



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

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# Religious Socialism

THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM

## A Challenge to the Palestinian People

FROM ISRAELI PEACE ACTIVIST GERSHON BASKIN

I know hundreds of Palestinians on a personal basis. Many of them I have known for many years. Not one of them supports terrorism. All of them deplore the acts of suicide bombers and condemn those acts with real sincerity. After each such suicide attack I receive tens of phone calls from Palestinians expressing their condemnation, horror, sadness and even apologies. I believe that each person expressing those emotions and beliefs are sincere and true to their honest beliefs, worldview and value system that terrorism is wrong.

I know many Palestinians who feel the need to explain, not to justify, but to provide reasons behind the suicide bombers' actions. I know others who condemn the suicide attacks from tactical positions of damaging Palestinian interests. But there are also many Palestinians who condemn them from a purely moral point of view as well.

Many, in fact, most of the people I am referring to above, are Palestinian societal leaders, public figures, academics, members of elites, governmental people, political leaders, and teachers. They represent the kind of people who should be leading Palestinian society. After having many long and frequent discussions with these people, I am always dismayed

*continued on page 4*

## editor's notes

This issue starts out with the wrenching conflict in the Middle East, which in recent weeks has overtaken the “war on terror” as the major news story on our television screens. Gershon Baskin, long an activist for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, has issued a challenge to the Palestinian people to build a non-violent movement for their cause. One has to wonder why, in a world where recent history has shown us the successes of non-violent social movements through Gandhi, King, and Mandela, the message of non-violent action has been lost on the Palestinian movement. In the same week in May that the siege of Ramallah ended, half a world away, Burmese freedom fighter Aung San Suu Kyi was released from years of house arrest by a far more oppressive regime, only to calmly seek talks with those who have oppressed and imprisoned her. Unlike the other, more well-known freed captive in the news that week, she was not shouting “Do you know I am the General?!” into the television cameras upon her release. She was genuinely seeking an end to conflict.

Perhaps as our nation hunts down an elusive organization that hijacked planes and used them as missiles, we might remember who it was exactly that pushed hijacking (which had previously been only an occasional worry) into the foreground in 1970 as a form of politically motivated terror. And while it is indeed wrong for one nation to tell another nation who its leaders will be, it may be at least worth the following thought: as Moses was denied entry into Canaan for his sins, it appears now that Yasser Arafat may also not be allowed to lead his people *into* his promised land. One *could* make an argument that that is less of a violation of international law than it is poetic justice, and one can only hope that Israeli voters will deliver a similar fate to Ariel Sharon in the next election. Peace, if it will come at all, can only come when both of the current antagonists are divested of all political power.

Maxine Phillips takes us further into the religious issues of the region with an excellent review of Harvey Cox's book *Common Prayers: Faith, Family, and a Christian's Journey Through the Jewish Year*. Since September 11, the relationship between the three faiths of the Middle East and the rest of the world has been and is being examined with greater care and scrutiny. Naturally, not all the conclusions will be neat or easy, but there is a lot in that relationship to consider, and Maxine's article serves up some provocative food for thought.

The ongoing scandal in the Catholic Church has ruined countless lives and injured the trust of the faithful. But John Cort suggests that the crisis could yet deliver something positive in terms of democratic reform inside the institution. The Vatican has a lot to think about, and if anyone can help push them along in that obligation, well, as longtime *RS* readers know, you just don't want to be on the bad side of Cort's pen.

As the courts gear up to wrestle with the issue of whether an oath is constitutionally “under God”, we found an interesting gem on the origins of that oath, which you will find on page 11, and can utilize the next time your Republican brother-in-law needles you about your politics and patriotism.

Also inspired by the justice system, we print an anecdote by Quentin Ogren on a case in 1933 where Clarence Darrow came to a small town in Illinois, to defend a young man on trial for his life. Capital punishment is one of those issues that never loses its urgency, and this tale demonstrates why.

With all these topics flying about, dear readers, certainly you have something to contribute as well. Let us know what's on your mind! You can write to us by e-mail at [religioussocialism@socialist.org](mailto:religioussocialism@socialist.org), or by regular mail at the address on our masthead above.

—Andrew Hammer



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# LETTERS

## FOR A BROADER DISCUSSION OF BELIEF

To the Editor:

I think *Religious Socialism* would be a more interesting journal if you were to address the role of religion in human society and affairs in a somewhat broader context. Clearly, religion from the earliest times has represented the human need to connect themselves with the deeper, invisible forces of nature and the cosmos. That every society that we know of, with the exception perhaps of some 20th century societies, had had some form of religion testifies to this universal need or impulse. Furthermore, the moral sense seems rooted in religious beliefs. At least it is almost universally associated with them, even though such beliefs have hardly resulted in uniform behavior. Why, for example, have religions been the cause of so much conflict and bloodshed between groups of believers,

rather than a basis for mutual understanding. Religious belief may inspire what is most noble and benevolent in human nature, but also what is savage and ignoble. I think religious believers ought to be prepared to address these questions.

Altogether I would like to see a broader discussion of the moral and philosophical, as well as political and historical questions raised by religious belief. I was pleased by the article by the Muslim cleric in the last issue, in which he insisted that Islam is a religion of caring and compassion, not of violence and fanaticism. Still, we seem to be heading toward a clash, if not of civilizations, at least of religious and political fundamentalisms, a dire prospect. Perhaps a clash of the haves and have-nots, rather than any specific conflict of religion or ideology, though the two are clearly intermixed. What is needed is charity and open-mindedness. And perhaps a new language of belief which will enable people to discuss their needs and differences in a more reasonable way.

Sincerely,

Franz Friedrich  
New York, NY

## ILRS EXECUTIVE MEETS IN VILNIUS

The Executive Committee of the International League of Religious Socialists (ILRS) met in Vilnius, Lithuania on April 6-7 to discuss events in the Middle East as well as to plan the political campaigns of the League over the coming year.

An important focus of the ILRS is working to combat religious and political extremism worldwide. Currently the League is creating an action plan for its national member organisations to consider, regarding ways in which activists can confront fundamentalism and bridge gaps between different communities of faith. More information on the ILRS can be found at its web site, [www.ilrs.org](http://www.ilrs.org).

