

rs

religious socialism



volume 30, issue one, 2006

Inside...

2...Editor's Notes

6...Still Room On the Left

Bill Blaikie

7...No Child Left Alive

Chris Zimmerman

8..Pastoral Prudence and Gay Marriage

Carlos Garcia de Andoín

10...Toward an Alternate Foreign Policy

Richard H. Schwartz

11...Book Reviews

Gene Birmingham, Steve Knight,

Charles West

15...Letters

THE JOURNAL FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH AND SOCIALISM

The Freedom To Offend

RELIGIOUS SOCIALISTS AND CARTOONS

Blasphemy. The word instantly takes any discussion from an exchange of ideas to a confrontation. 0 to 60 in one second. A serious word, of course, demanding immediate attention to the exact details of what has been said, why it was said, and what was meant by saying it. A word that requires that everyone walk on eggshells until the matter is somehow resolved, or at least de-escalated.

A word with deep and painful meaning to religious radicals spanning centuries, because it is the word that has been most often used to strike us down when we "offended" our own religious authorities.

The rules don't change because the faith is different. One either claims the freedom to challenge sacred cows or not. Doing so in a respectful way is certainly advisable if one wants to gain attentive rather than offended ears, but that's optional. A cursory glance at history tells us that it has always been difficult to bring about social change without at some point doing or saying something that those whose position will be unsettled find offensive.

Hubert Humphrey once said that "the right to be heard does not automatically include the right to be taken seriously." Wise words, yet when the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on September 30, 2005, published the now infamous cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad, they were definitely asking to be taken seriously. The cartoons were solicited in response to a report in another Danish paper that a children's author had been unable to find Muslim artists willing to illustrate an educational book he was writing about Islam and Muhammad, for fear of being attacked by their co-religionists. No friend of our political side and without the nobler motives of our own heretics, *Jyllands-Posten* eventually made the very point it sought to make about the issue. Based on the author's experience and their own (only 12 out of 43 artists invited to submit their work agreed to participate) the freedom to express ideas in Denmark was in danger of being restricted once again, just as it had been in olden times, only now by a different group of aspiring censors, yet with not so different interests.

cont'd on page 4

editor's notes

This is the beginning of another chapter of the story of this small publication and the group of stalwart folks behind it. Most of our readers are not new; you've been with us for years, so the backstory of *RS* is well known to you. The publication predates DSA—it originated in Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee—and together with the Religion and Socialism Commission will be thirty years old next year. We're the only commission in DSA to have such a long, uninterrupted lifespan.

Still, changes are taking place not only with us, but in the entire American left. More than anything we're in the midst of one of those generational transitions that have often re-arranged our numbers and our collective self-image, but at the same time it could be argued that the organized left in America is at its lowest point of appeal since the ascendancy of workers' movements in the 1860s. The labor movement is fractured, unable to stop the steady decline in union membership at a time when it is needed more than ever by working people. Electoral demographics suggest to some pundits that even if the results of the November polls deliver a Democratic Congress along with the nation's first socialist senator, the Republican Party has now become the natural party of government and could remain so for some time. And while we may protest vigorously with rational alternatives, all indications suggest that we are indeed headed toward what British Prime Minister Tony Blair has called a "clash about civilization"—playing on and against Samuel Huntington's term—between the fundamentalist capitalism of the West and fundamentalist Islam, whether we like it or not, with socialism caught awkwardly and impotently in the middle. So with all of these tremendous worries in front of us, why continue this little magazine?

David Seymour's comments in the last issue stuck in my head in a way that I feel merits a response. Much of what he said about *RS* could just as easily be said about religion itself. Why not just put it aside as well, until some point in the future when the time is right? After all, it's not clear that after 5000 years of recorded human faith systems that religion has ever done humanity any real good. In politics, it's clear that without tangible results, there is no point in sustaining organizations or policies that have no real use or political effect. Most political organizations come and go quite readily, throwing off their coils as soon as it becomes apparent that they've either done what they set out to do, or that success is not in the cards. Again, why continue with this small voice in the wilderness?

Socialism means different things to different people. Some wax verbose about the intricacies of replacing markets with alternate systems of value and distribution; others simply find the essence of the thing in the concept and remnants of the European welfare state. But what ties it all together across the disparate definitions, and answers the existential questions above, is that socialism embodies a vision that something more, something better is always to come in the human experience. It recognizes that the work for justice is not yet done, and that even if we were to put down our pens tomorrow, that work would still need to be done by someone—in good times or bad—so long as the need is there. It is not so much about the measure of success as much as it is the measure of our souls.

We continue because it is in our nature to do so. Because, in the words of the Jewish Sages who compiled the book of *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers), it is our responsibility, not to finish this work, but to accept that we must do our part in it. Withdrawal is not an option for the working class.



religious socialism

Circulation

536 W. 111 St. #37
New York, NY 10025

Editorial

29 Harris St.
Waltham, MA 02452
editor@religioussocialism.com

www.religioussocialism.com

Editor

Andrew Hammer

The Religion & Socialism Commission

Co-Chairs: Rod Ryon, Juanita Webster
Secretary: Maxine Phillips
Treasurer: Rev. Norm Faramelli

Executive Committee:

John C. Cort
Rev. Judith Deutsch
Mark Finkel
Andrew Hammer
David Kandel
Tharen Robson

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

RS Contributing Editors:

Jack Clark, John Cort, Rev. Judith Deutsch, Harvey Cox, Michael Eric Dyson, Rev. Marcia L. Dyson, Norm Faramelli, David O'Brien, Maxine Phillips, Cornel West

•Articles in this issue express opinions of the writers, and not of DSA or the Religion & Socialism Commission or *Religious Socialism*.

Contributions to the DSA Fund are tax deductible.

•Writers may submit manuscripts via postal mail, e-mail, or by CD-ROM. Photos are encouraged.

