



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 2004**

VOLUME 28, ISSUE 1

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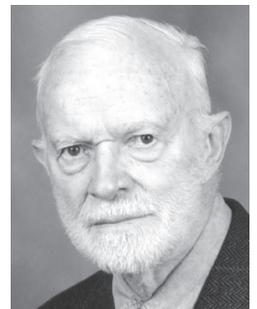
# Religious Socialism

THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM

## Kucinich Preferable, Kerry Acceptable, Bush and Nader Deplorable

JOHN C. CORT

*Co-editor's Notes:* The majority opinion of our highly selective poll regarding the presidential candidates (see following pages) seems to be that Dennis Kucinich should have been the Democratic nominee, but John Kerry, the obvious nominee, is acceptable; Howard Dean deserves points for energizing the party; and almost anybody would be preferable to George W. Bush, one of the worst presidents in U.S. history. Because this is a quarterly magazine, the respondents wrote before several candidates dropped out of the race.



Only Alex Mikulich dealt with the looming threat of another Ralph Nader candidacy. In this writer's opinion, Nader should have his mouth – he should have his mind – washed out with soap for even thinking about running again. In a statement on January 9, Nader declared that his running would actually help the Democratic nominee because of what he called "the spillover vote."

The spillover vote, in the crazed mind of Ralph Nader, seems to be the Democratic votes of people who will go to the polls only because a Nader campaign would get them so excited that they couldn't stay away. Nader still hasn't done public penance or, as far as I know, even expressed regret for making George W. Bush our president.

Nader polled over 97,000 votes in Florida in the 2000 election. Bush allegedly won Florida by 537 votes and, with them, the presidency. Nader is saying that Bush would have beaten Gore by even more votes if Nader's name hadn't been on the Florida ballot. Anybody who believes that should accompany Ralph Nader to the nearest available psychiatrist.

*cont'd on page 2*

## Important Question

Does any sane lefty reading these words know Nader well enough to talk sense to him? This is important. Kerry has a fair chance to beat Bush, but it will not be easy. Bush has money; he's the incumbent; and God knows what homicidal, suicidal maniacal horrors terrorists may have in store for us as the election approaches. Also, the Republicans will do everything they can to stick the Democrats with a label reading "Gay Marriages and Abortion on Demand." (See David O'Brien's contribution to symposium.)

So what does this co-editor think of the candidates? He writes the day after the Virginia/Tennessee results, which clinched the nomination for Kerry. Many of those in our poll wrote before that clincher.

## Once a Deaniac

I was once an enthusiastic Deaniac. I liked his intelligence, his apparent honesty, and in particular his anger because I was angry myself. We socialists tend to be angry because we see, or think we see, more clearly than others the reasons to be angry.

But anger is a dangerous emotion. As the Good Book says, "If you are angry, let it be without sin. The sun must not go down on your wrath; do not give the devil a chance to work on you" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

I fear the devil, in whom he clearly does not believe, unhinged Howard Dean. Even before that crazy speech I knew, from the Iowa results, that he was a done duck.

We owe you much, Howard, because you woke up the Democratic Democrats and even the Republican Democrats, even John Kerry, and gave us all reasons to believe that Bush could be beaten.

And what about Kerry? I'm from Massachusetts and have had more than enough years to be bored by Senator Kerry. I had to agree with the wit who said, "Kerry is Al Gore without the charisma." But you know what? Success seems to have bestowed on Kerry a modest helping of charisma. The man looks more alive, more energetic, more confident, more focused. Now if he can just mean it when he says he wants to put an end to corporate domination of our country.

Harvey Cox writes "I will work my tush off for" Kerry when he is nominated. I would have preferred "work my ass off," but Harvey's a Baptist minister and I'm not.

## *Noster Culpa*

It has come to our attention that the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue of *Religious Socialism* failed to acknowledge the co-editorships of David Seymour and Lew Daly during the years 1997 and 1998. We are sorry about this and hereby express retroactive appreciation for their services in keeping this magazine alive.

—The Editors

## Thank You, Readers

We want to thank all our readers who renewed their subscriptions and sent commission dues and contributions in response to our appeal. The response has been most generous. It seems evident that you want this little magazine to survive.

Not that we can't use more support. Keep it coming.

—The Editors



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UNION MADE  
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

# Who for President?

**who** for president?

## For Democrats' Nominee



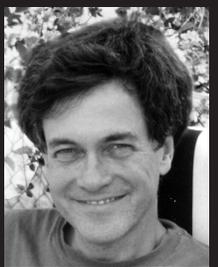
HERMAN BENSON

My pick was Richard Gephardt only because he has a record for knee-jerk support for most of the liberal issues that come up for a vote. When he and Howard Dean bombed in Iowa, after zealous support from unions, it was obvious that the labor movement has a serious internal problem. It could not inspire a majority of voters with unionists in their households to follow its lead. I'll vote for any candidate that the Democrats are likely to nominate. Practically, my choice at this point is irrelevant. I'm not registered Democratic but Working Families Party. I support the general approach of the Working Families Party and the New Party as the best at this juncture.

*Herman Benson is founder and secretary-treasurer of the Association for Union Democracy and editor of its Union Democracy Review.*

**who** for president?

## Another Vote for Kerry



JACK CLARK

The battle for the nomination has produced great results. As Jim Hightower notes, this Democratic field is sounding far more populist and aggressive than the Democrats of 2000 or 2004. Howard Dean's insurgent campaign contributed a lot to that. Dennis Kucinich, as the most principled and progressive of candidates, has exerted influence on the debate far beyond what his fundraising total or poll numbers would suggest. Dick Gephardt helped turn around the debate on trade.

In decrying the split between two nations, John Edwards set a tone that needs to carry through to the general election. Similarly, Wesley Clark's genuine anger about — and open ridicule of — Bush's manipulation of patriotic symbols needs to

endure. In Iowa and New Hampshire, voter turnout set new records. In New Hampshire, independents flocked to the Democratic primary, and Democratic write-ins broke double digits in the Republican primary. These signs offer hope that large numbers of the American people are ready for an alternative to George W. Bush.

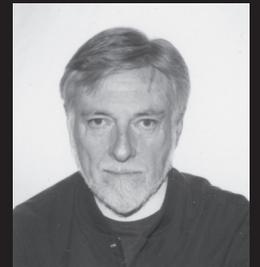
Now it's time for the nomination fight to end. The importance of this fall's election cannot be overstated. The Right will fight hard and dirty to consolidate its power. We need to start fighting back now. Kerry has emerged as a candidate who can challenge President Bush and his flock of chicken hawks.

Bring it on.