## CORRECTION

In our last issue, the Latin phrase *pax opus iustitiae* – “peace is the work of justice,” in John Cort’s article (“Is Religion the Problem or the Solution?”, pg. 5) was incorrectly mangled by a scanner to read *pair opus iustitia*. We offer a sincere *mea culpa* to our readers.



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when I receive the weekly public opinion polls from the West Bank and Gaza. For many months now there has been a strong majority of Palestinians who continue to support suicide bombers. When I raise this issue with many of the people I am in contact with, they almost all feel a need to explain — as if I needed to hear their explanation. They say “end the occupation and the suicide bombers will end.” That may be true, but what I would like to see and hear is an unequivocal denouncement and a public campaign against suicide bombings because it is morally wrong to kill innocent defenseless people.

Palestinians must make a decision, it is a difficult one, I recognize — it is the classic dilemma about whether

In today’s Al Quds Newspaper a full-page advert appeared in Arabic, calling for an end to suicide bombers, and was signed by tens of academics and public figures. This initiative was led by Professor Sari Nusseibeh, the President of Al Quds University in Jerusalem. I applaud this effort and hope to see it gain a lot of support. But I am quite concerned because I understand that many Palestinians on the streets of Ramallah and elsewhere are very critical of this public campaign against terrorism. I fear that those who initiated the campaign will be physically threatened or worse from within their own society. I applaud the courage of Sari Nusseibeh and the others who signed onto this campaign.



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or not the end justifies the means. It is true that the Palestinians have no real army to fight with against the occupation. It is true that Israel does have an army and makes use of its might in its fight against the Palestinians. There is no way that the Palestinians can win a military war against Israel. The suicide bombers extract great pain from Israel and I suppose one could be pleased when one’s enemy is suffering so deeply. (I cannot celebrate in the suffering of others, but I can see how some people could). The Palestinians feel weak and therefore resort to the weapon of the weak — terrorism.

Palestinians have had determining effects over Israeli elections over the past years. Many Israelis believe that the Palestinians are primarily responsible for the election of Sharon as Prime Minister. Palestinians can and probably will have an impact on future elections in Israel as well. The next elections are scheduled for Autumn 2003. If the Palestinians wish to have a positive impact on those elections and to help assure that a peace government will be elected in Israel, they should take up the challenge that Sari Nusseibeh has once again placed squarely in the center of the Palestinian agenda (the last initiative regarded

recognizing that there could be no right of return for Palestinian refugees to Israel — another initiative that I applaud). A loud and clear voice — a moral voice and not solely a tactical one against terrorism, against suicide bombers, should ring loudly throughout the land.

The opinion polls in Israel demonstrate that on the substantive issues related to peace, Israelis are more ready than ever before — on sharing Jerusalem, on borders, against settlements. Even someone like Yaacov Peri, the former head of the Shin Bet came out today with a public statement calling for a return to the June 1967 borders. It should be noted that Israelis are more firmly against any refugee return to Israel proper than ever before as well. This too is a result of the intifada. The main reason why the Israeli public also overwhelmingly supports Ariel Sharon is because they don't believe that the Palestinians want peace and therefore, do not believe that peace is possible. The main reason why Israelis don't believe that Palestinians want peace is because a large majority of them support suicide bombers and continue to celebrate them as martyrs and heroes. This must stop. Palestinian leaders, public figures, academics, politicians, religious and spiritual leaders and others must put an end to tolerating a society that celebrates the death and the

wounding of innocent people — even if they are the enemy.

If Palestinians truly wish to make peace with their Israeli neighbors, who seem on their part, under the right conditions, willing to end the occupation (according to the polls), they must first put an end to terrorism and suicide bombers. I know, Palestinians will say that Israel is the stronger party and therefore, it should make the first move. That may be so, but it will not happen. There will be no Israeli move towards peace and the Israeli public will continue to support the political leaders that convince them that they will hit the Palestinians the hardest until the cycle is broken. Terrorism is morally wrong. Terrorism damages and spoils Palestinian society by corrupting its morals and value system. Terrorism is evil and it must end. It is also in the direct interest of Palestinians to put an end to it.

This is the challenge to all of my many Palestinian friends and to many more who are not yet my friends: Stand up tall and proud and root out the support for terrorism from within your midst. ▀

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*Gershon Baskin is the Israeli Co-Director of IPCRI - the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information*

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### NEW ISLAMIC GROUP OPPOSES RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM

A group of Muslims from Arab-Israeli villages in the Galilee have launched the first Orthodox Muslim movement in the region to oppose Muslim militancy and extremism.

Calling themselves The Prophetic Tradition Helpers Association (PTHA), the goals of the 10-member group founded this month include providing a platform for moderation and nonviolence, and educating Muslims about how extremists are misinterpreting Orthodox Islam.

"We have watched the situation deteriorate at the hands of extremists," says Khalid Abu Ras of Ilut, near Nazareth, an Arabic schoolteacher and founding member. "We are unhappy that they talk in the name of Islam and we think their stands are wrong. They are hurting Islam and our people."

The group is the first to publish an anti-extremist essay in Arabic from a religious point of view. A recent op-ed in the Arabic daily newspaper, *al-Ayn*, told a parable of warring brothers in ancient times who learned to build bridges instead of fences. It went on to explain Islamic teachings that urge tolerance, dialogue, nonviolence, and moderation.

"People think all Muslims are the same but they are wrong. So many people disagree with the extremists but they have no where to speak. We want to give them a voice," says Abu Ras.

PTHA stands apart from those Muslims included on a list of Palestinians who published an ad in mid-June opposing terror attacks, saying they undermine Palestinian aspirations.

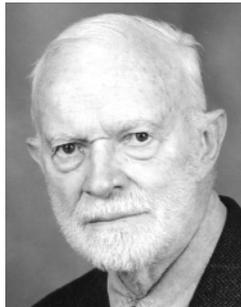
Rather than focusing on political efficacy, the new group looks at extremist activities through a moral lens, based on what they call misunderstood Koranic tradition. (RNO)

# SOMETHING GOOD MAY COME OF THIS

## A Reflection on the Catholic Sex Scandal

**JOHN C. CORT**

In our parish, St. Thomas Aquinas in Nahant, MA, a middle class suburb, the parish council has nine members elected by the parishioners. They are advisory only. The pastor has the last word.



