Abayudaya have truly given something wonderful to us. ▀

Deborah Klein is a disability rights activist in Alexandria, Virginia. "Shalom Everybody Everywhere" is \$15, and can be purchased or ordered at most larger record shops.

outside the box

TALKING TO SOMEONE WHO IS "NOT ONE OF US" ABOUT OUR POLITICS

One of the most frequent complaints heard among democratic socialists is that we spend most of our time talking to ourselves, and very little time talking to "the people" we actually claim to represent. The following article is an attempt to change that, and if our readers find it interesting, we might just consider making it a semi-regular feature.

In this case, RS editor Andrew Hammer sat down with Linnea Rawls, a college student who is working in child care to put herself through school, to ask her about her views on the way the world is run...

What does politics mean to you?

If I just thought of the word politics, I would think of the way that our government is run, and the choices we're able to make in how things are run... or maybe the choices we're not allowed to make...

Do you feel that you have any alternatives available to you in the political system, any one candidate or group that speaks to your concerns, your issues, your experience?

Yes and no... I mean, I'm a registered Democrat, but when you look at the candidates it's pretty depressing... I consider myself a liberal, and I've become even more liberal since coming to college, but I don't really find that I agree with anyone out there on everything. And then as a woman, I see that we're stuck again with only men as presidential candidates. You would have thought by now that we would have had a woman on the ticket, as much as people talk the talk about including women and needing our vote and such. So I guess that while I'm probably going to vote for Gore, at the same time, I don't really feel that there are any real alternatives that speak to me where I'm coming from.

What do you think needs to be done to improve society... specifically, if you had this nation to change tomorrow, what would you do and why?

Wow... there are so many issues right now that need to be resolved... I think that education is a big one, because it affects how everything turns out down the road, in the long run. I think that our educational priorities are all wrong, because, for just one example, you hear all this stuff about people being in debt these days, but no one I know was ever taught anything about money management, or credit, or anything like that. Now they want to say that "all these college students are a bad credit risk," but I don't think you can blame people who are in debt because they got trapped into a system that they were never educated about. I'm not

in debt myself, but I know so many people who are, and who are going to be for years.

Does your faith have an effect on your political views?

Oh, I think it has. I think religion has a huge effect on your politics, because you start thinking about people who are in need and worse off than you, and you think about what we're supposed to do to help them. You think about how God wants you to act towards others, about those less fortunate, and that definitely has a part in shaping how you feel about things like welfare and [social] programs and such.

So do you think God is a leftist?

Well, I don't know about it that way, but I think that God doesn't want us to be living the way we're living — doesn't want people to go hungry or without a place to live. That's where I think you start thinking about what you have to do... what you should do as a believer in whatever religion you have, to do right by God's commandments.

If I raise the word socialism with you, what comes to your mind?

Well when I think about it, it's still associated with democracy, right? I'm not exactly sure how effective it would be in this country, but I'm open to it.

Were you ever educated about socialism in Western European countries like Sweden or Holland?

Not really... I take a lot of international affairs classes, but what's funny is that no one has ever gone into the systems of other countries. The only thing anyone ever hears about those countries is that they have high taxes, and that tends to scare people in America off, because no one really explains what those taxes are for. I mean, I know that they pay for

you can't really say that most people are supporters of this system, because our system is really the only one they know about

The Social Contract and the Kingdom of God

THE COMPATIBILITY OF BASIC SOCIAL CONCEPTIONS WITH THE KINGDOM OF GOD

URS EIGENMANN

1. Society on the brink of reconstruction

The globalization of the economy, with a tendency to universal and complete domination by neoliberal, deregulated market forces in the service of the accumulation of capital, has led to such economic, socio-political and cultural-ideological changes, that the national consensus appears to be endangered and the debate about a new social contract has been initiated. Against this background, criteria for a new social contract must be sought; they must be oriented on that vision which is associated with the kingdom of God and his justice, the vision of a fulfilled life for all human beings. Starting from the central position, wealth of substance, complex structure and differentiated hermeneutics of the kingdom of God, thematic elements of a compatibility-test between basic social conceptions and the kingdom of God will here be formulated.

