



Forcing Change

March 2009

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All for Gaia: Earth Day and Total Transformation

By Carl Teichrib



Editor's Note: Earth Day is just around the corner. As the largest environmental celebration on the planet, impacting practically every community in the Western World, it is imperative that we grasp the importance of this movement. You see, Earth Day isn't just a twenty-four hour global event, but the tip of a needle that seeks to infect the world with a radical anti-human philosophy.

In the past, *Forcing Change* has delved into the Earth Day phenomena. And while some of the material in this article has been touched upon in earlier issues, this report seeks to link some aspects that are often overlooked – yet are visible to those who understand the symbolism and spiritual undercurrents that guide this movement.

“More than 6 million Canadians join 500 million people in over 180 countries in staging events and projects to address local environmental issues. *Nearly every school child in Canada takes part in an Earth Day activity.*” — Earth Day Canada¹ [italics added].

“Earth is more than just a spaceship. She is our Mother. She gave us life. There is nowhere else to go but to stay and love her.” — Reader's comment regarding John Kerry's Earth Day blog.²



Carl Teichrib, Chief Editor

Just as in olden days, the Earth has become the focal point for worship. In Grecian times the supreme Earth deity was Gaia, also known as the Universal Mother. Sacred oaths were given in her name, and worshippers performed rituals in her honour.³ One commentator tells us,

“The classic artistic representation of Gaia is a woman emerging breast-high from the earth. The goddess arises but never leaves her planetary body. Visceral rites, including plant, animal, and (presumably ecstatic) human sacrifice as well as unabashed sexual ceremonies were held to adore the goddess’s fecundity.”⁴

In our contemporary era, Earth Day has become the modern celebration of Gaia. Partakers of this event, whether aware of it or not, play off the ancient pagan beliefs of a Universal Mother. Like the sacred oaths taken in her name, today’s Earth Day celebrants sign environmental petitions, make pledges, and announce resolutions in support of Mother Earth. And like the old sacrifices to the deity, today’s Earth Day practitioners offer sacrifices of “good works” to the planet. Not only is the Earth a deity to be venerated, but the Earth itself – as the representative and embodiment of the Goddess – has become a modern day idol.

Do all who engage in Earth Day festivities realize the connections between this event and the ancient pagan deity? Some do, especially those who take a neo-pagan position, but many are unaware, thinking it’s a family-oriented way to engage in environmental conservation (much

good is done during Earth Day, such as cleaning up stream beds or planting trees – but that’s not the issue). Motivated by good intentions, scores of individuals (including professing Christians), participate without ever considering what Earth Day is actually about or the philosophies that underpin the movement.

James Coburn, the American actor (deceased in 2002), understood the overt pagan linkages. Consider his 1990 interview with journalist Caryl Matrisciana during the Malibu Beach, Earth Day festival.

Caryl Matrisciana:

“Mr. Coburn, why should we care about Earth Day or Mother Earth?”

James Coburn:

“Mother Earth is our Mother! She’s the Mother Goddess. She’s the one that we should be praising rather than raping.

I mean all of these people here today are here for one reason: Because they’re concerned about what’s happening to the Earth – what Mankind is doing to the Earth. I mean the negative emotions we carry around, a lot of us, is another contributor to it; it feeds the Moon. [Author’s Note: the Moon is significant in pagan circles.]

What we have to do is be true to ourselves, if we’re true to ourselves we’ll be true to Mother Earth. Mother Earth’s going to be bountiful; she’s going to give us everything we need. She has for a long time.

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We've lost our way. The pagans used to know how to do it. And the Indians, some of them still remember how to do it.

The Earth is a living organism. We're killing the one we love the most, and she loves us. We've got to praise our Mother Goddess!"⁵

When Earth Day was first inaugurated in 1970, *Newsweek* called the event "a bizarre nationwide rain dance."⁶ The *New York Times*, however, said it was an idea "whose time has come because life is running out." Earth, and the race of mankind, needed to be saved "from intolerable deterioration and possible extinction."⁷

Now, almost forty years later, corporate sponsorships pay for community Earth Day events. Federal and local governments spend tax dollars in promotion of April 22nd, and a myriad of grassroots organizations add energy to the cause. It's an event that captures the attention of local and national media outlets, politicians of every stripe, and fuels the imagination of school children everywhere. From the automotive giant Toyota⁸ to every urban center in North America, from the United Nations to the National Council of Churches⁹ – Earth Day is far more than a bizarre rain dance; it's a platform for global citizenship and Earth loyalties.