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

©2006 Religion & Socialism Commission, Democratic Socialists of America

editor's notes

cont'd from previous page

Now in case someone should misconstrue what I've said here to justify the existence of every so-called socialist sect with a newsletter, let me be clear: *RS* is small, *very* small, and we know it. We're not making claims to lead the revolution or to know the way to it. Moreover, we are a subset of a small organization (DSA) that sees itself as a part of a much bigger movement as well. Our presence makes sense in the context of the others around us on the broad American left, who do not offer a perspective that is decidedly religious *and* socialist. When *Sojourners* or *Tikkun* openly declare their politics as socialist, we'll have to think again. Until that time, we're not reinventing the wheel. If you're a socialist with either a calling to or a yen for things spiritual, we're the only game in town.

That said, one of the things you will slowly notice in this new incarnation of *RS* is that not all of the articles may necessarily have a religious tone. Aside from being people of faith, religious socialists are also socialists, and have opinions on issues that don't always bring faith into the discussion. That doesn't mean we're backing away from our faith, but just

declaring the right to be fully engaged in the same struggles we all face, religious or not, and to be counted as full partners when doing so.

Most people are spiritual in some way; despite the many twists and turns given over the years to Marx' infamous phrase about opiates, what he really meant was that he *understood* that fact, even if he wasn't happy about it. As religious socialists, we have nothing to apologize for. The numbers prove that we're actually the more normal ones among our political ranks, and the ones more likely to get the message across to those we claim to represent.

Another thing to notice is that we now have our own space on the Internet, at www.religioussocialism.com. Consequently, article submissions and correspondence may be sent to editor@religioussocialism.com.

Finally, to the issue itself. Along with the somewhat new look, part of the articles in this issue are continued from the one that came before it, so give us one more issue to get our bearings and chart the course ahead. And yes, *we do urgently need women writers*.

—Andrew Hammer

Religious Socialists on DVD!

Enjoy the *Religious Socialism* Panel from the 2005 Global Left Forum at home or with friends. Hear Donna Schaper, Norm Faramelli, Juanita Webster, and Judy Deutsch on "What the Religious Left and Secular Left Have to Say to Each Other." DVD available for \$20 prepaid from:

Joe Friendly
203 West 107th St. Apt. 8A
New York, NY 10025-3025

Back issues of
religious socialism
are available on our web site,
in Acrobat PDF format.
www.religioussocialism.com



www.dsausa.org

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

The Freedom to Offend

cont'd from page 1

It's helpful to point out here that the reaction of most Muslims in Denmark to the cartoons was along the lines of "Oh. That's provocative. OK. Let's see, what else did I have to do today? I need to make sure the kids have apples in their lunches..." Further, when the same cartoons were printed in the Egyptian newspaper *El Fagr* in October, there was practically no reaction at all from the Egyptian people. So the idea that there was some sort of reflexive, naturally violent impulse by all Muslims to the mere depiction of their prophet (who has been depicted frequently in the Shia tradition and also but less so in the Sunni) is just not accurate.

Rather, the angry few who would stir the cartoons into an international controversy were so determined to make a rallying point out of the images that they had to leave Denmark in a concerted effort to do so.

In December of 2005, disappointed that the publication of the cartoons did not bring the majority of Muslims out into the streets in sufficient numbers, two Islamicist activists (Akhmad Akkari and Imam Ahmad Abu Laban, the former of which had been filmed discussing the possible assassination of a Danish Muslim Liberal MP) compiled a dossier of the cartoons that were published—*along with some others that never were, and some images that depicted pigs but had nothing to do with Islam*—and headed off to eight Muslim nations with the express purpose of escalating the issue into a conflict within the Muslim world.

Finally, in January of 2006, four months after the cartoons were first published—and after a vigorous round of lobbying of both the Arab League and the OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference) by Akkari and Abu Laban—the first international protests began.

At that point, many secular socialists did reflexively leap to the supposed defense of their new Muslim constituents, assuming that they all were offended and forgetting, in a way that religious socialists cannot, how our forebears fought against the stifling, reactionary religious institutions of the 19th century; institutions that sought to control every aspect of our lives in the same way that fundamentalist Islamicist clerics seek to enslave the minds and bodies of free-thinking Muslims. The post-1968 Left's endless atoning for everything we've ever (and never) done to others in pre-industrial colonized societies resulted in a near deafness to the opinions of many of our Muslim sisters and brothers, who had a quite different take on the matter. (Of course, it's not the first time that Northern leftists have patronized the opinions of their Southern comrades in the pursuit of respecting them.)

It is those opinions however, expressed in a petition written by twelve Muslim activists in response to a death threat, that show the way ahead for those of us on the Left who believe that Muslims deserve the same right to resist religious totalitarianism that we eagerly supported in generations past, when the believers were Christians and Jews. Led by Canadian author Irshad Manji, the *Manifesto of 12* states: "...we reject 'cultural relativism,' which consists of accepting that Muslim men and women should be deprived of their right to equality and freedom in the name of their cultural traditions. We refuse to renounce our critical spirit out of fear of being accused of 'Islamophobia,' an unfortunate concept that confuses criticism of Islamic practices with the stigmatization of Muslims themselves. We plead for the universality of free expression, so that a critical spirit may be exercised on every continent, against every abuse and dogma."

Such sentiments are neither Northern nor Southern, colonial or aboriginal. They are the very universal values that should bind us together first as seekers of an enlightened age, and second as socialists who can no longer allow medieval strictures of any kind to burden the freedom of open thought, even the freedom to offend.

Read the Manifesto of 12 petition on the Internet at <http://muslim-refusenik.com/letters.html#manifesto>.

—Ed.

2006 ILRS Congress To Be Held In Oslo

The International League of Religious Socialists, the "Socialist International" of religious socialist groups worldwide, has announced its triennial congress will be held in Oslo, Norway on June 30 - July 2. With generous assistance from the Norwegian trade union organization LO, the Norwegian Labour Party and the Olaf Palme International Center, the congress promises to be one of the most exciting in the organization's more than eighty year history.

The theme of the event is "Social Globalization," and speakers and delegates will be coming from nearly all corners of the globe to share their views on how to take up the challenge of making globalization a more socially rooted than market-driven process.

Persons interested in attending the congress (as a delegate of the Religion and Socialism Commission) should contact ILRS Secretary General Andrew Hammer at editor@religioussocialism.com.