2. The kingdom of God and his justice for the earth

2.1. Central status

According to the testimony of the Synoptic Gospels, the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) was Jesus' primary concern. At the beginning of his public life he said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1,14f.)! In the Sermon on the Mount he exhorted his disciples: "But seek first his (God's, U.E.) kingdom and his justice, and all these things shall be yours as well." (Mt 6,33). The central prayer in the Our Father is: "Your kingdom come" (Lk 11,2). The kingdom of God was likened by Jesus to a hidden treasure (cf. Mt 13,44) and a pearl of great price (cf. Mt 13,45). The kingdom of God (or heaven) is therefore not just one of many subjects and not just a locally restricted factor, but a universally deciding one. Leonhard Ragaz put it this way: "The Bible has only one content from the beginning to the end: the proclamation of the living God and of the kingdom and his justice for the earth."

2.2. Wealth of substance

The kingdom of God comprises a great wealth of substance. In the course of history it has, over long stretches of time, been curtailed through individualistic privatization, supposedly apolitical spiritualization and ideological emphasis on the hereafter, or it has been misused for the establishment of claims to political or ecclesiastical supremacy, respectively for the justification of revolutionary violence.

Option for the disadvantaged

At the beginning of his public life, in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus' primary concerns are summarized programmatically when he applies to himself the words which he has read from the book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Lk 4,18f.). Jesus was therefore putting himself on the side of the poor, of prisoners and the blind and was not an accomplice of the rich, the mighty and the religious or ideological leaders. The works of Jesus, his preaching and his understanding of the kingdom of God will now be more closely specified with regard to the aforementioned social sectors (the economy, politics and culture/religion/ideology), in an exemplary manner and with no claim to entirety.

Economic

The preferred recipients of the kingdom of God are the poor (cf. Mt 9,10f. par.), whereas the rich remain excluded from it (cf. Mt 19,23f. par.). These poor are not simply needy but poverty-stricken, members of the lowest class of society. Among other ways, Jesus lived his solidarity with the poor in his variously witnessed practice of calling for the sharing of bread and fish, in order that all should be satisfied (cf. Mt 14,13-21 par.). He did not seek to organize the distribution of essential goods by means of money, but to achieve it through sharing (cf. Mk 6,36f. par.). In the parables of the rich farmer, the ravens, and the lilies (cf. Lk 12,16-31), Jesus pleads against an economy of enrichment and for an economy of justice, which orients itself on God's universal care for a life of dignity for all creatures and which is bound up with the striving for the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 12,31).

Political

In seeking the company of the despised tax collectors and sinners at table (cf. Mt 9,10f. par.), Jesus broke through social barriers. He told the high priests and the elders of the people that tax collectors and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them (cf. Mt 21,31). The pharisees (and some scribes) reproached him for eating with tax collectors and sinners, and called him a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners (cf. Lk 7,34 par.), and his relations declared him to be out of his wits (cf. Mk 3,21). The kingdom of God held for Jesus a critical view of the family: "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mk 3,33-35 par.). For him, children have

access to the kingdom of God (cf. Mk 10,13-16), and with women he was above social restrictions (cf. Jn 4,1-26). Often he overcame the social isolation of the sick, lepers and those who were possessed, even on the sabbath day (cf. Mk 1,30f.40-44 par.).

Cultural / religious / ideological

In his contact with lepers, Jesus broke through the bounds drawn between clean and unclean (cf. Lk 17,11-19). He explicitly established a connection between delivery from demons, and the kingdom of God: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12,28 par.). Jesus' battle with the religious leaders was, in the end, a battle for God and about which practice is connected with faith in which god. In the story of the healing of the paralytic (cf. Mk 2,1-12) the God of the scribes, who sanctioned the conditions of the time, and the God of Jesus, who healed and delivered, are irreconcilable with each other.

Jesus was not only available to individuals who were on the fringes of society, but he also attacked the very circumstances which led to economic disadvantage...

Fundamental criticism of the system

Of the utmost importance for Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God is his criticism of unjust social structures. He was not only available to individuals who were on the fringes of society, but he also attacked the very circumstances which led to economic disadvantage, political domination and cultural/religious/ideological regimentation. This is demonstrated by his attack on the temple as the economic, political and religious centre of Palestinian society (cf. Mk 11,15-19 par.; Jn 2,13-16). By driving out the buyers and the traders, Jesus put a stop to the business of the licensed temple merchants; by overturning the tables of the money-lenders, he prevented the further exploitation of the people, who were then not able to borrow the necessary money for the temple tax at a fixed rate from the temple bank; by driving out the pigeon dealers, he prevented the poor from bringing sacrifice; ultimately, Jesus deprived the temple of divine - and therefore of any - legitimation, when he declared that the temple was no longer a house of prayer, but a den of robbers (cf. Mk 11,17).

