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James L. Foster & John Lackey, co-editors

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CONTENTS:

ARTICLES

Article #1, Following Jesus, by James L. Foster

Article #2, Thoughts on Reducing World Poverty, by Bob Rundle

Article #3, Reflection on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by Don Timmerman

Article #4, New Slant on Angry God Atonement Theory, by *Michael L. Sherer*

Series: Loving with the Love of Jesus

Article #5, Love Is Something We Are

Article #6, The Power Paradox by Dacher Keltner

Article #7, Goodbye Old World, Hello New, by James L. Foster

+++++

Book Reviews

Phillips, Kevin. **American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century.** A review by Gerald W. Bone

Rosenberg, Marshall B., **Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life and Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What You Say Next Will Change Your World,** A review by James L. Foster

Moore, Sebastian. **The Contagion of Jesus, Doing Theology as if it Mattered.** A review by Anthony W. Bartlett

Douglass, James. **JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters.** A review by John K. Stoner

Claiborne, Shane. **The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical.** (Zondervan, 2006). A review by Edward T. Sullivan

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Editor's Introduction:

This is the fifth edition of *En Christo* published by the Institute for the Study of Christian Spirituality (ISCS), 204 Busbee Road, Knoxville, TN 37920. James L. (Jim) Foster and John Lackey, both retired pastors, are co-editors. Jim is also the Founder and President of the Institute. John is co-director with Bob Rundle of *The Institute for Spirituality and Global Economics*. Our intent is to create an ongoing dialogue about the changes in Christianity that have become increasingly obvious since we entered the new millennium as well as the changes that still need to happen. You may respond to any of the writers of this issue of *En Christo* by using the contact form included in this issue. It should also be noted that the ideas expressed by each editor and by other contributors are their own. The editors do not censor each other's writings.

Submissions of articles and reviews and reader responses may only be sent by email attachment to jimsandyfoster@yahoo.com. Since we do not know all of you personally, please include "En Christo" on the subject line, as otherwise we may delete your email without opening it. By like token, if you wish to be removed from our "En Christo" email list please let us know. We do not wish to hassle you with unwanted mail.

En Christo is a transliteration of the *koine* Greek for "In Christ." The focus of the journal is the experience of Christian discipleship interpreted in contemporary and non-theistic categories. The journal is ecumenical, even interfaith, in its outlook and seeks common ground with lovers of God of a variety of faith traditions.

Reviews of the books pertinent to the re-visioning of the Christian faith are solicited. All books reviews received will be given consideration based on their relevance to the focus of **En Christo**. We are seeking reviews of books that open up new vistas in the way we typically think about Jesus. All of the books listed are available from Amazon.com or Alibris.com in either new or used copies.

Books reviewed: As **En Christo** is not endowed with funds that enable it to pay for submissions (or for editors, for that matter), there is no remuneration offered for submissions of any kind. Expenses

incurred by contributors in the production of their submissions are solely their responsibility, including the purchase of books reviewed.

Dialogue is a space given to readers to converse about the issues raised by the editors and various other contributors to **En Christo**. Readers are encouraged to email their responses to the writings of other readers and authors of various articles and reviews. The editors will include your responses in the next issue. The responses must be civil in tone and display serious intent to wrestle with the presented issues if they are to be considered for inclusion. The editors reserve the right to edit accepted responses for length, grammar and civility.

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Articles

ARTICLE #1

Following Jesus

By James L. Foster

Given the title of this publication it seems to me appropriate for us to consider how we are doing in following the one whom many of us claim as our leader. In the records of his ministry and teaching given us by the writers of our gospels, Jesus has laid down some pretty clear markers of what it means to be *en Christo*, “in Christ.” I think it is safe to say that none of us have followed him perfectly. Indeed, if we look back over the last two millennia of the Christian Church, it would appear that on a number of issues we have not followed him at all.

It is no secret that the Christian Church through the centuries has been wrong on many occasions and in many ways: We were wrong morally by perverting the grace of God, as in the crusades (by which we set out under the banner of Christ to either convert the Muslims or to kill them), as in the inquisition (in which we tortured or killed those who dared to disagree with the church), and as in indulgences (by which, for a price, we offered to wipe the slate clean of the believer’s sins), as in papal infallibility (including our present Pope’s suppression of Nag Hammadi scrolls for 40 years), and as in character assassinations, Mary Magdalene, for example. We have also been wrong intellectually, believing, for example, that the earth is the center of the universe, and that the world is flat, having four corners (Revelation 7:1). We were wrong in our understanding of biology, believing and building our theology on the assumption that only the male contributed anything of substance to the character and identity of the new born child (the mother only contributed a safe haven for the fetus to develop). Therefore the birth accounts of the child Jesus, composed almost a century later, only needed to replace the human father, presumably Joseph, in order to eliminate inherited sin. In later years, we have been wrong again in supporting slavery, shunning, and segregation; wrong in our participation in wars and genocide (for example Rwanda, Burundi, and Bosnia), and wrong in our support of consumerism, and neglect of the poor – to name a few. Injustice has been our credo, and it still is. We have a sorry legacy when it comes to following the teachings and example of Jesus.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), the gospel writer has Jesus tell the story of a man journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell among thieves who left him battered, bleeding and perhaps unconscious on the side of the

road. The Torah, the Law of God by which the Jews pledged themselves to live, demanded that human need must take priority over every other concern. Yet, in this story, says Jesus, a Levite, a recognized leader in temple worship, who was surely aware of the Law's command to show compassion to those in need, passes by on the other side of the road, ignoring the wounded man. Next comes a priest, a holy man of Israel, ordained after becoming proficient in the study of the Torah. He, too, sees the victim. Perhaps justifying his behavior in typical ordained practice by countering the text calling for compassion with another text prohibiting one from touching the flesh of a dead man, he refuses to stop long enough even to investigate and passes by on the other side of the road. *

Then, says Jesus, a half-breed, a Samaritan, journeys along that way. He is not schooled in the Law and so may have been ignorant of the Torah's demands. But he sees a human being in need, and he responds without hesitating. Going up to the wounded man, he pours oil in his wounds and binds them up. He then gives the victim wine and water to drink and takes him on his own donkey to an inn, where he arranges to pay for his continued care and lodging until the healing process is complete.

Then Jesus says to the lawyer who prompted the story, "Go and do likewise."

This parable was a challenge to the defining prejudice in 1st century Judaism and it invited people to step beyond their prejudices, whatever they were, into a new definition of humanity, a humanity that emerges beyond the boundaries of our prejudices.

In this story and others, like the Prodigal Son and the Rich man and Lazarus, Jesus is shown to be a God-presence that calls those of us who would be his followers to become more fully human by opening up the dark places in our souls where our prejudices hide, the place to which we have assigned the Samaritans of our day. For some of us the Samaritans may be persons of a different skin color. For others they may be people who worship God in ways different from our way. For still others the Samaritans may be those whose sexual orientation is not like our own. To be followers of Jesus we are forced to heed his call to surrender all our killing stereotypes and to walk beyond all our fears into a new prejudice-free humanity, a humanity free of those barriers that divide us one from another.

The call of Jesus through his example and teaching to those who would be his followers is to put aside all gender and sexual distinctions. The Apostle Paul apparently understood this when he said that for those who have clothed themselves with Christ, "There is no longer Jew or Greek...slave or free, male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) These become only categories into which humanity is divided. They are not divisions that indicate sin, as past rhetoric had suggested.

The portrait of Jesus drawn by the biblical writers shows him violating the sexual boundaries of his day, not just once but many times. John's gospel, for example, says that Jesus engaged the woman at the well (John 4:1-42) in a lengthy theological discussion, even though Jewish males did not converse with women in a public place. No wonder his disciples were astonished when they returned to find the two of them in conversation, and though none of them said, "Why are you talking with her?" you can be sure all of them were thinking it.

Jesus also had women disciples, among whom Mary Magdalene was prominent. She was obviously a key person in the Jesus movement, despite the early church male leaders' attempts at character assassination by turning her into a prostitute without a

shred of evidence to support their accusations. Apart from one unexplained comment in Luke 8:2 where Jesus is reported to have cast out demons in Mary Magdalene, she is described in very positive terms in every other reference. She also went on to write one of the early gospels about Jesus, though it was never acknowledged by the Church Fathers. But they do not reflect either the example or the teaching of Jesus.

As for those with a different sexual orientation, Jesus never says a word in any gospel about homosexuality. Indeed, the word homosexuality does not appear in Scripture at all, nor does sexual perversion. Jesus did mention adultery and fornication, both heterosexual sins. And in the story in Genesis of Sodom and Gomorrah, though the inhabitants of Sodom were apparently homosexuals, their sin was in their attempted rape of Lot's guests. James is quoted in Acts 15:20 as advising the Gentiles to abstain from fornication, and Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 lists fornication as one of several works of the flesh, but makes no mention of homosexuality. I know a few homosexuals and all of them with but one exception are people of integrity, struggling with the burden of rejection, placed upon them for the most part by Christians

The science is in and it is conclusive. Sexual orientation, both heterosexuality and homosexuality, are natural, genetically imposed orientations with which we are born. Just because homosexuality is not natural for those of us that have a heterosexual orientation, that does not mean that it is not natural for those born with a homosexual orientation. The only thing that really divides us is the fear we have of an experience we do not understand, and for that we misquote Scripture to justify not following the teaching of Jesus. Homosexuals are clearly the pre-eminent Samaritans of our day, and the call of Jesus is to reach across the divide with compassion and acceptance.

Another teaching of Jesus about which I suggest we should be very concerned is that reported by Matthew in the opening verses of chapter 7 of his gospel. "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged, for with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

You, dear Christian friends, are my brothers and sisters. But we also have other brothers and sisters who are not a part of our faith traditions and who are different from us in one way or another. As we have opportunity, we need to embrace them, too, without judgment and without fear. May there be for us no more Samaritans but only human beings who share the wonder of what it means to be a child of God.

* Much of the interpretation of this parable is roughly quoted from the book *New Christianity for a New World* by John Shelby Spong, pp. 134-ff.

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ARTICLE #2

*To the Readers: The author, Bob Rundle is Co-Director with John Lackey of the **Institute for Spirituality and Global Economics (SAGE)**. Following is his revision of a paper with the same title published in an earlier issue of **En Christo**. It was written to influence the thinking of those large foundations that attempt to improve the lives of people, particularly the poor. He is particularly interested in ideas about the best ways to generate such influence. Your thoughts, criticism and questions about the paper are welcome.*

Responses may be sent to the author by way of email to Bob Rundle, rarhr@nuvox.net. Please copy your response to **En Christo**, James Foster, Editor, at jimsandyfoster@yahoo.com. Thanks.

THOUGHTS ON REDUCING WORLD POVERTY

(Revised May 2008)

By Robert Rundle

SUMMARY

This essay provides the background and a model for creating a more just and moral global economy. It proposes that a moral perspective is essential for creating such economic change. It also proposes that a more just and moral economy is essential to reducing world poverty. It challenges leaders in foundations, religion, business, and government along with all people of faith to review their part in world poverty. Part of this challenge involves reviewing how much funding is aimed at justice in addition to charity. Another part involves the role of spiritual development in creating change.

BACKGROUND

Justice and Charity

Several years ago my wife and I began attending the local United Church of Christ services at the Church of the Savior. We joined the adult discussion group that had just started studying Ross and Gloria Kinsler's book, The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life (1). After completing the book the group accepted the Kinslers' challenge to continue studying the relationships between faith, global economics and world peace. This study still continues today, partly within this group. We also developed an interdenominational group to study these issues during 2003-04.

Jesus spoke of, and modeled, love as the central guide for our lives. Christians today carry this out at the national and global level primarily by charitable efforts rather than efforts to achieve justice. Charity and Justice are at opposite ends of a continuum. At one end justice deals mainly with our systems, such as economy, government, education and health. On the other end, charity deals largely with the symptoms generated by the imperfections of these systems, such as poverty, poor education and poor health. The creation of justice is obviously more complex and controversial than charitable practices.