Our present pastor listens to the council's advice. Previous pastors did not. One went so far as to abolish the council when he did not like the advice. An appeal to higher authority was politely ignored.

This was the Catholic Church in America. But then came the Geoghan Case and all hell breaking loose, earthquakes, volcanoes erupting left and right, here in the Boston archdiocese, then in other dioceses and other countries. The eruptions blew off the lids of secrecy, denial and cover-up that have discredited our archbishop, Cardinal Law, and other archbishops and bishops around the country and around the world.

Veils of infallibility have been stripped away, up and down the chain of command, all the way to the Vatican. And commands and commanders are being questioned and challenged, often for the first time. This is progress.

Cardinal Law is an old friend. He has been very good in his support of labor, the poor, the sick and the disadvantaged. But his support of one sick individual, the pedophile priest John Geoghan, and his reassignment of Geoghan to one parish after another,

were terrible mistakes in judgment that have destroyed his moral authority. I was among many who urged him to resign. Since then his authority has also been shredded by revelations that he protected another very sick ex-priest, Paul Shanley.

### **More Democratic Structures Needed**

Shortly after the Geoghan case broke, the Cardinal invited some 2500 of the most active parishioners to a convocation in Boston to discuss the fallout from the scandal. I was one of those who took advantage of the two minutes provided to tell him and our six regional bishops what we thought. What many of us thought was that more democratic structures were essential to give the laity, and the lower clergy, a real voice in the making of decisions, at the parish level, the regional level and the archdiocesan level, structures that would protect our bishops and archbishops from making these stupid, outrageous mistakes.

New organizations of laity and clergy, national and international, have been springing up. In our son Paul's parish in Wellesley they are meeting nearly every night to put one together. Old organizations have been coming to life. Democracy is busting out all over.

Of course, all the old enemies and the new critics have been enjoying a field day of criticism and abuse, much of it justified, much of it not. "The Church has to give up the male, celibate priesthood... The priests are all homosexuals anyway."

The *New Yorker* printed a letter, without correction, saying in effect, what do you expect, the Church has

never canonized a married man except for St. Joseph, and he doesn't count. I was so mortified by this ignorance I wrote my own letter pointing out that *Attwater's Dictionary of Saints* names 25 married men, including St. Peter, the first pope, and the "man for all seasons", Thomas More. Didn't he win an Oscar?

Maybe there aren't enough candidates for the priesthood who are morally healthy and committed enough to refrain from abusing somebody, young or old, male or female. Maybe celibacy should be optional, maybe women should be ordained. Personally, I like the idea of a celibate clergy. I go with St. Paul: "The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife" (1 Cor. 7:32-34), I don't think that I, with a wife and ten children, would have made a very good priest.

### John XXIII Knew Better

This is not the first time I have worried about the lack of democracy in our church. Pope John XXIII, that good and saintly man, tried to do something about it by calling the bishops together and reminding them that the Church is "the people of God". Vatican Council II agreed, and a new spirit seemed to be blowing through our musty churches and chanceries, at least until John Paul II began to step on the brake.

In 1970 Cardinal John Wright, another old friend who was by then a member of the Vatican's Curia, asked me to gather some information for a study he was making of lay organizations in America. I sent him a sizeable packet of material and a letter that read in part:

Virtually all lay organizations are suffering a decline, both the old and the new, both the relevant and the irrelevant. The one major exception is the parish council. Its rapid expansion is enough to make up for the other discouragements, for it is involved

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with the real nitty-gritty, namely, power in the Church.

I agree that one can go too far with the democratization bit. The Church is not a democracy in the usual sense of that word. But it seems reasonable that, with changing times, the Holy Spirit may want to express itself through the mind and experience of the faithful as well as through the mind and experience of the Holy Father. And the times they are certainly a-changing....

We live in a participatory age. And the Church cannot escape it. It hangs in the air we breathe. You might call it pollution. I call it oxygen mixed with the fragrance of spring flowers, and just a touch of skunkweed.

In response the Cardinal thanked me warmly for my help and added, "I sense that in philosophical and related matters we have grown miles apart, but perhaps in practical conclusions we would find ourselves more nearly at one, if not, indeed, entirely so. I do not do my thinking in terms of 'power' and I never did."

I did not respond, but if I had I might have been tempted to write, "Your Eminence, you never had to do your thinking in terms of power because you had it."

Readers of *Religious Socialism* might well be thinking, "What's a democratic socialist like Cort doing in a church like that?" That's a longer story than we have room for here. I hope to tell it in a different and more commodious medium before I die. ▀

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*John C. Cort is a contributing editor to Religious Socialism.*

# A Religious Ménage à Trois?

MAXINE PHILLIPS LOOKS AT HARVEY COX'S  
SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN FAITHS

***Common Prayers: Faith, Family,  
and a Christian's Journey  
Through the Jewish Year***

Harvey Cox  
Houghton Mifflin Company,  
2001, 305 pp., \$24



What does a book about interfaith marriage have to say to a religious socialist who's not in an intimate interfaith relationship? Not that much was my first thought, but when the author is Harvey Cox, it's worth a second thought. *Common Prayers* is an exploration of what Cox has learned about his faith and about Judaism since his marriage in 1986 to Nina Tumarkin, a Jewish professor of Russian history at Wellesley College. It is intimate and scholarly, taking the reader through the Jewish year from Rosh Hashanah to Tisha B'Av, the holiday dedicated to mourning the loss of the Temple. He explores rituals — the sabbath, shivah, bar/bat mitzvahs, marriage— noting that every issue that will arise in an interfaith marriage is foreshadowed in planning for the wedding.

Cox is a professor of religion at Harvard Divinity School, therefore not unacquainted with Judaism. He is an ardent advocate for understanding other religions. Yet, until his marriage to a Jew, he tells us, he lacked true appreciation both of the richness of Judaism and of the depth of Christian anti-Judaism. He goes beyond explaining the traditions to try to find original meanings as well as propose modern interpretations. And he attempts to come to grips with his feelings about the Middle East.