The universal feast as a subversive metaphor for the kingdom of God

Probably the richest metaphor for the kingdom of God is that of the wedding feast (cf. Mt 22,1-10) or banquet (cf. Lk 14,15-24). This illustrates what Jesus thought; that he understood the kingdom of God as a reversal of the social order, because the

first shall be last and the last first (cf. Lk 13,29 par.). It is the essence of a feast that everyone has enough to eat and drink. It is important at a feast that there is room for everyone and nobody is excluded. And finally, a feast that is more than a mere respite from the drabness of everyday life is the celebration of a good life for all mankind. This would be according to the mind of Jesus, who came that all may have life, and have it abundantly (cf. Jn 10,10). The parables of the wedding feast, respectively of the banquet, can "...serve to ground all of those aphorisms, dialogues, and parables [of Jesus, U.E.] concerning the Kingdom of God". (J.D. Crossan, *Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography*) The guests whom the host causes to be called are, according to Luke, "the poor and maimed and blind and lame", together with others from the country roads (Lk 14,21-23) and according to Matthew "bad and good" (Mt 22,10) in that order: bad and good. "But if one actually brought in *anyone off the street*, one could, in such a situation, have classes, sexes, and ranks all mixed up together. Anyone could be reclining next to anyone else, female next to male, free next to slave, socially high next to socially low, and ritually pure next to ritually impure. And a short detour through the cross-cultural anthropology of food and eating underlines what a social nightmare that would be." In the cross-cultural anthropology this type of company at table is known as "open commensality" an open commensality, an eating together, without using table as a miniature map of society's vertical discriminations and lateral separations. The social challenge of such equal or egalitarian commensality is the parable's most fundamental danger and most radical threat ... The Kingdom of God as a process of open commensality ... clashes fundamentally with honor and shame, those basic values of ancient Mediterranean culture and society." (Crossan)

2.3. Complex structure

The kingdom of God has a complex structure and comprises at least five areas of tension, the poles of which neither simply exist side by side nor stand dualistically opposite to each other, but are dialectically co-ordinated and must both be radically emphasized.

Gift of God and obligation

The kingdom of God is a radical gift of God, which however just as radically puts the faithful under an obligation. It is "... according to the bible, entirely *God's* work inasmuch as it *comes* entirely from *Him*, inasmuch as man could never ever *create* it, with all his art and all his might, inasmuch as he could never add a nail to its completion, as he could at most build Babylonian towers, if it did not come from God. That is one half of the truth ... but the other is: The kingdom of God would never come, if *man* did not accept it and put himself at its disposal." (Ragaz) The kingdom of God as God's gift calls to the imitation of Christ, whereas it frees man from the compulsion to create the totum and ultimum of history by himself.

Not of this world, but in it and for it

For Jesus, his kingdom is not of this world (cf. Jn 18,36). It is neither the religious transfiguration of the world, nor completely separated from it. In his healing and liberating

cont'd on next page

work, Jesus clearly showed that the kingdom of God must take shape in the world and work through it as does the leaven in the flour, or grow through everything like the mustard plant. The central prayer in the Our Father is: Your kingdom come. "His kingdom must come: to us, on earth, neither must we go to his kingdom in a far-off *hereafter*, nor will it not be until the 'Last Judgement' after the 'resurrection of the dead', but here and now. His will should be done on earth, not in Heaven, where it is already done, but it should be followed so perfectly on earth as in heaven. Earth must not be drawn up into heaven, but heaven must come down to the earth." (Ragaz) The kingdom of God is certainly not of this world, but His righteousness is valid for this world and must take shape in it.

Existentially personal and politically structural

In Jesus' life, the kingdom of God was doubtlessly his commitment to individual sick people, to people who were materially disadvantaged, socially discriminated, possessed by demons or religiously despised. At the same time, however, he criticized the social circumstances and attacked their representatives, which created and/or sanctioned the structures which led to the marring of human life. The kingdom of God comprises both the existentially personal level, in that it calls for personal conversion and solidarity with the disadvantaged, and the politically structural level, in that it requires action towards conditions which serve the complete development of all men and women. Neither a reductionist care for the individual alone, nor a concern only for theoretical structures, is according to the idea of the kingdom of God. What rather accords with it is a critical analysis and liberating formation of the logical relationship between individual and society, between subject and structure.