Global justice eliminates much of the need for charity. Continued funding of charitable efforts is vital, since we are a long way from achieving justice. But the effects of charity are often diminished by injustice. It is essential that we feed the hungry. But there will always be hunger until we deal with its causes. We must address injustice to both maximize charity and achieve justice.

The challenge to governmental, religious, and private funders attempting to make this a better world is to determine an appropriate balance between funding justice, aimed at

curing social ills and charity, aimed at alleviating symptoms. This is difficult enough in medical funding, where choices have to be made about how much to support basic research versus treatment of the sick. It may be more difficult for funders supporting a broader range of activities. During the Cold War, Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife, Brazil, said, "When I feed the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist." If funders really want to improve the world they must be prepared for the criticism that efforts to create more justice are likely to bring. But it appears that most of these funders are unable to resist "sainthood".

Global Business Practices

Large corporations have grown beyond their level of competence. They have achieved great size and power, both commercial and political. But their success is leading toward their destruction. It is natural that corporate and financial leaders try to influence public policy to favor their activities. But their success doing this in recent decades has greatly influenced the distribution of the world's resources. We are now at a stage of unsustainable "maldistribution" of global income and resources. The job of a business or financial leader never included making decisions about the appropriate distribution of the world's resources to people. Yet their normal business practices have led to their having the greatest power in these crucial distribution decisions.

The old story about two people alone on a deserted island with only one having food seems appropriate for our times. Without sharing, the owner of the food will not sleep well. We are faced with the same choice: sharing or conflict. The United States and other "advanced" economies have the money. But in their search for continually expanding profits and market share, they are increasing poverty, accelerating the gap in incomes and resources in the world, inviting terrorism and destroying the earth at an unsustainable rate.

It is essential that we change our current global economic practices if we hope to increase equity of income and resources among the world's population. Susan George's article, "A Short History of Neo-Liberalism" (2) outlines these practices very well. They have allowed a few to accumulate tremendous wealth but also have largely created the intolerable income gaps and inequalities we see in our world today. World poverty will continue to increase without changes.

Our group concluded that we have all helped create our present economic system. Consequently, we have the responsibility to work for a more just and moral one. A quick overview of these conclusions is in such sources as, a) the last twenty pages of David Korten's The Post-Corporate World (3), b) pp.249-277 of John Perkins' Confessions of an Economic Hit Man (4), c) the Introduction and first two chapters of Jim Wallis' God's Politics (5), d) the Introduction to M. Douglas Meeks' God the Economist (6).

Spiritual/Religious Issues

But reducing world poverty calls as much for spiritual changes as economic ones. We are in a struggle for the hearts of the world's peoples. The United States now primarily relies on military and economic means to reach its objectives. This is not winning hearts but helping terrorists sell their ideology.

One key to attaining a more just and moral economy is to clearly articulate the values that will frame such an effort. Our study group became convinced that it is important to introduce moral values into economic policy development. This is why faith-based institutions and people with a strong spiritual sense must be part of such an effort. But few religious organizations, even socially active ones like our United Church of Christ, appear to have much activity in the area of economic system change. Religious groups need help to get fully engaged. If we truly believe that all humans have equal value that flows from God, we need to start building an economy based on this belief.

The Search for Solutions

I had become increasingly frustrated in seeking religious or secular organizations that seem to be effectively dealing with the big elephant in the room, our global economic system. Most appear to work around the edges of economic justice. Many focus their efforts on the symptoms of economic injustice through charitable works. Some use largely negative approaches in attacking current business practices. Others like World Vision, Oxfam, Bread for the World, and Call to Renewal seem to be doing commendable work. But they also appear to spend a sizeable part of their resources on attempts to influence governments without doing much to counteract strong corporate influence. This corporate influence often undermines the changes these organizations are trying to enact. Many organizations also seem to lack a strong moral rationale for their programs. The International Forum on Globalization provides a rich source of ideas about alternatives but leaves it to many relatively small organizations (such as those represented at the World Social Forums) to enact change. Such grassroots efforts at change are vital but they need support from large organizations with major financial resources to have more impact. These factors have slowed much positive social and economic change.

Our study group asked how a major reduction in world poverty might occur:

1. If our present way of doing business in the world increases world poverty?
2. If business can't or won't effectively regulate itself?
3. If business largely controls the governmental bodies that could provide such regulations?

It all came together for me recently when our discussion group started reading Jim Wallis' God's Politics (7). His review of faith-based social movements in the United States like achieving civil rights, abolishing slavery and creating child labor laws suddenly seemed to provide a key. The model I was searching for (but didn't recognize)

is a global, faith-based movement. This could add to the pressure from activist groups on national and international governmental organizations to humanize our present economic system. Part of the answer lies in the heart as well as in economic behavior.

Broad educational programs about better alternatives to our present economic practices and the moral malaise that supports them are essential to humanize our economy. The work of the International Forum on Globalization provides a secular model for this. Its publication, Alternatives to Economic Globalization (2004)(8), lays out principals for sustainable societies and just economic systems. It summarizes alternative economic systems and provides ways that they may be achieved. Tying these excellent ideas to the compassionate teachings of the world's religions will enhance them.

Since we have not found organizations that appear to have the capacity to create large positive changes in our economy, I pulled together the following thoughts on how this might happen. These are based on our group study and my own readings.

A MODEL FOR CHANGE

A. Mission

Create a more just and moral global economic system that reduces poverty and terrorism through a global, nonviolent social movement guided by a moral framework and extensive educational programs.

B. Why This Mission?

1. Poverty is a moral and religious issue. What would Jesus think of us U.S. Christians? We live in the wealthiest nation in history. We have helped to create and then tolerate a world where 30,000 children die every day of starvation or preventable diseases in the developing world.
2. Global business practices are a major cause of poverty and preventable deaths. An immense secret behind all the positive reports about these practices is the central question they raise. Susan George ("A Short History of Neo-Liberalism")(9) puts it this way: "Who has a right to live and who does not". John Kenneth Galbraith in The Economics of Innocent Fraud (10) suggests this may be secret from many business leaders as well as the public.
3. Poverty breeds terrorism (even if it does not cause it) and terrorism is winning. (See the National Intelligence Assessment released in July 2007 (11).) While Al-Qaeda has regained much of its strength, particularly since the Iraq war started, support around the world for the U.S. way of dealing with terrorism is shrinking. Poverty also breeds poor health, starvation and hopelessness that diminish the effects of charitable efforts.
4. Military force is an ineffective way to deal with terrorism. Violence only creates more violence. This adds to world poverty.

5. Providing charity does little to change the system that creates the need for charity. But charity, not justice, gets most private funding. As Jim Wallis puts it in God's Politics, we believe in a God of Charity but not a God of Justice.

6. Some business leaders include social and human concerns in their business practices in spite of the strong pressures to ignore these concerns. Both the legal charter of the corporation and the business culture provide stiff opposition. But these admirable efforts are only a small start toward the necessary shifts in business practices required to reduce world poverty. Such shifts will need to come from inside the corporation as well as from national and international regulatory bodies.

7. Corporate and financial leaders have a hugely disproportionate influence on governmental policies (and could also have a major role in creating positive changes in these).

8. Oppressive government policies strongly supported by the establishment, such as economic regulations, change little without a movement that creates pressures for reform. People need to see these policies in a different way. (An example in the United States is the civil rights movement.)

9. All the world's religions stress compassion as an important element of their beliefs. There is a huge reservoir of potential support for a movement that can tap this moral sense.

10. Using a moral-based approach can help to reduce the clash of ideologies that invariably arises while attempting fundamental shifts in culture. This clash usually leads to a lot of steam but little change. Poverty rates in the United States in recent years are a good example. Using moral frames can lead to more effective efforts. In God's Politics (12), Jim Wallis presents a picture of how this has worked in our nation. Movements to change our policies about slavery, child labor, and civil rights for example were strongly tied to a moral-based approach. As he notes, God is neither a Republican nor a Democrat.

11. David Korten in The Post-Corporate World (13) notes our present global economic system is on a suicidal course. It has created great misery for many at the same time as it has produced immense wealth for a few. This invites conflict and is destroying our earth, a major basis for wealth, at an alarming rate. Positive changes in this system will increase the responsiveness of governments to citizen's needs and the chances for peace. If we want peace, we must take much of the profit out of war.

12. Many commendable major efforts to create positive economic changes in recent decades appear to lack:

- a. the combination of business and faith leaders with a shared vision of a just and moral economy, and the courage to work toward this.
- b. a strategy to loosen the grip of corporations on governments so that lobbying efforts of groups trying to create more justice can be more successful.

- c. a major educational campaign teaching what a just, moral economic system looks like, changes essential to bring this about, how our present economic practices fail to meet this standard and why it matters.

C. Steps To Achieve This Mission

1. Obtain funding from sources that are willing to divert some of their charitable contributions or from new sources. This would initially cover start-up costs and activities in steps 2 and 3 below. Increased funding would be required to carry out the subsequent steps.
2. Create a planning group to lead the steps below. It needs to be a world body comprised of individuals selected for their commitment to the mission and their skills and knowledge in each of the sectors necessary to carry out the mission. These sectors include government (including the UN), business, religious organizations, social movements, unions, think tanks and organizations trying to humanize our economy. Clergy, journalists/writers, business leaders, educational/media experts, economists and other academics will need to be among the professions represented.
3. Develop a vision of what a just and moral global economic system looks like. (This should be a developing picture that changes with new knowledge and new world events.) Then complete a picture of the changes that would need to be made in our present business and governmental policies to achieve this vision. (Alternatives to Economic Globalization (14) is an excellent source for this.) These changes then need to first be set within a moral frame and then prioritized. Step 3 will provide the architecture for the movement's work.
4. Develop a new organization to carry out the steps below if negotiations are not feasible or successful with existing ones. Over 130 different organizations are listed in "Alternatives to Economic Globalization"(15) that are working toward alternatives. Even eliminating those that do not have a global focus leaves many potential candidates to assume this task.
5. Develop a global campaign to change people's thinking about our current global economic practices based on step 3 above. Basic tenets of such an effort must be that ideas have consequences and that moral values are critical in creating an economy. This campaign may well be the most valuable contribution of the movement to reduce poverty. The economic ideology developed with great corporate support over the past 60 years has convinced much of the public that our current economic policies are virtuous and inevitable. A similar size effort may be necessary to put this ideology in a moral frame that shows the public its full effects and the advantages of alternative policies.
6. A variety of educational programs and materials will need to be used since the public knows so little about economics. (This of course is one reason the business community has had such success in Washington and other capitals.) There seems to be a wide range of these already available about alternative economic policies, but few we found tied them to moral values.
Three areas of our current global economic policies need particular focus:

- a. the myths underlying them (such as the market is the most effective way to allocate resources)
- b. the ways that this system helps to create poverty (such as through trade agreements and the policies of the World Bank) and destroys the environment
- c. why many are immoral

Such a major campaign will assist greatly in the difficult task of creating a better world economy. For example, I think that many business and financial leaders have either not connected the potential dots between their usual practices and those 30,000 kids noted above, or resist thinking about it. They and rest of us need help to face up to this reality and find how we can change this.

Religious organizations can play a key role in this educational campaign. In addition to helping to develop this campaign, they can provide a major means of reaching the public through a variety ways. These can include their worship services, study groups, community activities, denominational publications and other educational methods.