*Jack Clark is a former national director of one of DSA's predecessor organizations, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee. He now works for the Community Transportation Development Center in Washington, D.C.*

**who** for president?

## Anarchist for Dean



TOM CORNELL

There comes a time when this anarchist has to bite the bullet. The Democratic Party has betrayed the working people and minorities. It has betrayed an essential element of the Old Coalition by insulting the Catholic Church to please a small minority. I'd love to sit this election out. But that would be massively irresponsible to the point of serious sin.

We can't afford four more years of G.W.B.! There will be no fixing the damage: privatization across the board, across the world; the undermining of the only possible structure for peace, international law. *Pacta sunt servanda!*

At this point, any Democrat but Bush. Third parties can play only a spoiler role. If Ralph Nader insists upon another run, he defines himself as unworthy of further consideration.

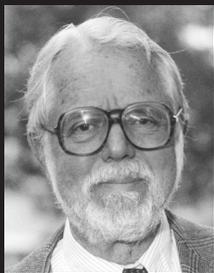
I prefer Dean because he gets angry. But he needs a dollop of cheeriness in his wrath, like "Give 'em Hell Harry." Truman had a twinkle in his eye. FDR got away with taunting the Re-

publicans. He did it with a smile. Smile, Dr. Dean, and give 'em hell before they make a hell out of the Republic we inherited from giants, now in the hands of thieves.

*Tom Cornell is an associate editor of the Catholic Worker.*

**who** for president?

## Kucinich Now, Kerry Later



HARVEY COX

"Howard Dean simply has to learn how to talk with people in regions of the country where religion of part of the local vernacular idiom. Otherwise he hasn't got a prayer (so to speak) in Alabama, Georgia, etc. I think I can help. I've worked in presidential campaigns before, and I know a little about how Baptists talk since I've been one a long time — that is, all my life."

The above are my words to Joe Trippi, the late lamented manager of the late lamented Howard Dean campaign. I was, in fact, drawn in, and Dean did start mentioning religion. Awkwardly, ineptly. Imagine my surprise to learn after many years of study in the field of religion that the Book of Job is in the New Testament!

I was actually pulled into the Dean effort by Tom Hayden of sixties fame, who was here at Harvard last fall. Tom believed he saw in the Dean campaign a real "movement."

Well (I write on the day of the Tennessee/Virginia primary), as we say in theology, "*Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

I do not like the word "electable." It seems vacuous. Nixon was obviously electable. He won twice. But, like every other left democrat from here to Hawaii, I know the country desperately needs to get G.W.B. out of the White House. Imagine losing another three million jobs, four more years of Republican congressional hegemony, Supreme Court appointments, federal judges and Patriot II, III, IV until we are all enjoying the balmy winds of Guantánamo. So, given the luxury of living in Massachusetts, where Kerry will get 109% of the vote (like Curley did in Southie), I plan to vote for Dennis Kucinich just to keep a little left pressure on Kerry. When he is nominated I will work my tush off for him. But I don't think I'll try to advise him on how to talk about religion. Or maybe I'll just tell him that Job is still — I think — in the Old Testament.

*Harvey Cox is a professor at Harvard Divinity School and author of The Secular City, among numerous works.*

**who** for president?

## Kucinich for Good Reasons



JUDITH DEUTSCH

I support Kucinich because

- he is the only candidate who voted against the war in Iraq;
- advocates for a Department of Peace that seeks to make nonviolence an organizing principle;
- works for nuclear disarmament, the preservation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the banning of weapons in outer space, and a halt to the development of a "Star Wars"—type missile technology;
- advocates for an increase in unemployment benefits and the establishment of wholesale-based rates for electricity, natural gas, and home heating oil;
- has been honored internationally for his work for human rights;
- stands for universal health care with a single-payer plan that would be publicly financed and privately delivered and quotes the United States General Accounting Office as stating, "If the United States were to shift to a system of universal coverage and a single payer . . . the savings in administrative costs would be more than enough to offset the cost";
- stands for full Social Security benefits at age 65 and a progressive tax structure and is opposed to the privatization of Social Security;
- supports an approach to drug abuse that emphasizes treatment rather than criminalization and an end to the "fueling of a prison industrial complex at the expense of minorities who are disproportionately incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses";
- supports the right of those suffering from disease to have access to medical marijuana;
- opposes the death penalty;
- has introduced legislation that would repeal 10 sections of the Patriot Act that speak to governmental secrecy and infringement upon personal privacy;
- includes education and peace among his budget priorities;
- favors a global trade system in which the United States leads the world in bilateral negotiations and agreements that raise environmental, labor, and human rights standards around the world;
- opposes the secrecy of NAFTA, its extension, and its agreements negotiated by and for multinational corporations; and
- has been honored as a champion of clean water and clean air, and, internationally, has led the way toward a sustainable, shared stewardship of the planet.

*Rev. Judith Deutsch is a Unitarian-Universalist minister and a member of the R&S Commission Executive Committee.*

**who** for president?

## Kerry to Beat Bush



GARY DORRIEN

I would like to support an electable, personable, progressive candidate with Southern-state appeal who has strong credentials on domestic and foreign policy, opposed the Iraq war, and has the right stuff to win the swing vote in states like Missouri, Pennsylvania, Illinois, West Virginia, Ohio, and Florida. But that candidate doesn't exist in this field. As a nation, we are in an emergency situation, and I'm ready to support the surviving Democratic candidate.

The field of candidates was disappointing. Richard Gephardt had been around the block too many times, and he supported the war; John Kerry was afflicted with Gore-like public stiffness, and he supported the war; John Edwards was inexperienced, his campaign floundered, and he supported the war; Joe Lieberman was an outright Pax Americanist who, of course, supported the war; Wesley Clark had no political experience at all and wasn't even a Democrat until recently; Howard Dean's veer to the left smacked of primary-season opportunism, and his prickly, volatile temperament made him unelectable; the other candidates had no electoral base.

On the ground that electability trumps everything else in this time of crisis, I struggled to identify the most electable candidate. Dean was hot on the campaign trail but a sure loser against Bush. Fortunately, the Democrats of Iowa, having gotten a long look at the candidates (except Clark, to his folly), got it right. I am supporting Kerry, and I hope that he picks Edwards as his running mate.

If the Supreme Court had voted 5-4 the other way, or if Ralph Nader's ego had not skyrocketed into orbit, or if Al Gore had selected Bob Graham as his running mate, or if Gore had won any Southern state, today we would have a decent and reasonably honorable government, a decent environmental policy, and a foreign policy that didn't set most of the world against the United States. Instead, we are in a national emergency and getting Kerry elected is imperative.