Earth Day is Born

The idea for Earth Day goes back to 1962 and Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin. Convinced that environmental issues needed greater exposure, Nelson suggested to President Kennedy that he embark on a "national conservation tour." The following year Kennedy went on a five-day excursion promoting environmental conservation, but it never generated the political interest Nelson was hoping for. However, according to the Senator, "it was the germ of the idea that ultimately flowered into Earth Day."¹⁰

Only a few years later, during the height of the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, Senator Nelson hit on the idea of a national educational event to create environmental awareness; the "first national environmental teach-in." This event, planned for April 22, 1970, was to be styled after the war protest movement, and it was aimed at capturing the interest and energy of young people – a generation going through one of the largest cultural shifts in the history of the United States. Not surprisingly, Nelson's first Earth Day speech reflected this cultural shift, boasting that April 22 was to be the "birth date of a new American ethic that rejects the frontier philosophy that the continent was put here for our plunder..."¹¹

Decades after the initial event, Nelson's assistant who coordinated the Earth Day nation-

al teach-in campaign, Denis Hayes, told an interviewer that: "We consciously set out to build a movement to bring America back together, and let everyone under the umbrella with a shared set of values."¹²

New ethics and a common set of values were to guide this movement, and act as the inspiration for college students in their environmental advocacy. Remember, this was April 22, 1970, and the students of that era represent a wide swath of today's political, business, academic, and religious leadership. Senator Nelson understood the potential power of tapping the nation's youth.

Helping to make this inaugural Earth Day a success, a special book of essays was compiled through Friends of the Earth and distributed nation-wide to teachers and professors. Titled, *The Environmental Handbook: Prepared for the First National Environmental Teach-In, April 22, 1970*, this volume introduced a new set of social ideals that would point America to a better world. Tens of thousands of copies were distributed, and 20 million young people across the US celebrated what was to become a global movement: Earth Day.

But what of those values laid out in *The Environmental Handbook*? Were they based on the core Judeo-Christian tenets of Western thought and law? Did they support common sense conservation: erosion control, maintaining a balanced wildlife population, curbing toxic pol-

lutants, or stemming the tide of invasive species?

Pollution was addressed, with a population control twist. Land use was also discussed, while demeaning “conventional cattle ranching.”

Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, contributed a doomsday scenario to ignite impressionable minds: By 1973 air pollution would be choking cities, causing single-event smog disasters with death tolls in the hundreds of thousands – all heralding the advent of a global air quality collapse that would make the “planet uninhabitable” sometime before 1990. By the mid-seventies, the US grain belt would be turning into the great Mid-western desert, wiping out food stocks. During this time period, Ehrlich speculated, America’s resource sector would be collapsing and a national “family planning” program would have to be set up alongside an international agenda to curb the human population. By the summer of 1979, the world’s oceans would be dead and all sea-based animal life extinct.¹³

For high school and college students participating in the first Earth Day, this future-tense story would have had a chilling effect. As Mr. Ehrlich explained; “A pretty grim scenario. Unfortunately, we’re a long way into it already.”¹⁴

Does any of this sound familiar? “Warming may trigger agricultural collapse,” so reported the Inter-Press Service in 2007.¹⁵

“Fish stocks could collapse because of global warming,” announced an Associated Press article in 2008.¹⁶ Professor John Brignell, an author and social researcher, posted his observations regarding climate change and fear.



“Got a problem? Blame global warming! From allergies to maple syrup shortages to yellow fever: apparently every contemporary ill is caused by climate change.”¹⁷

Brignell’s website lists no less than 300 alleged problems, or pseudo-problems, attributed to global warming. This documented list includes crabgrass, kidney stones, inflation in China, invasions of jellyfish and giant oysters, the Loch Ness monster dying, fish getting lost, an upcoming Ice Age, conflict with Russia, sour grapes and stronger

wine, farms going under – and farm output boosted, the Atlantic becoming more salty – and less salty, smog, terrorism, fainting, and smaller brains. I tend to believe this last one.