7. From the list developed in step 3 above, the organization will select specific national or international policy changes on which to start actions. These actions may involve becoming part of a coalition already working on changes. For example, in the United States this could mean joining Public Citizen and other groups working on real campaign finance reform to reduce corporate influence. This movement could also join World Vision, Oxfam and others trying to change policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Or it might select an issue or policy that other organizations are not working on and invite them to join it. In a coalition effort, its most significant contributions may be in adding educational campaigns around these actions and in providing financial resources.
8. Each of these actions needs to be tied to the movement's vision and moral frame. Preparatory education would usually precede the action. The myths behind the policies involved in the selected action and how they help create poverty may also be included. Suppose the action is attempting to humanize trade policy such as CAFTA. Its tie to creating more poverty in Central America, the real beneficiaries of this trade policy and the morality of enriching the rich further could receive wide spread publicity. Such specific educational programs will need to be coordinated with the general educational campaign noted above.
9. Focus particularly on the U.S. public for two reasons. We have the greatest influence and power in our current global economic system (and hence the greatest power to change it). People in our nation also have the least awareness about the negative effects of this system.
10. Create public awareness through such vehicles as the media, think tanks, conferences, legislative work and non-violent protests that help illustrate both the problem and point toward alternatives.
11. Monitor the results of funded activities and reduce or eliminate those that show few results.

D. Conclusion

Many organizations working for economic justice do commendable work and can bring expertise in specific areas. They may lack the range to lead a movement such as described here. This effort obviously will require a long-range commitment in funding. But it should require considerably less than the available assets for charitable endeavors. Funding for charity rather than justice would need to continue to be much larger for some time. This effort to reduce poverty is aimed not only at saving the world's peoples but also the sacred globe we call home. It can also provide many opportunities for spiritual growth. We hope to provide further information in future papers about some of the issues discussed in this essay and the resources used by our study groups.

END NOTES

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ARTICLE #3

Editors note: The author of the following reflection is a regular contributor to **En Christo's** sister publication, **ICS Peace Memo**.

REFLECTION ON DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. By Don Timmerman

What is it about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that causes me to admire him so much? It was not only that he spoke out against discrimination, violence and war. Many have done this in the past. It was not only that he marched, demonstrated and was arrested for doing nonviolent civil disobedience. Many have done this and still do it. It was not only that he was an eloquent and powerful speaker. There have been and still are many who are very powerful and eloquent speakers. The reason Dr. King is admired as a hero and a man of courage is because he returned good for evil. Instead of retaliating against those who discriminated against others he refused to practice discrimination. Instead of retaliating against the police and National Guard who tried to stop the marches and demonstrations by using dogs, water hoses, smoke bombs, guns, etc. and locked him up in jail, he offered them his friendship and gave them a gift far more precious than gold and money. He taught them to forgive everyone who offended them, even those who would never ask for forgiveness. He taught that peace cannot be brought about with swords and guns but rather with the dove and olive branch. To constantly forgive your enemies, and do good to those who do bad to you is a revolutionary way of thinking and acting. Many people then as now mistakenly believe this way is wrong, foolish and would bring about the demise of America. Those of us who believe in his message choose to refuse to cooperate with violence and war and instead practice forgiveness and generosity. We refuse to pay for war and fighting, and choose instead to aid the millions in the world who lack the basics of life. May the lesson of Dr. King live on forever!

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ARTICLE #4

Editors Note: The author of the following article, Michael Sherer, is editor of the Metro Lutheran, a regional Lutheran newspaper serving Minnesota Lutherans..

New Slant on Angry God Atonement Theory

by *Michael L. Sherer*

Four theologians committed to nonviolent Christianity brought a message of hope and peace to participants in a "nonviolent atonement" conference in Burnsville, Minnesota, October 26. The four spoke at Open Circle Church of the Brethren, where a significant portion of the audience was Lutheran. While the presenters drew on the nonviolent tradition prevalent among Anabaptists, two of the four had roots in Roman Catholicism. (There were no Lutherans on the program.) Former Jesuit priest Tony Bartlett told the group, "We are engaged in a battle for the Christian soul." Violence as a problem-solving tactic, he said, is an agency with its own character. "By using violence to

overcome evil, one becomes evil. We become what we say we hate when we use violence to deter violence.”

Drawing on the Genesis story of Cain, who murders his brother, Abel, Bartlett said, “Violence is relational. It’s about conflicting desires. I want what you have.” When a culture engages in war,” he maintained, “there is always backflow. Violent solutions to problems in culture become normal and acceptable.”

Our problem, he maintained, is that “we are rivals with God because we want to be God ourselves. In the process, we are also rivals with everyone else.” That, he said, leads to conflict and violence among people.

A recently retired professor from Bluffton University, a Mennonite school in Ohio, discussed what he called the misguided notion that God uses violence to keep human beings in line.

Said T. Denny Weaver, there is a long tradition in the human family of attributing bad things to God’s anger and resulting punishing wrath. “Lots of people used Hurricane Katrina to explain why evil people were being punished. The assumption behind all these arguments is that God operates violently.”

“The late Jerry Falwell,” Weaver reminded his audience, “once said that God is pro-war.” Like others, he argued, Falwell got that idea from the Old Testament, where it appears that God kills people as a matter of policy and procedure. While there is a violent tradition in the Old Testament, he explained, there is another there, one which says, “You cannot kill anything created in the image of God.”

Weaver traced the American tradition of associating evil and tragedy with God’s punishing anger to Puritan New England. “When disasters broke out, the clergy proclaimed God was punishing the ungodly — among other things, for not going to church and for ignoring ‘family values.’”

The pastor of a St. Paul, Minnesota, congregation in the free church tradition said Christians have unfinished work to do with the Christian doctrine of the atonement (which seeks to explain why Jesus was crucified and what was accomplished by his death)

The Rev. Gregory Boyd said, “Since the Middle Ages, Christians in the West (Roman Catholics and their spiritual offspring) have embraced a theory popularized by the theologian Anselm. He said Jesus’ death was a payment to God for our sins, offered to satisfy God’s judgment and sense of righteous wrath.”

Somebody had to pay, Boyd explained, so Jesus paid for us. But, he said, that theory leaves a lot of questions unanswered. He revealed, “As a teen-ager I wondered, ‘Does God really love me — or does Jesus really love justice but I got lucky?’ I wondered, ‘Does God have a split personality — God the Father, who is angry, and God the Son, who is loving?’”

Boyd said Martin Luther asked the same questions. The clergyman continued, “I began to think God the Father was a ‘rage-o-holic.’ Anselm implies God the Father is addicted to his own honor. It’s been violated and has to be restored. Anselm sees God much like a feudal lord.”

Traditional atonement theories, he argued, “suggest God needs permission to love — and Jesus’ death provides this.” The theory, he said, suggests that Jesus pays God the debt we should have paid. “But if God gets paid, doesn’t salvation cease being a gift?”

Boyd maintained that, for the first 1,000 years atonement theories in the Christian Church argued that love overcomes evil. “But starting with Anselm, the theories focused on a penal / honor system / legal approach. It was a reflection of the times, because in the Middle Ages that was what those-in-power really cared about.”

He reminded his audience that, unlike most other doctrines, there has never been a single “official” theory of the atonement — except among modern fundamentalist Christians, who believe the “satisfaction theory” is the only possible one.

Picking up on Boyd’s concerns about “satisfaction” themes in atonement theory, Weaver argued, “There is no evidence for ‘satisfaction’ in the actual New Testament passion story (concerning Jesus’ suffering and death).”

Weaver argued a better way to explain what happened when Jesus died would be with the term “Christus Victor” (which means that Jesus overcame the power of death, not by opposing it violently but by submitting willingly to it). There is, he said, “a conversation in the Old Testament between violence and nonviolent behavior. You can find both strands.” He argued Jesus’ call is to embrace the nonviolent strand, since that is clearly what he lived and taught.

During a return visit to the podium, Bartlett lifted up an approach to theology he believes holds great promise for nonviolent living. He championed “mimetic anthropology” — a view of human behavior that recognizes how people connect with each other by imitating each other, sometimes even unconsciously.

“We are each other,” he suggested. “You do something I see as important and I imitate that action mentally.” Significant to this understanding of human behavior, he said, is the fact that when everybody fights with everybody else, somebody will finally resist and try to stop the conflict. Usually the group turns on the resister. “He or she will be killed and then the violence suddenly stops.” This phenomenon, he suggested, gives meaning to the line of reasoning in Scripture used to rationalize the crucifixion of Jesus: “It is better for one person to die than for [the rest of] the people to perish.”

Michael Hardin, who directs an organization called “Preaching Peace,” returned to a consideration of mimetic theory by arguing “it has been tested across several disciplines and has now found its way into the natural sciences.”

People are not isolated, he said. “We are our relationships. This redefines sin and salvation. We are members of one body — the body of Christ.”

Hardin believes the first Christians understood interdependence and connectedness but that, by the second century, theologians were already moving away from it. “Christian culture began to become enculturated (to adapt to outside influences). It began to accommodate to culture.” He argued that sin is godless desire. “All objects of desire are

limited, so there will be violence,” he argued. “But God as the object of [our] desire is unlimited.”

Hardin focused on a famous theological formula in which Christians agreed that Jesus and his Father were “of one substance.” Said Justin, “So, since Jesus was nonviolent, so is God.”

(This article is reprinted with permission from the Metro Lutheran, December 19, 2007, Michael L. Sherer, ed.. metrolutheran@lycos.com)

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Series: Loving with the Love of Jesus
Article #5

LOVE IS SOMETHING WE ARE

By James L. Foster

As I sit at my desk contemplating the proposition that Love is something we are, I am listening to Beethoven’s “Sonata No. 23,” popularly called “Appassionata.” An intense dramatic work, it reveals the incredible depth of feeling of its composer. In him was a passion that demanded the full and eloquent expression such as could only be given by a master. Even in the restrained second movement, there is something approaching a sublime ecstasy crying to be freed from its bondage to form and convention. Beethoven never departs from the classical form; rather, he fills it full to overflowing with a passion that gives itself wholly within the limitations imposed by its musical identity.

In agape’ we never depart from our identity in Christ—our “form” in him, as it were, but we are rather filled full to overflowing with a passion that gives itself wholly within the limitations imposed by our Christ identity. In Christ we are transformed into instruments for expressing passionate, selfless, unconditional Love. So fully encompassing and indwelling is this Love, when it is created by the master in us, we may legitimately be said to be Love. We embody Love. We are the Love of God to those we are given to love. We incarnate Love. When we love, it is God loving, and others experience our Love, in all its expressions, as God’s Love. Just as in Beethoven’s “Appassionata” we encounter the master composer himself, and others meet God in the passionate expression of his Love in and through us.

I have found few of us as Christians who have owned our true identity in Christ. Few of us have emptied ourselves so that God can fill our emptiness with his divine Love. In our freedom we have chosen the way of ease and selfishness, and have foregone the privilege that is ours by right of our Christ-identity to be divine Lovers. How tragic for us and our world is our choice!

We are called by Christ into union with himself: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes *into* him...” (John 3:16) (emphasis mine). So begins this well-known biblical passage in the language in which it was first written. In his “bread of life” discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of eating his body and drinking his blood. What happens, for

example, when we eat a slice of bread? First we chew it. Then we swallow it. And then we digest it. It enters into our blood stream and flows with the blood into every part of our bodies. It becomes so identified with us that in no way will we ever again be able to tell where that slice of bread leaves off and we begin. We and the bread are one. In much the same way, when we “believe *into*” Jesus, our oneness with him becomes so complete that in no way can we tell where he leaves off and we begin. Nowhere is this more the case than when we are transformed into divine Lovers.

The Apostle Paul prays that we may “know the Love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” that “we may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19). The Apostle John says, “God is Love,” and immediately goes on to assert that “as he is, so are we in this world” (I John 3:16-17). To know the Love of God and to be filled with him is to be so filled with his Love that we embody it. For all intents and purposes we become the Love of God in all its earthy passion and expression.

Jesus loved as we love. When we visualize the content of this statement, what we see is Jesus following in our way rather than we in his. Inasmuch as we are in union with him, sons and daughters of God—and that truly, not just figuratively—our Love has the same dignity, the same significance and the same divine imperative that we see in his Love. Only when we take up the mantle of divine lovers can we understand first-hand the Love with which we have been loved. It is said that we cannot know another person until we have walked in his or her shoes. Neither can we fully appreciate the Love of Jesus until we have walked in that same Love. Then we know with a depth of knowing that defies description that the Love we have received is the same as that which we are giving.