*Gary Dorrien is the Parfet Distinguished Professor at Kalamazoo College. His eleventh book, Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana, will be published by Routledge in May 2004.*

**who** for president?

## Why Kerry Should be President



NORM FARAMELLI

I am finishing this piece as the results from Virginia and Tennessee primaries are coming in. I am delighted that many voters in different regions of the nation concur with my judgment.

I do not subscribe to the "anyone but Bush" mantra. We need to ask, what does this nation need at this time? We need leadership that can provide a foundation for the core values of the Democratic Party—values of social, racial, and economic justice. We need someone around whom the Democrats of various political leanings can rally. We need someone who can get a handle on the war machine and control military spending with more of a focus on benefits for those in uniform and veterans of military service and less on sophisticated military weaponry. We need a person who can repair the damage done to our allies, and who can bring the United States back into the international community.

Of all the Democratic candidates, Kerry can provide the leadership our country needs at this time. Are there shortcomings to Kerry? Of course. He is hardly a democratic socialist. On electability, Kerry seems to have the most promise, but we will not have the definitive answer until November.

*Rev. Norm Faramelli is an Episcopal minister and a member of the R&S Commission*

**who** for president?

## Dean for Kerry



ANDREW HAMMER

Four years ago in these pages, when asked about my opinion of the presidential race, I chose instead to criticize the electoral system. The aftermath of the 2000 elections confirmed that critique. But at some point opinion must reconcile with practice. I did support Bernie Sanders; I also voted for Gore. So it's no surprise that in the 2004 race, after casting my primary vote for Howard Dean, I'm prepared to support John Kerry's totally uninspiring campaign for president.

Like most socialists, I'm disgusted by the American voters' apparent need for their leaders to have proven their worth as a human being by killing someone while wearing a military uniform. Such an obsession destroys the credibility of those "patriots" who seem to think that the American model is so superior to countries such as Paraguay or Pakistan, both of which also have a penchant for putting military men in power. But democracy must develop in stages, and sometimes, as in Turkey, it is acceptable if not necessary to replace right-wing generals with not-so-right-wing generals for the sake of the nation's future.

In this case, we're talking about the future of the world, and therefore, almost any Democratic nominee save for Joe Lieberman is a step toward bettering that future. So vote Kerry and do a lot of praying in the meantime.

*Andrew Hammer is a co-editor of Religious Socialism and general secretary of the International League of Religious Socialists.*

**who** for president?

## Pro-Kerry, Anti-Nader



ALEX MIKULICH

The decision for 2004 is clear: we need John Kerry to become president of the United States. No other Democratic candidate has a chance of winning in November. All other candidates are irrelevant. Except for Ralph Nader and the Greens. If the Greens pull the same stunt they did in 2000, we may well see further annihilation of international and national environmental protections and standards when Bush the Younger is coronated.

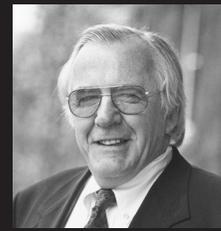
John Kerry's experience in Vietnam and subsequent anti-war stance give him an edge of integrity that the American people treasure and that the current president lacks. Kerry would provide invaluable leadership to re-establish international environmental, arms, and legal standards that are so critical for rebuilding global cooperation, peace, and security. At home, despite his elite class position, Kerry offers the best vision to turn back the plutocratic thrust of the Bush dynasty and offer hope for expansion of civil rights, affordable health care, and economic security for more Americans. I don't see a better candidate anywhere.

I am not inclined to paint apocalyptic visions of the future, but the White House record of the past four years has been morally chilling here and abroad. Brothers and sisters, if we get four more years of the likes of Rove, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Ashcroft, et al., they may plunge the world into hell. Renew hope for the future and get out the vote for John Kerry!

*Alex Mikulich is a former co-editor of Religious Socialism and is assistant professor of religious studies at St. Joseph's College in West Hartford, Conn.*

**who** for president?

## Homeless for Dean



DAVID O'BRIEN

I have been politically homeless for many years, at least since the amazing 1984 disappointment of Walter Mondale, a longtime favorite of mine. As a lifelong Democrat of the DSA persuasion (I fell for Eugene Debs forty years ago), I found the Democratic Leadership Council and Bill Clinton strained my "lesser evil" arguments for the party. Yet, I did not lose hope, for the problem was with the presidential, not the congressional, Democrats, to use an important distinction made years ago by James MacGregor Burns.

My own congressman, Jim McGovern, comes close to what I think Democrats should look like. The "close" brings me to the other source of my homelessness. McGovern shares with most of his Democratic colleagues the almost mindless mantras of the pro-choice movement. The poison of the abortion debate reached a climax in the spring of 2000, when Al Gore and Bill Bradley debated at the Apollo Theater in Harlem on the eve of the New York primary. Offered a series of wonderful questions on foreign and domestic policy, they spouted Democratic clichés, then spent most of their time demonstrating the completeness of their dedication to choice.

Add to that, Al Gore's spinelessness as vice president and his lifelong commitment to "strong defense," including strategic missile defense, and, at long last, I found I could not vote Democratic. In an effort to demonstrate to students and friends that grassroots political work could gradually broaden political options, I did what I could to assist Ralph Nader. His failure to build a movement based on civic responsibility, citizen participation, and reasonable alternative solutions to public problems leaves me, and I suspect many others, still homeless.

Knowing how bad a job the Clinton administration did on foreign and military policy and the environment, and concerned about their obsession with money and spin, I probably underestimated how bad a Bush administration might be. Yet I did believe that, in the absence of vigorous, creative grassroots political work, the Democratic Party would lose control of the Congress big time. Now we are faced with the prospect of a second Bush administration, capable of enormous damage to our institutions and our social fabric, and a House and Senate possibly filibuster-proof. It will be easy to blame the right for all this, but that mote only obscures the plank of widespread

civic irresponsibility, nowhere wider than among the smart people who despise the president.

So, if there were a credible and responsible Democratic candidate, we would have to back that campaign. I would urge everyone to get wholeheartedly behind the Democratic nominee, knowing that even a successful Democratic campaign will mean little if there is not genuine citizen mobilization far beyond what is presently available.

Every effort should be made to construct a socially progressive cadre within the Democratic Party, focused on domestic social justice questions, working hard to develop a now unavailable alternative international policy, and staying away from the politicization of divisive cultural issues that erode political seriousness. Michael Harrington's "boring from within" argument has never been more relevant, but it will not work until there is a group that knows how to bore and what to bore for. Can that be us?