Cox knows that traditionalists and even liberals in both religions would question his conclusions, and he is scrupulous in differentiating his own thinking from that of the many rabbis he quotes. He is convinced that the "core convictions of Jews and Christians have been distorted by centuries of polemic." Most of the time,

he's talking about Christian polemic, reminding us often that Jesus was born a Jew and died a Jew. Christianity was a portal to monotheism for pagans, not a replacement for Judaism.

He tackles what he considers two basic misunderstandings to which every Christian, no matter how liberal his or her upbringing, has been exposed. The first is that Jews are "people of the law" and Christians are "people of love," with the Christian notion that one supersedes the other. The early converts from paganism were not expected to become Jews first and follow Jewish law, hence the initial misunderstanding. It is a misreading of Paul to speak of justification by faith versus following the law, since Paul is describing the New Covenant as one that makes God available to gentiles. "In short, Law is for the Jews, and Gospel is for the Gentiles. God has called both into one family." Such an interpretation, of course, precludes any proselytizing of Jews.

The second major misunderstanding for Christians is their practice of reading back into early Biblical texts foreshadowings of Christianity. For instance, the story of Abraham and Isaac — a story that Cox returns to throughout the book — becomes a prefiguration of the crucifixion. Hearing Biblical stories in a Jewish context made Cox realize "how often Christian readings of the Hebrew Bible are softened, even distorted, by projecting Christian themes back on them." He urges Christians to take the texts and "wrestle with them in their own terms."

When we do so with this story, for instance, he says, it takes us to a murkier place and gives us glimpses of our own nature and of God's that we would "prefer to suppress." For, he writes, the "fact is that neither God nor life as it unfolds is always user-friendly, benevolent, and supportive. Life can be cruel, and God's ways often seem arbitrary and inscrutable, even terrifying."

The subject of terror and violence weaves through the chapters, specifically Christian violence toward Jews

and Muslims. Cox wonders about Christian “disingenuousness on the question of religiously inspired violence” when it was Christians who initiated the Inquisition, witch-hunts, pogroms. Why, Cox asks, do Christians think that violence is not in keeping with Christianity, that it “is someone else’s religion, not ours, that inspires jihads and the burning of widows on funeral pyres”? He rejects the idea that Jesus was a pacifist, commenting that the same man who said, “all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt: 26:52, RSV) also admonished his disciples to “let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one.” (Luke 22:36, RSV).

In addition to the two basic misunderstandings, Cox believes that most Christians lack a sensitivity to the

followed by the mass conversion of the Jews, Armageddon, and the second coming. This belief helped influence European and U.S. support for a Jewish state. Part of the prophesy speaks of a King of the North who will wage war on God’s chosen people. Soviet Russia used to be the stand-in for the King of the North, Cox notes, but now, “the villain is more often equated with Islam.”

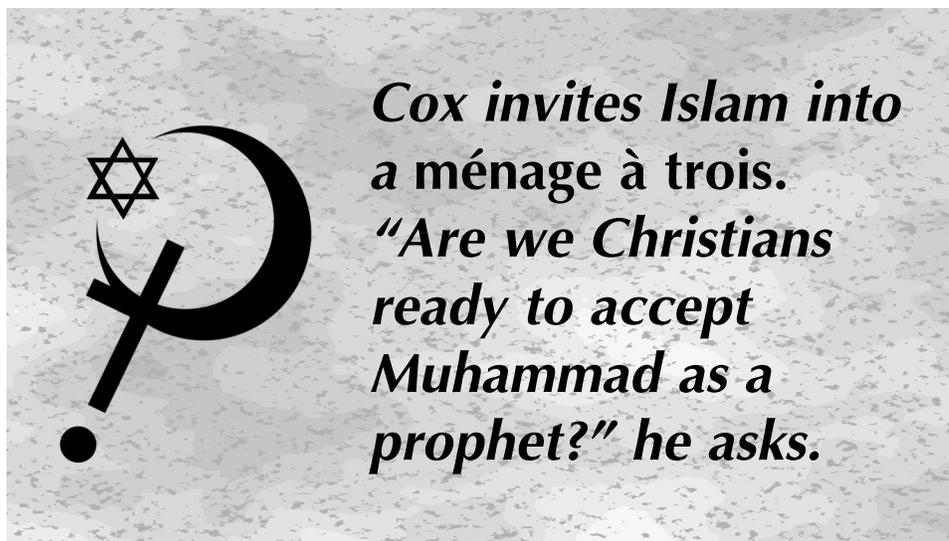
The role of Christian fundamentalists, which undoubtedly is of major influence in the Bush administration, is one that non-fundamentalist Christians need to understand. Cox does not say this, but some within the Israeli peace movement see Christian (read right-wing Christian) support as more crucial than Jewish support for current U.S. policies.

“It seems mind-boggling,” Cox writes, “but from the perspective of Christian Zionists, one can believe that Jews who do not accept Christ as the Messiah are doomed to hell, while at the same time lobbying Congress on behalf of Israel and urging the Israeli government not to give back one square inch of the Holy Land to the Arabs.”

On his first visit to the Holy Land, Cox tries to understand the role that the stories of the Holy Land played in his Christian upbringing. On the second visit, he is with his Jewish wife and son, and he finds himself

moved by a visit to the Western Wall and put off by the Christian factionalism at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. What does he believe, amid all the lies, about Jerusalem, a city that Jesus said “‘murders the prophets’”? After his wife and son have returned home, and he is about to lecture at an ecumenical study center near Bethlehem, he finds a book called *The Testing of Hearts* by Donald Nicholl. Nicholl offers a test for knowing when your own heart has been infected with lies. Ask yourself what your first reaction is “when you hear that the Israeli Defense Force has shelled an allegedly terrorist camp, or a Hamas suicide bomber has exploded his dynamite in a restaurant, and in both cases people die. Do you say to yourself, ‘Well, what do they expect if they are oppressing people? Or do you feel, first of all, that this is a human tragedy?’ This test always works, he says, because even if your ideology is correct, if your first response is ideological, then your heart has begun to harden.”

*cont’d on next page*



fear of annihilation carried by every Jew, a terror released in celebration of life-affirming holidays. He repeats an old joke about the holidays, almost any holiday: “They tried to kill us, we won, let’s eat.”