What does it mean that we have been loved unconditionally? What does it mean that Love is a way of life? How is Love a shared identity? Or how is Love a reality in its most exquisite expression? The answers to these and other questions will be explored in subsequent reflections. But we can really know the answers experientially only from the standpoint of being the Love itself. It is the crucial difference between knowing about something—a second-hand knowledge—and knowing something empirically—a first-hand experiential knowing. What did divine Love cost Jesus? We only know when we have shared in his death. He loved as we love. He died as we die. Only when we have embodied his Love and death in our own bodies, do we “know the Love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19). Then, and only then, do we really know what agape’ Love cost Jesus. We know what it costs us.

We are not called simply to love according to our own meager strength. As divine lovers we do not stop with charity expressed through Thanksgiving baskets and missionary support. As divine lovers we give ourselves totally to others because of who we are. We are called to actualize Love. We cannot do otherwise and remain true to our identity. We do not count the costs or weigh the advantages for ourselves because our only satisfaction is the good that accrues to those who receive our Love. As divine lovers we are vulnerable, accepting willingly the pain of the beloved, and we are often “crucified” by those we seek to love. It’s not that we seek to be martyrs, but rather that our very identity as divine lovers opens us to that possibility.

To be divine Love—that is our calling, our identity. To act out of that being with Love that defies reason or explanation is our vocation. Whatever else we do, it is all permeated, submerged, subordinated to Love when we are Love.

“God is Love, and whoever lives in Love lives in God, and God in him” (I John 4:16). In our union with the divine we take on his nature, and that nature is agape’ Love. This is our calling in Christ, to incarnate the Love of God in our time, no less passionately than did Jesus of Nazareth in his day. Then said I, “Here am I. Send me.”

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ARTICLE #6

True power requires modesty and empathy, not force and coercion, argues the author, Dacher Keltner, Ph.D., a co-editor of **Greater Good** and a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley.

The Power Paradox

by Dacher Keltner

It is much safer to be feared than loved, writes Niccolò Machiavelli in *The Prince*, his classic 16th-century treatise advocating manipulation and occasional cruelty as the best means to power. Almost 500 years later, Robert Greene's national bestseller, *The 48 Laws of Power*, would have made Machiavelli's chest swell with pride. Greene's book, bedside reading of foreign policy analysts and hip-hop stars alike, is pure Machiavelli.

Here are a few of his 48 laws:

Law 3, Conceal Your Intentions.

Law 6, Court Attention at All Costs.

Law 12, Use Selective Honesty and Generosity to Disarm Your Victims.

Law 15, Crush Your Enemy Totally.

Law 18, Keep Others in Suspended Terror.

You get the picture.

Guided by centuries of advice like Machiavelli's and Greene's, we tend to believe that attaining power requires force, deception, manipulation, and coercion. Indeed, we might even assume that positions of power demand this kind of conduct—that to run smoothly, society needs leaders who are willing and able to use power this way.

As seductive as these notions are, they are dead wrong. Instead, a new science of power has revealed that power is wielded most effectively when it's used responsibly, by people who are attuned to and engaged with the needs and interests of others. Years of research suggests that empathy and social intelligence are vastly more important to acquiring and exercising power than are force, deception, or terror.

This research debunks longstanding myths about what constitutes true power, how people obtain it, and how they should use it. But studies also show that once people assume positions of power, they're likely to act more selfishly, impulsively, and

aggressively, and they have a harder time seeing the world from other people's points of view. This presents us with the paradox of power: The skills most important to obtaining power and leading effectively are the very skills that deteriorate once we have power.

The power paradox requires that we be ever vigilant against the corruptive influences of power and its ability to distort the way we see ourselves and treat others. But this paradox also makes clear how important it is to challenge myths about power, which persuade us to choose the wrong kinds of leaders and to tolerate gross abuses of power. Instead of succumbing to the Machiavellian worldview—which unfortunately leads us to select Machiavellian leaders—we must promote a different model of power, one rooted in social intelligence, responsibility, and cooperation.

Myth number one: Power equals cash, votes, and muscle

The term power often evokes images of force and coercion. Many people assume that power is most evident on the floor of the United States Congress or in corporate boardrooms. Treatments of power in the social sciences have followed suit, zeroing in on clashes over cash (financial wealth), votes (participation in the political decision making process), and muscle (military might).

But there are innumerable exceptions to this definition of power: a penniless two year old pleading for (and getting) candy in the check-out line at the grocery store, one spouse manipulating another for sex, or the success of nonviolent political movements in places like India or South Africa. Viewing power as cash, votes, and muscle blinds us to the ways power pervades our daily lives.

New psychological research has redefined power, and this definition makes clear just how prevalent and integral power is in all of our lives. In psychological science, power is defined as one's capacity to alter another person's condition or state of mind by providing or withholding resources—such as food, money, knowledge, and affection—or administering punishments, such as physical harm, job termination, or social ostracism. This definition de-emphasizes how a person actually acts, and instead stresses the individual's capacity to affect others. Perhaps most importantly, this definition applies across relationships, contexts, and cultures. It helps us understand how children can wield power over their parents from the time they're born, or how someone—say, a religious leader—can be powerful in one context (on the pulpit during a Sunday sermon) but not another (on a mind numbingly slow line at the DMV come Monday morning). By this definition, one can be powerful without needing to try to control, coerce, or dominate. Indeed, when people resort to trying to control others, it's often a sign that their power is slipping.

This definition complicates our understanding of power. Power is not something limited to power-hungry individuals or organizations; it is part of every social interaction where people have the capacity to influence one another's states, which is really every moment of life. Claims that power is simply a product of male biology miss the degree to which women have obtained and wielded power in many social situations. In fact, studies I've conducted find that people grant power to women as readily as men, and in informal social hierarchies, women achieve similar levels of power as men.

So power is not something we should (or can) avoid, nor is it something that necessarily involves domination and submission. We are negotiating power every waking instant of

our social lives (and in our dreams as well, Freud argued). When we seek equality, we are seeking an effective balance of power, not the absence of power. We use it to win consent and social cohesion, not just compliance. To be human is to be immersed in power dynamics.

Myth number two: Machiavellians win in the game of power

One of the central questions concerning power is who gets it. Researchers have confronted this question for years, and their results offer a sharp rebuke to the Machiavellian view of power. It is not the manipulative, strategic Machiavellian who rises in power. Instead, social science reveals that one's ability to get or maintain power, even in small group situations, depends on one's ability to understand and advance the goals of other group members. When it comes to power, social intelligence—reconciling conflicts, negotiating, smoothing over group tensions—prevails over social Darwinism.

For instance, highly detailed studies of "chimpanzee politics" have found that social power among nonhuman primates is based less on sheer strength, coercion, and the unbridled assertion of self-interest, and more on the ability to negotiate conflicts, to enforce group norms, and to allocate resources fairly. More often than not, this research shows, primates who try to wield their power by dominating others and prioritizing their own interests will find themselves challenged and, in time, deposed by subordinates. (Christopher Boehm describes this research in greater length in his essay in this issue of *Greater Good*.)

In my own research on human social hierarchies, I have consistently found that it is the more dynamic, playful, engaging members of the group who quickly garner and maintain the respect of their peers. Such outgoing, energetic, socially engaged individuals quickly rise through the ranks of emerging hierarchies.

Why social intelligence? Because of our ultrasociability. We accomplish most tasks related to survival and reproduction socially, from caring for our children to producing food and shelter. We give power to those who can best serve the interests of the group. Time and time again, empirical studies find that leaders who treat their subordinates with respect, share power, and generate a sense of camaraderie and trust are considered more just and fair.

Social intelligence is essential not only to rising to power, but to keeping it. My colleague Cameron Anderson and I have studied the structure of social hierarchies within college dormitories over the course of a year, examining who is at the top and remains there, who falls in status, and who is less well-respected by their peers. We've consistently found that it is the socially engaged individuals who keep their power over time. In more recent work, Cameron has made the remarkable discovery that modesty may be critical to maintaining power. Individuals who are modest about their own power actually rise in hierarchies and maintain the status and respect of their peers, while individuals with an inflated, grandiose sense of power quickly fall to the bottom rungs.

So what is the fate of Machiavellian group members, avid practitioners of Greene's 48 laws, who are willing to deceive, backstab, intimidate, and undermine others in their pursuit of power? We've found that these individuals do not actually rise to positions of

power. Instead, their peers quickly recognize that they will harm others in the pursuit of their own self-interest, and tag them with a reputation of being harmful to the group and not worthy of leadership.

Cooperation and modesty aren't just ethical ways to use power, and they don't only serve the interests of a group; they're also valuable skills for people who seek positions of power and want to hold onto them.

Myth number three: Power is strategically acquired, not given

A major reason why Machiavellians fail is that they fall victim to a third myth about power. They mistakenly believe that power is acquired strategically in deceptive gamesmanship and by pitting others against one another. Here Machiavelli failed to appreciate an important fact in the evolution of human hierarchies: that with increasing social intelligence, subordinates can form powerful alliances and constrain the actions of those in power. Power increasingly has come to rest on the actions and judgments of other group members. A person's power is only as strong as the status given to that person by others.

The sociologist Erving Goffman wrote with brilliant insight about deference—the manner in which we afford power to others with honorifics, formal prose, indirectness, and modest nonverbal displays of embarrassment. We can give power to others simply by being respectfully polite.

My own research has found that people instinctively identify individuals who might undermine the interests of the group, and prevent those people from rising in power, through what we call "reputational discourse". In our research on different groups, we have asked group members to talk openly about other members' reputations and to engage in gossip. We've found that Machiavellians quickly acquire reputations as individuals who act in ways that are inimical to the interests of others, and these reputations act like a glass ceiling, preventing their rise in power. In fact, this aspect of their behavior affected their reputations even more than their sexual morality, recreational habits, or their willingness to abide by group social conventions.

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli observes, "Any man who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great number who are not good. Hence a prince who wants to keep his authority must learn how not to be good, and use that knowledge, or refrain from using it, as necessity requires."

He adds, "A prince ought, above all things, always to endeavor in every action to gain for himself the reputation of being a great and remarkable man." By contrast, several Eastern traditions, such as Taoism and Confucianism, exalt the modest leader, one who engages with the followers and practices social intelligence. In the words of the Taoist philosopher Lao-tzu, "To lead the people, walk behind them". Compare this advice to Machiavelli's, and judge them both against years of scientific research. Science gives the nod to Lao-tzu.

The power paradox

"Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely", said the British historian Lord Acton. Unfortunately, this is not entirely a myth, as the actions of Europe's

monarchs, Enron's executives, and out-of-control pop stars reveal. A great deal of research—especially from social psychology—lends support to Acton's claim, albeit with a twist: Power leads people to act in impulsive fashion, both good and bad, and to fail to understand other people's feelings and desires.

For instance, studies have found that people given power in experiments are more likely to rely on stereotypes when judging others, and they pay less attention to the characteristics that define those other people as individuals. Predisposed to stereotype, they also judge others' attitudes, interests, and needs less accurately. One survey found that high-power professors made less accurate judgments about the attitudes of low-power professors than those low-power professors made about the attitudes of their more powerful colleagues. Power imbalances may even help explain the finding that older siblings don't perform as well as their younger siblings on theory-of-mind tasks, which assess one's ability to construe the intentions and beliefs of others.

Power even prompts less complex legal reasoning in Supreme Court justices. A study led by Stanford psychologist Deborah Gruenfeld compared the decisions of U.S. Supreme Court justices when they wrote opinions endorsing either the position of a majority of justices on the bench—a position of power—or the position of the vanquished, less powerful minority. Sure enough, when Gruenfeld analyzed the complexity of justices' opinions on a vast array of cases, she found that justices writing from a position of power crafted less complex arguments than those writing from a low-power position.

A great deal of research has also found that power encourages individuals to act on their own whims, desires, and impulses. When researchers give people power in scientific experiments, those people are more likely to physically touch others in potentially inappropriate ways, to flirt in more direct fashion, to make risky choices and gambles, to make first offers in negotiations, to speak their mind, and to eat cookies like the Cookie Monster, with crumbs all over their chins and chests.