*David O'Brien is Loyola Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at Holy Cross and a contributing editor of Religious Socialism.*

**who** for president?

**Not Bush**



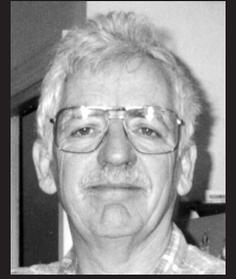
MAXINE PHILLIPS

Almost every day for the past four months, I've worn a small button with the word "Bush" and a circle with a line drawn through it. Almost every day for the last four months, at least one person has come up to me on the street and said, "I like your button." It's created instant camaraderie at the Post Office (with clerks, who whisper that they know they shouldn't be saying anything), in the grocery store, at the crosswalk waiting for the light to change, on the subway platform. And more than anything that any "electable" candidate has said, these reactions give me hope for November. Four years ago a lackluster Democratic candidate that none of us could get excited about actually won the election. This year, more progressives are ready to vote and work for any Democratic candidate. Our job is clear. We have to reach out to everyone we know and people we don't know. We have to be willing to go door to door with campaign literature, stand at tables on sidewalks, register voters, talk to everyone we meet, dig into our pockets, and do more than many of us have done in a long time to make the Democratic candidate "electable." We have to stiffen the spine of the Democratic Party, which played dead for so long that until recently it was hard to tell whether there was any life left.

*Maxine Phillips is a co-editor of Religious Socialism.*

**who** for president?

**Kucinich  
Cool, Kerry  
Scary**



ROD RYON

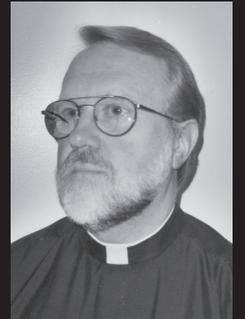
Dennis Kucinich. Single-payer IS the way to affordable universal health care coverage. While other candidates pussyfoot on the jobs issue and talk (vaguely) about reliance on monetary and fiscal policy, he speaks up for a living wage and the rights of labor. As for NAFTA and the other free trade treaties, his proposal to scrap (not, as the other candidates tend to say, "reform") them is a virtually necessary means to upholding worker rights worldwide and challenging the environmental devastation wrought by the treaties. (On these issues, I should say, John Kerry particularly scares me.)

Kucinich's "pull out" from Iraq is not ideal, but it is the best alternative to the quagmire that Iraq is. What I like about his proposal is its recognition that U.S. policy in the Middle East and Central Asia really is imperial.

*Rod Ryon is co-chair of DSA's Religion and Socialism Commission.*

**who** for president?

**Kucinich  
for Peace,  
Justice,  
Faith**



DAVID SEYMOUR

Dennis Kucinich is a man of peace. Other Democratic contenders either supported or waffled on the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Kucinich has consistently opposed the war and has offered a positive, pro-active stance by proposing a federal Department of Peace to use nonviolent strategies in negotiating international disputes.

He is a man of justice. He advocates increasing the minimum wage to a living wage. He supports publicly financed health care privately delivered. He places an emphasis on the needs of too often neglected rural communities and family farms.

He is a man of faith. He is in the Roman Catholic tradition and

has stated that his faith does not allow for a separation between the personal and the political. He is a man of integrity.

Does a man of peace, justice, faith, and integrity stand a chance amid the degenerate and oppressive late-stage capitalism that is twenty-first century America? The same can be asked of democratic socialism. We will never know unless we take our stand, raise our voice, and cast our vote.

*David Seymour is a former co-editor of Religious Socialism.*

**who** for president?

## Passes for Now

**JACK SPOONER**

Editor John Cort, bless his stout heart, posed the question: your choice for president? My answer is that the very question proves the bankruptcy of socialism in America. A choice? Among these pretenders? How fortunate socialists were seven decades and more ago, when against all odds of winning they had viable candidates vying for their vote. Socialist candidates who, despite their minority status in national politics, played a significant part in shaping domestic policy and influencing the social consciousness of the nation.

Setting aside the misfortune of having to choose among the current pretenders, one must decide whether to choose between the pretender who voices the "Next best thing to a socialist platform" and the pretender having the best shot at beating George W. Bush. Unfortunately, the "next best," given the left agenda required to be taken seriously, will have little chance of obtaining the Democratic majority, let alone a majority of electoral votes in November, 2004.

In his last speech at the Constitutional Convention in the waning years of the eighteenth century, Benjamin Franklin warned of the fragility of the new "Form of Government" just enacted into being, concluding that he believed "this is likely to be well administered for a Course of Years and can only end in Despotism as other forms have done before it, when the People shall become so corrupted as to need Despotism government, being incapable of any other."

I dreadfully fear that our nation is approaching that corrupted end. Socialist candidates decades ago held the moral high ground, advocating a public agenda of justice and fairness. Where is that voice today?

My choice? I pass for now.

*Jack Spooner is a former editor of Religious Socialism.*

**who** for president?

## Kucinich, Then the Democratic Nominee



**JUANITA WEBSTER**

In a recent article in the *Nation* magazine, Joel Rogers wrote that John Edwards offers the best chance for getting progressive values stamped clearly on the national ticket and that he (Rogers) would vote for him in the Wisconsin primary. He urged progressives to vote for Edwards in all the remaining primaries. I disagree – I don't know how voting for John Edwards in the remaining primaries addresses any of our issues or progressive values. Progressives certainly can not be encouraged based on a review of John Edwards's or John Kerry's past voting records.

Kerry voted for "welfare reform" in 1996. Kerry and Edwards voted for the Patriot Act of 2001, the Iraq War Resolution, and the Fast Track Trade Agreement. John Edwards was not a member of Senate at the time of the NAFTA vote, but he voted for the Surveillance Bill. Kerry and Edwards voted against permanent estate tax repeal. Edwards voted against the millionaire tax cuts, and Kerry did not vote. Al Sharpton has publicly stated his opposition to most of these bills, and Dennis Kucinich voted against all of them. In the New York primary I will probably vote for Dennis Kucinich. But as long as Sharpton and Kucinich remain active in the remaining primaries, their positions on the issues are more closely aligned with progressives than either Edwards or Kerry. Of course in November, I, like many progressives, will vote for the Democratic nominee.

What should progressives do in the campaign? They should stay on message with issues that are the real concern of the American people and not succumb to the "Anybody but Bush (ABB)" factor. The Democrats will not win over a significant part of the voting public with the ABB line next November. George W. Bush with a war chest of hundreds of millions of dollars will make sure it doesn't happen. Progressive democrats must stay focused on the following issues: saving jobs; increased public funding and providing a quality education for all children; enacting universal health care for all Americans; national legislation permitting civil unions or marriage for same sex couples; increasing benefits and programs for the poorest Americans; and protecting and enhancing environmental laws; repairing relations with allies and improving our image around the world; finding a solution to stop the death and destruction of the Iraqi people; and finally, withdrawing American troops

from Iraq as fast as possible.