ILRS STATEMENT ON THE CARTOON INCIDENTS

The following statement was issued by the ILRS on February 15, 2006.

The International League of Religious Socialists expresses its great concern over the recent incidents resulting from the publication of editorial cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

The right of individuals to speak freely about what they believe is an essential element of a modern democratic society, a right that must be defended. At the same time, it is also a matter of basic social responsibility that one should seek to avoid a method of expression that is deliberately offensive to the identity, religion, or culture of others.

For religious socialists, whose own identity has at important times in history been based upon our willingness to say or publish things that some governments and religious authorities have found to be offensive, this particular incident is complex.

It is not possible for socialists to support a social order where ideas, even the most sacred ideas held by any religion, cannot be openly debated. Instead we put our trust in the fact that the overwhelming majority of people in the world are not using their words or actions to offend or attack the sacred ideas of others, and then work to create a space for genuine dialogue between faiths and cultures in the interest of furthering global democracy and respect among peoples.

The question of consequences for those few in society who deliberately seek to offend is a valid but separate one; there are laws in democratic countries which do prosecute a clear intent to do harm to the beliefs or identity of others. But that intent is not so easy to determine when we look at the present situation.

The Danish newspaper responsible for printing the cartoons has apologised for

doing so; this shows an understanding that an offence was caused by their publication, and we welcome the apology as a necessary step towards healing the wound.

But the nature of, and motivation for the worldwide protests we have witnessed have now become a matter for investigation, as it has been revealed that while the original publication of the cartoons in September of 2005 may have been an inciteful act by one European newspaper, not much public attention was given to the matter until those same cartoons, along with others much worse that were never printed anywhere, were actually created and distributed by Muslim clerics in Islamic nations in order to provoke the unrest we have seen in those nations.

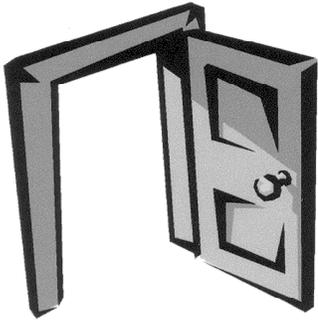
Therefore, it is not so easy to find only one source of the problem, nor to assign only one source of blame for the publication of offensive cartoons. This only demonstrates further the ongoing need for developing contact, dialogue and understanding among people in our global village.

The violent reaction to those cartoons in some nations has raised the issue throughout the world of the ability of individuals to speak their minds without fear of injury or oppression. In the kind of society we seek to build, such violence against thought, even questionable thought, is totally unacceptable, and we condemn it unconditionally.

At this moment the most important question before us is what we all shall do to move beyond this situation. The way to avoid the 'clash of civilisations' is by building an alliance between people of different faiths and cultures who are willing to defend the freedom of thought and expression across the borders of those civilisations, and who can agree at the same time to work for a world where mutual respect and social justice replace provocation and poverty.

It is not possible for socialists to support a social order where ideas, even the most sacred ideas held by any religion, cannot be openly debated.





Still Room On the Left

FOR BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS

BILL BLAIKIE

During the 2005 Presidential election in the United States, responding to a button worn by Southern Baptists that said, "Vote your Values," Rev. Jim Wallis of the Sojourner Community in Washington is reported to have said: "I say, vote all your values. The cries of the poor ring from cover to cover in my Bible."



The social gospel interpretation of the Bible which informed and inspired many of those who helped build Canada's Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the New Democratic Party (NDP), and which continues to be important for many on the left today, was and is just such an attempt to vote "all the values" that are to be found in the Judeo-Christian heritage. Highlighted over and over again in the biblical tradition are those values having to do with defending the needy and the oppressed, and challenging the interests and world view of the powerful.

In a time when, both north and south of the 49th parallel; religion is largely characterized in the political arena as a conservative force, there is a need both to diversify the face of religion in the political realm and to reclaim territory that was once seen to be held in common by religion and the left. There is a need to re-establish in the public mind the fact that there are faith-informed progressive perspectives on those issues which tend to be dealt with as if there is only a debate between faith and non-faith. In fact, what is really going on is often a debate between Canadians of the same faith and/or a debate between conservative faith communities and a secular liberalism that owes its values in part to Christianity.

In any event, it is certainly a growing problem that faith is associated in the public mind with a particular set of conservative positions instead of being associated with a diverse group of people who, though they may share a particular faith, arrive at different conclusions about contentious public policy issues and, as a result, join or support different political parties. It is not in the best interests of Canadians to have religion caricatured as narrowly focused on only a few issues or, even worse, to have "faith" or "religious argument" come to be seen as inadmissible in public discourse about public policy options. Questions of peace and war, the economy, and the environment are also issues to be informed by faith. But there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of speaking in an explicitly faith-informed way in the public square. The task at hand for both the faithful and non-believer is to discern and agree on the appropriate ways of such speaking. Dismissing views purely because they are "religious" is an approach which throws out the wheat with the chaff. Secular fundamentalism is not the answer either.

There is more common ground between faith communities, broadly speaking, and the left, than is ever credited in the image of religion served up by the media.

There is more common ground between faith communities, broadly speaking, and the left, than is ever credited in the image of religion served up by the media. Canadians who are active in both their own faith communities and progressive politics know this, but it is a

fact underpromoted by a media culture fixated on the conservative aspects of religion. Witness the coverage of John Paul II, whose position on abortion was much more highlighted than his opposition to the invasion of Iraq.

cont'd on page 16



no child left alive

are we testing our kids to death?

CHRIS ZIMMERMAN

With three sons enrolled in a Manhattan public school, I am dismayed by the emphasis placed on standardized testing. Tests are not a new thing, of course. But what is new are the high stakes of the exams, which the city has begun to use to measure school performance under the Bush administration's controversial No Child Left Behind law, and the way in which the academic year must consequently be organized around them.

No previous generation was subjected to such a barrage of exams. At least here in New York City, schoolchildren have to take one test after another, from the third grade through the eighth. (If they don't excel at every step, there is summer school, and those who don't make the cut at that juncture are held back for extra tutoring, or forced to repeat their current grade.)