The book came out in 2001 and was written after the second *intifada* but before the latest rash of suicide bombings and Israeli reprisals. Never far from his mind, though, is the struggle for Israel and Palestine. He discusses the roots of secular and religious Jewish Zionism, then turns to Christian Zionism, something about which most mainline Christians know little. Although its source can be traced back to the Middle Ages, its most popular expression came in the nineteenth century in a book by William E. Blackstone entitled *Jesus Is Coming*, which sold a million copies. Even today, one might add, books on the second coming and Armageddon are bestsellers. The thesis is that before the second coming of Jesus Christ, the Jews have to return to the Promised Land, and the Temple — destroyed in 70 C.E. — must be rebuilt. This will be

Cox admits that he had not passed the test. "I had found myself thinking, 'What do they expect if they bulldoze people's homes?' or 'What do they think will happen if they blow up innocent people in restaurants?'" He longs to come to terms with his own feelings about the Holy Land, realizing that in Jerusalem he had been "touched and revolted, inspired and enraged, overcome by both awe and abhorrence." He recalls Jewish, Muslim, and Christian violence in that city, the blood of Jews and Muslims that flowed through the its streets "'as deep as the horses' stirrups'" when the Crusaders conquered it.

Finally, he realizes that "Jerusalem is the city where Abraham did not have to shed the blood of human sacrifice." It was the place where "God showed us that there had been enough human sacrifice." He recognizes that not only Jews and Christians must be engaged in fulfilling the divine promise, but that the promise is true for Muslims.

In effect, Cox invites Islam into a *ménage à trois*. Are we Christians ready to accept Muhammad as a prophet? he asks. And if so, can we find a place at the table for other religions. "The much-touted Jewish-Christian dialogue cannot continue as a duet. It must become a trio, a quartet, and eventually a whole choir."

I can't do justice to other themes in the book. It is rich in provocative thought, yet accessible to the layperson. It's also probably not your parents' interpretations, perhaps not even yours. The theological points he makes could take up hours of heated discussion, and I don't feel qualified to comment on them.

What I can say, though, is that his emphasis on the unexplored depths of Christian anti-Jewish sentiment, Christian hubris, and Jewish fear ring true. His choice of the Abraham and Isaac story calls up the memory of Isaac's banished brother, Ishmael. On September 11 Ishmael's cousins literally crashed into our gates, demanding a reckoning. To explore that story and anti-Arab bias on the part of Christians would require another book.

Here on the religious socialist left, though, much as we want/try to be ecumenical, the majority of us come from either Jewish or Christian traditions. Even (and sometimes it seems especially) our secular leftist comrades who scoff at religious belief also come from those traditions. Therefore, it behooves us to look first in our own hearts and minds.

Writing in the *American Scholar* ("Grace, Punishment and the Torah," Winter 2002, pp. 61-63), Jonathan Rosen noted the signs carried by peace demonstrators after the American invasion of Afghanistan that said "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind." He "could not help seeing a finger pointed at Judaism, often depicted as a punitive faith presided over by an angry God." He finds the same theme in an article by Karen Armstrong written in *Time* magazine in the wake of September 11 in which she says that the "'Koran quotes the Torah, the Jewish scriptures, which permits people to retaliate eye for eye, tooth for tooth, but like the gospels, the Koran suggests that it is meritorious to forgo revenge in a spirit of charity.'" To the contrary, he argues, Jewish law rarely enforced a death penalty and interpreted that particular injunction not as a literal eye for eye, but as a "way for making sure the punishment was not disproportionate to the crime." The rabbis of the Talmud, he says, were explicit in stating that it was a metaphor that meant a payment of money. Judaism, he stresses, is not about revenge, it is about justice.

I hadn't yet read Cox's book when I saw Rosen's article, but Rosen made sense. As a Christian, I'd been taught that the interpretation was literal (and I assumed that it meant something like what the Taliban used to enforce and the Saudi government still does). Still, I thought, wasn't he being a little too touchy? After all, the quote carried by the demonstrators is attributed to Gandhi, who was trying to stop Hindu terrorists from attacking the British after the British massacre at Amritsar. My response, I think, relates to the inability of most Christians to understand the fear Cox describes. When the Soviet Union fell and a Jewish neighbor told me he was certain pogroms would follow in Russia, I was as incredulous then as I am now when writer Nat Hentoff says he wouldn't be surprised if all Jews were ordered to report to Times Square. My neighbor was right about slaughter but wrong about the location and the target group. Hentoff may be right about coming fascism in the United States, but he's got to be wrong about the target group,

Nevertheless, the fear evoked by the resurgence of anti-Jewish feeling here and abroad is real, as is the anti-Judaism. The question that many Christians and secular leftists need to ask themselves is why they can't just oppose the brutal policies of Ariel Sharon without indicting a whole country and religion. Our right-wing government has, as Sharon did, seized a crisis to advance its own undemocratic agenda. Do we immediately condemn all Christians as undemocratic? When Catholic and fundamentalist Protestant dictators

# THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

## a socialist document

*Predictable as it might be during a national crisis, the media and various opportunistic politicians have used the naïvely-timed ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to rally back to an issue that seems to be more important to some Americans than food, shelter, and clothing: the Pledge of Allegiance. Putting aside the question of whether or not we shall indeed be under or over God in the future, we thought the following true story of the Pledge of Allegiance, written by John W. Baer and originally published in the Summer 1989 issue of Propaganda Review, would delight those of our readers who find themselves faced with statements like, "You damned socialists are trying to destroy the Pledge of Allegiance!" How ironic.*

Every class day over 60 million public and parochial school teachers and students in the U.S. recite the Pledge of Allegiance along with thousands of Americans at official meetings of the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Elks, Masons, American Legion, and others. During the televised bicentennial celebration of the U.S. Constitution for the school children on September 17, 1987, the children as a group did not recite any part of the Constitution. However, President Reagan did lead the nation's school children in reciting the Pledge. Yet probably not one of them knows the history or original meaning of the Pledge.

How did this Pledge of Allegiance to a flag replace the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights in the affections of many Americans? Among the nations in the world, only the USA and the Philippines, imitating the USA, have a pledge to their flag. Who institutionalized the Pledge as the cornerstone of American patriotic programs and indoctrination in the public and parochial schools?

In 1892, a socialist named Francis Bellamy created the Pledge of Allegiance for *Youths' Companion*, a national family magazine for youth published in Boston. The magazine had the largest national

circulation of its day with a circulation around 500,000. Two liberal businessmen, Daniel Ford and James Upham, his nephew, owned *Youths' Companion*.