*Juanita Webster is co-chair of the Religion & Socialism Commission and is a member of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and the Black Radical Congress (BRC)*

**who** for president?

**Clark,  
Edwards,  
or Kerry**



CHARLES WEST

Two days ago [January 30] David Brooks, that friendly Republican columnist, made fun of the Democratic primary. It is, he said, not about issues, but an election about electability. "Who can beat Bush?" is the only test. Well, he is right; that is the issue. All the differences among the candidates pale before it. We have to drive the plunderers from office and restore responsible government before they steal Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, jobs, the environment, the judiciary, civil rights, and our reputation in the international community from us all. All the candidates want to do that. Who has the best chance to succeed? Let's look at them.

Al Sharpton has made a good impression in debates. He makes thoughtful and often incisive comments. But, given his sensational past and political inexperience, can anyone see him as president? He ought to run for Congress. Dennis Kucinich is the most attractive on the basis of ideas alone, e.g., radical rejection of Bush tax cuts and advocacy for a single-payer national health system. But could he run a nation? Few people think so. Then there's Joe Lieberman, a good senator. But he has raised little support, for a good reason. He doesn't define the alternative to Bush clearly enough. He seems to be ab-

sorbed in the center and promises to be less effective in it than Bill Clinton was.

Howard Dean, I predict, won't recover his lead. His aggressiveness doesn't bother me. His disparateness does. He seems not to be master of his policy and program. There are too many good small ideas and critical insights, not enough coherence. He is not enough of a statesman. I'm afraid the voters are coming to this conclusion.

This leaves Clark, Edwards, and Kerry. I'll take any of them. They all are sound enough on both domestic and foreign policy, with nuances to be sure that would be important if they were really the issue. But they aren't. The question is, who can beat Bush? The voters will decide that in the next few days or weeks. Let's go with their decision!

*Charles West is a professor emeritus of Princeton Theological Seminary.*

**who** for president?

**For the  
Democrat,  
but Mad  
About It**



LORETTA WILLIAMS

An *International Herald Tribune* cartoon says it best: Chappatte draws John Kerry standing center stage. "I feel your love," he says to the obviously exuberant audience. The signs the people carry: "Not Bush in 2004," "Bush Not for President," "No Bush," "Defeat Bush in 2004," ad infinitum.

I will vote for the Democrat. That's my candidate, the Democrat. Not either of the current frontrunners. I am disgusted by

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the reluctance of progressives to demand that the media stop silencing the speeches and ideas put forth by Al Sharpton and Dennis Kucinich. No, I am not making the case here for either of them as a viable candidate able to defeat Bush. Instead, I am making the case that positions espoused by democratic socialists are being consistently advocated by Kucinich and Sharpton, yet are not reported on by the press. Are progressives amplifying their voices so as to influence the party platform and the thinking of the press-appointed candidate?

“Electability” rules! So, too, does hegemony. More of us should speak out about the fact that Kerry and Edwards are allowed to strut their stuff. Dean was, too, for a while, and then the media beat him down. Kerry’s and Edwards’s “knowledge” and definition of “reality” are legit. Sharpton’s and Kucinich’s “knowledge” and “reality” are deemed inadequate, irrelevant, not worthy of print ink. Those in power have always named what is “knowledge” and what is “reality” in ways that further their own ends. What we, the people, have come to “know” in this season of Democratic primaries was visibly created and shaped by a narrow configuration of power, dominance, and subordination. I protest.

*Loretta J. Williams is director of the Gustavus Myers Center for Multidiversity at Simmons College, Boston.*

**who** for president?

## If Only Kucinich Were Alive

**RABBI ARNOLD JACOB WOLF**

I think I’ll vote for Norman Thomas this time. Don’t tell me he’s dead; I know that already, but — dead or alive — he seems to me to be better than any of the candidates now available. If a candidate tells us the truth, as we ask them all to do, we immediately turn against him, e.g., the Democrat who once promised to raise taxes or, more recently, Howard Dean promising to treat Israel and the Palestinians evenhandedly, which was perceived as anti-Israel even though it is the only possible way Israel will ever be at peace.

Yes, I want George W. Bush out of the White House. Yes, I’m less demanding as I get older (though, perhaps, more cynical). I still really trust only God and keep my political wallet carefully out of sight. Come to think of it, Moses or Confucius might be an even better candidate than Norman Thomas. Do as I do, comrades, which is not necessarily do what I say I will do. If only Dennis Kucinich were alive now!

*Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf presides over the KAM Isaiah Israel congregation in Chicago.*

## LETTERS

### PICKING THE RIGHT FIGHTS

To the Editors:

I reside in Nassau County, N.Y., which for many years had the premier Republican machine in the country. Recently the Democrats have taken many elective offices, including the County Executive.

Before this turnaround, the Democratic Party was often referred to as basically a third party, because there was no second party that had any power. Nevertheless, DSAers were able to be effective in county politics within the Democratic Party.

David Sprintzer, a DSAer, chairman of the Long Island Progressive Committee (the Citizen Action affiliate on Long Island) and Mary Harrison, co-chair of the LIPC and vice chair of the State Democratic Committee, both served on the committee that finally shut down Shoreham Nuclear Plant.

Democratic socialists have been members of the Democratic State Committee, chaired think tanks for the Nassau party, and now serve the County Executive in both voluntary and paid positions.

In my 21 years as a Democratic county executive committee member, I have managed congressional and town council races and run as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. I have been asked by the Democratic Party to run for both state senate and assembly. I was elected Committee Man of the Year and have been honored by several Democratic clubs besides my own.

Many things can be accomplished as a democratic socialist within the Democratic Party when you pick the right fights, and speak about democracy and socialism and how they affect the bottom line of people’s lives. Unfortunately, you have to work twice as hard as any other party activist.

Mark Finkel  
Far Rockaway, N.Y.



## Two Big Protestant Books

The Making of American Liberal Theology:  
*Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900*

by Gary Dorrien

Westminster John Knox Press. 494 pp. \$39.95

The Making of American Liberal Theology:  
*Idealism, Realism, & Modernity, 1900-1950*

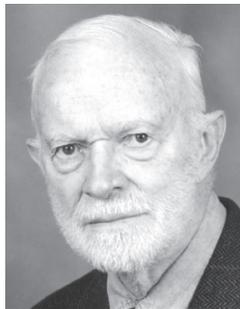
by Gary Dorrien

Westminster John Knox Press. 666 pp. \$39.95

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Because the author is a fellow member of the R&S Commission as well as a valued contributor to RS and since, further, the reviewer is a Roman Catholic and critical of these books, we have taken the unusual step of inviting the author to comment on the review. It seemed only fair.*

JOHN C. CORT

"Monumental" and "definitive" are the appropriate words to describe this two-volume history of the liberal wing of American Protestantism. Eight distinguished theologians, quoted on the back covers, confirm this conclusion. And Gary Dorrien has promised a third volume, bringing the work up to the year 2000, which will complete the definitive monument. We must congratulate him on such an impressive undertaking.