Then there are the anxieties faced by underpaid teachers who routinely work six days a week (if not seven), and the principals who hover over them. Dedicated as these professionals might be, they labor under the threat of having their school placed on what amounts to a blacklist if their students don't measure up. Beyond that, because of No Child Left Behind legislation, they risk the loss of federal funds, and eventual shutdown, if the school does not improve.

Not surprisingly, curricula across the city are continually being revised in order to maximize test scores--and simultaneously denude them of the creativity and flexibility that children (and teachers) thrive on.

On the home front, parents increasingly find their weekend plans thwarted by test-prep classes, and their evenings tied up by the challenges of coaxing a child to relax (but still pull himself together) and not worry (but still do his best). No wonder that author Jonathan Kozol has described the whole ordeal as "pathological

and punitive." Writer Johann Christoph Arnold says it is "tantamount to child abuse."

I'm not complaining about my kids. With a roof over their heads and food on the table, they don't need pity. They can get help when they need it, and a hug, or a break in the park near our apartment. Sometimes we leave the house whether they "have time" for it or not, simply to give them some fresh air between homework assignments. In an age when recess is seen as a quaint, old-fashioned idea, they'd never get outdoors otherwise, except on the weekend.

But what about the kid who doesn't have these things? And what about the teacher who spends every Saturday in the classroom and never has time to recharge? Is it any surprise that in New York City alone, where teachers face enough hurdles as it is, quite apart from testing frenzy, some 7,000 teaching jobs are currently going begging?

According to a recent article in the *New York Times*, New York State will administer about 3.5 million tests this year, at a cost of about \$6.5 million. As for the fallout on the children who are forced to pass them--sure, many adults are concerned. But they're addressing the problem in some pretty bizarre ways. One is the use of the Test Anxiety Inventory, a 20-point yardstick for measuring test stress devised (you guessed it) by a professor of psychology. Another "helpful" product on the market comes from the Institute of HeartMath, which is selling a CD-ROM with "strategies for controlling test anxiety."

It's money for the experts, but it leaves parents like me steaming. I don't have any grand solutions, but I'm sure of one thing: it's time to rename the legislation that's driving a good part of this insanity. Because if things continue the way they are, it won't matter which child is left behind. There'll be no child left alive.

Chris Zimmerman is a member of the Bruderhof Community.

PASTORAL PRUDENCE AND GAY MARRIAGE

A Spanish Viewpoint

Last year in these pages we invited some perspectives on the controversial issue of gay marriage, but they all shared one thing in common; they came from a country where the matter has yet to be settled. The following article comes from the leader of our sister religious socialist organization in Spain, one of the world's more spiritually conservative nations, where gay marriage was made legal by the socialist government in July of 2005. Regardless of what one may think of the issue and its place in the general discussion of socialist theory, the one thing that is clear is that it is not going away until decisions have been made about it in each of our respective halls of power.

CARLOS GARCIA DE ANDOIN

The bishops have fundamental reasons to reject the inclusion of same-sex unions in the institution of marriage. Such is the position, for example, of Lionel Jospin, significant because in 1999, as the socialist prime minister of France, he promoted the legislative recognition of same-sex partnerships through the Civil Pact of Solidarity. Still, last year an article in the newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche* affirmed that “marriage is in principle an institution created from the union of a man and a woman.” And it added that “one can disapprove of and fight homophobia while at the same time not being in favor of homosexual marriage, as in my case.” Such a position is not shared by the gay and lesbian movement, who consider such a distinction to be discrimination at its heart.

Nevertheless the doctrinal and anthropological reasons of the Church do not justify any type of opposition to the decision of the [Spanish] Parliament. There are at least two Catholic traditions on how to perceive the relationship between morals and policy. First is the prophetic, guided by the proclamation of principles. A good example of this is Isaiah and Jeremiah. Here one finds the ethics of conviction in the Weberian distinction. Second is the prudent, rooted in the Wisdom tradition, represented well by Saint Paul, and which is oriented to the selection of means adequate for the attainment of the goal. It would come to be related with the ethics of responsibility. Prudence pauses to consider the most suitable ways for the real achievement of the goal at hand. It is not enough to know if a thing is good by itself; it is also necessary to discern if it is also good in the present circumstances, and to evaluate if it is better than another thing and

more or less suitable for the intended end. A good example of this is that of Saint Thomas, who in the 13th century and in a religious society, defined the civil law as a ‘certain arrangement of reason appointed to the common good’ that does not necessarily have to identify itself with divine law because it can carry more evils than benefits for the common good.

What the bishops have to bring about today, by virtue of itself, is pastoral prudence. It is necessary to look ahead with wisdom to the day after the battle with the government [over gay marriage]. One could have acted in a more prudent way, helping to find a more mature position in the social assembly, but the Church cannot, moreover does not have to “burn all the ships,” so to speak. If it does, it will find it impossible to carry out those tasks that by fidelity to the gospel, do not allow for any delay. Which are these?

First, there is the recognition of the existence of homosexuals and the firm support to the same inside the Church. There are homosexual men and women in the Christian community, among priests, monks and the laity. They live a double life. They suffer a lack of acceptance and recognition. The doctrinal proposal is lived in fact like a negation of their identity, dignity and rights. The Christian faith, far from meaning liberation to them, has instead caused and is causing emotional blocks and anguishing experiences. Fewer and fewer do not remain in the experience of the love of God in spite of remaining in the [Catholic] Church. Many have not had any other means to realize their particular exodus of liberation until they find a space of fresh air far from the Church. Quite a few have left the faith, although a few hold on to embers that allow them to continue living in a Christian way, but deeply removed

from any commitment to the Christian community. Since its first claims of liberalization in the 1970s the Spanish Church has not taken a single step forward. In order to begin, a public dialogue between a bishop and a gay or lesbian Christian—in a suitable context of course— would be important. A visible dialogue, with images in the media, would be even better. Not only does this not go against some doctrine, but rather it stands in favor of the evangelical principle of non-discrimination.

