



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 2001

### *Inside...*

2...Editor's Notes

6...Religious Socialism in Holland

8...Al-Fatiha Seeks To Open Doors to Gay and Lesbian Muslims

10...Christian Socialism for a New Millennium

12...ILRS Congress Meets in Budapest

# Religious Socialism

THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM

## What Does It Mean To Be a Zionist Today?

Before last September, few people in Israel would have ever said that Ariel Sharon could become Prime Minister. Not that the job is all that rewarding; Ehud Barak's triumphant victory over Binyamin Netanyahu quickly became anything but pleasant as he settled into the difficult balancing act we call the Peace Process. But the disturbing events of the past few months have not only put the right-wing Sharon in the Prime Minister's seat by the biggest margin in Israel's history, they have again put some basic questions on the table for Jews. In a way unique among the world's religions, Judaism, which was the faith of Jesus, and which inspired the birth of Islam, throughout the centuries also became a cultural-ethnic identity when the rest of the world made it violently clear that whomever they were and whatever they believed, Jews were not wanted by a majority who believed otherwise. Thus began Zionism, the idea that Jews could only live in peace and safety if they had their own homeland. Ideally that peaceful homeland was to be made in the same original land of Canaan, which the world had since come to know as Palestine. Needless to say, the state of Israel has not enjoyed any more peace from her neighbors, and that brings us back to the questions.

RS editor Andrew Hammer went to the future of the Zionist movement, the socialist Zionist youth organization *Habonim Dror*, to ask some of those questions, and got some interesting answers from their General Secretary, Jamie Levin. It's clear that being a Zionist today still means insuring security for the Jewish people to live in autonomy without being oppressed. But a broader and more incendiary question, such as "What does Zionism mean, or indeed what does it mean to be a Jew, if one does not believe in the Jewish faith, in the living G-d of Abraham?", is not asked in the following interview. Instead, we invite our readers to comment heartily on that one.

***"no progressive Zionist wants to continue an occupation..."***

*I'm sure you encounter quite often the question of why, in an increasingly secular and multicultural civil society, there is a need for a Zionist movement at all?*

I think fundamentally Zionism is about a Jewish national liberation movement, and I think that even though there's a state today, it's still important to look at that state critically to foster a love of it. It's become a focal point for the

*cont'd on page 4*

editor's notes

Well, here we are. After an election that laid bare nearly every possible flaw in the American electoral system, and threw in some ugly realizations that the nation has not come as far from pre-1965 polling practices as we might like to think, we have come under the shady rule of George W. Bush.

Among our own ranks, we are still divided – between those who chose Gore and those who chose Nader, as well as between the justifications that went with those choices. But there can be no division on the fact that we now have a clear common enemy, in the White House, in the Congress, and shamelessly in the Supreme Court. With the Right in charge of every branch of the government, we on the Left must undergo a period of rethinking which moves beyond our two electoral choices of the 2000 poll. We are in need of a new political strategy that goes beyond the rather reductionist question of whether socialists should or should not work within the Democratic Party, to address what kind of politics is even open to us in a new American political climate where that clearly insufficient party is itself in danger of becoming “the permanent opposition.”

However, that’s a larger discussion for another day. The order of the day for religious socialists is to respond to the President-Select’s proposal for “faith-based initiatives,” which would provide government funds to religious institutions to do some of the things that governments are supposed to do for people in need.

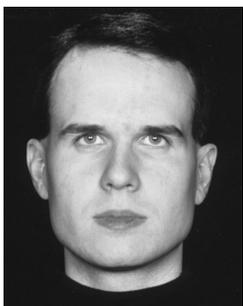
Some irony is inevitable here. At the beginning of the 21st century, the leader of the world's most powerful nation, selected by a privileged elite, proposes a modified form of charity as the method by which we should address the needs of the poor and oppressed. So far, on these points, 21st century America would appear to be politically indistinguishable from early 19th century Britain.

But with that irony comes another remembrance of things past, of people of faith who in that Dickensian era came together, called by the teachings, not merely the trappings of religion, to call for an end to the poorhouses and the orphanages. Perhaps it is too much to ask our intellectually challenged President to know the history of the religious socialist movement. But then it becomes all the more necessary for us to remind him through our actions that our movement of religious radicals has its origins in, and actually rose up in indignation as a result of, the flawed “faith-based initiatives” of another visionless time.

The use of religion as a *quid pro quo* for food, shelter, or other services is an insult not only to people of faith, religious institutions, and those people who are in need of such basic provisions, but also to any society that would so egregiously abdicate its social responsibility to its citizens. For religious socialists, faith must be a choice, not a bribe. The “initiative” required is not a return to charity, but rather that the son of a Bush who occupies the White House take some initiative to address the long standing matters of systemic economic injustice that plague this nation. But I’m afraid I don’t have much faith in that.

— Andrew Hammer

the editors



Andrew Hammer  
Winter Issue



Maxine Phillips  
Spring Issue



Alex Mikulich  
Summer Issue



Norm Faramelli  
Fall Issue



Religious Socialism  
1 Maolis Rd  
Nahant, MA  
01908  
religioussocialism@socialist.org  
[www.dsusa.org/rs](http://www.dsusa.org/rs)

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.

©2001 Religion & Socialism Commission, Democratic Socialists of America

**The Religion & Socialism Commission of DSA**  
Co-Chairs: Rod Ryon, Juanita Webster  
Secretary: Maxine Phillips  
Treasurer: John Cort

Executive Committee:  
Rev. Judith Deutsch  
Rev. John Endler  
Rev. Norm Faramelli  
Mark Finkel  
Andrew Hammer  
David Kandel  
Alex Mikulich  
Tharen Robson  
Juanita Webster

Member, International League of Religious Socialists – ILRS (Socialist International)

**RS Contributing Editors:**  
Jack Clark, Rev. Judith Deutsch, Harvey Cox, Michael Eric Dyson, Rev. Marcia L. Dyson, David O'Brien

**RS Advisory Board:**  
Jack Clark, Rev. Judith Deutsch, Harvey Cox, Michael Eric Dyson, Rev. Marcia L. Dyson, David O'Brien, Cornel West

•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.

**UNION MADE  
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER**

# LETTERS

After reading Mr. Kimball's comments in the Autumn issue, I felt the need to thank all those who "reluctantly" voted for Gore, even though they may have felt more closely allied to Nader's political program. I'm saying thanks because I am one of the tens of millions of citizens who live "on the margins," in my case because of a physical disability and the lack of access to affordable health care and other benefits. At least with Gore as president, we had some hope of gaining access to additional benefits. The same cannot be said for the Pretender, in light of what he did or failed to do in Texas.

I had no illusions about the limitations of Gore either, but unlike Mr. Kimball, I recognized the immediate danger and problems Bush presented, not only in terms of my own health and welfare but in terms of the future of the country. And it's clear now that Nader may have spelled the difference in the outcome of the election, notwithstanding the Florida injustice. Moreover, I have come to seriously question the strategy limitations of the Greens themselves and wonder just how concerned and capable their leadership is. Indeed, the Greens emphasis on a top-down strategy at this point in the development of their party in the U.S. smacks of utopianism.