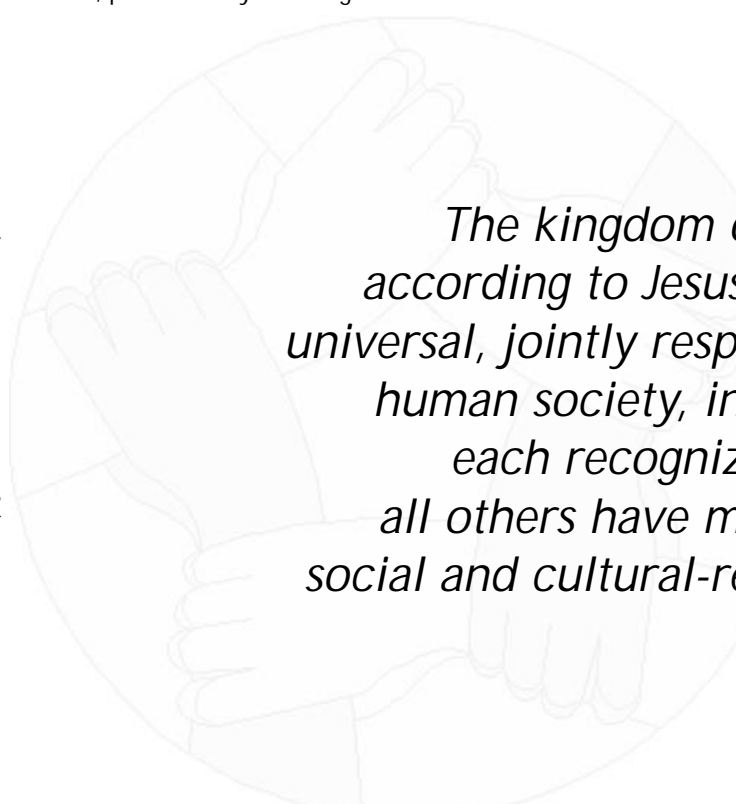
Celebrated symbolically and testified practically

Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God in parables, but he also testified to it practically in his life. As long as we are on our way to the promised completion of the kingdom of God, this kingdom, which has already come in Jesus, must be brought to mind in religious speech and liturgical celebration, or its completion must be symbolically anticipated. Religious speech and liturgical celebration should give guidance and courage to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The kingdom of God has a religious, spiritual dimension and stands for an inner stance in the spirit of Jesus. This is genuine in so far as it is bound up with a personal, pastoral and political practice of the faith in the imitation of Christ.

Dawning in the present and promised for the future

The kingdom of God is already dawning and come near in Jesus himself. It is universally present, fragmentally, wherever people act in the spirit of Jesus; for as you did to the least of

these, you did it to me (cf. Mt 25,40). The completion of the kingdom of God, however, as a promised act of God, has still to come. It is necessary to adhere to both these aspects at the same time; to the fact that the kingdom of God is present now in fragments, and to the fact that it is the eschatologically utopian horizon of all our efforts. It is in the nature of this horizon, however, that it basically cannot ever be reached. If something cannot ever be reached, we are infinitely far away from it. If we are infinitely far away from something, we are always equally far away, i.e. infinitely far away. The difference between present conditions and the kingdom of God is therefore not a quantitative one, which can be reduced step by step and eventually removed. It is rather a qualitative difference. Therefore the question is not quantitative, how near or far we are from the kingdom of God. The question is qualitative, whether our social structures and customs are basically compatible with the kingdom of God or not. The kingdom of God is not a static future Utopia which, striven for



*The kingdom of God,
according to Jesus, is the
universal, jointly responsible
human society, in which
each recognizes that
all others have material,
social and cultural-religious
needs.*

in infinite progress, could at last be fully realized. It is not an aim which is attainable through the realization of a historical project (free market system, planned economy etc.). The identification of the kingdom of God with a historical project is an utopian Anti-Utopia. There is no historical deed or action of which one may say that the kingdom of God was present in it. If this is nevertheless stated, it leads to a triumphalist mystification of earthly conditions, where the eschatological aspect is negated and the existing situation is declared sacral.