Second, there is the need to reinterpret the call to abstention from love. The Church no longer puts so much emphasis on the legal non-regulation of the homosexual union, but on the legal non-comparison to marriage. The Compendium for Social Doctrine of the Church leaves the question open on the legal recognition of homosexual union. A. Rouco, while president of the EEC, said in its Plenary Assembly that “it is not to deny the legitimate rights of anybody” but to defend the institution of marriage and the family. If this is so, the Church has before itself the challenge of continuing to propose the evangelical perspective of love for the homosexual couple. The homosexual, Christian or not, can find in the commitment of the mutual donation without reservation and without terms an inspiration and a reference for orienting, supporting and enriching reciprocal love. For a couple of decades the Church proposed the abstention-like quality of Christian love to spouses, not in the sense of sexual abstinence, but in the sense of a sexuality lived with radicalness in love: “abstention is to live in the order of the heart” (John Paul II). If there is a homosexual practice from the Christian perspective, it would be better if it is inspired and signified by the mutual donation.

Third, there is the struggle against homophobia with decisiveness and without concession. Homophobia exists in our society and could yet increase in spite of the ample and increasing social acceptance of the reality of homosexual love. Highly offensive messages circulate on the Internet. There are episodes of insults and acts of aggression. In any case, opposition by the Church to same-sex marriage does not serve as a legitimization of homophobic conduct. It is clear that the Church does not try to do that, but it also does not have to appear unconscious of these undesired effects of

said conduct. What it says in its texts must become a determined action: “it is to deplore with firmness that homosexuals have been and are still the object of malevolent expressions and violent actions. Such behaviors deserve the condemnation of the shepherds of the Church, wherever they can be verified [...]. the dignity of all persons must always be respected in words, actions and legislation” (J. Ratzinger, 1.10.86). In this sense the gay and lesbian movement suffers from an attitude held by the Church at the international level that is more decided against the elimination of homophobic legislation that still stands in a remarkable number of countries. The Church could sign on to the proposal to declare the 17th of May as an International Day Against Homophobia. On this date in 1990 the WHO eliminated homosexuality from the list of mental diseases.

Homophobia exists in our society and could yet increase in spite of the ample and increasing social acceptance of the reality of homosexual love. ...In any case, opposition by the Church to same-sex marriage does not serve as a legitimization of homophobic conduct.

As the reader can observe there are solid arguments that appeal to prudence. It is necessary to look to the days ahead. The gospel is filled with passages in which Jesus admonishes those who loved to put the moral code over people. Many of us have wondered ourselves if the general call to civil disobedience by Catholics, to politicians and to the person of King Juan Carlos I, is pastorally prudent.

And it is not because the author is against civil disobedience. On the contrary, the democracy that emerged after Francoism owes itself very much to the right of resistance to authority and particularly to the Christian idea of spiritual freedom before power. The objection of conscience that postulates the Christian tradition is often a more radically democratic form of political commitment. At least this way we live through a good generation of young people who, before the call to learn virtues and skills for war, decide to exercise their fundamental right to the objection of conscience, with well little support from bishops or governments.

Carlos Garcia de Andoín is president of Cristianos en el PSOE. Translated from the Spanish by Andrew Hammer.

Toward An Alternative U.S. Foreign Policy

RICHARD H. SCHWARTZ

Noting that the Hebrew words for war, *milchama*, and bread, *lechem*, are derived from the word *locham*, which means both "to wage war" as well as "to feed," Jewish sages reasoned that when there is a shortage of grain and other resources, people are more likely to have disputes and wage war. Connections between shortages and violence have been observed from battles over wells in the days of the Hebrew patriarchs to modern disputes over oil in the Middle East.

These connections are especially serious now, when the availability of abundant, affordable oil is nearing an end. Other vital resources are also becoming scarce. It is projected that in 30 years at least half of the world's people will live in areas chronically short of fresh water and the combination of global warming and shrinking aquifers is decreasing the ability to produce enough food for the world's increasing population.

Former Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon stated, "Hunger and famine will do more to destabilize this world; [they are] more explosive than all atomic weaponry possessed by the big powers. Desperate people do desperate things." Richard J. Barnet, author of many books on international conflicts, believes that the anger and despair of hungry people sometimes lead to acts of terrorism and economic wars.

What are the implications for U.S. foreign policy? Military strength, while important, is not sufficient, as we learned in Vietnam and are relearning in Iraq. It is essential that the United States lead a multilateral effort to move toward world sufficiency of energy, food, and water, through conservation efforts and improved production approaches. A major part of this effort is a switch toward veganism, since the production of animal-based foods uses far more resources than the production of plant foods. For example, almost 40 percent of the world's grain is used to fatten the 50 billion animals raised for slaughter annually, and it takes 14 times as much water for a typical American diet than it does for a vegan diet.

To reduce other potential sources of desperation and violence, the United States should join other nations in an ongoing campaign to reverse global warming and to reduce hunger, poverty, disease, and illiteracy. Such efforts would also improve America's humanitarian image, which, in turn, would lower the chances that terrorists would find support. It is also essential that the world reduce its huge military expenditures, because they are often the source of oppression, authoritarianism, death, and destruction, and they waste trillions of dollars that could be spent on health, education, environmental protection, housing, poverty reduction, jobs, mass transportation, and so on.

The following Jewish teachings may be helpful in carrying out the above proposals: (1) Judaism teaches that the greatest hero is the person who converts an enemy into a friend; (2) Judaism teaches that violence and war result directly from injustice: "The sword comes into the world because of justice delayed, because of justice perverted, and because of those who render wrong decisions;" (3) Judaism emphasizes the

It is essential
that the United States
lead a multilateral effort
to move toward
world sufficiency
of energy, food, and water,
through conservation efforts
and improved production
approaches.

pursuit of justice and harmonious relations between nations to reduce violence and the prospects for war. The prophet Isaiah declared: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace." (Isaiah 32:17) Applying these teachings can help in the improved production and distribution of *lechem* and other resources that can lead to the fulfillment of the prophets' dream of an end to *milchama*.