Perhaps more unsettling is the wealth of evidence that having power makes people more likely to act like sociopaths. High-power individuals are more likely to interrupt others, to speak out of turn, and to fail to look at others who are speaking. They are also more likely to tease friends and colleagues in hostile, humiliating fashion. Surveys of organizations find that most rude behaviors—shouting, profanities, bald critiques—emanate from the offices and cubicles of individuals in positions of power. My own research has found that people with power tend to behave like patients who have damaged their brain's orbitofrontal lobes (the region of the frontal lobes right behind the eye sockets), a condition that seems to cause overly impulsive and insensitive behavior. Thus the experience of power might be thought of as having someone open up your skull and take out that part of your brain so critical to empathy and socially-appropriate behavior.

Power may induce more harmful forms of aggression as well. In the famed Stanford Prison Experiment, psychologist Philip Zimbardo randomly assigned Stanford undergraduates to act as prison guards or prisoners—an extreme kind of power relation. The prison guards quickly descended into the purest forms of power abuse, psychologically torturing their peers, the prisoners. Similarly, anthropologists have found

that cultures where rape is prevalent and accepted tend to be cultures with deeply entrenched beliefs in the supremacy of men over women.

This leaves us with a power paradox. Power is given to those individuals, groups, or nations who advance the interests of the greater good in socially-intelligent fashion. Yet unfortunately, having power renders many individuals as impulsive and poorly attuned to others as your garden variety frontal lobe patient, making them prone to act abusively and lose the esteem of their peers. What people want from leaders—social intelligence—is what is damaged by the experience of power.

When we recognize this paradox and all the destructive behaviors that flow from it, we can appreciate the importance of promoting a more socially-intelligent model of power. Social behaviors are dictated by social expectations. As we debunk longstanding myths and misconceptions about power, we can better identify the qualities powerful people should have, and better understand how they should wield their power. As a result, we'll have much less tolerance for people who lead by deception, coercion, or undue force. No longer will we expect these kinds of antisocial behaviors from our leaders and silently accept them when they come to pass.

We'll also start to demand something more from our colleagues, our neighbors, and ourselves. When we appreciate the distinctions between responsible and irresponsible uses of power—and the importance of practicing the responsible, socially-intelligent form of it—we take a vital step toward promoting healthy marriages, peaceful playgrounds, and societies built on cooperation and trust.

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ARTICLE #7

GOODBYE OLD WORLD, HELLO NEW

by James L. Foster

There are four revolutionary movements currently underway, any one of which has the potential for changing the world as we have known it. All four happening simultaneously virtually guarantees that a new world order will be born in the lifetime of most of the readers of this article. What I am talking about here is not technological (though communications technology may well be an enabler of the revolutions) and it is not political (though politics will certainly be greatly impacted.) No, what is happening is much more basic, addressing the world views and the deep issues of faith and reason held by most of the human inhabitants of this planet. What is happening is a fundamental mind change.

The four revolutionary movements embody and promote some aspect of a way of being in the world that has been experienced for decades by a few exemplary individuals. The thing that has changed is that this way of being is becoming a mass movement propelled in part by these related but separate revolutions:

1. The first revolution is within the Christian Church. Because Christianity comprises such a large number of people throughout the world, a major shift in its understanding of itself in relation to other major faiths will have significant effects on every other religion. These changes have to do with insights into the very roots of its origin in the 1st and 2nd centuries of the Common Era. Because of the work of numerous Christian and Jewish scholars on the comparatively recent availability of both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hamadi texts, Christianity is wrestling with significant challenges to its exclusivist teachings and the identity of its founder, Jesus of Nazareth. It turns out that these texts, originally suppressed by the Church Fathers, seriously undercut Christianity's exclusivist claims of superiority and historicity.

One immediate effect of the deciphering of these ancient texts is the discovery that we have new grounds for relationship with other religions, since major Christian doctrines that have purportedly been inspired by God to the exclusion of all other religious doctrines, may have origins that are far more human than divine. For the centuries-old barriers between religions to come tumbling down, has a potential for peaceful relationships—even appreciative relationships—that has never before existed on such a massive scale. One significant example of how these non-biblical writings are changing our understanding of the Christian faith has to do with the identity of Jesus Christ—born of a virgin? No; Killed for our redemption? No; Son of God? No, unless we are prepared to accept that we all, like him, are sons and daughters of God; Non-political and sinless? Hardly. Exemplary, yes, but as human and divine as the rest of us.

Another major example of this change is in the discrediting of the historical doctrine of the Trinity (one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit). This doctrine alone has been an impediment to interfaith relationships in as much as the Christian Church has characteristically taught anyone who thinks otherwise is destined for eternal separation from God—or, in a word, Hell. As it turns out, contemporary historical research shows that it was not until 325 AD that this decision was made by a Church council that was badly divided. Its conclusions were made not on the basis of reasoned theological debate but rather on the basis of political power and brute, sometimes lethal, force.

With these kinds of changes in the teaching of the Christian Church will come the opportunity for genuine dialog, particularly with Islam and Judaism. If these three major religious faiths can come to the place of mutual respect and appreciation, the world we live in will be all the better for it. Let the new dialog begin!

2. Nonviolent atonement is yet another challenge to a cherished doctrine of the Christian Church, this time on the basis of biblical exegesis. Challenged are two theories of the atonement (the saving work of Jesus Christ by atoning for our sin), the Penal Substitution Theory authored by St. Augustine (4th and 5th centuries) and the Satisfaction Theory (authored by Anselm in the 12th century). These theories have been bedrock theology in the Christian Church.

The first, Augustine, says the sin offended God's honor and caused inconceivable debt and that the debt must be satisfied or punished to satisfy God's honor. Since the payment of the debt is so far beyond what humans could do, only God could pay it. There fore Christ (who must be God) paid the debt by his death on the cross.

The second, Anselm, speaks of retributive justice. God has to “get even.” Sin incurred a debt and has to be punished (payback). Therefore, since humans cannot possibly pay the debt, God punishes Jesus instead.

Both of these theories make of God a vengeful, violent ruler and compromise Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness. If sin is paid for (i.e. the debt is paid and the account is balanced) there is nothing to forgive. If God is truly forgiving, it means the debt is written off and there is no need for either repayment or punishment.

Nonviolent atonement says that God is neither vengeful nor violent (the violence attributed to God, especially in the Jewish Scriptures, notwithstanding). Therefore God cannot be blamed for Jesus’ death. Jesus suffered the fate of many of his contemporaries—death at the hands of the Roman occupiers, with the probable collusion of Jewish antagonists. It was man’s violence, not God’s that killed Jesus.

This distinction is important because it deprives us humans of a major rationale for engaging in violence, i.e., “God, our Father, did it, therefore, so can we.” If, as God’s children, we wish to emulate God’s relationship to us in our relationship with others, we can no longer justify violence.

3. Nonviolent communication is a discipline taught by Marshall Rosenberg. Though many of the principles he teaches have been taught before by the likes of Jesus and Gandhi, Marshall is a gifted in formulating a clear and doable way to put the principles into practice. Nonviolence is broken down into many tiny and tangible steps, that when learned and put into practice can transform formerly confrontive and hostile relationships--whether these relationships are between individuals, groups, or nations—and whether or not both sides practice it. These nonviolent “techniques” can be practiced, as it were, unilaterally by anybody, anywhere, in any circumstance.

Marshall’s books and seminars are proliferating as others take up the work of spreading his teaching. What was originally one man’s crusade, is becoming a movement which will grow exponentially as others both practice and teach the disciplines he has so neatly packaged. (*See the review of two of Rosenberg’s books, Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life. and Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What You Say Next Will Change Your World in this issue of En Christo.*)

4. A fourth movement gaining momentum in our day is the result of the writings of the French philosopher Rene’ Girard. Rene’s writings have the effect of holding up a mirror in which we see ourselves for who we really are. The starting point for Girard’s theory is “acquisitive mimesis”. Girard proposes that much of human behavior is based on “mimesis”, an all-encompassing expression of imitation, but focuses on acquisition and appropriation as the object of mimesis, contrary to most of the extant literature on imitative behavior (Girard 1979, 9). Girard describes a situation where two individuals desire the same object; as they both attempt to obtain this object, their behavior becomes conflictual, since there is only one object, but two people. “Violence is generated by this process; or rather, violence is the process itself when two or more partners try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire through physical or other means” (Girard 1979, 9). In his mimetic theory, Rene’ argues that imitation is an “ability that is fundamentally linked to characteristically human forms of intelligence, in particular to language, culture, and the ability to understand other minds.

This burgeoning body of work has important implications for our understanding of ourselves, both individually and socially. Imitation is not just an important factor in human development, it also has a pervasive influence throughout adulthood in ways we are just beginning to understand.” – (Susan Hurley & Nick Chater)

A related area of Rene’s A thought is scapegoating. “This scapegoat is, according to Girard, an arbitrary victim: For Girard, there are several conditions for the choosing of the scapegoat. First, the scapegoat is, by definition, an arbitrary victim, at least to the degree that the victim has, in reality, no direct bearing on the problems that are causing the community disturbance. However, the victim is not arbitrary to the extent that most scapegoats tend to have similar cultural traits that allow Girard to classify them as a group. Normally they are an outsider, but on the border of the community, not fully alien to the community. This victim belongs to the community, but has traits that separate him/her from the community. Several common victims are elucidated by Shea, summarizing Girard's list in *The Scapegoat (1986)*: children, old people, those with physical abnormalities, women, members of ethnic or racial minorities, the poor, and “those whose natural endowments (beauty, intelligence, charm) or status (wealth, position) mark them as exceptional” (Wallace 1994, 253).

Paradoxically, this victim is often deified. Not only was the victim the cause of the violence, but, since this victim was sacrificed, s/he also becomes the salvation of the community, since sacrificing the victim becomes the method of ending the violence. So the victim is surrogate because s/he was sacrificed instead of the entire community being sacrificed.

Once this process is established, it becomes mythologized. The immediate memory reconfiguration becomes woven into the oral history of the people. This figure that was sacrificed was the deity who saved the community from destruction. Since the pattern started with the cessation of violence by the original human sacrifice, the continuation of that pattern is understandable. But as culture progressed, and specifically with the introduction of the Jewish religion into the world's culture, symbols--animal sacrifices and sacred rituals--were used in place of human sacrifices. Thus Girard claims the origin of religion is rooted in violence. (Jeremy Townsley)

If any of this sounds familiar, we have only to look at our own religion and consider its origin. And if it makes us uncomfortable, it may be that when we look in this mirror, we do not like what we see. (For more on this, see the review of the book by Suzanne Ross, *The Wicked Truth: When Good People Do Bad Things*, an application of Girard's theories to that wonderful children's classic, *The Wizard of Oz*, in this issue of *En Christo*.)

Conclusion

Each of these revolutionary movements, as I have called them, qualifies for such a designation. According to Webster a movement is “a) a series of organized activities by people working concertedly toward some goal” and “b) the organization consisting of those active in this way.”

The first of the above listed revolutionary movements is represented by several organizations, the most notable of which would be the *Jesus Seminar* that includes such

notable members as theologians John Dominic Crossan, Robert Funk and Marcus Borg. *Institutes for Christian Spirituality*, the publisher of this journal, *En Christo: A Journal for a New Christianity* is another such organization. The number of books that are being written to address the multiple changes that are already taking place continue to proliferate. Change is hard, particularly when it is in areas in which we have a lifetime investment, but it is also necessary if we are to mature in our faith and vision of what God is doing in the world. Teilhard de Chardin's vision of the future of humankind was of a final stage of development during which we would mature spiritually to our fullest potential. I have always hoped that he was right and that I may be one of the fortunate members of our species to participate in that process. I dare to hope that the dramatic changes happening now in Christianity are an indication that it is so.