I should have mentioned earlier that I, too, "reluctantly" voted for Gore, but I also chose to vote for the Green candidates in nearly all local and state races where they ran a candidate. This should have been and should be the strategy of the Greens. Stay out of the presidential race for now--a race in which they can't win, and focus on local and state politics. Not only might this relieve us in 2004 of a replay of the 2000 election, but the Greens will have more time and resources to spend on potential electoral victories, while simultaneously presenting the voter with a more personal and complete picture of who the Greens really are and what they really stand for. Only when voters become familiar with the Greens at the local and state level will they feel comfortable about voting in any meaningful way for the Greens at the national level. In the interim, the Greens should be satisfied with having the ability to make a considerable impact on local and state politics.

Finally, unlike some others, I make no apologies for my open criticism of the Green's national political strategy in 2000, or Mr. Kimball's comments. In addition to my above-mentioned concerns, as someone of the Christian faith, I feel Bush's "carte blanche" views on capital punishment and his commitment to right-wing values, as well as his neglect of the poor and those in need of healthcare during his governorship in Texas, testify to his lack of concern for

biblical values, e.g. witness Jesus's dedication to healing the sick. In this sense and contrary to Mr. Kimball's assertions, I felt it was clearly imprudent of the Greens to risk helping elevate Bush to the Presidency, especially knowing full well they couldn't win. In sum, and under similar circumstances, I wouldn't hesitate to repeat saying thanks to all those who might "reluctantly" vote for the Democratic presidential candidate instead of the Green presidential candidate in the 2004 presidential elections--if we're still having presidential elections then.

Thanks RS for being here,

Michael Bowles  
Tucson, Arizona

PS On a lighter note, I was impressed with several of the articles in the Autumn issue and appreciated Stephen Mott's successful effort to reconcile biblical teachings with egalitarian economic thought. Although framed in a more limited context, one Bible passage I would like to add to his efforts relate to Yahweh's commands concerning the distribution of the manna (Exod. 16).

## RS Welcomes A New Editor

With the Summer 2001 issue of Religious Socialism, we will be welcoming a new face to our editorial team. Alex Mikulich (see photo on page 2) has been chosen to replace John Cort, who announced his retirement in the Summer 2000 issue. Alex is a part-time professor of social ethics at Loyola University. With his wife Kara, they have an almost three year old daughter Katie, and make their home in Chicago.

Alex answers the question of why he is a socialist with the following: "With Michael Harrington, I believe that we need to work within and beyond liberalism, while we commit ourselves to the vision of a society that is more participatory, egalitarian, and solidaristic. I think religious socialists offer hope for the coming century. We are drawing upon rich religious and political traditions that nurture a transformative imagination of how all people may care for each other and the earth."

We look forward to Alex's contributions.



[www.dsausa.org](http://www.dsausa.org)

Check out DSA on the World Wide Web for the latest news and updates!

## Zionism

*cont'd from cover page*

Jewish world, for Jewish continuity, but for those of us who are progressive I think we look at it and we say "Well it's not perfect, but how can we change it, how can we fix it... it's an idea of making this focal point a better place." And that's a job that's never going to end.

*What distinguishes labour Zionism from traditional Zionism?*

Labour Zionism is a lot more critical... we focus on equality for the citizens of Israel, their economic equality, and in recent years the younger generations are also including



"The majority of the country is Jewish, and the country can remain Jewish, but there's got to be a real respect, a real investigation as to what it means to be a minority in this state. To not deal with these issues is actually a threat to the Jewish state."



environmental aspects and other things like this. So it's a critical form of Zionism that again, seeks to make Israel a better place.

*How do labour Zionists see the peace process, specifically the recent attempts by Barak to reach a settlement with the Palestinian Authority? What can the labour Zionist movement bring to the table that can would allow all parties to achieve enough of their aspirations to create an Israel not constantly in fear of its very existence?*

I think the peace process up until five months ago was, for labour Zionists, or Zionists in general, an extraordinarily exciting prospect. People felt that peace was very, very close, and the concessions that Barak was willing to make were a very good starting point for negotiations, as far as I'm concerned. Unfortunately, as with a lot of things, I think the movement had a bit of myopia, and it only considered the Jewish Zionist perspective. The Palestinians didn't feel the same elation towards the peace process, because things weren't getting better. Their economy was not so good, political corruption was rife, there still were settlements, there still was an occupation... there just wasn't much evidence of a process, and I think that's why it collapsed.

Today the left in Israel is certainly shattered. I mean, you see that there's a national unity government, but even within the Labour Party, people are unsure whether they want to

be part of it or not. And I think that today we're equally unsure of where to go... it's going to take us a while to realize where labour Zionism should be going and where it is right now, when there is no peace process and when there are no negotiations.

If you ask me, we have to sort of put all of this into context: yes, there is a crisis right now, but we've been calling for changes for years, and I think we've just been rocked by this current crisis, but the things we're calling for haven't changed. We want to end the occupation, we want to see a Palestinian state, along side a Jewish state. There are very serious political answers to those questions, they're just hard to find today when the left has crumbled in the face of this crisis.

*What is your position on the idea of a Palestinian Right of Return?*

That's a tough question. I believe in a right of return, but historically there's no country that's insisted on a right of return for land they did not control. First, there has to be a Palestinian state, and I think that a Palestinian state should encourage a right of return into Palestine.

For humanitarian issues, things like family reunifications and such, I think people should be allowed to come back into Israel, and I think there has to be compensation for those people that go to Palestine or who decide not to leave for anywhere. So there has to be a right of return, it should be to a Palestinian state, and that Palestinian state should be an equitable compromise, something that's just for all Palestinians and at the same time allows Israel's right to exist.

Certainly a lot of Israelis are very anxious about the prospect of four million people returning, but I don't think that's likely or logistically possible. It's a silly notion, but equally so, the Jewish right of return is sort of a silly notion... the [Israeli] law of return has been around for over 50 years now, and not all the Jews of the world are living in Israel. But it's a very fundamental notion of what the Jewish state is, and I think people are anxious that if you water that down, you water down the basis, the Judaism of the state. So I think there's a reason for people to be anxious.. it's symbolism... but it's unlikely that a mass return to Israel would happen.

*What will become of the Zionist project in a state of Israel where Jews will be increasingly outnumbered by a higher Palestinian birth rate?*

Again this gets down to the very basic question: no progressive Zionist wants to continue an occupation. It's fundamentally unjust, it's not something we want to be doing. The Palestinians deserve their own state, they've been waiting long enough.

The Israeli Palestinian population does have a high birth rate, and this has been an issue, certainly with this recent intifada when riots broke out within Israel proper. But I think that people are finally beginning to realize, or at least they should be realizing that the Arab population within Israel has been a second class. They have been ignored while the rest of the nation's development has moved forward. There seem to be a few people who want to address this; we're going to see our first Israeli Arab member of the Cabinet, but that's too little too late. They've got to see real investment into their communities, they've got to be made full citizens, and there's got to be a real exploration as to what it means for the non-Jewish citizens of Israel... I mean, can you expect these people to sing Hatikvah, the national anthem, when it's about Jewish freedom and a Jewish homeland?