The sky is falling! The sky is falling! Is this a scare tactic for global transformation? Consider the following quotes,

“During any ‘issue-attention-cycle’ in environmental campaigning, there is a phase in which the issue needs to be strategically exaggerated in order to establish it firmly on an agenda for action.”¹⁸

– International Institute for Sustainable Development.

“We have to offer up scary scenarios, make simplified, dramatic statements, and make little mention of any doubts we may have.”¹⁹

– Professor Stephen Schneider.

“No matter if the science is all phony, there are collateral environmental benefits...climate change [provides] the greatest chance to bring about justice and equality in the world.”²⁰

– Christine Stewart, former Canadian Minister of Environment.

“Collateral environmental benefits...?” This is questionable at best; so much so that over 31,000 scientists have signed a petition that challenged the human-caused global warming line, and openly suggested that increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide may

have benefits.²¹ Moreover, “justice” and “equality” are social issues – not atmospheric. Again, this points to the heart of the matter: social transformation.

But scare tactics are effective. They leave the masses wondering: How can the human race reverse our imminent environmental demise? What can be done to save Mother Earth?

According to the first Earth Day and *The Environmental Handbook*, we can start by placing the blame on Christianity and Western values, and then adopt pagan and radical socialist solutions.

Consider the following quotes from *The Environmental Handbook*. Keep in mind that this text established the ethical ideals of a new Earth reality, and set the tone for the first Earth Day – and subsequent celebrations.

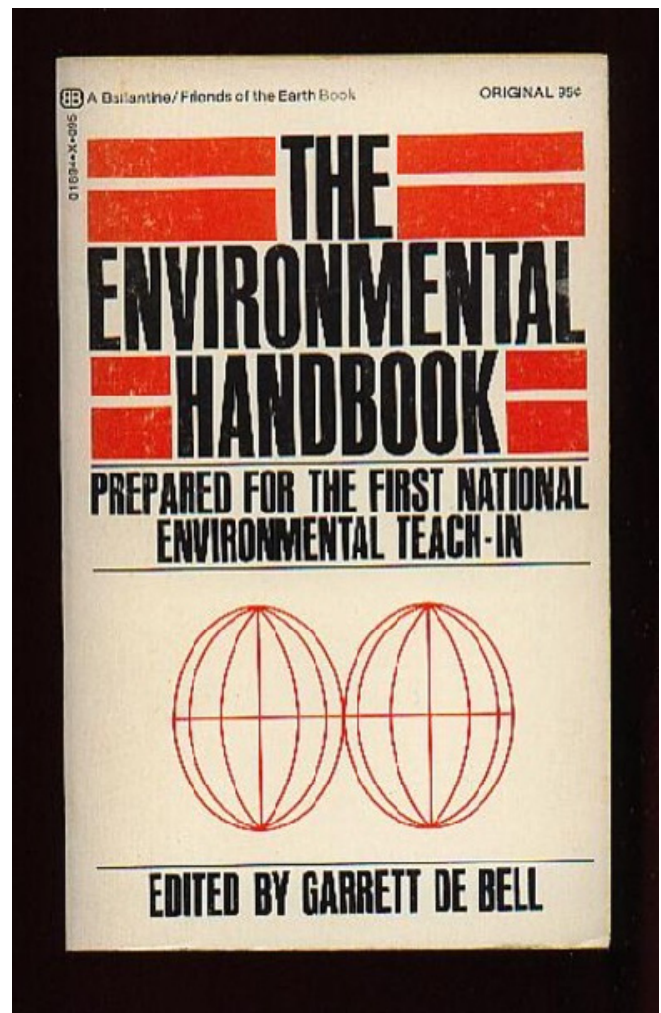
Note: the author’s name and page numbers are at the end of each quote, and all misspellings are in the original.

On Religion:

“Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions...not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.

At the level of the common people this worked out in an interesting way. In antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genius loci, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men...Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.” [p.20-21, Lynn White Jr.].

“What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More sci-



ence and more technology are not going to get us out of our present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one...” [p.24, Lynn White Jr.].

“No new set of basic values has been accepted in our society to displace those of Christianity. Hence we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man.” [p.25, Lynn White Jr.].

“Both our present science and our present technology are so tintured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.” [p.26, Lynn White Jr.].