One hundred years ago the American flag was rarely seen in the classroom or in front of the school. Upham changed that. In 1888, the magazine began a campaign to sell American flags to the public schools. By 1892, his magazine had sold American flags to about 26,000 schools.

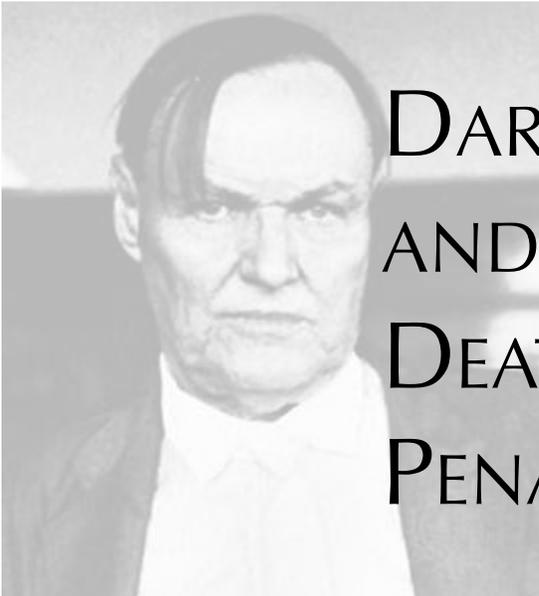
In 1891, Upham had the idea of using the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America to promote the use of the flag in the public schools. The same year, the magazine hired Daniel Ford's radical young friend, Baptist minister, Nationalist, and Christian Socialist leader, Francis Bellamy, to help Upham in his public relations work. Bellamy was the first cousin of the famous American socialist, Edward Bellamy. Edward Bellamy's futuristic novel, *"Looking Backward"*, published in 1888, described a utopian Boston in the year 2000. The book spawned an elitist socialist movement in Boston known as "Nationalism," whose members wanted the federal government to nationalize most of the American economy. Francis Bellamy was a member of this movement and a vice president of its auxiliary group, the Society of Christian Socialists. He was a

**Francis Bellamy was  
a Baptist minister  
who preached on  
the virtues of socialism  
and the evils of capitalism.**

**He also wrote  
the Pledge of Allegiance.**

Baptist minister and he lectured and preached on the virtues of socialism and the evils of capitalism. He gave a speech on "Jesus the Socialist" and a series of sermons on "The Socialism of the Primitive Church." In 1891, he was forced to resign from his Boston church, the Bethany Baptist Church, because of his socialist

*cont'd on page 14*



# DARROW AND THE DEATH PENALTY

**QUENTIN OGREN**

The idol of my high school days in the Depression-ridden early thirties was Clarence Darrow, America's most hated, most loved, and most renowned lawyer. By 1933 Darrow had fought the famous battles of his career, and he came to Rockford, Illinois out of retirement at the urging of my father's friend, Fay Lewis, to defend Russell McWilliams, age 16, charged with the murder of a streetcar conductor in an armed robbery. Darrow served without fee. The State's Attorney demanded the electric chair.

Throughout the lengthy trial, the issue among Rockford's citizens wasn't so much Mc Williams as Darrow. Though George Gallup was yet to invent his poll, a conservative estimate would be that 98% were against Darrow and 2% for. My father was a vocal part of the tiny, unpopular minority. If there were any "undecideds," I never met one.

One day as the trial was drawing to a close, I happened to be in the vice-principal's small office when Chester Bailey, the commercial law teacher, dropped in. Pointing to a headline on the front page of the morning paper, he exclaimed, "Look at that! Why, that Darrow ought to be run out of town on a rail!" Since the vice principal was part of the 98%, there was no argument, just conversation. I knew my place, which was off to the side, and I bit my lip.

The talk got hotter, and finally the teacher said, "If Darrow gets his way and McWilliams is let out, it won't be safe to walk the streets of Rockford!" My lip was raw; I could bite no more, and I exploded: "I'd rather be seen on the streets of Rockford with Russell McWilliams than with some teachers I know." Within

minutes I was expelled from school. It was in the last half of my senior year.

I was proud to have spoken out for justice, and I knew my father would be pleased. But I was hardly a wise son, for I didn't know my own father. Where would I be if I didn't graduate from high school? No diploma, no college, even if we could somehow scrape up the money. After a couple of days' reflection, at my father's prompting I ate humble pie and was reinstated.

Then an exciting thing happened. Fay Lewis, as close a friend of my father as of Darrow, invited Dad and me to dine with him and Darrow at the Nelson Hotel, where Darrow was staying. We spent the evening together, and I was strongly impressed with Darrow's relaxed and easy manner, his friendliness, his humor, and especially his utter lack of bitterness toward his countless detractors. "I never wished any man dead," he told us, adding with a characteristic twinkle, "but I confess that I have read a few obituaries with considerable satisfaction."

Darrow lost the case, both the trial and the appeal. The boy was sentenced to die in the electric chair at the Joliet penitentiary. The day before the scheduled execution there was to be a hearing before the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, which had authority to recommend commutation to the Governor, and the expectation was that the Governor would follow the recommendation, whatever it might be.