The majority of the country is Jewish, and the country can remain Jewish, but there's got to be a real respect, a real investigation as to what it means to be a minority in this state. It's about equal access, and a lot of the things are on the books already... it's a trilingual country by law, but we just have to make it for real, and start putting up Arabic signs, and issuing government documents in Arabic, and eliminate barriers such as this. To not deal with these issues is actually a threat to the Jewish state; if Israeli Arabs are treated as full citizens of the state, I think they'll enjoy that freedom, and there won't be a fear that they will threaten the existence of Israel.

*A lot of work has been put into trying to rebuild a sense of Jewish community in Europe, and there is a sense among some Jews that not only can Jews now return to Europe, but that there's almost a moral obligation do so, in order to show that the Nazis did not in fact succeed in eliminating Jews from Europe. Is there any sense among Zionists that this is a valid proposition for some European-descended Jews rather than making aliyah?*

I don't think there's much of an impetus to do it, but there are a lot of people who want to reinvigorate a community there. There's a big impetus to move to Israel; the word 'aliyah' is not about making immigration, it's about moving up, going to a higher place, building the state into a better country... about the national liberation movement, about coming back after 2000 years.

IT'S CERTAINLY  
NOT THAT WE'RE  
PULLING OUR  
IDEAS OF SOCIAL  
JUSTICE OUT OF  
OUR HEADS AND  
TRYING TO FIT  
THEM INTO THE  
JEWISH MOLD.  
IF ANYTHING,  
IT'S THE OTHER  
WAY AROUND.

*There is an historical perception that Zionism, even though it is based on the interpretation of biblical promises made by G-d to the children of Abraham, has more to do with race than religion. What kind of interaction do you have with religious institutions, and what role does the concept of social justice in the Jewish faith play in motivating the labour Zionist movement?*

Habonim Dror has five pillars that motivate us, and "tikkun olam," or the pursuit of social justice is one of them. On top of that is socialism and self-actualization, so if you take that as a holistic chunk, three-fifths of what we're doing is not 100% Zionist, or 100% Jewish. It's from a Jewish perspective, from a Zionist perspective, but ultimately it's about changing

the world.

The evidence of this certainly exists within our organization. Very few of us are moving to Israel to make aliyah, but if you look around, these are the people who are involved in labor issues, or protests on their university campuses — we are a youth movement — and we educate our people to become very active when it comes to social justice issues.

We're a secular movement; we're culturally Jewish, and these ideas of social justice are part of what makes us Jewish, but we're not really religious per se. We don't really have so many ties to religious organizations.

*cont'd on page 14*

## RELIGIOUS SOCIALISM IN HOLLAND

The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it

HERMAN NOORDEGRAAF

The history of religious socialism in the Netherlands dates back more than a century. Here I shall briefly highlight a few moments from that history.

In the Netherlands the industrial revolution took place later than in most Western European countries, starting around 1870. The extremely poor labor conditions and the opposition between capital and labor gave birth to a socialist movement. This movement was slightly tinged with anarchism, but its main trend resulted in the formation of the Social Democratic Labor Party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij or SDAP) in 1894. This party grew to become by far the largest socialist party in the Netherlands. Although the party was officially Marxist, it became increasingly revisionist (i.e. less oriented towards classical Marxism) as far as practical matters were concerned. The party showed rapid growth and came to pose a real threat to the conservative groups that had left their mark on Dutch politics during much of the nineteenth century. Apart from the SDAP, however, there were also Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant movements that sought emancipation for the religious groups they represented. These movements created their own networks of organizations for education, politics, trade unions, sports etc. This led to that typically Dutch phenomenon of so-called "pillarization".

The idea that Christians might choose to embrace socialism was by no means taken for granted – in fact, it was passionately opposed by Christianity's official spokespersons. In their view, socialism was irrevocably linked to atheism and philosophical materialism. Moreover, great offense was taken at the revolutionary stance of the SDAP. On the other side there was a considerable degree of anti-clericalism in SDAP circles, because the churches had shown themselves to be conservative forces per excellence, which obstructed the efforts of the oppressed proletariat to build a socialist society. Officially the SDAP took the view that religion was a private matter: everyone could believe as he or she saw fit, as long as such belief was not allowed to interfere with party matters.

However, in spite of the proposition that Christianity and socialism were two utterly opposed entities, there were some clergy who rejected such an either-or formula, and chose to embrace both Christianity and socialism. Thus in the 1890s some freethinking (liberal) pastors joined the SDAP.

They took this step particularly on the basis of the biblical

notion of justice, which implied taking up the cause of the poor (that which Liberation Theology would later call the 'preferential option for the poor'). They made an explicit choice to work for a better society within the broad socialist movement. In 1902 these ministers established a journal, "De Blijde Wereld" ("Glad World") for which they chose a motto from Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it". In other words: The blessings of the earth should be enjoyed by all, and not only or largely by the capitalists. The Blijde Wereld group was the first organized religious socialist movement in the Netherlands.

In their journal, and at the conferences they arranged, they fought a two-pronged battle. Firstly, they opposed the view of the majority of their fellow-believers who rejected socialism as unchristian. Against it, they tried to argue that from a Christian point of view, support for socialism was quite legitimate – or even more strongly: that such a position was imperative. It should be mentioned, however, that there was a whole range of views within the religious socialist movements as to whether socialism was a necessary consequence of Christian faith ("Christian and therefore socialist"), or whether one should be somewhat more hesitant on this matter ("Christian and socialist").

Secondly, a struggle was waged within the socialist movement. Religious socialists joined fully in the socialist struggle, but they also contested the hostility against religion, which characterized the atmosphere within the party as well as doctrinaire forms of Marxism. According to the Blijde Wereld group the option for socialism was a religious/ethical decision rather than a choice based on insight into the economic laws of capitalism, as the Marxists suggested. During the adoption of a new party program in 1912, one of the points of discussion was whether capitalism was outdated and therefore morally repugnant, as the Marxists claimed. The Blijde Wereld group opposed the use of the term "therefore", because it seemed to make a moral judgement dependent on economic developments. By dropping the word "therefore", the matter was left undecided.

Between the two world wars, the SDAP grew increasingly isolated. The party did not even participate in the government. Part of the reason for this was that Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian workers continued to vote for their confessional parties. This fact, as well as the challenges arising from the economic crisis of the 1930s, and the

totalitarian forces of fascism, Nazism and communism, gave rise to heated discussions within the SDAP about the basic principles and direction of the party. One of the most important renewal movements within the SDAP was that of religious socialism. This movement was now led by the “red reverend”, Dr. W. Banning, who got elected to the party leadership. Through his speeches and writings he managed to canvass significant support within the party, which exceeded the numerically small support (about 2000 members). He spoke especially through the journal *Tijd en Taak* (Time and Task), as the journal *De Blijde Wereld* was renamed in 1932 because the original title sounded a bit too idyllic in a time of crisis. Banning argued for an ethically based socialism, which would also attract other sectors of the population, apart from the workers, including Christians who at that stage still identified with the confessional parties. Until the Second World War, this renewal did not really take off, despite some openings in the new program of principles of 1937.