The second movement listed above, nonviolent atonement, is smaller but is quickly gaining momentum. It, too, has just initiated in May of 2008 the formation of an organization called *Theology and Peace* to promote research and publications supporting fresh biblical understandings of the nonviolent, compassionate Father of us all. Michael Hardin of *Preaching Peace* along with Catholic theologian Anthony Bartlett, Mennonite theologian Sharon Baker and approximately 40 other biblical scholars are among the charter members of the organization.

Marshall Rosenberg's organization, *Center for Nonviolent Communication*, though new, is already spawning others devoted to spreading his program for teaching nonviolent communication in a wide variety of secular and religious contexts around the world. It is already providing resources for the rapid dissemination of the principles he espouses.

Finally, the movement built on the teachings of Rene' Girard, has fostered *Colloquium on Violence & Religion (COV&R)*, a well-established organization with a world-wide constituency. Other organizations, too, are involved in promoting Rene's teachings on violence and religion, notably *Preaching Peace*, founded by Michael and Lori Hardin; *The Raven Foundation*, founded by Suzanne Ross, author of *The Wicked Truth: When Good People Do Bad Things*; and *Institutes for Christian Spirituality*.

How long will it take for these and other initiatives I have not covered to have a visible impact on our world? My guess is years, not decades. The impact is already considerable, but the world is a big place. We will know that it is happening when these concepts become the fodder for conversations of the people in the pews. The internet is providing the means for rapid dissemination of information, a phenomenon which Teilhard did not envision but would confirm his anticipation that each phase of human development would be significantly shorter than the one before. God willing, this journal will have at least a small part in bringing about the revolution.

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Book Reviews

Phillips, Kevin. **American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century.** Penguin Books, 2006, 2007. 394 pages. A review by Gerald W. Bone

American Theocracy has been widely reviewed. It has also been another step in Kevin Phillips' epic journey from 1968 Nixon strategist to PBS and a seat next to Bill Moyers,

arguably the most consistently liberal political analyst in media. The book is not always easy to read, but it is well worth reading. As Phillips writes in his introduction, the “mainsprings of this volume lie in politics, not religion.” That may be true, but this reader found his discussion of the rise of the religious right, and its emergence as a prime player in America’s bloody games, to be the most interesting of the three acts of this human tragedy.

However, let us begin with oil. This substance has, more than anything else, powered the American Empire—from the manufacturing capacity that was once the wonder of the modern world to our gas-hog, consumption-driven economy and the sprawl which it engendered. We need our cars. We need to secure more fuel to power them. Recall that Hummer ad which came out just about the time the invasion of Iraq occurred. Here was the Hummer, circling the globe, telling the world what it already knew—that America was the big dog and all the little dogs better just get out of the way. There was oil out there somewhere, and we meant to get it. No longer were we in those bad old days of Jimmy Carter, and gas shortages, and hand-wringing naysayers like E. F. Schumacher. We had real men leading us now—men like Cheney and Bush, captains of industry, barons of oil—and men like Donald Rumsfeld, who knows a little something about getting us into war. As Phillips writes, “oil abundance has always been part of what America fights for, as well as with.” So, away we went to war—for oil. Not weapons of mass destruction. Not to restrain a brutal dictator. Not to bring democracy to a benighted land. For oil.

Part I of *American Theocracy* is titled “Oil and American Supremacy.” In it, Phillips traces the history of oil and how it emerged as such an important resource for keeping the engines of the American economy running. He also explores the beginnings of the decline of the American energy infrastructure. Oil is no longer just about corporations, plants and pipelines (and most certainly not about larger-than-life oil barons like Rockefeller or fictional anti-heroes like the one played by James Dean in the movie *Giant*). Phillips counts as part of the oil equation in the 21st Century the “government subsidies and preferences, entrenched bureaucracies and interest groups, foreign relationships, political party coalitions, and recurring Middle East patterns.” It is well worth remembering this as we explore the connections between the war and various stakeholders in it, which includes the U. S. congress and the current crop of contenders now vying for the dubious honor of snatching the reins from “the decider.”

Phillips skillfully traces the historical steps which led to the decline and fall of past imperial powers in chapter 7, titled “Church, State and National Decline.” Admitting the categories are his own, he lists the following symptoms of declining imperial power:

Public concern over cultural and economic decay.

A growing religious fervor, church-state relationship, or crusading insistence.

A rising commitment to faith as opposed to reason, the corollary being the downplaying of science.

Considerable popular anticipation of a millennial time frame: an epochal battle, emergence of the antichrist or belief in an imminent second coming or Armageddon.

Hubris-driven national strategic and military overreach.

The four imperial powers Phillips chooses to examine are Rome, the Hapsburg Empire centered in Spain, the Netherlands, and Great Britain. All were, at one time, the leading world economic power and the principal naval or military power. All declined while displaying the symptoms of decay noted above—and all “believed in their own exceptionalism.” This belief in exceptionalism seems to be the point of no return in the decline and fall of great powers, but it doesn’t happen by accident. How many of us children of “the greatest generation” have heard the words “History is bunk”, as attributed to Henry Ford? Why would we not believe that history does not pertain to us? How many of us were raised with the notion that we can get what we pray for from an ever-present God? Why would some of us not then believe that what comes from this God’s lips instantly reaches the ears of President George W. Bush and that, duty-bound and rightly instructed, Mr. Bush orders the invasion of Iraq?

That here-and-now God, totally involved in the affairs of His most favored nation, comes to life in the pages of Chapter 4, *Radicalized Religion: As American as Apple Pie*. Citing polling data, Kevin Phillips shows that 83% of evangelical Protestants believe that the bible is literally accurate. The figure is 47% for non-evangelical Protestants and 45% for Catholics. What’s more, 77% of born-again, fundamentalist and evangelical Christians believe that events in the Book of Revelation will occur sometime in the future. Fully 71% of evangelical Protestants believe that the world will end in a battle between Jesus Christ and the Antichrist. So, that’s what the religious right believes. No sudden annihilation in a nuclear holocaust. No slow, excruciating demise due to global warming. No bang, no whimper. Just a hell of a good battle and all the people die or disappear into the heavens. (Too bad. It would make a great movie if there were just someone around to film it.)

The belief system which permits such a view of the future is buttressed by a series of books called the *Left Behind* series, written by fundamentalist preacher Tim LaHaye. The series, an apocalyptic saga which locates the antichrist in the center of Iraq, sold sixty million copies in book and tape form. Phillips thinks that, after 9/11, the series “provided an extraordinary context for a president with a religious mission.” Other holy warriors in the rush to Armageddon were the Reverends Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, both of whom charged that the 9/11 attacks occurred because God was displeased with the United States’ secular immorality.

Lesser players shout from pulpits in the mountains, across the plantation south and into the prairies. Increasingly, as Phillips notes, the message is reaching deeper and deeper into the North and East, and to the “left” coast. The secular right is also politically astute enough to reach out, whenever possible, to the faithful. For example, it is useful to note what Phillips tells us about economic conservatives and how they “warm to sects in which a preoccupation with personal salvation turns lower-income persons away from distracting visions of economic and social reform.” (More “pie in the sky when you die” for the Wal-Mart workers and shoppers who go in for the old time religion.) In massaging its hot-button issues, the right is also alert to nuances. Again, from the chapter *The United States in a Dixie Cup*, Phillips writes about how black support for Bush went from eight percent in 2000 to eleven percent in 2004, and was greatest (22 percent) among frequent church attendees. Much of this gain was tied to “the gay marriage issue, which was emphasized by many black pastors.”

It is with reluctance that I leave this part of the review, for the section on the religious right was truly illuminating and it held my attention throughout. I commend it to the reader's attention. Let us now move on to Borrowed Money.

Part III: Borrowed Prosperity begins with a chapter titled Soaring Debt, Uncertain Politics, and the Financialization of the United States. The chapter itself begins with a description of the reversal of fortunes in American financial services and in manufacturing. As Phillips points out, "the finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE) sector of the U. S. economy swelled to 20 percent of the gross domestic product in 2000, jumping ahead of manufacturing, which slipped to 14.5 percent." The reversal continued to deepen in 2003, as manufacturing sank to 12.7 percent and FIRE rose to 20.4 percent. While American jobs were disappearing and while much of what we used to manufacture was being made elsewhere, the financial sector thrived, in part, from profits gained by "providing American households with artificial purchasing power." Enticed by teaser rates and promises of instant gratification, cash-strapped Americans bought in and the rates grew as high as 19 to 25 percent—what we would call loan-sharking in the old days.

This is cause for alarm, as far as Phillips is concerned. We have now reached a point in our decline as a major power that is marked by "excessive debt, great disparity between rich and poor, and unfolding economic decline." Phillips calls this stage "financialization." The thesis of Part 3, he writes, is simple: "this debt and credit revolution constitutes the third major peril hanging over the future of the United States."

Then Phillips shows us how things are beginning to come unglued. It is at this point that a reader needs to really pay attention. Up to the time roughly defined in this narrative, the victims of this financialized economy were relatively hidden and easy to avoid. Homeless? You know where the shelter is. Take a left one block down and you can avoid seeing it. Health care? Maybe your co-pay went up a little, but when was the last time you had to go to an emergency room? In some gut-wrenching expository writing, Phillips pricks our middle-class bubble and awakens us from our pipe dream of invulnerability. My favorite paragraph was this one:

Worsening the burden on the elderly was the trend reported in a February 2005 study for the medical policy journal Health Affairs. Between 1981 and 2001 medical-related bankruptcies increased by 2,200 percent, a spike that far exceeded the 360 percent growth in overall personal bankruptcies during the same time period. Medical-related debt had become the second leading cause of personal bankruptcy, partly because of the widening lack of health insurance (with the number of uninsured rising to forty-five million). One of the study's authors, Harvard Law School professor Elizabeth Warren, observed that "the people we found to be profoundly affected are not some distant underclass. They're the very heart of the middle class. These are educated Americans with decent jobs, homes and families. But one stumble, and they end up in complete financial collapse, wiped out by medical bills.

A couple of paragraphs down, Phillips then sheds some light on what we are now seeing with the stock market and the housing market. Writing about a 2003 IMF study of previous property slumps in the US and thirteen other industrialized countries, he notes that "a real-estate bust less than half as large as a decline in stock prices had typically proved twice as dangerous to national economies, with effects lasting twice as

long.” He then asks if, in these circumstances, it is wise to leave bubble popping to a central bank blinded “by fealty to finance.” Well, we seem to be in a housing crisis now. Is anyone asking this question yet?

There is much more in the third section of the book which sheds light on the situation we find ourselves in today. We learn, for example, that in 2005 “nearly 40 percent of the profits of the typical (credit) issuer came from penalty fees” and that in the same year “homes, not stocks, were the principal base of U.S. net worth.” Let’s just wrap this part up with a quote from Phillips’ chapter on Debt. He writes “Crippling indebtedness is like the ghost of leading world economic powers past, a familiar Shakespearean villain come to stalk the current *hegemon*.”

The final chapter in the book is called The Erring Republican Majority. A quote from Garry Wills, cited at the beginning of the chapter, pretty much says it all about how the Republicans have been governing under Bush and Cheney. Wills wrote “If religious extremism is only one set of bodies in this fringe constellation (of Republican interest groups), it is a powerful one. That is why federal agencies reject scientific reports on ecological, stem cell, contraceptive, and abortion issues. They sponsor not only faith-based social relief, but faith-based war, faith-based science, faith-based education, and faith-based medicine.” Republicans in control of Congress and the White House have, Phillips writes, “conducted both fiscal and energy policy in a state of denial—denial, at least, of any potential crisis.” He then cites the 2005 energy legislation which failed to impress global energy markets and resulted in the elevation of oil prices to a new high. He also chided conservatives in the White House for continuing to insist on making the 2001-2003 tax cuts permanent, a project that would cost over 75 years a whopping \$11 trillion--nearly three times the \$4 trillion it would take to fully fund Social Security benefits.

This chapter goes on to present startling graphs depicting “The Hocking of America: Massive U.S. International Debt as the Price of Domestic Overconsumption” and “The Rise in Net U.S. Assets Held by Foreigners, 1982-2004.” While viewing the latter, one’s jaw tends to drop at the realization that the percentage of such assets was – 8 % in 1982 and was about + 22 % in 2005.