*Richard H. Schwartz is a professor emeritus of the College of Staten Island and author of *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, *Judaism and Global Survival*, *Mathematics and Global Survival*, and more than 100 articles at JewishVeg.com/schwartz. He is president of Jewish Vegetarians of North America.*

reviews

God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It

By Jim Wallis

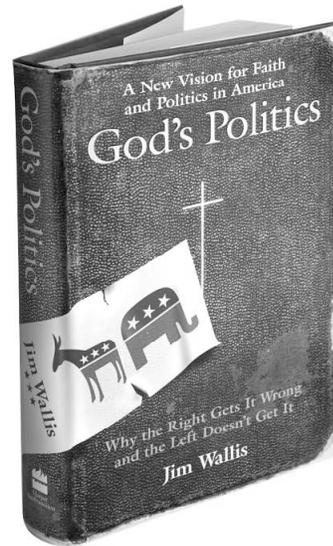
Harper San Francisco, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 2005 416 pp. \$25.95

GENE BIRMINGHAM

Jim Wallis is an evangelical Christian with a progressive politics and an inclusive stance toward other religions. He founded Sojourner Community, a nationwide network of progressive Christians, headquartered in Washington, D.C., and edits *Sojourners*, a monthly magazine covering faith, politics, and culture.

Wallis has taught faith, politics, and society at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government as an Institute of Politics Fellow and at the very liberal Harvard Divinity School. Author of seven other books, he speaks more than 200 times a year, writes columns in several newspapers, and appears on radio and television talk shows. He lined up Christian leaders to meet with President Bush, Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Archbishop of Canterbury, among others, to plead for an alternative to war in response to terrorism.

God's Politics, his latest book, is addressed to the progressive religious community. The religious right is wrong to try to use the Republican Party for its private agenda. What the religious left doesn't get is that the biblical teachings of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus are a political matter as well as a religious one. Denominational leaders issue justice statements, with little effect. Right-wing Christianity wants to use public means to enforce its private religious beliefs. Religious left politicians keep their faith to themselves, as though it did not apply to politics. The only way Wallis sees to make the social justice teachings of the Bible a political force is for the religious left to make them so. His Call to Renewal campaign is an attempt to make it happen. His example is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s combining biblical justice with the U.S. Constitution in his civil



Wallis does not address the issue of economic systems, whether capitalist or socialist. Instead, he presents the spiritual nature of the struggle between right and left as the problem.

Become a Selective Moralist?" The biblical prophets did not preach for individual conversions, but spoke to the kings, the priests, and especially to the false prophets, to change their ways or face God's judgment. Good religion today would copy them.

A Moderate Pro-Life Position

Wallis does not address the issue of economic systems, whether capitalist or socialist. Instead, he presents the spiritual nature of the struggle between right and left as the problem. The losers in our political struggle become cynical, while the winners are ready to wield the power they have gained, leaving the issues without even conversation. He believes that loss of hope is at the root of voter apathy. It is up to the religious left to restore hope by reclaiming the biblical basis of social justice. It remains a foundation for dealing with the issues of today, as Wallis sees them: race, poverty, and peace.

rights campaign.

Bad religion on the right must be challenged by good religion on the left. Rather than allow the right to continue to define its religion as the only alternative to secularism, good religion will ask the questions Wallis uses as chapter titles: "When Did Jesus Become Pro-War?" "When Did Jesus Become Pro-Rich?" "When Did Jesus

The most interesting example of his approach shows up in his moderate pro-life position on abortion. He accepts the "seamless garment" approach of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who called for the end both of the death penalty and abortion as a consistent ethic of life. But instead of resisting all policy of choice, he calls for both left and right to make abortion "safe, legal and rare," with emphasis on rare. Neither right nor left puts enough emphasis there. The right plays to its constituency during elections, but does nothing afterward to help could women in need of child care, health care and employment. The left fights to preserve *Roe v. Wade*, while failing to say how abortion might become rare through education and economic policy. Wallis believes that millions of votes from those who agree with progressive issues but have a religious view of the sanctity of life are lost by Democrats because of a hard line, pro-choice stance. The religious left, he argues, needs to give expression to the value of all human life by presenting choice as a last ditch option that may be necessary at times, but can be made rare by other means of meeting the needs of women. Unfortunately, he offers no examples of those who share this hope.

Harrington's Version

The subtitle of Michael Harrington's book *The Politics at God's Funeral*, is "The Spiritual Crisis of Western Civilization." Coming from an atheist, it sounds strangely like what Wallis, the evangelical Christian, says. Harrington closed his book this way:

It is at this precise moment and the conjunction is not an accident that the political and social God of the Western tradition is dying. An atheism of fools could rejoice in the emptiness of the heavens he leaves behind; a theism of fools could keep on singing the old hymns. *But the real issue is whether the horizon is being wiped away, not how it is defined. No politics can answer that question and only politics of all those concerned with the survival of the spirit, whether it is said to be holy or only human, can work to create the social structures in which people are more likely to answer it for themselves* [italics mine].

Compare Wallis's call for a spiritual component in politics in his closing chapters:

Prophetic faith does not see the primary battle as the struggle between belief and secularism. It understands that the real battle, the big struggle of our times, is the fundamental choice between cynicism and hope...

...the commission I want to use to conclude this book....It's a commission that can only be fulfilled by very human beings, but people who, because of faith and hope, believe that the world can be changed. And it is that very belief that changes the world. And if not us, who will believe? After all, we are the ones we have been waiting for.

Whether or not God is dead, religion is alive and kicking. Right-wing Christianity is trying to force a return to Christendom. Wallis believes God will be alive in the human spirit by action for social justice rather than by theological beliefs. He sounds like a theist who is singing new hymns. Whether or not there is hope for justice in the religious left, it is true that matters of the spirit matter to everyone.

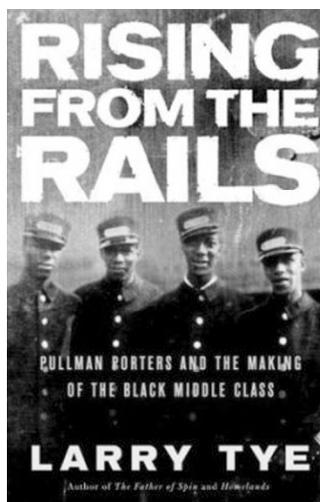
Gene Birmingham is a retired pastor of the United Church of Christ and secretary of Chicago DSA. A similar version of this essay appeared in the July-August 2005 issue of the Chicago DSA newsletter, New Ground.