The Second World War worked as a catalyst. In the resistance, people who had formerly operated in separate political and social circles found one another. This led to a renewal movement that sought to end the pre-war separation that had so obstructed effective handling of the crisis of the 1930s. After the war, this led to the so-called “Doorbraakbeweging” or Breakthrough Movement, composed of Christians who wished to work together on a wider front towards a society based on social justice. This movement, of which Banning was the leading spokesman, resulted in the establishment in 1946 of the Labor Party (‘Party van de Arbeid’ – PvdA), which swallowed up the SDAP, and became a political home for progressive Christians. In its program of principles, the PvdA stated clearly that it did not adopt any confessional position: anyone – regardless of his or her philosophical orientation – who supported the aims of democratic socialism could become a member. However, the intimate link between one’s view of life and one’s political orientation was also recognized, and it would be welcomed if members of the party exhibited this within the party. Here was, then, a difference in principle from the pre-war SDAP. Different “working groups” (“werkverbanden”) came into existence within the PvdA: Protestant Christian, Roman Catholic and Humanist. Each had their own organs and held their own meetings. Furthermore, a number of parliamentarians had their roots in these working groups. The working groups continued to function until the 1960s.

In the early post-war years the PvdA participated in the government and made an important contribution to the development of the Dutch welfare state. In this, it received generous support from religious socialists.

choosing socialism  
was a  
religious decision  
rather than  
a choice based on  
insight into  
the economic laws  
of capitalism

The breakthrough movement had limited success numerically: the separate “pillars” continued to dominate Dutch society until the mid-1960s. At that point the “pillared” society began to show some cracks that coincided with a drastic drop in church membership (at present, in the year 2000, 63% of the population do not see themselves as belonging to any denomination). Moreover, during the 1970s and 80s there was an anti-religious climate within the PvdA. There were efforts, however, to fill the gap left by the disappearance of the working groups, such as the establishment in 1982 of the “Meeting-point for Socialism and Views of Life” (“Trefpunt voor Socialisme en Levensovertuiging”). Included in this official party body, are people who are active in the church and the ecumenical movement, as well as the humanist movement. The Meeting-point is still functioning, even though it has been marginalized somewhat with regard to its influence in the party. Its function is to advise members of parliament and

the party leadership about important policy matters, and to participate in fundamental discussions about the direction of the party – at present, for example, a new program of principles is being discussed. They also organize discussions in this connection through publications and conferences. It is their goal to include representatives from the Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu communities as well. After all, due to the arrival of immigrants, the Netherlands has increasingly become a multi-cultural society, in which around 8% of the population are adherents of the aforementioned religions.

The PvdA has been part of the government again since 1989. Since 1994 the Prime Minister (Wim Kok) has come from their ranks, leading a coalition government of social democrats and liberals (or should one say conservatives?). Social democracy is currently going through a re-orienting phase. Many religious socialists feel that in this process too many neo-liberal ideas have intruded into its thinking and policy, that too much of a guiding role is being assigned to the market, and that solidarity with the poor – locally and internationally – is not sufficiently present anymore. The relationship that obtains here can be characterized as one of critical solidarity. An important motif continues to be that of social justice, which implies that priority should be given to the improvement of the position of the poor. Here lies the constant factor in the contribution of religious socialism. It has not yet lost any of its relevance! ■

---

*Herman Noordegraaf is President of Trefpunt, the Dutch religious socialist organization.*

**“I thought I was  
the only one...”**

**AL-FATIHA SEEKS TO OPEN  
DOORS TO GAY AND  
LESBIAN MUSLIMS**

*While the issue of homosexuality and its acceptance in religious communities remains an issue loaded with controversy, perhaps nowhere else is it still as much of a forbidden topic of discussion as within Islam. The following article, reprinted from the August 1999 issue of the Southern Voice, tells the story of Faisal Alam and his courageous efforts to create a safe space for those who are both gay and Muslim.*

**DAVID GOLDMAN**

In the fall of 1998, Faisal Alam did something that's become fairly commonplace for gay Americans. He organized a conference for "LGBTQ" (Lesbian/Gay/Bi-sexual/Transgendered/Queer) members of his religious faith.

But the fact that Alam is a Muslim and the nearly 40 people who attended worship in the Islamic tradition made this convention anything but routine. To weed out homophobes who might seek to invade it, Alam interviewed each interested person for an hour over the phone. He revealed the meeting's Boston location to selected participants only a week before it occurred.

"If most Muslims hear about us, they think we're a joke," Alam said. Skeptical gays who first hear of Alam's group often worry that it might be a fundamentalist front intent on outing gay Muslims. "One woman thought the fundamentalists were going to line us up and shoot us," he said.

That picture isn't too far from the reality gays face in some parts of the Muslim world. In Afghanistan, authorities still carry out the traditional death sentence in which, after a sham trial, a wall is collapsed on top of those convicted of sodomy. (In an especially ironic touch, victims who remain alive after 30 minutes beneath the crushing rubble are given medical attention.) And yet this is the same Islamic world, observers say, where strict segregation of the sexes routinely leads men and women alike to turn to their own gender for love and physical companionship.

Ponder this seemingly irreconcilable contradiction, and you begin to glimpse the enormous spiritual conflict with which gay Muslims wrestle every day.

**A modest beginning**

"We are about 200 years behind Christianity in terms of progress on gay issues," said Alam, 22, the founder and director of the Al-Fatiha Foundation ("for LGBTQ Muslims"). He is a field associate with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, D.C. "Islamic attitudes toward homosexuality are barbaric. That's the only way to put it. It's an issue that has not even begun to be discussed," Alam said. "It's still viewed as a Western disease that infiltrates Muslim minds and societies.

"If you tell most straight Muslims you are gay and Muslim, they will tell you it's an oxymoron — you cannot be both. The first thing most gay Muslims say when they hear of another gay Muslim is, 'My God, I thought I was the only one.'"

A desire to combat that withering isolation led Alam, in November 1997, to launch an Internet listserv for gay and lesbian Muslims. That list has now grown to include 250 people in 20 countries.

In October of 1998, Al-Fatiha (which means "The Opening") organized the First International LGBT Muslims Retreat. The event drew fewer than 40 participants — yet these present were from the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. A second gathering, held the following Memorial Day weekend in New York City, attracted 60 people. Alam held another international meeting in London in June 2000.

In addition to the Al-Fatiha web-site, Alam maintains the "Queer Muslims Home Page" on the Internet. Yahoo also features a "queer Muslim" club. But Alam said he rarely looks at the posted comments, which are often "letter after letter of filth" written by Muslims enraged at the idea of granting any vestige of respect to homosexuality.

Indeed, a quick glance at another web resource reveals the level of resistance that confronts gay Muslims. "Queer Jihad" — itself, a gay-friendly site —

Al-Fatiha will hold its Second North American Conference for LGBTQ Muslims and Friends from June 21-24 in the San Francisco Bay Area.