The Republican hawks seem to have suffered a setback in the 2006 elections, but they quickly recovered--with some help from establishment Democrats. As Phillips notes, evangelicals remain the “mainstay of minority backing for the occupation and for the larger doctrine of preemptive invasions.” Is it any wonder that John McCain, currently running for savior of the Republican Party, can safely predict another hundred years of war without fearing a loss of his base?

Well, that about wraps up my summation. Before I begin my critical comments, let’s let Phillips have another word, about as encouraging a word as you’re likely to find in this book. Writing about the political picture which emerged in 2006, Phillips summed it up this way: “Difficult politics thus lies ahead. Unfortunately, the history of past leading world economic powers is that they have not been able to throw up the sort of leadership needed to reverse the tides involved. In consequence, the nations in the process of being dethroned as the world’s economic leader have faced a difficult period of twenty to forty years, at very least, in making the transition from yesterday’s hegemony to a lesser but eventually comfortable role in a differently shaped world.”

Whether the United States and its people are willing to accept an “eventually comfortable” role in this future world remains to be seen.

My problems with American Theocracy have little to do with content or political analysis. I guess that what I’m sensing is an alternative perspective. Phillips and I were born about a year apart, in the two years preceding America’s entry into WWII. In 1957, he graduated from the Bronx High School of Science. At about the same time, I was graduating from Cairo Central School in a tiny town in the northern Catskill Mountains. While he was growing up in the city, I was walking the streets of Ossining, a few miles up river. It was here that, at the age of ten, I witnessed the battered buses and wounded people coming back from the Peekskill riots. In 1957, Phillips went to college, I’m guessing. I went into the Marines.

The three legs—radical religion, oil, and borrowed money—work beautifully schematically, but seem to lack the complexity necessary for adequate analysis. (Here, I’m assuming that this journal’s audience is mostly liberal/progressive religious folks and a smattering of rationalists.) Let’s suppose we picture this schematic as three rivers converging to flow into the looming disaster. Let’s assume that we could travel up one of these rivers and discover the streams which have fed these rivers—and carried us inexorably to the present dilemma.

One of these streams is the racism with which the party of Lincoln built its “southern strategy.” Deny it they might, but the GOP must know that the bulk of its winning constituency has been the white folks who fear the growing numbers and political power of the dark masses. Another stream is the American frontier culture and the mythology of benevolent intentions it engenders. The brutal, systematic slaughter of Native Americans and the virtual destruction of their culture might seem a fair exchange for the prosperity we have enjoyed as a nation, but I’m not sure that plays so well in Iraq, currently left to the tender mercies of America’s military. We could follow plenty of streams upriver, but we would eventually reach a dark, forbidding place where the trees are hung with long strands of dark moss--and skulls and bones. We can sense that, the more we travel this stream, the darker and more mysterious it gets, and the more we feel helpless against its secret, quietly brutal currents.

The sheer mass of the bureaucracy which holds America’s pernicious consensus in place is awesome, by any standards. To trace the roots of this military/industrial bureaucracy, we need to revisit the years just after WWII. Writing in the introduction to *Scoundrel Time*, Lillian Hellman’s best-selling memoir of the McCarthy era, Gary Wills paints this picture:

The OSS was loath to go out of existence. The FBI, expanded to new kinds of power against espionage at home and throughout South America, did not want to give up its new powers. Atomic research continued at full speed and in secret, keeping the issue of security checks alive into peacetime. Crusaders slow to take their armor off get itchy, and start to look ridiculous. What could put the moral shine back on that armor but the discovery, off on the horizon, of another Total Enemy? The reluctance of our demobilization in late 1945 explains the rush of glee at our remobilization in early 1947. The liberal second lieutenants and intelligence officers were back in business, and business looked liberal again. We had a world still to save, with just those plans—from NATO to the Korean War—that Professor Commager called “so wise and so

enlightened.” A thousand wartime ties, relaxed slightly in 1946 to moans of economic and psychic discontent, twanged back tight again and gave America its tonic.

Incompleteness of the scope of an analysis is really a small complaint. How much can you do in 394 pages anyway? Besides, much has been said about the other currents this analysis might explore in other volumes, most of which I have not read. My other small complaint is that Mr. Phillips seems to offer very little of the “and what you can do about it” suggestions which might enable us to avert the impending disaster. Other than collaboration with George Lakoff, I’m not sure what I could suggest.

I guess that leaves it up to the liberal/progressive church folks and rationalists I mentioned earlier. Whatever we need to do, we’d better get started. I strongly suggest the reader start by getting a copy of *American Theocracy*—and reading it. The war for oil, the attack on science and reason, and the ongoing economic crises are all grave threats to our freedoms, our lives and the future of our children and grandchildren. We’d better begin to counterattack against these three evils or we, our nation and the world could all be Left Behind.

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Marshall B. Rosenberg, **Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life.** (Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer Press, 2nd edition, 2003) 207 pages, including bibliography and index.

and

Marshall B. Rosenberg, **Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What You Say Next Will Change Your World.** (Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer Press, 2005), 185 pages, including bibliography and index. Both books reviewed by James L. Foster

Observation, feeling, needs, request – observation, feeling, needs, request. Imprint these four words indelibly in your consciousness. For Dr. Rosenberg, a clinical psychologist (who found his chosen discipline wanting) and the director of the Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC), they are four words that revolutionized his life and set him on a new career path.

Oddly enough, most of what he teaches in these two books is not new. The concepts behind the words have been taught for millennia in one form or another by various religious traditions. But they are concepts which have most often been ignored by the followers of these traditions, perhaps because they are so counter-intuitive, or otherworldly, or seemingly impractical in our modern societies. To be sure they are easy enough to understand, but with generations of contrary practice behind us they are not so easy to apply. The two concepts most in evidence in Dr. Rosenberg’s teaching are compassion and non-judgment. Simple, yes. Easy, no.

By observation, Dr. Rosenberg means our awareness of the “concrete actions we are *observing* that are affecting our well-being.”

By feeling he is referring to “How we *feel* in relation to what we are observing.”

By needs he means our awareness of our “needs, values, desires, etc. that are creating our feelings.”

And by request he is referring to the “concrete actions we *request* in order to enrich our lives.”

“When we use this process, we may begin either by expressing ourselves or by empathically receiving the four pieces of information from others.” It is a process by which we both express honesty through the above components and receive empathically through the four components.

It is a process which can be used, he believes, in any situation with any person. The testimonials quoted freely throughout both books underscore his belief, for with attribution to this process many, many people report broken relationships being restored and objectives being met through cooperative action rather than through competition or coercion. It is a process that has been successfully applied by teachers in the classroom and by warring parties in cross cultural contexts, by parents with their children and in international diplomacy.

Dr. Rosenberg calls nonviolent communication a “giving from the heart” as opposed to a head trip. It is not intended to be a way to manipulate others, but rather an expression of genuine caring for the other person. It eschews moralistic judgments and comparisons of any kind and does not allow for the denial of personal responsibility for our relationships.

He devotes chapters to “Observing Without Evaluating” (“When we combine observation with evaluation, people are apt to hear criticism.”), and “Identifying and Expressing Feelings” (distinguishing between what we feel and what we think), and “Taking Responsibility for Our Feelings” (“What others do may be the stimulus of our feelings, but not the cause.”)

Rosenberg devotes chapters to making requests, differentiating between “requests” and “demands,” and on giving and receiving empathy. Chapters on expressing anger and appreciation round out the first of these two books, “Nonviolent Communication.”

In the second book, “Speak Peace,” Rosenberg enlarges on the techniques of nonviolent communication and applies them in a wide variety of contexts including domination structures (as in gangs), creating change in our institutions, mediation between warring factions, terrorism, and creating social change.

For some years, this reviewer, who devotes his energies virtually full time to building peace on many levels, has acknowledged that peace has to begin on an individual level, but concrete handles for accomplishing this have been elusive. Dr. Rosenberg, in these two books, has shown a practical way to bring about peace – peace within ourselves, our families, our communities, and our world. He is, perhaps, the second Jew to show us the way. I think Jesus was the first.

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Moore, Sebastian. **The Contagion of Jesus, Doing Theology as if it Mattered**, Edited by Stephen McCarthy. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2007; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008. pp. xiii, 208. Reviewed by Anthony Bartlett, theologian on the faculty of Bexley Hall Episcopal Seminary, Rochester New York and author of **Cross Purposes: The Violent Grammar of the New Testament**

Off and on I have tried my hand at a book with the title *Divine Virus* so when I picked up Sebastian Moore's *The Contagion of Jesus* (Orbis, 2008) it was with a mixture of pleasure and dread. Moore and I have the thought of René Girard in common so this was no casual coincidence. *Contagion* would certainly be swimming in the same vein as *Virus*. Would his book do the topic justice as I had grasped it, so I would feel the whole idea given good energy, or would I feel doubly deprived: the idea taken but treated, for example, insipidly?

I had nothing to fear, and my pleasure was more than fulfilled as I read this latest from the celebrated Benedictine author. As a researcher in the field of gospel virology Sebastian Moore is at the top of his game. His work contributes urgently both to our intellectual understanding of the human shift brought by the person of Jesus and to its practical happening in our world. More than once I felt I was in the presence of a quiet classic, containing so much authentic spirituality at the cutting edge of anthropology that it will remain important for decades to come.

The form of the book is a collection of essays, sermons and poems written through more than a dozen years and assembled by a friend, Stephen McCarthy. Most of the sections, and also the book overall, end with poems of the author, frequently directly linked to the content of previous discussion. The effect is to bring us the story of a life, in which the primary history of Jesus-infection is the author's. On the way he produces thoughts which are consistently responsive to the deep changes in humanity prompted by the God of the Bible. Strange, or perhaps not so strange to say, nowhere are these changes playing out with more stress and difficulty than in the church.

In a keynote introductory essay, itself worth the price of admission, Sebastian celebrates monotheism not as the necessity and authority of the single metaphysical God. Rather it is a profound shift in the human landscape. In his own words it is the "the withdrawal of God into all-enclosing mystery" while human beings are thrown beyond cultural divisions into the work of love. It is a revolution in human consciousness, coming from the loss of the gods of tribe and marketplace and a plunge into the void where something new is being formed. He shapes the movement in one of his poems:

to sink into the deep
where I can always hear you when you call
me out of me as once again I leap

This trope of the void, of nothing, and the plunge into it, is the hinge of a new Christianity. It is where the very emptiness that causes us to dispute and kill becomes the pathway of surrender, to and for the other, which is the new creation of love. Once this astonishing revelation is grasped we realize that much of "Christian doctrine as we receive it with all its imperial baggage is a travesty, recognizable as such."

Moore shares the thought of the void with other traditions of mysticism and he has been particularly affected by the writing of Eckhart Tolle. But what gives it a unique twist is where Moore makes it converge with the work of Girard who sees the biblical pathway bringing about a progressive disclosure of human violence. Taking Girard as a starting point Moore sees Christ is the “willing scapegoat,” the one who endured the endless human capacity to offload on others our chaotic violence. He did so both in order to shine an unblinking light on it and to set free those who relate to him at the heart of the violent human process. Jesus went to this deep place in his own relationship with his Father, one without fear or violence, one ready for the void. This revolutionary relationship with God is the reason why religion crucified him, and the whole experience of being with Jesus, through the depths of his story and out the other side, is what precipitated a total psychological transformation in his followers. It is this transformation that then becomes contagious (i.e. the divine virus...), and of course it is a transformation in the meaning of God too.

This fear of nothing is God in reverse
I've got to go there, and there Jesus goes...