2.4. Differentiated hermeneutics

In order to avoid a fundamentalist, truncated reference to the kingdom of God, a differentiated understanding of its status and its contents is necessary. For this, the "alternative" model of the correspondence of relationships, such as Clodovis Boff suggested, is helpful. According to this model, the biblical text and our situation do not directly correspond, but it is rather so

that the biblical texts with regard to their historical context are on the one side, and our answer and practice with regard to our context, analogous to the relationship between the biblical texts and their context, are on the other side. There is, therefore, a correspondence of relations: Scripture / its context = we (our practice and answer) / our context. In this sense "... one may not expect formulas to 'copy' or techniques to 'utilize' from Holy Scripture. What it can offer us are guidance, models, types, guiding rules, principles, inspiration, in short, elements with the help of which we can acquire for ourselves an 'hermeneutic competence', because they make it possible for us to judge for ourselves 'according to the mind of Christ' or 'in harmony with the Holy Spirit' the new and unforeseen situations with which we are constantly confronted today. The christian Scriptures do not give us a *what*, but a *how*: a way, a style, a spirit." (Boff, *Theology and Praxis*)

This means that, in order to understand the kingdom of God, our practice with regard to the kingdom of God must be realized in analogy to that practice which Jesus testified in the context of the social structures of Palestine. The content of the kingdom of God is therefore not ultimately fixed. This is so, for example, for the ecological problematic, which was not as virulent then as in our times. It is also so for the assessment of the situation of women, for which there are only criteria for a liberating practice on the fringes of scripture and not centrally.

3. Elements of a Compatibility-test between basic social conceptions and the kingdom of God

3.1. Option for life

The most fundamental contrast of all is that between life and death. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of life. Jesus testified to it as liberation from all that harms or destroys life, and preached it as the vision of true, whole and fulfilled life before death for every human being on earth. It is therefore his will that all may have life, and have it abundantly (cf. Jn 10,10). The kingdom of God is unalterably bound to the option for life. This option includes nature, because human life is only possible in a society in which nature also has its place. The option for life means, in the sense of the parable of the Last Judgement (cf. Mt 25, 334-40), just that elemental love which would procure for all mankind the material goods, human affection and cultural-religious interpretation of life which they need for a life of dignity and fulfillment. This criterion, of supplying the basic needs of all, is universally valid and is absolute. It carries the implication of the universal disposition of all goods. Thus the right to private possessions is so subordinate to the right to life that there is no right to private possessions, as long as even one human being is suffering or dying because he or she is denied satisfaction of the most basic human needs.

A society is inasmuch compatible with the kingdom of God as it is guided by the option for life in wholeness and dignity for all mankind.

3.2. A society and world in which all have a place

The option for life in its entirety corresponds with the conception of a society and world in which all have a place and nobody is excluded. This accords with Jesus' vision in

which he likened the kingdom of God to a banquet, to which all are invited in the sense of open commensality and at which all barriers are removed. The kingdom of God, according to Jesus, is the universal, jointly responsible human society, in which each recognizes that all others have material, social and cultural-religious needs. A concept such as this represents "... a universal criterion for the weighting-up of social principles which claim general validity. This universal criterion does not carry with it the assurance of knowing which is the best form of life for all men and women. Irrespective of what their ideas of a good life are, they are still subject to the criterion that a good life for one may not make it impossible for another to live". (F.J. Hinkelammert)

A society is inasmuch compatible with the kingdom of God as it binds itself to the project that all have their place and nobody is excluded.

3.3. Equal rights for women

Women are economically, politically and culturally disadvantaged in several respects. Over the whole world, men control 90% of the income and 99% of the assets, both measured in money. Compared with men, women's earnings are lower. Some women are therefore poor although they are in full employment (working poor). Because of their precarious work situation, women are more likely to lose their jobs, and to slide into poverty. In addition, their reproductive work in the family and their contribution to the welfare of society through social and cultural services is hardly, if at all, remunerated.

A society is inasmuch compatible with the kingdom of God as in it women are neither economically, politically nor culturally disadvantaged, but enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men.

3.4. No utopianization of universal social principles

The project of a society and world in which all have their place comprises the abandonment of universal social principles, such as an anti-utopian utopianization of the free market or of an historical socialism, because "the exclusion of members of society ... (is) in the nature of universal social principles, inasmuch as they totalized". (Hinkelammert) This abandonment results from the productive-critical eschatological reserve which must be kept towards all historical phenomena; because the kingdom of God is the qualitative eschatological-utopian horizon at the end of time, such reserve refuses to proclaim the completion of history before the fullness of time, promised as God's work, and so to sanction the current social conditions.