For more information about Al-Fatiha, visit their web site at <http://www.al-fatiha.net>, or e-mail them at [gaymuslims@yahoo.com](mailto:gaymuslims@yahoo.com).

You can also get in touch the old-fashioned way, at the following address:

Al-Fatiha Foundation  
405 Park Ave, Ste. 1500  
New York, NY 10022

includes a link to a site offering “Islam Questions and Answers.” A search here for “homosexuality” unleashes a torrent of hate and judgment. Muslims are encouraged to feel “total abhorrence towards this shameful act” which Islam “emphatically forbids.” A catalog of horrors is reserved for the guilty, including, “Allah rained upon them a storm of stones of baked clay prepared specifically for them and destroyed them completely.”

Given this condemnation and the fact that some half-dozen Islamic countries continue to impose the death penalty for sodomy, why do gay people remain in the Islamic faith? Their answers are as complex as the ancient religion itself.

### Traditional ties

“For each of us, it is a struggle,” Alam said when asked why he stays a Muslim. “Probably 90 to 99 percent of gay Muslims who have accepted their sexuality leave the faith. They don’t see a chance for a reconciliation. They are two identities of your life that are exclusive.

“Islam has been such an important part of my life since I was a teenager that I cannot see myself living without it. But I am the last person on earth to say I have reconciled it with my sexuality,” Alam said. Though he still considers himself a Muslim, Alam is not now religiously observant.

Part of the dilemma that confronts gay Muslims stems from the unique character of the faith. Islam is now considered the most rapidly growing religion in the United States and in the world. As a monotheistic system born in the Middle East and allied with the prophet Abraham, it shares much in common with Christianity and Judaism. And yet the faith struggles for acceptance and understanding — Islam was omitted completely from the Human Rights Campaign’s *“Mixed Blessings: Organized Religion and Gay and Lesbian Americans in 1998.”*

As it is practiced in most societies, Islam is a non-hierarchical religion. Abdullahi An-Na’im, a law professor at Emory University and a Muslim, noted that Sunni (as opposed to the more radical Shiite) Muslims make up the majority of Islamic faithful. “Sunni doctrine is strongly against centralized institutionalized religious authority,” he said.

So while Islamic scholars may make various pronouncements, there is neither a Muslim Vatican nor a Muslim pope to hand

down decrees to the common folk. As a result, Islam is “much more decentralized, more informal, and for that reason much more democratic,” An-Na’im said.

However, An-Na’im affirmed that public policy and private behavior regarding homosexuality differ widely. “My personal opinion is that it’s much more tolerated than one would expect. Given the conservative nature of Islamic societies, one would expect more intolerance than exists in practice.”

In fact, An-Na’im — who said he knows no gay Muslims — speculated that opening a dialogue on the matter might make things worse for those in the sexual minority. “If it were talked about a lot, it would become an issue. The fact that it is not debated allows the informal practice to continue more than if it were debated,” he said.

Some of what goes on — not only privately but also in public in these officially anti-gay Islamic societies seems wild by Western standards. Alam, a native of Pakistan, said that forced segregation of the sexes leads to the impression that “sexuality is something very fluid. It’s much easier for two guys to express their love toward one another and be accepted than it is for a male and a female.” He recalled seeing men holding hands and kissing in public, all the while followed by wives completely veiled in the Islamic tradition.

And the situation is “100 times worse” for lesbians, Alam said, owing to the oppressed status of women in most Islamic states. Alam’s site includes a link to a site put up by Lazeeza, an Arab lesbian group, but the new site at present contains mainly links to other sites.

“What you have are very close and frequently sexual male-male relationships, but very often these are in a bisexual context,” said John Voll, professor of Islamic history and associate director of the Center for Muslim Christian Understanding at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. “One of the things that is clearly visible and has been historically is that in a society that adopts a very strong and rigid social segregation of the sexes, you have among both women and men a very high level of same-sex sexual and love relationships,” Voll said. “This is deeply rooted in society.”

### The role of scripture

Like the Old Testament, the Muslim Koran includes the story of Lot (Lut in the Koran) who narrowly escaped destruction when God destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Voll said a larger issue forms the basis of Muslim homophobia.

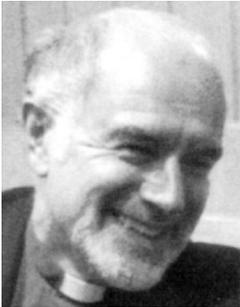
“Probably in terms of informed Muslim argument, it would be that the Koran really does make a clear distinction between males and females, and anything crossing that line would be un-Koranic,” Voll said.

**“We are about 200 years behind Christianity in terms of progress on gay issues”**

# Christian Socialism

## *for the new millenium*

DAVID HASLAM



An Anglican Bishop, an Indian theologian and a good number of curious church members, since I became chair of the Christian Socialist Movement, have asked me what Christian Socialism means today.

This is the response to that question, a contribution to an ongoing debate. If however we are going to make sense of the debate, and look forward

to Christian Socialism in the new millennium, we need first to remind ourselves of some of our history, and the values intrinsic within it. These values include equality, justice, non-violence, compassion and community.

In the world of the web and the ever-faster transfer of information, history does not inspire many with wild enthusiasm. However some of the worlds recent conflicts have reminded us how profoundly our history can affect the present.

### Roots and the future

The roots of Christian Socialism as we know the movement today lie in the late 1840s and early 1850s when F.D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, John Ludlow and John Ruskin were among the founders of what has ever since been a Christian Socialist movement. However, Chris Bryant in his history of the British Christian Socialists *Possible Dreams* writes of many comrades from an even earlier age. Among them are John Ball, John Wycliffe, the Levellers, George Fox, the Tolpuddle Martyrs and, arguably, William Blake.

The values that they, and what Alan Wilkinson calls the second wave of Christian Socialists (Henry Scott Holland, Bishops Westcott and Gore, Enid Stacy and eventually William Temple), espoused remain very largely the values of Christian Socialists today. Before reviewing these let us set out a definition of socialism. The Concise Oxford Dictionary describes it as

a political and economic theory of social organisation which advocates that [the] community as a whole

should own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange.

It is little different from its definition of communism, except that for the latter it adds that

each member [is] working for the common benefit according to his capacity and receiving according to his needs.

The Marxist scholar Ernest Mandel describes the socialist objective as the replacement of a bourgeois society by a classless community in which social solidarity replaces the search for individual wealth as the essential motive for action (Mandel, 1979). Far from wanting everyone to be the same, he goes on, Marxists want to create the conditions for every individual to develop all their possibilities, but social and economic equality is the necessary precondition for this. A socialist society therefore requires an economy where production for need supersedes production for profit. Humanity will no longer produce goods for a market but on the basis of values, goods will then be distributed according to need.

The ideas of socialism necessarily developed in the particular historical context of the 19th century. The social historian E.B. Hobsbawm writes of this period

Urban development... was a gigantic process of class segregation, which pushed the new labouring poor into great morasses of misery outside the centres of Government and business and the new specialised residential areas of the bourgeoisie. It was also at a time when the Baroness Rothschild wore one and half million francs worth of jewellery to a masked ball...while in Rochdale 2,000 women and girls passed through the streets singing hymns... they are dreadfully hungry, a loaf is devoured with greediness indescribable (Hobsbawm, 1977).