The idea of a new humanity sits well with the prominence given to the figure of Jesus' mother in the Roman Catholic tradition, but the accretion of doctrine around Mary is not easy. Moore worries at it the way my Dalmatian goes after one of those tightly woven chewing balls. The tangle of history, the feminine and high Marian doctrine drives him crazy. Moore is attempting to unravel the ball in terms of the new anthropology released by Jesus. Earlier he has said a new humanity has been born of “our great murder” which is the killing of Jesus, and as such it becomes the perpetuation of “a dangerous memory” which can overturn everything in our world. In his discussion of virginal conception Moore prefers finally to take the memory as a transcendent rupture in normal biological arrangements, but surely it is also possible that there is something parallel to the crucifixion here. That the dangerous memory of “the thing conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” is not incompatible with one of the worst things that could happen to a young woman. That this is how deep the abyss of redemption goes... In one of his antiphonal poems Moore in fact says: “I don't know how you let in the sublime / to Nazareth on a dull afternoon.”

Be that as it may, Moore sees Mary as both symbol and subject, constructing the Christian role of woman as the leading edge of the human.

(Mary was called) to represent woman as she frees herself from culture-assigned roles for culture's subversion and transformation. But the lens for the recovery of a Marian understanding of life as a flourishing rather than a conquest is woman's quest for her own subjectivity... For me it is the acceptance of the woman in myself. For all men it is this.

And then another Catholic dogma comes into play, the idea that Mary was born “without original sin.” Mary “had to be free of our vast and endless human karma in order to represent our humanity at its forgotten best.” This makes anthropological sense when we say it was Mary who was the first point of teaching for Jesus' radical nonviolence, and it makes ecclesial sense if we say Mary speaks of nonviolence, peace, and a ministerial leadership to go with it. It also makes theological sense if we lose the biological concept of original sin and see it much more in terms of generative violence, the

ancient way of being human which aspects of the Jewish Wisdom tradition were already rejecting for nonviolence by the first century BCE. Along this road Moore quotes Karl Barth as saying that Mary represents the (heretical) essence of the Roman church in the idea of human co-operation in redemption. He also relates the wonderful counterpoint of Barth's four page footnote in his *Church Dogmatics*, on Mozart and his music as free of the distorted attitude to creation due to original sin. So apparently there is a space in the human somehow free of the violence of sin! Moore goes on to tell the story of Barth's dream in which he asked the great Viennese composer how he could have been a member of the Catholic church with all its superstition and corruption. Mozart remained silent. Was this the rising up of the repressed human against the relentless onslaught of dialectical theology? For Moore it certainly is.

The book is divided into two parts, and it is in the second part that it hits its own wall, a wall almost visibly stretched across the book's pathway. It's here that the contagion both works and doesn't work, and it seems inevitable that it get to this point, the cutting edge of research. Here is the place where the ferment caused by the contagion meets the actuality of sex: sex as the acute point in physical existence where desire is promised fulfillment: sex which is excluded in the monastic community to which Moore has belonged for so much of his life, and yet which also provides the opportunity for same-sex attraction. The community, therefore, in Moore's account, is the place which gives rise to the it's-alright-to-feel-it-but-not-do-it response to homosexuality. However, according to Moore, this as the only place where this injunction is valid, precisely for the reason of common brotherhood! Elsewhere he turns it on its head, seeing it as a profound category error caused by this celibate clerical viewpoint. Elsewhere indeed there is every reason to do it, for the sake of human enjoyment and fulfillment between committed partners. His basic argument is out of natural law: sex is intended by God for personal human flourishing and it doesn't matter in which gender relations this finds its completion.

But I think at this point it is Moore's categories which are inadequate. He reposes confidence in the Roman Catholic authorities that they can change their stance, based on the argument he makes. He believes that it's a simple matter of logic. What he doesn't see is the power of the Jesus contagion to reshape the very meaning of human nature, sweeping away past constructions and reducing us simply to our desire. The Roman church does not, I feel sure, think this way. Moore omits from his account the natural law arguments from Aquinas which go in completely the opposite direction, against homosexuality, and even though I am sure these can be parsed more liberally by creative minds this is not the way the Vatican understands them. Thus the only place to assert what he asserts is in completely new philosophical and moral space created under the very effect he invokes as his title, the contagion of Jesus. And there is no way an institution as historically self-identifying and identified as the Roman church is going to put itself in this new place.

The contagion of Jesus reveals desire as the mainspring of human existence, and hand-in-hand the violence that can so quickly result from desire. At the same time, as Moore says and posits all along, desire that becomes love is the invention of Jesus, by means of his entering into the void to remove violence from desire. It is on this ground that a profound argument for Christian gay and lesbian sexuality can be made, not on the shaky preferences of how we see "nature." Jesus has made possible gay sexuality from a specifically Christian perspective, from the place where desire can be

transformed into love. And so it is, I believe, that Moore has in fact outgrown the straightjacket of his ecclesial and philosophical conditioning. What he is looking for is a liberated practice of the gospel, a joyful humanized Christianity and a liberated church. My suspicion is he won't get it this side of some enormous upheaval, some deeper spreading of the virus, some real breaking free of the bureaucratic forms against which he rails. I hear and feel this in every line he writes, especially in the second more fraught section, and that is why his book is a not-so-quiet classic.

Indeed if it takes a Benedictine monk who has spent a lifetime serving God so much spiritual and intellectual effort to reach this breakthrough, what about the rest of the rude multitude? Thus it is here, paradoxically, I would posit something much wider, deeper and more dynamic, in any account of the contagion. It would be the way Jesus has affected popular and secular culture more profoundly than we recognize, so that the themes of nonviolence and desire-become-love rise to the surface more and more, regardless of church practice and ethics. It could be that the divine contagion has galloped through the world completely out of control, and the church may be in fact one of the last best places to limit its effects because of the inoculation dose the church has taken...

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Douglass, James. **JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters.** (Orbis Books, 2008). A review by John K. Stoner, Akron, PA, founder of *Every Church A Peace Church* and member of Akron Mennonite Church.

This book is an examination of the Cold War through the eyes of a prophet, Thomas Merton. Actually, it is through the eyes of two prophets--Thomas Merton and James Douglass.

How much difference would it make to see world events through the eyes of people whose purpose and gift it is to reflect the glory of God rather than through the eyes of news media? This book confirms that it makes a big difference.

In chapter one Thomas Merton is quoted (from his "The Cold War Letters", circulated informally in January 1963) on the state of the American public at that time. Can you recognize our time in it?

In actual fact it would seem that during the Cold War, if not during World War II, this country has become frankly a warfare state built on affluence, a power structure in which the interests of big business, the obsessions of the military, and the phobias of political extremists both dominate and dictate our national policy. It also seems that the people of the country are by and large reduced to passivity, confusion, resentment, frustration, thoughtlessness and ignorance, so that they blindly follow any line that is unraveled for them by the mass media."

James Douglass writes, "In our Cold War history, the Unspeakable was the void in our government's covert-action doctrine of plausible deniability," sanctioned by the June 18, 1948, National Security Council directive NSC, 10/2. Under the direction of Allen Dulles, the CIA interpreted "plausible deniability" as a green light to assassinate national leaders, overthrow governments, and lie to cover up any trace of accountability--all for

the sake of promoting U.S. Interests and maintaining our nuclear-backed dominance over the Soviet Union and other nations.

I was slow to see the Unspeakable in the assassination of John Kennedy. ... That void of accountability for the CIA and our other security agencies, seen as necessary for covert crimes to protect our nuclear weapons primacy, made possible the JFK assassination and cover-up. While I wrote and acted in resistance to nuclear weapons that could kill millions, I remained oblivious of the fact that their existence at the heart of our national security state underlay the assassination of a president turning toward disarmament.

“A president turning toward disarmament...” Read the book to see how much history is packed into that phrase, and begin to measure its implications for where this country has gone since JFK. Read about the secret correspondence, an exchange of 21 letters from 1961-63, between Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev. Read about the role of Norman Cousins, carrying communications between Kennedy, Khrushchev and Pope John XXIII. Read about Kennedy’s willingness to talk with his “enemies,” including Fidel Castro, and how the CIA felt about that.

James Douglass says “I remained oblivious...” Thomas Merton says “the people of the country are by and large reduced to passivity, confusion, resentment, frustration...” We do not have to remain oblivious, passive, and unspeaking because of The Unspeakable. Knowing and speaking truth is the most powerful thing a citizen can do. If voting, for example, in a presidential election, seems weak, do something stronger. Read this book, fortify yourself with truth, and engage the principalities and powers with power that is greater than their powers of nuclear weapons and death.

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Claiborne, Shane. **The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical.** (Zondervan, 2006). Reviewed by Edward T. Sullivan, member of the United Church of Christ.

In this engaging spiritual memoir, Claiborne eschews the labels liberal and conservative in favor of "radical Christian," explaining radical means returning to the roots. This young founding member of the Simple Way Christian community in an impoverished, crime-ridden Philadelphia neighborhood describes the path he took from his Tennessee Methodist upbringing to his commitment to live as an "authentic Christian" ministering to the homeless and poor.

Spiritually dissatisfied with living in the world of "safe Christianity," Claiborne's path to becoming a radical began while he was a student at Eastern University where he first organized and engaged in actions to help the homeless. Feeling the need to find a real world example of a "fully devoted Christian," Claiborne went to work for Mother Teresa in Calcutta. In Calcutta, Claiborne witnessed "Christianity lived out." Working with the outcasts of society, "the poorest of the poor," was a transforming experience. Claiborne returned to the United States to find his own Calcutta. Eventually he finds it in inner city Philadelphia where he founded Simple Way, which Claiborne describes as a new culture that relies on radical interdependence and consists of grassroots organizations, intentional communities, and hospitality houses. This community attempts to live like

Christ and the earliest converts to Christianity, ignoring social status and unencumbered by material comforts.

Claiborne is able to skewer the insulation of suburban living and "safe Christianity," and the hypocrisy of wealthy churches without sounding self-righteous. Readers may find Claiborne's chatty, conversational style annoying at times, but his deep commitment to the social gospel is genuinely inspiring. The Irresistible Revolution will challenge readers to rethink what it means to truly live out their Christian faith.

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Appendix

WORLD CITIZENSHIP CREED

As a citizen of the world...

I BELIEVE in the dignity of all humanity, that each person is a being of supreme worth.

I BELIEVE in the wholeness of the human race, undivided by economic, cultural, racial, sexual or national differences.

I BELIEVE in the stewardship of life and resources to the end that all may mutually benefit from the earth's bounty and that no person may have to go without food or shelter.

I BELIEVE in the primacy of human relationships as a person committed and responsible to other persons, regardless of their economic status, race, creed or nationality.

I BELIEVE in the global community, interdependent and mutually responsible for our physical and social environments.

I BELIEVE that we are One World and affirm that I am a citizen of this world. My allegiance to it and its people, my brothers and sisters, is primary over all other political entities.

I AM, therefore, committed to the promotion and care of the whole of humanity without partiality or prejudice and with such resources as I have at my command, both within and without.

I HEREWITH AFFIRM that I wish, as much as I possibly can, to base my actions on my beliefs and thus contribute to a world where justice and compassion rule and where greed and hatred are diminished.

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1.2 The new journal is concerned with early Christianity as a historical phenomenon. Uncontroversial though that may sound, its editors share a quite specific understanding of this broad field of research. In seeking to further the study of early Christianity as a historical phenomenon, we aim to overcome certain limitations which "in our view" have hindered the development of the discipline. To identify a limitation is already to have seen the possibility of moving beyond it. Peter Arzt-Grabner, Salzburg Christos Karakolis, Athen John S. Kloppenborg, Toronto Achim Lichtenberger, Münster Hindy Najman, Oxford Daniel R. Schwartz, Jerusalem Janet Spittler, Charlottesville Alin Suciu, Göttingen Jürgen K. Zangenberg, Leiden. Manuscripts. Previous (History of Chinese art). Next (History of Ethics). The history of Christianity concerns the history of the Christian religion and the Church, from Jesus and his Twelve Apostles and Seventy Disciples to contemporary times. Christianity is the monotheistic religion which considers itself based on the revelation of Jesus Christ. In many Christian denominations "The Church" is understood theologically as the institution founded by Jesus for the salvation of humankind. This understanding is