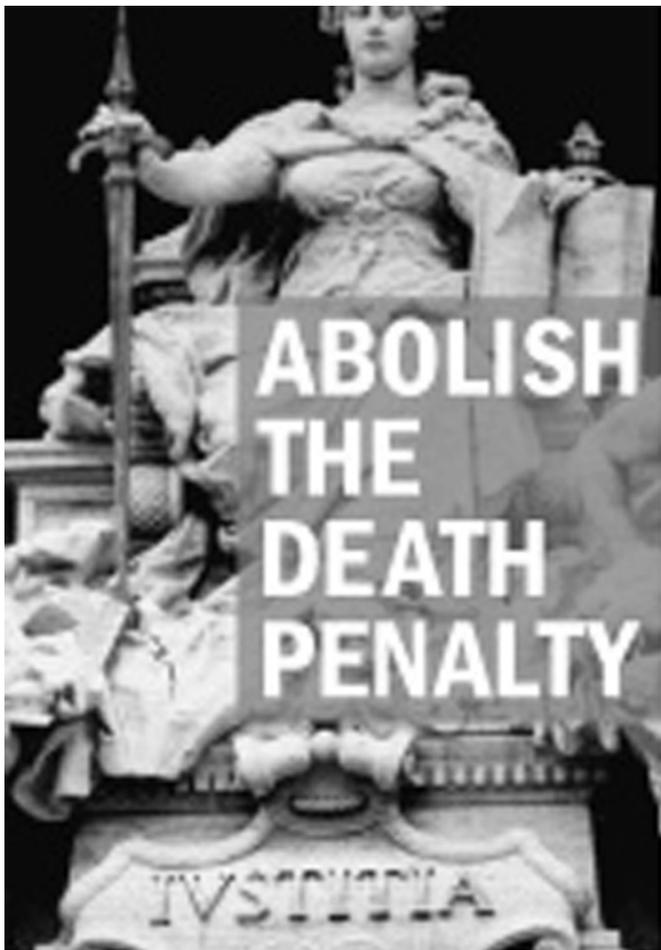
Early on the day of the hearing, Fay Lewis, Dad and I drove to Joliet to be with Darrow at the hearing, to be held at the prison. Before the hearing we went with Darrow to see the warden, who told us candidly that he hoped for a commutation, because he was certain the execution would set off a riot, so intensely did the inmates identify with the boy, now only seventeen. "You can feel it in the air," the warden said, "there would be no way to stop it!"

The ten men on the Board took their seats facing us at a highly polished table, and State's Attorney B.J. Knight was first to address them. He displayed the murder gun and the conductor's bloodied shirt. He talked passionately about what a cold-blooded, premeditated killing it had been, what a fair trial the defendant had had, and their solemn duty to fulfill the command of the law, which was death. After two histrionic hours, he sat down.

It was Darrow's turn, and he began by asking permission to address the Board sitting down, which was

readily granted. In no time the contrast in style was absolute. No flamboyance here, just man-to-man come-let-us-reason-together conversation, delivered in such a “soft voice that some had to lean close to hear.” Nothing sensational, nothing even novel. Merely a suggestion that they put themselves in the shoes of the young lad, penniless, his mother dead, his father long without work, living in a shanty out at the edge of town, utterly without hope of earning a few dimes so he could take his girl out for a good time, never in trouble before, like the street-car conductor a victim of evil social forces and frustrations that deny life and breed crime and death. The boy hadn’t intended to fire the gun, but the conductor, surprised, reacted in a nervous, menacing way; the boy panicked, and the gun went off.

Above all, “It is not the policy of this state to kill children.” he said. “The mind of the child is not the mind of the man. The child does not have the experience that alone can guide life. The civil laws recognize this. Why should not the criminal law recognize it?”



SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL



After fifteen or twenty minutes Darrow said he was getting tired, and the chairman granted a brief recess.

I had been sitting in the front row, and as he started up the aisle, Darrow beckoned to me to join him. When we reached his destination, the water cooler, he said to me, “Bud, did you see their eyes?” “No,” I said, “I was watching you.” Ignoring my response, he said, “If Russell McWilliams dies tomorrow, I’m going to sue ten men for breach of promise!”

The hearing resumed. Darrow talked in the same low-key manner for less than five minutes, and it was over.

After the hearing we returned to the warden’s office, where Darrow arranged to have a guard escort me to death row. Why me? I didn’t ask, and to this day I don’t know the answer.

McWilliams’ cell was tiny, with barely enough room for his cot, a toilet and washbowl, and a small table. When I first saw him through the bars and a heavy wire grill, he was sitting on the edge of the cot, reading. He stood up when the guard called his name and announced that he had a visitor.

McWilliams, a Caucasian, was so pale, he was literally the whitest person I had ever seen. His pink eyelids confirmed what he told me, how for three nights he had not slept; he had just prayed and read his Bible. I told him then what Darrow had said at the water cooler, and he needed no interpretation. “Thank God,” he said, “Now I can sleep.” We compared our ages, and I was only a few days older.

Early that evening Governor Henry Horner, following the Board’s recommendation, commuted the sentence to life. Years passed. Darrow had died in the thirties, and I had gone to his funeral at the University of Chicago chapel. In 1951 I was practicing law in California, and I received from my parents a clipping from Page One of the *Rockford Morning Star*: Russell McWilliams, a model prisoner for eighteen years and a trustee on the landscaping crew, was released from Joliet penitentiary on parole to take a job in Vermont as a gardener. ▀

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*Quentin Ogren is a retired lawyer in California who himself was largely responsible for saving a convicted murderer from execution. This piece is excerpted from his unpublished autobiography.*

## Ménage à trois?

cont'd from page 10

in Latin America act brutally toward indigenous populations, do the words "Catholic" or "fundamentalist" come to mind before the word "dictator"? Do Catholics or fundamentalists in the United States start feeling unsafe? I understand that the situations aren't analogous, but they're worth keeping in mind.

The fear even among Jewish leftists is so great that some believe they are being forced out of the left. An anecdote: my teenage daughter was stunned to learn that a Jewish friend of hers whose politics she had always thought were similar to hers was going to the pro-Israel rally in Washington, D.C. this past April. At this rally Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz was booed after he expressed sympathy for the deaths of innocent Palestinians. When my daughter asked the friend why she had gone, the seventeen-year-old said that she just felt so much anti-Jewish hostility around her that she wanted to be with people who wouldn't make her feel bad about who she was. However, she reported, the booing turned her off.

Ironically, in Israel itself, there is support for moderate solutions, but the very real fear of terrorism gives support to the government's futile and repressive responses. Were the Palestinians to renounce violence, they might still use "soul force" to gain much of what they want (short of an end to the state of Israel). Both sides are blinded, one by fear, the other by humiliation.

We on the left can examine our hearts, look at the "testing of the heart" that Cox holds out, and try to speak to moderates in both camps.

As I read *Common Prayers*, with its recurring Abraham/Isaac theme, I thought also of the story of Sarah and Hagar. The tent wasn't big enough. The inability to imagine that there could be enough for both their sons led to a splitting of the family. Yet in that split, Hagar became a free woman, and God promised that there would be an inheritance for each child.