The world was still sufficiently divided in the early decades of the 20th century to cause Keir Hardie and others with Christian values to form the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in Bradford in 1893. They went on seven years later to form the Labour Party itself. Christian Socialists like Arthur Henderson were involved in all its stages. Henderson, born in Glasgow and brought up in Newcastle, was first elected

to parliament for the ILP in 1902. When he was re-elected in 1906, he remarked how the new Labour intake owed more to the Bible than to Marx (Bryant, 1996). Henderson was the Secretary of the Labour Party between 1912 and 1935, and its Leader between 1914 and 1917. He drew up the Constitution of the Party including the original Clause 4, and as a Methodist chose as the venue for the key 1918 Conference the Westminster Central Hall. He later became Foreign Secretary and also won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Colleagues of Henderson through this period included George Lansbury and R.H. Tawney, whose book *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* remains a classic for many Christian Socialists. Among Tawney's wry definitions is that of private property which he describes as a necessary institution, at least in a fallen world. He continues it is to be tolerated as a concession to human frailty, not applauded as desirable in itself; the ideal — if only man's nature could rise to it — is communism. In a section on *The Social Organism* Tawney digs deep into the economic values of Christian philosophers down the years. His final observation is

The unpardonable sin is that of the speculator or middleman, who snatches private gain by the exploitation of public necessities. The true descendant of the doctrines of Aquinas is the labour theory of value. The last of the Schoolmen was Karl Marx (Tawney, 1990).

Christian Socialists have remained an important strand within the Labour Party and the wider Labour movement since its beginning. Their influence perhaps has waxed and waned. It is certainly at a very interesting point today, with several members of the present Cabinet as members, including the Prime Minister, as well as a number of other Ministers of State. New Labour has made some modest acknowledgement of its Christian principles, but Christian Socialists are eager to take forward the discussions about what Christian Socialism means in this new century.

It is essential of course to put this debate in an international and indeed a global context. From that perspective the ideas of Marx and Engels, which led to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution against the corrupt and class-ridden Russian regime of that time, may seem to have run their course in what is often described as the collapse of communism in eastern Europe. It is important, however, for history not to be entirely rewritten by the triumphalist capitalist West. Although there is no doubt that the seeds of the downfall of post-war totalitarian communism lay within its inability to accept criticism and change, the immensely costly arms race which arose due to the West's nuclear capability was also a key factor in its collapse.

It is also important for Christian Socialists to be aware of what Marx actually said about religion. His most recent biographer, Francis Wheen, comments that, rather than attacking it, as totalitarian communists have always taught, his point was rather more subtle and sympathetic. Marx understood the spiritual impulse, and thought the wretched in this world might justifiably console themselves with hope in the next. Wheen quotes Marx:

Religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. (Wheen, 1999)

What a pity Christians and Marxists have not been able to find more common cause over the last 150 years.

The achievements and successes of state socialism in the second half of this century have to be set alongside its cruelty and its failures. In most of the countries of eastern Europe there was very low unemployment, a reasonably fair distribution of wealth, cheap housing, energy, basic food and clothing and good local public transport. In

*cont'd on page 14*

Socialism  
in Britain  
has always  
owed more  
to the Bible  
than to  
Karl Marx



# What Is Our Idea of Democracy?

## ILRS CONGRESS MEETS IN BUDAPEST

Meeting in a building that housed the former local headquarters of the communist Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, across the street from a park where activists in the 1956 uprising were hung, the International League of Religious Socialists (ILRS) held their triennial Congress last October in Budapest. Heavy with meaning, and the knowledge of the history before them, the theme of this first ever congress in a former Soviet bloc nation was "What Is Our Idea of Democracy?", with a focus on the different scenarios and systems of democratic governance experienced by democratic socialists round the world.

The theme was chosen with the idea of engaging the changes in central and eastern Europe clearly in mind, and the congress gave testimony to the endurance of democracy against dictatorship of any kind. Today, the building is occupied by the reformed organization, the Hungarian Socialist Party (now a member of the Socialist International). Hungary, always a defiant partner in the old Warsaw Pact, has since 1991 been well on its way to transforming itself into a modern European nation, with its eye on membership in the European Union. The transformation was evident in the words of our Hungarian comrades. István Orosz, Chair of the Religious Section of the Hungarian Socialist Party, opened the congress by saying that after the dark age of communism, Hungary will again become part of Europe. Socialist Member of Parliament Gyula Hegyi spoke of the need to use social democratic principles to bring about a global culture of solidarity that can be a counterbalance to the global market. And the leader of the Socialist Party, László Kovács, told the congress that the 21st century would be an era of social principles to combat the growing gap between rich and poor, as well as to build tolerance and democracy throughout the world.

### Ideas of democracy

For the congress, each national delegation was asked to present a synopsis of the political system in their country, and share the distinctions of those systems in work groups designed to build a better understanding of how we approach democracy, both in a pragmatic and visionary sense. One of the most challenging aspects of such an exercise is dealing with the often very different perspectives on history and economics that one finds between those in the East and West, as well as the North and South. For example, perceptions of the market economy and its usefulness in building democracy tend to break down along lines of affluence and adversity, with those socialists in industrialized nations taking a far more critical view of a market system with which they have had more experience than their Eastern European comrades. But beyond the different forms of social services and safety nets we live with (in some cases like the US hardly any at all), and the various laws pertaining to electoral politics and groups in civil society, one finds some common ground in our aspirations as socialists to confront the inequalities within our respective societies, be they social, economic, or political.

Three reports informed these work groups, from Sweden, South Africa and Britain respectively.

The Swedish government has just completed an extensive



Delegates share their ideas of democracy at the ILRS Congress in Budapest

(L to R: Secretary General Andrew Hammer, Treasurer Johan van Workum, Edit Koritz, President Evert Svensson, Gyula Hegyi MP, Christer Gustafsson, and Mariann Ytterberg MP)

and groundbreaking report on Sustainable Democracy, which was presented to the congress by Professor Erik Amna of the University of Uppsala. After noting a decline throughout all industrialized nations in the degree of participation in the political process, the Social Democratic party government began surveying Swedish voters about their opinion of democracy and their own democratic process, to try and find out why the decline was happening. Five areas were identified as important in maintaining the public's interest in civic responsibility, which are mentioned here very briefly:

1. The need to improve democratic awareness, that is the sense that one has control over one's sphere of life.

2. A need to develop participation between elections, so that this sense of control over one's own affairs has real meaning beyond the period of elections. Citizens need to feel involved, and that their involvement has a more immediate effect on their lives.

3. In order to make that involvement real, an expansion in the amount of local self-government and legal review is required, with the ability to take the input from local forums to the national and international policy level.

4. An increase in the accountability of institutions and elected officials is essential if the previous three points are to have any meaning and impact upon people's desire to participate in the democratic process. By that is meant that people need to have access to information about social policy as well as access to methods of recall and review.