A society is inasmuch compatible with the kingdom of God as it does not identify its own historical project in an idolatory manner with the Whole (the totum) and the Last (the ultimum).

3.5. Primacy of politics over the appeal to the force of circumstances

In consideration of the ecologically and socially destructive results of neoliberal deregulation in the name of an utopian total market, a society must once again be prepared to accept responsibility for the dominant social conditions and the

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Social Contract

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customs which are connected with them. They are not based on nature but the result of historical development. Therefore the responsibility must not be delegated, in an idolatrous act of perverse lack of responsibility, to the ostensibly infinitely wise market mechanisms. Instead of the primacy of economics over politics, there must be a primacy of politics over economics.

A society is inasmuch compatible with the kingdom of God as it is prepared to establish its conditions and customs responsibly, instead of irresponsibly putting itself at the mercy of the supposedly immutable force of circumstances.

3.6. Associative-symmetrical system dynamics versus the 'two-thirds- society'

The impending "two-thirds-society" is the product of a neoliberal policy of deregulation, which is a tendency of every aspect of society, in the service of maximization of that anonymous magnitude, capital. In opposition to inclusion-exclusion dynamics, a policy of re-regulation should be pursued, directed to the welfare of the weak, aiming at their integration and reversing the present distribution of income and wealth from bottom to top. The economic, legal and cultural aspects of social system dynamics should make a point of joining people together associatively, instead of separating them dissociatively. They should promote egalitarian-symmetrical conditions, instead of unequal-asymmetrical ones. They should so prevent individuals or population groups from being economically left out, socially excluded and culturally ostracized.

Barth

cont'd from page 7

more years until Fall 1921. In 1918 and 1920-1921 he spent many hours writing his 1st and 2nd editions of his commentary on Romans. He treasured those years as pastor and did not want to leave. He always considered himself a pastor in his following professorial years.

These ten years as a model pastor were years that set the direction for his lifetime vocation in theology. Barth, despite the lack of a Ph. D., left the pastorate for academia and the development of his new theology. After his first seven years in academia, he also continued along the same activist way of life. However, religious socialist John Cort sees Barth differently — as one who proclaimed "a gospel of helplessness," "sanctified utilitarianism," "discouraging ambiguities," and "intolerable otherworldliness." (*Christian Socialism*, 1988, p. 209-211). Cort followed the "wholly other" Barthian interpretation highly influenced by T. F. Torrance. Cort also appears to follow the over forty year interpretation of Barth as experiencing a second turn in 1930 to neo-orthodoxy. Bruce McCormack (*Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectic Theology*, 1995) challenges that interpretation and claims that Barth always maintained his dialectic theology. In the United States, Barth has also been interpreted negatively by Reinhold Niebuhr, especially for his

A society is inasmuch compatible with the kingdom of God as it does not submit to a social inclusion-exclusion logic, but regulates the dynamics of social conditions and customs in such a way that all have their place and nobody is excluded.

3.7. Meaningful work, guaranteed minimum income for all
Productive and reproductive work are both objectively socially necessary, and subjectively of great importance for the individual. Therefore everyone should have a right to meaningful work. In order that this can be possible, in view of declining employment and a tendential increase in reproductive work, the traditional partition of socially necessary work in remunerated productive work and unpaid or badly paid reproductive and caring work must be removed, and completely new time models must be developed. Those who, for physical or psychic reasons, can do little or no work have the right to a minimum income, in the sense of the social-ethical materialization of the religious word of justification through faith, according to which no-one must justify his or her existence through performance. The minimum income must be so arranged and adjusted that it allows a large measure of social participation and a life of dignity, and does not simply ensure a fringe existence on a financial minimum.

A society is inasmuch compatible with the kingdom of God as it provides meaningful work for all, respectively guarantees all a minimum income which allows a life of dignity. ▀

Urs Eigenmann is a member of the Swiss Religious Socialist Movement. This article was translated by Jean Drummond-Young.

failure to join the US crusade against communism. But Reinhold Niebuhr (*Christian Century*, 12/31/69, p. 1663) also changed his evaluation of Barth to "consistently anticommunist." He admitted that "I misjudged Karl Barth." More recently, George Hunsinger has opened up new interpretations of Barth with his book, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (1991). Now that Hunsinger is heading the new Princeton Center for Barth Studies to join McCormack, we will be encouraged to take another look at Karl Barth. This writer concurs with McCormack and Hunsinger. Karl Barth did center his life's work dialectically on God *and* the world.