“What was it that enabled Eskimo shamen, their minds a product of the taiga, tundra, and sea ice, to travel on spirit journeys under the ocean and to talk with the fishes and the potent beings who lived on the bottom? How did the shamen develop the hypnotic power they employed in their séances? What can we learn from the shamen who survive about thought transference and ESP? The answers are in the arctic wilderness still left to us.

Wilderness is a bench mark, a touchstone... New perspectives come out of the wilderness. Jesus, Zoroaster, Moses, and Mohammed went to the wilderness and came back with messages... This handbook, and the teach-in it serves, have their beginnings in wilderness.” [p. 148, Kenneth Brower].

On Population:

“Freedom to breed is intolerable.” [p.41, Garrett Hardin].

“No technical solution can rescue us from the misery of overpopulation. Freedom to breed will bring ruin to all... The only way we can preserve and nature other and more precious freedoms is by relinquishing the freedom to breed.” [p.49, Garrett Hardin].

“...it is sinful for anybody to have more than two children. It has long since become glaringly evident that unless the earth’s cancerous growth of population can be halted, all other problems – poverty, war, racial strife, uninhabitable cities, and the rest – are beyond solution.” [p.139, John Fischer].

“Stabilizing the U.S. population should be declared a national policy. Immediate steps should be taken to: 1. Legalize voluntary abortion and sterilization and provide these services free. 2. Remove all restrictions on the provision of birth control information and devices; provide these services free to all, including minors. 3. Make sex education available to all appropriate levels, stressing birth control practices and the need to stabilize the population...” [pp.317-318, Keith Murray].

“Explore other social structures and marriage forms, such as group marriage and polyandrous marriage, which provide family life but may produce less children. Share the pleasure of raising children widely, so that all need not directly reproduce to enter into this basic human experience. We must hope that no one woman would give birth to more than one child.” [p.324, *Four Changes* section].

On Nations and Economies:

“Nations...must be phased out as quickly as possible and replaced with tribal or regional autonomous economies...” [p.6, Keith Lampe].

“Interdependence of course can be sustained only in a context of cooperation, so competition (capitalism) must be phased out and replaced with cooperative economic models.” [pp.6-7, Keith Lampe].

“Looking beyond our borders, our students will be encouraged to ask even harder questions. Are nation-states actually feasible, now that they have the power to destroy each other in a single afternoon? Can we agree on something else to take their place, before the balance of terror becomes unstable? What price would most people be willing to pay for a more durable kind of human organization – more taxes, giving up national flags, perhaps the sacrifice of some of our hard-won liberties?” [p. 145, John Fisher].

On Global Transformation:

“Nothing short of total transformation will do much good. What we envision is a planet on which the human population lives harmoniously and dynamically by employing a sophisticated and unobtrusive technology in a world environment which is ‘left natural’...Cultural and individual pluralism, unified by a type of world tribal council.” [p.330, *Four Changes* section].

“It seems evident that there are throughout

the world certain social and religious forces which have worked through history toward an ecologically and culturally enlightened state of affairs. Let these be encouraged: Gnostics, hip Marxists, Teilhard de Chardin Catholics, Druids, Taoists, Biologists, Witches, Yogins, Bhikkus, Quakers, Sufis, Tibetans, Zens, Shamans, Bushmen, American Indians, Polynesians, Anarchists, Alchemists...the list is long. All primitive cultures, all communal and ashram movements. Since it doesn't seem practical or even desirable to think that direct bloody force will achieve much, it would be best to consider this a continuing 'revolution of consciousness' which will be won not by guns but by seizing the key images, myths, archetypes, eschatologies, and ecstasies so that life won't seem worth living unless one's on the transforming energy's side." [p.331, *Four Changes*].

The message is clear. In order to save the world, we need to drastically change our present religious, political, economic, and social structures. We need to significantly re-shape society towards a New Age world-view where nature supersedes all, where political and economic structures morph into a type of ecological communism, where the cancer of human growth undergoes radical surgery, and where education and religion are indelibly altered to serve Mother Earth.

This is the essence of Earth Day. It's the embracing of massive religious and social changes – the sacrifice of our “orthodox Christian arrogance” so that Gaia can be healed and humanity saved. It's the clarion call of One World.