5. Finally, all of the four points above have to be regularly evaluated to ensure that they are functioning properly. Only when people trust the processes in which they are invested will they continue to use them.

Where the Swedish report provided an idea of how to move toward a better realization of democracy, our report from South Africa analyzed some of the things that can go wrong after a dramatic democratic transformation of an unjust society.

Cedric Mayson's report, from the Religion and Socialism Commission of the African National Congress, explained how the revolutionary energy that went into the struggle against apartheid quickly transformed itself into the more mundane tasks of government once the people took power. The same skilled activists who led a dynamic movement for a new political system became members of parliament, government ministers, and local officials, thereby leaving that mass movement to itself, without direction or leadership. As a result, rather than pushing for the ongoing changes which are needed in South African society in areas of women's rights, economic justice, and AIDS, the ANC government has been bogged down with the tasks of ensuring that the new political structures work properly, and that the nation maintains a sufficient level of socio-economic "stability" to keep investment flowing into the country. (Part of the misunderstanding of the past year over President Thabo Mbeki's recalcitrant position on the AIDS crisis has arisen from the fear that declaring a state of emergency over the AIDS crisis will hurt the South African economy.)

The task that faces South Africa's civil society is one of reinvigorating its grassroots methods for achieving change in more specific areas of social policy, without those methods being seen as a threat to the very stability of the state. It's a lesson that both those in and outside of the ANC are trying to learn as that nation builds its democracy.

In the third report, Bev Thomas, Co-Chair of Britain's Christian Socialist Movement addressed the rights of minorities and oppressed groups in democratic societies, and noted that South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an excellent model for how to proceed in attempting to solve the conflicts

in Northern Ireland and the Middle East. Speaking on a more personal level, Bev stated that an important issue for her was not to be seen or recognized as merely a "person of color" but first and foremost as a human being.

### The ILRS and its activities

Carrying on from the theme of democracy, the ILRS has announced the creation of a Campaign Against Religious and Political Extremism to be developed in the coming year. The origin of the concept comes from earlier proposals from the 1997 ILRS Congress in Helsinki, and the campaign in part addresses what has always been a *raison d'être* for the League — the confrontation of the right/fundamentalist current in religious life.

Recent political victories by the Right in Europe, an increase in anti-Jewish and anti-immigrant hate crimes, and a disturbing climate of religiously motivated intolerance in some Islamic countries have prompted the ILRS to work towards ways of building understanding between people of different faiths, by focusing upon common social values which are universal to all faiths as well as to a democratic socialist agenda. While plans are in development for specific actions and forums around the Campaign, the League has begun working with its contacts in the Middle East to hold a "conference on peace and understanding" in either Jerusalem or Amman.

The Campaign Against Religious and Political Extremism hopes to provide a space where religious socialists can turn their ideas into actions, in order to make a larger impact on our parties' political agenda.

At this congress, three new member organizations (Hungary, Italy and Latvia) were admitted to the ILRS. Of these, the largest is the Italian organization Cristiano Sociali, which boasts 11,000 members affiliated to Italy's Party of the Democratic Left (PDS).

A new executive was elected, including the organization's first woman Vice-President (Irène Häberle). The DSA Religion and Socialism Commission's own Andrew Hammer was elected as the new Secretary General, and our Judy Deutsch was returned to the Executive Committee as a Substitute. Evert Svensson and Harry Watson were re-elected as President and Vice-President respectively, with Johan van Workum continuing as Treasurer. A lot of good work is ahead for the ILRS, which is growing with every year, and reaching out ever further across the globe. ■

Citizens need to feel that their involvement in democracy has a more immediate effect on their lives.

## Gay Muslims

*cont'd from page 9*

an often hostile environment. Alam said that even though orthodox Muslims reject Rev. Louis Farrakhan, leader of the radical Nation of Islam, he is still the best-known Muslim to many Americans, leading to widespread mistrust of Islamic people. Alam, who said he used to be "very religious," now feels "ostracized" from the larger Muslim community. He was asked to leave a Muslim youth group when it was learned he was gay. When his parents found out, they cut off his school money.

And Alam is not blind to the danger he faces — even in the United States. "A lot of people have asked me, 'Are you afraid for your life? Are you afraid of being killed?' I'm not worried, but I do take precautions," he said. He described himself as "very out — but not in the Muslim community."

Though he has long anticipated a backlash from conservative Muslims, Alam continues to organize. Al-Fatiha now has chapters in New York City and Toronto, and Alam has plans to launch groups in Atlanta, Vancouver, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Detroit and Chicago. "We're asking for tolerance," Alam said. "It's a far cry from asking for gay marriages. That issue will not happen until hundreds of years from now." ▀

## Christian Socialism

*cont'd from page 11*

China a mediaeval, even feudal, system was challenged and eventually destroyed by Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese Communist Party. The peasants and workers were released into a new situation which if far from perfect was much better than before. African socialism made its appearance and was particularly associated with the name of Julius Nyerere. It was his lack of personal aggrandisement, perhaps due to his Christian background, which led to the respectful obituaries and the out pouring of grief which met his death in mid-1999.

It was also socialism that contributed to the struggle against apartheid and its eventual downfall. It should not be forgotten in the West's euphoria over apartheid's demise that the capitalist system, aided and abetted by Western governments, vigorously opposed economic sanctions against the white supremacist regime. It was only when it became clear the liberation movements eventually were going to win that the companies and governments of the West shifted their loyalties, ready to take advantage of the situation in a liberated South Africa. The extent of their moral commitment can be judged by the fact that South Africa is still trying to pay back the debts created by the apartheid regime which arose from shopping sprees when the capitalist West was still eager to do business.

We should not forget either that Marxist analysis is widely used in many parts of the world, particularly the South, to understand what is happening now in the world and indeed

## Zionism

*cont'd from page 5*

It's hard... there's the question of orthodoxy and then the question of religion. We're neither orthodox nor really observant by nature, but it's very clear that these ideas of social justice are from the Torah... these are ancient ideas. Why are there so many environmentalists in our movement today? We're taking our cues from our ancient writings. Does that mean the we pray, that we are totally observant? No. I think a lot of it is about reinterpretation and what makes sense to us on a critical and intellectual level. It's certainly not that we're pulling our ideas of social justice out of our heads and trying to fit them into the Jewish mold. If anything, it's the other way around. ▀

---

*Again, we encourage our readers to respond with their own ideas on this subject. For more information on Habonim Dror North America, visit their web site at <http://www.habonimdror.org>, or contact them at: Habonim Dror, 114 West 26th St., Suite 1004, New York, NY 10001*

to try to change it. The liberation theology of Latin America, which was so influential in the 70s and 80s, drew on that analysis a good deal to try and understand how while the rich were getting richer — the poor either got poorer or remained the same. Linked with a reading of the Scriptures from the perspective of the poor liberation theologies from many parts of the South have undermined many of the infertile theologies of the West. In India Marxist parties continue to attract support and even from time to time hold power in large states such as Bengal and Kerala. A European colleague who has worked in India for many years commented that, in general, he finds that economic and social analysis in India is of a higher standard than that in the West. Analysis from the context of the poor makes it easier to understand what is going on in the world, perhaps partly because it is willing to use the Marxist analytical tools.