Cox challenges Christians to go outside their comfort zone to meet other religions on equal terms. It is a challenge worth taking under any circumstances. It is an imperative one today. ▀

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*Maxine Phillips is a contributing editor to Religious Socialism and an active member of Judson Memorial Church in New York City.*

## Pledge

cont'd from page 11

activities. He then joined the staff of the *Youths' Companion*.

By February 1892, Francis Bellamy and Upham had lined up the National Education Association to support the *Youths' Companion* as a sponsor of the national public schools' observance of Columbus Day along with the use of the American flag. By June 29, Bellamy and Upham had arranged for Congress and President Benjamin Harrison to announce a national proclamation making the public school flag ceremony the center of the national Columbus Day celebrations for 1892.

Bellamy, under the supervision of Upham, wrote the program for this celebration, including its flag salute, the Pledge of Allegiance. His version was,

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands — one nation indivisible — with liberty and justice for all."

This program and its pledge appeared in the September issue of *Youths' Companion*. He considered putting the words "fraternity" and "equality" in the Pledge but decided they were too radical and controversial for public schools.

The original Pledge was recited while giving a stiff, uplifted right hand salute, criticized and discontinued during WWII. The words "my flag" were changed to "the flag of the United States of America" because it was feared that the children of immigrants might confuse "my flag" for the flag of their homeland. The phrase, "under God," was added by Congress and President Eisenhower in 1954 at the urging of the Knights of Columbus.

The American Legion's constitution includes the following goal: "To foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism." One of its major standing committees was the "Americanism Commission" and its subsidiary, the "Counter Subversive Activities Committee." To the fear of immigrants, it added the fear of communism.

Over the years the Legion has worked closely with the NEA and with the U.S. Office of Education. The Legion insisted on "one hundred percent" Americanism in public school courses in American history, civics, geography and English. The Pledge was a part of this

## Pledge

*cont'd from previous page*

Americanism campaign and, in 1950, the Legion adopted the Pledge as an official part of its own ritual.

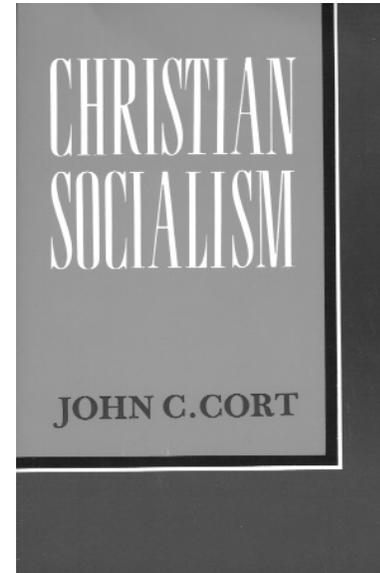
In 1922, the Ku Klux Klan, which also had adopted the "one hundred percent Americanism" theme along with the flag ceremonies and the Pledge, became a political power in the state of Oregon and arranged for legislation to be passed requiring all Catholic children to attend public schools. The U.S. Supreme Court later overturned this legislation.

Perhaps a team of social scientists and historians could explain why over the last century the Pledge of Allegiance has become a major centerpiece in American patriotism programs. A pledge or loyalty oath for children was not built around the Declaration of Independence — "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..." Or the Gettysburg address — "a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal..."

Apparently, over the last century, Americans have been uncomfortable with the word "equality" as a patriotic theme. In 1992 the nation will begin its second century with the Pledge of Allegiance. Perhaps the time has come to see that this allegiance should be to the U.S. constitution and not to a piece of cloth. ▀

*John W. Baer is a professor of economics at Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold, Maryland.*

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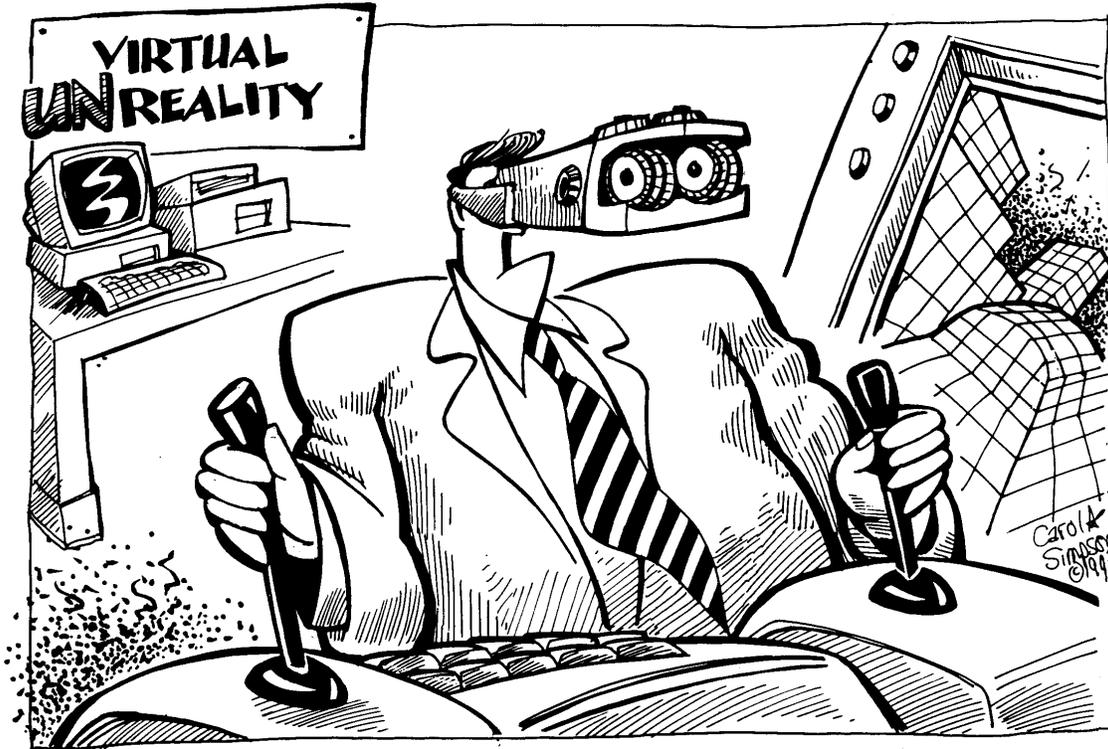
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