Dorrien defines his subject as follows:

Fundamentally it is the idea of a modern Christianity not based on external authority. Specifically, liberal theology is defined by its openness to the verdicts of modern intellectual inquiry, especially historical criticism and the natural sciences; its commitment to the authority of individual reason and experience; its conception of Christianity as an ethical way of life; its favoring of moral concepts of atonement; and its commitment to make Christianity credible and socially relevant to con-

temporary people.

The key words in this definition are "a modern Christianity not based on external authority," and similar phrases appear several times throughout the two books. A liberal Catholic could say that he agrees with all the words that appear after those words. He might even agree with the words themselves. The more orthodox, traditional Catholic, which describes this reviewer, could not. So be forewarned. This review is bound to be critical.

## A Good Example

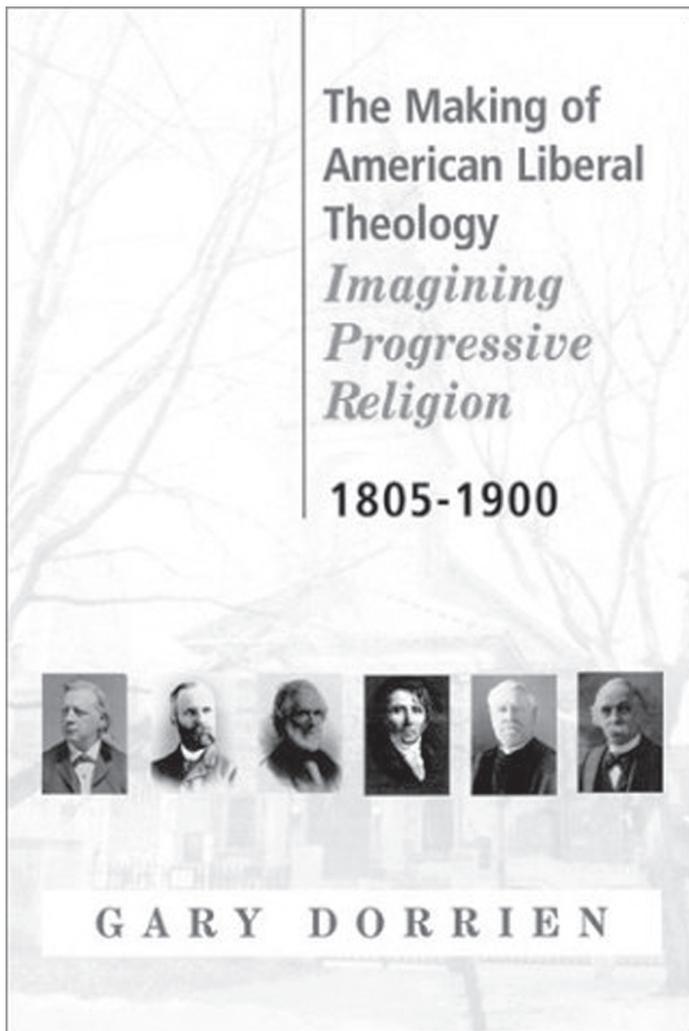
The gay-marriage controversy, currently splitting the Episcopal Church, is a good example of the problems involved. The American church has authorized the consecration of an actively gay bishop in New Hampshire. That's the act of an external authority. Other bishops, pastors, and lay folks have rebelled, here and especially in Africa, calling on the Archbishop of Canterbury to convene an international conference to reverse the American action. Does a liberal Episcopalian appeal to the external authority of the American church but oppose any international authority that might reverse the American authority? Or does he reject both and say, "Let's all just make it up as we go along"?

Personally, and here I revert to my hapless tendency to be blunt, the idea that any human endeavor can successfully be based on the rejection of "external authority" seems a clear contradiction of the more universal varieties of reason and experience.

From the moment of birth we base our actions and beliefs on external authorities of one sort or another — first, our parents, then teachers, then almost anybody, or collective anybodies, whose combined intelligence or persuasive power persuades us that we ought to take them seriously and base our lives, our actions, or our beliefs on theirs. And all of these are authorities of one sort or another and external to oneself. Are they not?

I was an Episcopalian once, singing for pay in the choir of Christ Church, just off the Harvard Yard, and even then, in the old-fashioned Thirties, we had a pastor who encouraged us to pick and choose, out of the Nicene creed that we recited during the service, those articles of faith that we appealed to our "individual reason and experience," to use Dorrien's phrase. Because everyone had his or her own peculiar reason and experience, the result was, and is bound to be, a bewildering multiplicity and variety of belief and unbelief.

I became a Catholic, basing my Christianity on what seemed to me a more rational authority than that pastor, a more rational way of determining what Christianity is, namely, those creeds, Nicene or Apostles', which the Apostles, the Fathers and Doctors, and the Church Councils decided were dictated by a correct reading of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.



### Bewildering Multiplicity and Variety

Bewildering multiplicity and variety of belief and unbelief is what you find in these two volumes — starting with the transcendental moonshine of Ralph Waldo Emerson and proceeding to William Ellery Channing, Theodore Parker, Horace Bushnell, Henry Ward Beecher, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Theodore Munger, Washington Gladden, Newman Smyth, Charles A. Briggs, Borden Parker Bowne (Volume I) and in Volume II (1900-1950), William Newton Clarke, William Adams Brown, Henry Churchill King, Charles Clayton Morrison, Walter Rauschenbusch, Vida Scudder, George Burman Foster, Shailer Mathews, Shirley Jackson Case, Edward Scribner Ames, Douglas Clyde Macintosh, Gerard Birney Smith, Henry Nelson Wieman, Francis J. McConnell, Edgar S. Brightman, Albert C. Knudson, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Rufus Jones, Georgia Harkness, Benjamin E. Mays, Reinhold Niebuhr, John C. Bennett, Paul Tillich, H. Richard Niebuhr, Henry P. Van Dusen, Robert C. Calhoun, and Howard Thurman.

And this is only the list of those who get major treatment. There must be a hundred more, both European and American, who get some sort of mention. Dorrien does a good job of telling us what these men and women believed or disbelieved, and why, but I finished the books with the feeling that those who agreed entirely with anybody else on the list could

be counted on the fingers of one hand, if that. Never mind the theological niceties of the Nicene Creed. Just take the basic bread-and-butter of the Apostles' Creed. Even John Locke, the empiricist philosopher, held firmly to that creed. But when you finish Volume II, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that well before 1950 American liberal theology had discarded virtually every article of that creed but the words "Jesus Christ" and "Holy Spirit," without any clear agreement as to what he or it really was or is.