Rising from the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class

By Larry Tye

Henry Holt & Co., 314 pp. \$26

STEVE KNIGHT



For more than a hundred years—from the end of the Civil War to the late 1960s—the Pullman railroad car was synonymous with luxury intercity travel. At the company's peak in the 1920s, 40 million passengers rode annually in Pullman sleepers staffed by more than 12,000 porters.

Former *Boston Globe* reporter Larry Tye chronicles the rise and fall of the Pullman Company's fortunes, highlighting the key role played by the smiling Pullman porter in its success.

The work life of a typical porter was exhausting, both physically and emotionally. Porters were expected to

work every day while on shifts that sometimes lasted weeks at a stretch; their schedules often permitted only two or three hours a night of sleep. Racist insults from passengers and company management alike were a routine part of the job. Salaries were so meager—a 1930s study found that average pay was 26 percent below the minimum needed for a family of five—that porters were compelled to ingratiate themselves with riders for tips. Real economic gains for porters were not realized until 1937 when the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, led by the charismatic A. Philip Randolph, won its long battle with Pullman Company management and signed its first union contract.

In return for working in these difficult circumstances, however, the Pullman porter could claim a prestigious status within the African-American community. A porter was admired for his steady employment, handsome uniform, and for often being one of the few homeowners in his neighborhood. Tye also emphasizes that the Pullman porter played a crucial role in the shaping of twentieth-century black political consciousness. As frequent travelers who spent much time in the company of better-educated whites, porters

Today many of the most successful African-American professionals—doctors, lawyers, judges, business and political leaders—can claim at least one Pullman porter as a forebear.

gained a cosmopolitan outlook that they brought back to their communities. In the days before television and the Internet facilitated the transfer of information, porters helped distribute black-oriented magazines and newspapers to rural areas that would not have received them otherwise. Several porters—and relatives of porters—became activists in the civil rights struggles of the 1950's and 1960s.

Although *Rising From the Rails* describes in unflinching detail the brutal racism and economic exploitation that generations of porters had to endure, this is ultimately a triumphant narrative. Through interviews with many retired porters, their children, and grandchildren, the author shows that the qualities of patience, strength, and determination required from all porters were passed down to their descendants. Today many of the most successful African-American professionals—doctors, lawyers, judges, business and

political leaders—can claim at least one Pullman porter as a forebear.

Steve Knight is a lay co-founder of the Peace & Restorative Justice ministry at Manhattan's Church of the Holy Trinity, where he recently taught classes in Christian Socialism.

***The Great Unraveling:
Losing Our Way in the new Century***
By Paul Krugman
W.W. Norton, 320 pp. \$25.95

CHARLES WEST

It really happened, and in Princeton, New Jersey! Paul Krugman had just finished a vigorous attack on Bush administration policies when the first questioner rose and asked, "Are you a communist?" "No," said Krugman, "I believe in . . . arithmetic."

So, is he a socialist? No. It isn't even in the index of his book. Is he religious? Maybe (he is Jewish), but we find no reference to that dimension in his analysis. He would probably answer both questions by saying simply, "I am an economist."

Then why are we concerned with him here? Why do we read him avidly week by week (on the *New York Times* op-ed page) for clear analysis of what is happening to us? Because, despite his disclaimers, he is more than a dealer in facts and trends; he is, in his secular context, a prophet. Over the past six years he has stood in the public marketplace and, like an arithmetical Amos, pronounced column by column the judgment of God on the deceptions, the policies, and the actions of the Bush administration and its radical supporters.

His indictments are specific each time, but his book arranges them by theme: the irrational exuberance of the financial and technological boom, the illusions of Alan Greenspan, crony capitalism among the Texas rich, fuzzy math on taxes and Social Security, the reign of special interests, short-term greed, exploitative environmental energy policy, control of public media, distortion of research, and more. There are some comments on other countries and world trade, but the focus is on America, his home.

Krugman sees a pattern in it all... radical revolution against the covenant (a biblical word he does not use)

cont'd on next page

Reviews

cont'd from previous page

that has bound society together since the Great Depression and the Second World War. These radicals of the right do not listen, they do not negotiate; they may make tactical retreats, but they do not compromise. Their aim internationally is to reduce treaties and the United Nations from servants of peace (again a biblical phrase, not his) to instruments of American power and interest. Their national goal is to destroy government as an agent of justice (once again, biblical, not Krugman) and security for all: Social Security and Medicare, protection of the environment, taxation and regulation of unearned income in the financial markets, support of low-cost housing, and all else that serves the public good.

To this end, with tremendous funding from wealthy corporations and individuals, these radicals will use any tactic that works. Deception about policy goals, false statements about economic realities or trends, harassment of some and control of other news outlets, and slanderous attacks on its critics instead of answering their arguments are only some of these tactics. Revolutionaries do not play politics or economics by accepted rules.

A Terrible Aberration

Krugman does not know why these radicals behave this way. Rich people are prospering. Why do they resent tax policies and social services that help the rest of us? Corporations are wealthy. Why do they object to environmental protection that in the long run serves us all, including them. The United States is the most powerful nation in the world. Why should it flout its neighbors and declare its own war?

For an arithmetical economist all this is a terrible aberration. He can see the destruction of society to which it leads; why can't they? He pins his hope on the revulsion of reasonable people, which he is trying, by providing sensible information, to arouse. In other words, he understands the subtleties of human sin very well, but is baffled by the way in which the human will to live, as Reinhold Niebuhr expounded years ago, becomes the will to power that recognizes no limits to its expansion and control.

How, then, should we respond to this secular Amos? We can respond first, by taking his detailed indictment seriously and placing it in context. Make no mistake, the judgment of God is at work here, and Krugman shows us how, in detail. Not only is the second table

of the Ten Commandments being violated—You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; and even, You shall not kill—but the first table as well. “You shall have no other gods before me.” Another god is being served here than the one in whom Christians and Jews believe. “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” The name of Christ has been captured by a religious right allied with economic power, and together they are capturing political power as well.