Another source we have to draw on is the Roman Catholic tradition of social teaching, sometimes summarised as 'the common good'. The latter was the title of a statement by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in October 1996, a few months before the election which brought Labour to power. In the introduction Bishop David Konstant says this teaching is not solely Catholic property, the aim is to bring about a good and fair society, for the benefit of all. Christian socialists would agree with that aim, the problem is how to accomplish it. ▀

---

*David Haslam is Chair of Britain's Christian Socialist Movement. This article is excerpted from a larger document of the same title.*

**Membership has its rewards...**

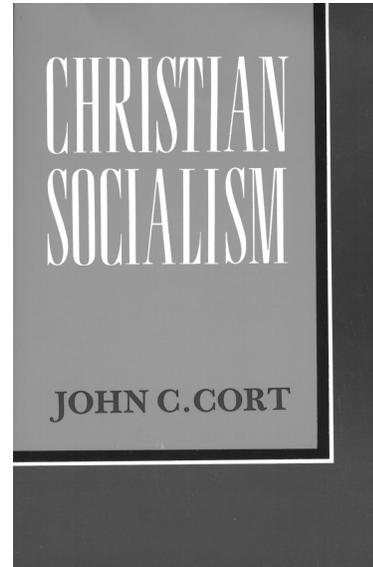
If you haven't yet heard of it, or haven't yet considered it, now might be the time to think about a lifetime membership in the DSA Religion & Socialism Commission.

For \$100, your lifetime membership can support our efforts to maintain a voice of faith among the socialist left, a voice that has endured since 1975.

The R&S Commission is the only organization of its kind in North America, and is sustained solely by your membership dues. Please give a thought to becoming a lifetime member today.

Contact: Lifetime Membership, 1 Maolis Road Nahant, MA 01908 or religiousocialism@socialist.org

**FREE**  
with your new subscription  
to *Religious Socialism*



**CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM**

by John C. Cort

402 pp., Paperback

Published by Orbis Books

If you've already subscribed, get the book today for the low price of \$5.00 each, add \$2.00 for shipping/handling. (Profits go to Religious Socialism)

Make payable to Religious Socialism, 1 Maolis Rd, Nahant, MA 01908

[www.dsausa.org/rs](http://www.dsausa.org/rs)

Back issues of RS  
are available  
on our web site  
in Acrobat PDF format.

*Religious  
Socialism*

**...is the only periodical dedicated to people of  
faith and socialism in North America.**

This is a:

- Renewal subscription - \$7.50 until 12/31/99
- New subscription - \$10
- Change of Address

Enclosed is:

- \$10 Regular, 1 year (4 issues)
- \$15 Sustaining (includes DSA Commission Membership\*)
- \$12 Special DSA Commission Membership\* (includes 1 year sub)
- \$12 Canadian, 1 year
- \$15 Foreign, 1 year

\*DSA membership required

Make checks payable to:

**Religious Socialism, 1 Maolis Rd, Nahant MA 01908**

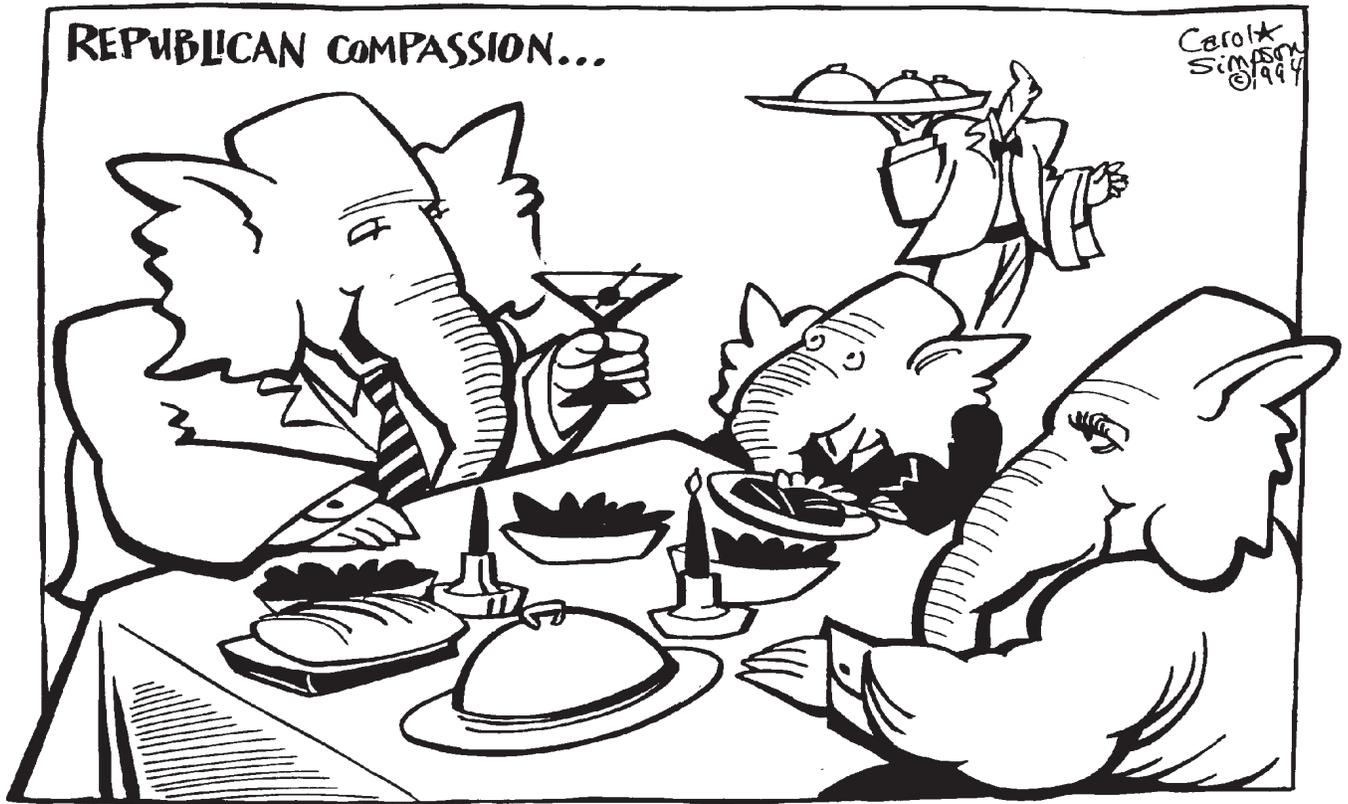
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP+4: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

- I am a member of DSA.
- I would like membership information about DSA.



*"Don't eat everything on your plate...  
remember all the hungry children waiting at the dumpster."*



**Religious Socialism**  
The Institute for Democratic Socialism  
DSA Fund for America  
1 Maolis Rd.  
Nahant, MA 01908

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Boston, MA  
Permit No. 59341