Among the more prominent figures treated are five who were at one time or another active Christian socialists, namely Rauschenbusch, Gladden, Scudder, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Tillich. The first three, especially Scudder, were pretty orthodox Christians and are among the most admirable of all Protestant Americans. Dorrien's extended treatment of them is most welcome.

### Niebuhr and Tillich

Niebuhr, however brilliant his insights, held that, in Dorrien's words, "the Christian doctrines of the deity and resurrection of Christ are religious myths." Sitting with Tillich in our living room, I once asked him the naïve question, "Professor, does your idea of God as the ground of our being have anything in common with the personal, self-conscious God of the Gospels?" He assured me that it did not. Like Niebuhr, he was a brilliant intellect, another powerful, charismatic speaker, but a Christian theologian? As the young folks say, give me a break.

Dorrien gives Tillich far more breaks than he deserves, while faithfully revealing that (a) he boasted that during seven years at Harvard he never went to church, (b) "he rationalized that he could not fulfill his intellectual potential if he did not satisfy himself erotically," and (c) he alienated Niebuhr, his host at Union Seminary, by making a crude pass at one of Niebuhr's students.

Granted, we are all sinners and too quick to throw stones, but there would seem to be some point beyond which we have to conclude that this guy might just have been some kind of phony. As for his theology, don't take my word for its failure to resemble authentic Christianity. Read the biography by his dear friends Wilhelm and Marion Pauck.

### Richardson's Challenge

Ah, but you say, "Face it, John. Historical criticism has proven that what you call 'authentic Christianity' was indeed no more than 'religious myth'." Has it now? Until I see some evidence more solid than mere assertions endlessly and boringly repeated, I will go with the Anglican theologian Alan Richardson, who challenged a skeptical Reinhold Niebuhr in open meeting:

The only Jesus known to contemporary historical and critical scholarship is the Christ of the apostolic witness, the very Jesus who healed the sick, raised the dead and was himself raised from the dead on the third day. There is no other *historical* Jesus (emphasis in the

original as reported in *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought*, ed. Charles Kegley and Robert Bretall).

The editor, who happens to be the same as the reviewer, should have given these books to a Protestant for review. The fact that he selfishly kept them, read every word himself, and insisted on writing the review should testify to the importance and the quality of Gary Dorrien's accomplishment. In any case, there follows now Dorrien's response.

## Gary Dorrien Responds

I am grateful for John Cort's thoughtful review of the first two volumes of my trilogy on American theological liberalism, and I'm especially grateful for the longtime example of John's faithful dedication to the just, compassionate, peacemaking way of Jesus and the prophetic biblical tradition.

I should explain that the books on theological liberalism are part of a larger project of mapping and critically analyzing modern theology as a whole. My early books accented ethics and politics more than theology, but the past half dozen have been more strictly theological, including books on neo-orthodoxy, evangelicalism, trends in European and North American theology, and the like. The trilogy on liberalism is part of the latter project. Last year I began to alternate between sociopolitical writing and theological work, so the liberal theology series is going to be interrupted by a book on the new Pax Americana.

I should also note at the outset that it isn't correct to describe the trilogy as dealing only with liberal Protestant theology. Volumes one and two discuss efforts to launch an American Roman Catholic tradition of theological liberalism that were put down by the Vatican, and volume three will feature extensive discussions of Roman Catholic theologians. Protestantism does not own the liberal tradition, and Catholicism is not immune from it.

John clearly expresses his desire to belong to a church that establishes and upholds doctrinal uniformity. Emphasizing the rejection of external authority that all liberal theologies hold in common and the liberal commitments to reason and experience, he explains that these issues have everything to do with his decision many years ago to leave the Episcopal church and embrace a doctrinally conservative form of Roman Catholicism. He appears to have judged, rightly, that theological pluralism is built into the Anglican idea, though he doesn't recognize that this makes Anglicanism too distinctive to be a "good example" of the liberal Protestant story as a whole.

Unlike the *sola scriptura* Protestantisms that gave birth to most of liberal Protestantism, the Anglican divines taught that Christian belief has three establishing authorities. But unlike Roman Catholicism, which mediated the variability of scripture and tradition by appealing to the teaching magisterium of the papacy, Anglicanism refused to seal the principle of external authority with another external authority.

From Richard Hooker onward, Anglicanism taught that the establishing authorities of and for Christian belief are scripture, tradition, and reason. The Anglican divines recognized



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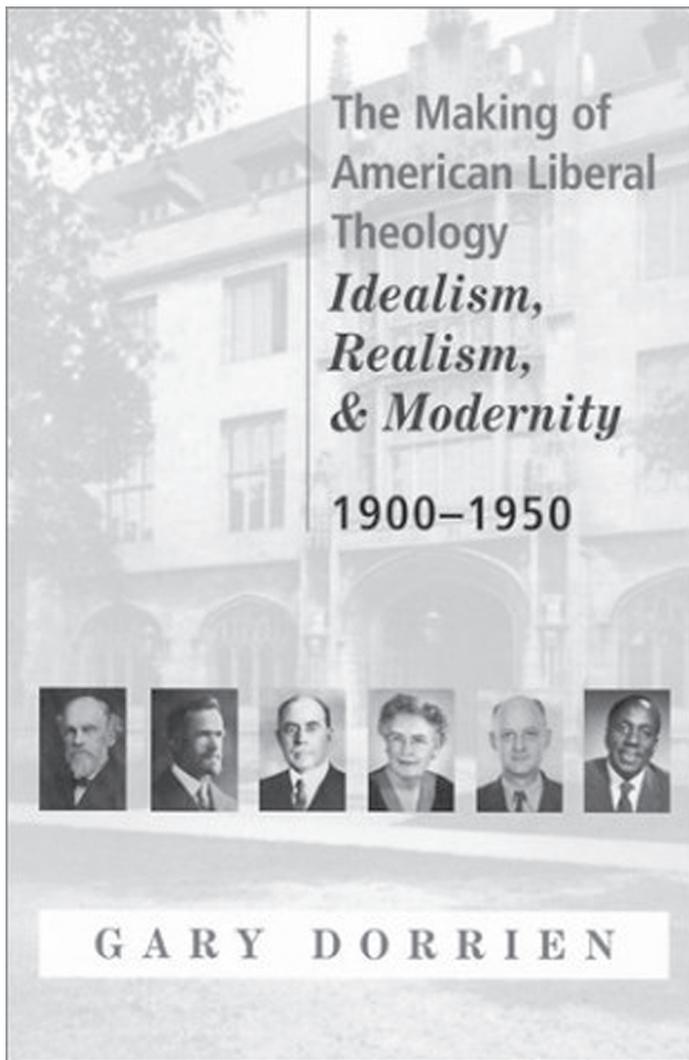
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that reason is individual and necessarily tied to the best of contemporary knowledge. This distinctive approach to theological authorities put the Anglican churches ahead of the game in modern theology, but it also caused them to be late in playing it. A few English and North American Anglicans made important contributions to the early liberal theology movement, but most of the leaders came from the Reformed traditions, where the battle over what to do about losing the only operative authority — an infallible Bible — was most intense.