Gaia Rescue, a project of Earth Day 2008, brings this into focus; “To correct this problem we're going to have to act as a planet, not separately as groups or countries. It will take all of Gaia's children to save her from the mistakes we've already made.”²²

Gaia is Mad

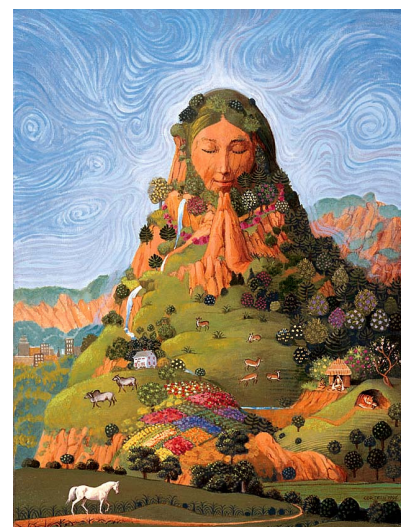
If we don't correct our mistakes, if we don't change our values, behaviours, ethics, and beliefs – Mother Earth is going to take matters into her

own hands. This is the current eco-philosophy fad. Human beings are a blight, and Gaia is going to cleanse herself unless we become good global citizens and respect the Universal Mother.

This is the message of the Dalai Lama.

“Until now...Mother Earth has somehow tolerated sloppy house habits. But now human use, population, and technology have reached that certain stage where Mother Earth no longer accepts our presence with silence. In many ways she is now telling us, ‘My children are behaving badly.’ She is warning us that there are limits to our actions...”²³

Meanwhile, movies such as *The Happening* depict Mother Earth striking back against Mankind – chemically inducing humans to commit suicide in order to clean up the people problem. Another recent flick, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, has watchful aliens descending on the planet to save failing Mother Earth from the cancer of humanity. During the last part of the movie, the main characters come to the realization that they must evolve at the global level in order to avert planetary disaster. Many other movies, documentaries, and television shows present a similar message. Man must change, or Gaia will deal harshly with us.



This is also the prognosis of British geophysicist James Lovelock, who wrote the 1979 book *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (this volume spurned on the “modern,” pseudo-scientific Gaia theory of Earth as a living construct). Now, his 2006 book *The Revenge of Gaia*, paints a picture of a planet suffering from a crippling fever – Global Warming – and that Mother Earth is fighting for her existence against the destructive capacity of humankind.

Not surprisingly, this line of thinking is found laced throughout the online deep ecology and Gaia community. Blog and on-line articles proclaim that Mother Earth is growing madder by the minute.

“The reasons why there are so many natural disasters and severe weather changes, is because Mother Earth is angry with the people.”²⁴

“The earth is parched. There is not enough water. Fires will rage. Some things are beyond the control of humans. Mother earth is angry, showing us the limits to our power. Let us learn from her.”²⁵

Maybe a little party would make her happy.

A Secular Holiday?

Ironically, Earth Day is considered “the largest secular holiday in the world.”²⁶ Yet there is little secular about it. Rather, a variety of spiritual activities takes place; from Mother Earth rituals to multi-faith Sunrise services, from interfaith Earth gatherings to Spring meditations and “Earth Prayers” – such as the one suggested below,

“Mother, Father, God, Universal Power
Remind us daily of the sanctity of all life.
Touch our hearts with the glorious oneness of all creation
As we strive to respect all the living beings on this planet.
Penetrate our souls with the beauty of this earth,
As we attune ourselves to the rhythm and flow of the seasons.
Awaken our minds with the knowledge to achieve a world in perfect harmony
And grant us the wisdom to realize that we can have heaven on earth.”²⁷

Unfortunately many Christian congregations across North America have jumped on the bandwagon of Earth Day transformation; Some out of naivety, others with full consent and complicity.

One example is San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral. During the 2001 Earth Day, Grace held an interfaith song-celebration for the planet.

“The music will be an eclectic blend of the world’s musical traditions. Tibetan temple bells will blend with the Cathedral Organ. Vocal performances will range from Native American and Muslim Chants to Spirituals and Choral canticles. Representatives from a diverse range of religious paths will participate in the festivities, including Native American, Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, Pagan, and Christian.”²⁸

Over the years Grace Cathedral has been a beacon for comprehensive religious transformation, and has done much to promote a contemporary global-spiritual model, such as helping to birth the United Religions Initiative.

The United Church of Canada is another example. During the last twenty years, the United Church denomination has been considered a Canadian trend setter in “progressively left” Christian thought. This denomination has also been viewed as a social pillar by academics, political figures, and other leading personalities. Here’s part of a responsive reading for an Earth-centred worship service.