A deeper issue is at stake than the separation of church and state: it is the struggle of faith with idolatry. Who is the God in whom we believe, and how is that God at work? It is a struggle on two fronts; one with fellow Christians (others must speak for their own faiths) to clarify the word of God to and for us; the other with the world around us to bear witness to and work for God's justice and peace in the covenant that includes us all. Krugman, the arithmetician, can help us on both fronts. A passion for justice, a longing for peace, and a desire for some form of covenant that will direct our behavior toward responsibility for one another, underlie all his economics.

Second, we can supplement Krugman with imagination and hope. He is fighting to preserve the elements of a welfare state that we achieved through the New Deal and the Great Society; but this is not enough, either as a standard or a goal. His one column with a positive plan is about tax policy, not social programs. He sympathizes with a weakened labor movement that, to preserve its hard-fought rights and gains, must work against the mass of the world's poor, but he does not show any way through this dilemma. He does not help us with any theory of the proper interaction between private enterprise and government agency in both producing prosperity and distributing it justly for the good of all.

We need to go further. What might a secular reflection of God's covenant with the American people, whatever they believe, look like? What is justice and how might the powers of this world be pressed into some approximation of it? In the past, many of us have called this guiding vision socialism. Some of us cling to what word because, despite, being misused, it still expresses the principle that the purpose of economic enterprise and political action is to serve all people in a community of mutual help, not individual or corporate gain of a few. But the name is not important; the reality is. With Krugman's help, let's work on it.

Charles West is a professor emeritus of Princeton Theological Seminary.



One More Embarrassment

There is simply no end to the embarrassments I am compelled to inflict upon my more politically correct comrades. For example, Michael Walzer contributes a splendid analysis of *Politics and Religion in the United States* (Vol. 29, No.4, 2005). However, he cannot avoid sticking a few needles into “fundamentalist Protestants and conservative Catholics” on the subjects of gender equality and patriarchal authority.

About patriarchy in the family setting. Better matriarchy than this silly notion that husband and wife must have equal authority in governing the little community that makes up a family.

The reason is simple enough. Just give common sense free reign. I have an advantage because in younger days I raced a small sailboat with a fanatical desire to win. Imagine yourself in either a sailboat or a ship at sea. There is a male skipper and a female skipper and they both have their hands on the tiller, or the wheel, and the both have equal authority to steer the boat as they think best. In the case of the racing sailboat, at best you lose the race but save your lives and the survival of the boat. At worst you run into a storm and lose both boat and lives. In the case of a ship, the worst is the same, the best is that you don’t arrive at your destination at the time advertised.

In the case of the family the best is that man and wife love each other so much and are so intelligent that they can either agree or defer to each other when crucial decisions must be made. The worst, as in the case of the boats, is shipwreck.

And, as you might have expected, since the Sixties, when gender equality really took off, the result has been a sharp increase in family shipwrecks. At best there has been a lot more badly raised children and unhappy, conflicted marriages than there was in the old days when it was recognized that you cannot steer a boat when there are two skippers with equal authority.

We need fundamentalist Protestants and conservative Catholics, not to mention conservative Jews, Muslims and Buddhists, in the socialist movement. Why not grit our teeth and refrain from the unnecessary needling, especially when the reasoning behind the needle is by no means self-evident?

John C. Cort
Nahant, MA

An old saying in our movement is that it takes two wings to fly a plane. Actually it takes more than just two wings, and our dear John Cort has been jiggling the ailerons for years now. He invites Michael Walzer to respond. –Ed.



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

This is a:

- Renewal subscription - \$10
- New subscription - \$10
- Send my free copy of *Christian Socialism*
- Change of Address

Enclosed is:

- \$10 Regular, 1 year (4 issues)
- \$20 Sustaining (includes DSA Commission Membership*)
- \$12 Canadian, 1 year
- \$15 Foreign, 1 year
- \$100, Lifetime
- \$7 for *Christian Socialism* (new subscribers only, includes shipping and handling)

Make checks payable to:

Religious Socialism, 29 Harris St, Waltham MA 02452

NAME: _____

STREET: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP+4: _____

PHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

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

Still Room On the Left

cont'd from page 6

In 21st century multi-faith, pluralistic and secular Canada, any dialogue between politics and religion writ large must transcend older paradigms and take full account of the pluralistic country which Canada now most certainly is. In this sensitive environment, even language like the "social gospel" can be heard by some as residual Christian imperialism if it is not used properly. On the left there is a need to make the same kind of connection between social democratic principles and the social justice or prophetic traditions in all the major faiths, as was made by an earlier generation between the left and social gospel theology.

In the early 1980s, American left-wing thinker Michael Harrington said that the absence of serious thought about the human condition was the enemy of both faith and anti-faith. He called for a common cause against the mindless hedonism and de facto atheism of late capitalism in favor of "a values-informed vision of individual and social meaningfulness that goes beyond the latest consumer or cultural fad."

The rulers of the present age would not welcome such an alliance. They would prefer to keep religion a private thing, to be called on only from time to time to legitimize their free market idolatry, their illegal preemptive wars, and their manipulation of the culture wars in which the collateral death of children and the destruction of creation due to poverty, war, and multinational profit strategies is uncritically accepted, while the decision of a woman to have an abortion is held up as one of the most heinous sins.

Deep down, I think we all know to whom Jesus was directing his admonition about throwing the first stones.

Bill Blaikie is an MP in the Canadian federal parliament and serves as the New Democratic Party's defense critic. He is also a United Church minister, having been ordained in 1978. Since first being elected to Parliament in 1979, he has been re-elected seven times and is now the longest continuous-serving MP in Canada. This article was originally printed in the CPPA Monitor in September 2005.



Religious Socialism

**The Institute for Democratic Socialism
DSA Fund for America
29 Harris Street
Waltham, MA 02452**

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage Paid
Boston, MA
Permit No. 59601