Even if we are not personally as orthodox as Barth, it is important to claim him for our socialist movement. Not only a socialist, Barth was a union advocate and a model pastor. We need to cherish Barth's life of action (if not his theology) before the Barth-embracing conservatives corrupt him as the liberals did and postliberals may. Then the world's premier 20th Century theologian/pastor will continue to be lost to religious socialism. ▀

Richard L. Righter is a PhD in Economics and Biblical Studies and has served two urban, social justice oriented pastorates in the Presbyterian/UCC church for 36 years.

DSA Convention Elects Two Commission Members to NPC

At the DSA National Convention in San Diego last November, two members of the Religion & Socialism Commission were elected to the National Political Committee of DSA (NPC). The NPC is DSA's highest decision making body between conventions. Juanita Webster, the Commission's Vice-Chair and incumbent member of the NPC, was re-elected to the committee, and Andrew Hammer, a member of the Commission's Executive Committee, was also elected.

The focus of the convention was rebuilding our organization, and in doing so a strong focus was placed on strengthening DSA locals. The four-day gathering also offered members an opportunity to meet DSA's new National Director Horace Small. The keynote address was delivered by independent socialist Congressman Bernie Sanders of Vermont, and Bernie's comments can be viewed in their entirety on the DSA web site — <http://www.dsausa.org>

Letters

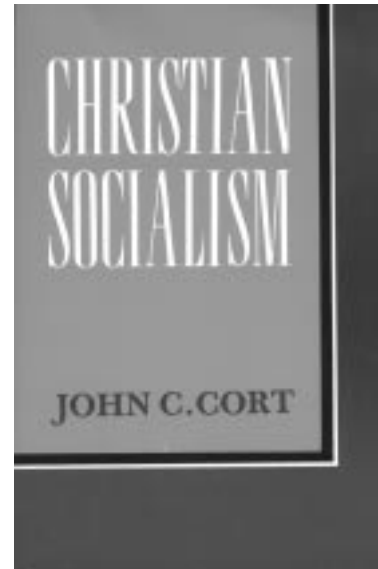
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[Andrew Hammer] wrote a good article in the Fall 1999 issue of Religious Socialism. Unfortunately, [he] ruined it by attacking my race and gender — "white, male." What is wrong with being white and male? Should we dye our skins black and have sex change operations to be good socialists?

Why can't we stick with "affluent" — a legitimate word for opposition and criticism — a "class struggle" word, instead of driving white males over to Pat Buchanan?

Sad and resentful,
Perry Cartwright
Woodridge, IL

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Outside the Box

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things like health care and child care and such, but you're never taught about that. I think that one of the problems is that there are many people who probably would go along with paying higher taxes, if they could only see them going to things that actually help everybody. But you can't really say that most people are supporters of this system, because our system is really the only one they know about.

Have you ever joined or thought about joining a political organization? Why or why not?

I joined Young Democrats when I first came to college, mainly because they had a table and it was the first year I could vote, so I just joined them. I've never really done anything with them, but I don't see that they really do anything much anyway. If you're going to join an organization, they should really be doing something that makes a difference. I don't think that most people get involved with any groups because maybe they feel that they have no way to make a difference. And then like we were talking about earlier with education, I'm not sure that most people know *how* to go about making a difference.

How important are identity politics to you? Do you think that race, gender, and sexual orientation have a greater impact on how society is shaped than class?

I think that they're all important... it's hard to separate them because each thing is part of the other. If you're talking about class, I mean, it's pretty obvious that the upper class makes the rules. The system favors them, and all politics in this country is geared to the middle class and above. If you're below middle class, your views don't matter and there's no way for you to get access to the system. The problem with that is that it's not people's fault if they're poor or under-educated.

If you want to talk about race, and gender, well there is racism almost anywhere you look, and sexism too. But see, what is racism about but keeping one group of people less advantaged than another for your own purposes?... so that gets back to class, I guess. And the same thing when it comes to women in the workplace, and how we are treated. Where I work I don't have that problem, because I'm working with women, but everyone knows that women get paid less than men, and that there's still a problem with sexual harassment.

Do you think that if we dealt with class, that it would automatically improve race and gender relations?

For the most part, yes, because money is power, right? So it would be harder to keep certain people down if you couldn't use money to control them. But then people still have attitudes and prejudices; even an African-American in a three-piece suit has a harder time getting a cab than a poor white man. That's not about money. ▀



Religious Socialism

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