“Speaking to the Earth Community, we say:
Brothers and Sisters in Creation, we covenant
this day – with you, with all Creation yet to be,
and with the Creator. With every living creature
and all that contains and sustains you.

All: With all that is on Earth – and with the Earth itself.”²⁹

Alarmingly, it doesn’t seem to matter if a church is “right” or “left” in its general outlook. Conservative congregations too are focussing on the Earth as a point of service.

A few weeks back, in February 2009, I had a chance to visit with some relatives who attend an evangelical church that has been locally recognized for its stalwart stand in proclaiming the Gospel. But I found out that things have changed. Instead of messages focussing on the truths of God's Word, sermons have taken an overt ecological edge. Although not promoting Earth-centric beliefs like the United Church – “we covenant this day...with the Earth itself” – the teachings highlighted typical environmental themes: Global warming, the problems caused by Man, and changing consumption patterns and social behaviours. Does this remind you of anything?

Like hundreds of other pastors and churches across North America, naivety to the true intent of deep ecology and its message of global transformation is undercutting Christian based values – right in the church itself.

Does this mean that Christians shouldn't be concerned about the environment? Not at all. However, a healthy Biblical approach is needed – one that recognizes the rightful place of Man in tending, managing, and using the Earth; not one in which Man is servant to a planetary master made in the image of the United Nations or some other globally inspired environmental agency. Sadly, pastors and congregations around the world are parroting the message of Earth Day and the leaders of global environmental governance.

The quest to involve the Christian community in Earth Day celebrations is especially significant. Not only do individual churches promote Earth Day as a special event, the Earth Day Network (EDN) specifically targets the “faith community” in the hopes that influential religious leaders will move the global agenda forward. And EDN has some clout.

The Earth Day Network is a group that arose from the original Earth Day in 1970. Today the organization's International Council is comprised of the some of the world's most influential globalists,

- Lester Brown, Worldwatch.
- Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director of the World Health Organization.
- Robert Kennedy Jr., Senior Attorney with the Natural Resources Defence Council.
- Gus Speth, former UN Development Programme official.
- Maurice Strong, President of the Earth Council and former UN Special Advisor.
- David Suzuki, Canada's leading environmentalist.
- Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the UN Environmental Programme.³⁰

Presently, EDN works hard to promote their Communities of Faith Climate Campaign, a global warming/Earth Day educational platform targeted at religious groups. In fact, the EDN faith-based website has the motto “Earth Day: Something We Can All Believe In.”³¹

In 2007, EDN reached out a hand to the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities by creating “12,000 sermons and religious events” to empower religious leaders for Earth Day goals. EDN took this a step further during Earth Day 2008 by activating “500,000 parishioners” to support climate change legislation. Many churches also pledged to join EDN for “Earth Day Sunday” in 2008, focussing on climate change and saving the Earth during their Sunday services.³²

Now for 2009, the Earth Day Network is kicking off their Green Generation campaign, which seeks to engage students, churches, and communities in pressuring the world to adopt a new global climate treaty. Moreover, this campaign is slated to continue until 2010 when it's expected that the world will witness a massive Earth celebration: the 40th anniversary of Earth Day.

Paradoxically what originally started as a movement to intentionally place Earth on a pedestal while “demonizing” Christianity, nationalism, and human populations – all focused on driving America's youth to a pagan, socialist utopia – has now been embraced by churches far-and-wide. Furthermore, by hosting and supporting Earth-centered and interfaith services, churches actually contribute to the systemic attack on Biblical values.

Gaia must be smiling. **FC**

Carl Teichrib is editor of *Forcing Change*, a monthly online journal on global government and world social change (www.forcingchange.org).

Endnotes:

¹ Earth Day Canada FAQ, www.earthday.ca/pub/resources/faqs.php. Economic support for the Earth Day Canada organization comes from a wide array of sponsors, such as Environment Canada (government), The Discovery Channel, Panasonic Canada, Sony, and a host of other groups, including Canada's largest banking institutions.

² John Kerry's blog site and responses, http://blog.johnkerry.com/2007/04/please_take_care_of_spaceship.html.