### The Liberal Principle Defined

John doesn't quite explain the liberal rejection of the external authority principle. It doesn't mean that the Bible has no authority (it has authority within Christian experience), or that liberal Anglicans pay no attention to their bishops, or even that liberalism is necessarily committed to the modernist ideal of objective universal knowledge.

The liberal (modernist) principle is that no external authority *establishes* belief on its own. From the liberal perspective, one should not believe something simply because it is asserted in the Bible or taught by the church. For Harry Emerson Fosdick,

the liberal turning point occurred when he realized that he didn't believe in the Samson tales, even though the Bible contained them; for William Newton Clarke, it was the realization that source criticism plausibly explained the composition of various biblical narratives.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the Vatican condemned source criticism, form criticism, evolutionary theory, liberal democracy, Americanism, and other "modernist heresies," liberals like Fosdick and Clarke embraced the Enlightenment principle that religious beliefs must be open to revision and correction by the best of modern knowledge. The church had to accommodate modern science and biblical criticism, even when that meant overturning beliefs taught by the Bible and church councils. Rightly, the liberals insisted that theology had no future in the academy or the modern world if it dogmatically stood against the social and natural sciences in the name of a revealed deposit of doctrine.

In three books that preceded my liberalism trilogy, beginning with *The Word as True Myth* (1997), I elaborated a neo-orthodox/postmodern view of the relativity of historical knowledge and the contextual layerings of reason. Many of the old liberals had too much faith in the truth-securing power of historical criticism, some were overly fearful of being contradicted by secular academics, and most really believed in the certainty, objectivity, and even goodness of rationality. Often they turned the academy into a new external authority.

### The Myth Problem

In his closing remarks, John dismisses the myth problem and historical criticism, but he assumes a simplistic concept of myth, and his appeal to Alan Richardson is simply wrong. Neither the myth problem nor the issue of historical criticism can be swept aside in a categorical manner. The Bible contains plainly mythical elements, such as the creation stories and the reworked Babylonian myths of the flood and the tower of Babel. It contains stories about antediluvian patriarchs who lived an average of 857 years (Gen. 5:1-21), trees going forth to anoint a king (Judges 9:7-15), a day when the sun went backward (Isaiah 38:8), a day with the sun stood still (Joshua 10:13), night hags (Isaiah 34:14), Yahweh smashing the sea monster and breaking the heads of the dragons (Psalm 74), and a rock that followed Moses in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:4).

More broadly, it contains mythic tropes that play similar roles in the sacred literature of other religions. The issue of Christian myth is unavoidable; the question is how it should be conceived and approached. One of the crucial tasks of theology is to struggle with the cluster of problems concerning religious language, definition, symbolism, the question of a normative role, demythologization, and remythologization that the myth problem contains.

John's appeal to Richardson has similar problems. He thinks that the Richardson quote repudiates historical criticism, but Alan Richardson employed the tools of source, form, and redaction criticism throughout his career; he could not have

## Short Retort from Cort

been a prominent biblical scholar without them. Richardson was a leading figure in the Biblical Theology Movement of the 1950s, which took a mighty crash in the early 1960s because of its faulty arguments about Hebrew semantics and history. Richardson took a down-the-middle approach on the use of the gospels as historical sources and took for granted the documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch, the promonarchical/antimonarchical redacting of Samuel, the multiple authorship of Isaiah, and the synoptic theory of the gospels.

Here again, as with the myth problem, there is a wide range of debates to deal with, but no alternative to dealing with historical criticism. Biblical criticism sheds invaluable light on the formation and meaning of biblical texts; even conservative evangelical scholars use redaction criticism to understand, for example, how and why Matthew and Luke revised Mark's account. The Catholic Church was right to back away from its condemnations of higher criticism, first gingerly in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), then more explicitly in *Verbum Dei* (1962).

On the other hand, there is a downside to historical criticism. It has often been employed in a reductionistic historicist fashion that violates the literary character and canonical shape of the Bible, and recent developments in the use of redaction-critical and reader-response techniques have opened the door to highly speculative renderings of early Christianity.

My biblical studies teacher, Raymond Brown, was a conservative Catholic priest and a rather bold redaction critic. Using redaction critical tools on the fourth gospel and Johannine letters, which have no external source, he wrote an entire book on the religious worldview of a hypothetical Johannine community. In the last years of his life, Ray Brown greatly disliked the kind of speculative revisionism that the Jesus Seminar made famous, but his scholarship specialized in the very techniques that led to it. Thus, there are complex issues to deal with concerning the uses and limits of high critical methods, but dismissing historical criticism is not an option, and Alan Richardson is not an example of doing so.

Regarding John's closing remark about a Protestant reviewer, Protestant reviewers are very good to have, but so are others! I appreciate John's perspective and criticism, and as far as the Protestant/Catholic issue is concerned, it's worth reiterating that theological liberalism is not an exclusively Protestant subject. The day when Catholic theologians and scholars didn't identify with these issues, problems, and figures is long past. Being Catholic does not keep contemporary Catholic scholars from identifying with Horace Bushnell's arguments about religious language or Charles Briggs's case for historical criticism. And today we have important and creative Catholic proponents of theological liberalism.

By no means do I think that the Richardson quote repudiates historical criticism. What I think it repudiates is that sloppy, arrogant brand of historical criticism that claims to prove that Jesus did not heal the sick, raise the dead, or himself rise from the dead.

I too venerate Father Ray Brown. Stick with your old teacher, Gary, and you can't go wrong. An excellent external authority.

FROM FORDHAM

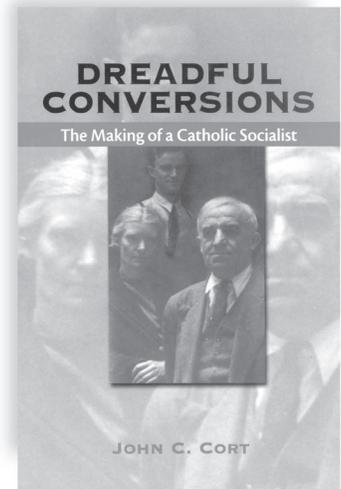
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