³ Books consulted on Gaia include: *The Life of Greece* by Will Durant; *Occidental Mythology: The Masks of God*, Joseph Campbell; *Magick of the Gods and Goddesses* by D.J. Conway; *Mysteries of the Dark Moon*, Demetra George (an overview of the Goddess cultus from the perspective of the dark Goddess – this book, like *Magick of the Gods and Goddesses*, is a pagan work); *The Gods who Walk Among Us* by Thomas R. Horn and Donald C. Jones (parallels ancient religions to modern paganism – written from a Christian perspective); *Goddess Earth* by Samantha Smith (a Christian exposé of the goddess/environmental movement); *Occult Invasion* by Dave Hunt (a Christian exposé on occultism, including the Gaia movement). I also consulted a host of websites on Greco-Roman mythology, goddess worship, and the Gaia movement, along with works on the Gaia Hypothesis such as *Gaia* by James Lovelock (this is the book that kick started the “scientific” Gaia hypothesis of a Living Earth); *Gaia: The Growth of an Idea* by Lawrence E. Joseph (on the history of Gaia and the Gaia hypothesis); and *Saviors of the*

Earth by Michael S. Coffman (Christian exposé of the environmental movement, with material on the Gaia concept).

⁴ Lawrence E. Joseph, *Gaia: The Growth of an Idea* (St. Martin's Press, 1990), p.226.

⁵ This interview is part of the documentary, *Earth's Two-Minute Warning*, produced by Jeremiah Films and narrated by Caryl Matrisciana.

⁶ See Bill Christofferson's book, *The Man from Clear Lake: Earth Day Founder Senator Gaylord Nelson* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p.6.

⁷ Ibid., p.6.

⁸ For more on the Toyota, Canada, Earth Day program, go to www.earthday.ca/scholarship.

⁹ www.nccusa.org/news/080422earthday.html.

¹⁰ Senator Gaylord Nelson, How the First Earth Day Came About,” *Enviro Link*, [<http://earthday.envirolink.org/history.html>]. Accessed April 11, 2007.

¹¹ *The Man from Clear Lake*, p.7.

¹² Ibid., p.305.

¹³ See Paul R. Ehrlich's essay, “Eco-Catastrophe!,” *The Environmental Handbook: Prepared for the First National Environmental Teach-In* (Ballantine/Friends of the Earth, 1970, edited by Garrett de Bell), pp.161-176.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.174.

¹⁵ Abid Aslam, “Environment: Warming May Trigger Agricultural Collapse,” IPS, September 12, 2007.

¹⁶ “UN Report says fish stocks could collapse because of global warming, pollution,” Associated Press, February 22, 2008.

¹⁷ Professor John Brignell's website is www.numberwatch.co.uk.

¹⁸ *Empowerment for Sustainable Development: Toward Operational Strategies* (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 1995), p.51.

¹⁹ Stephen Schneider, Professor of Biology and Global Change, Stanford

University (as printed in *Trashing the Planet* by Dixie Lee Ray, p.167).

²⁰ Christine Stewart, former Canadian Minister of the Environment, *Calgary Herald*, December 14, 1998.

²¹ The documentary, *Global Warming or Global Governance*, provides some very compelling evidence regarding carbon dioxide benefits. See also, the Petition Project (www.petitionproject.org) for the names of the 31,000 plus scientists.

²² Gaia Rescue, www.gaiarescue.com [Accessed February 24, 2009].

²³ Dalai Lama, as printed in *Only One Earth* (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2000), p.61.

²⁴ <http://rainbowmotherearth.ning.com>.

²⁵ <http://bluebanshee.wordpress.com/2008/07/28/earth-fire-and-water>.

²⁶ EcoSmart, “The Origins of Earth Day,” Earth Love Movement, www.earthlovemovement.org/tag/secular-holiday [Accessed February 24, 2009].

²⁷ Jo Poore, Earth Prayer [to be used on Earth Day], *Celebrations of Spring*, Electronic Newsletter, April 15, 2004, www.faith-commongood.net/news/letter.asp?ID=1

²⁸ Grace Cathedral news release, “A Song of Creation: An Interfaith Earth Day Celebration at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco,” www.ewire.com/display.cfm/Wire_ID/175

²⁹ United Church of Canada, *Enough for All Worship Resource*, p.10.

³⁰ EDN International Council, <http://earthday.net/node/64>.

³¹ Earth Day Network, Earth Day: Something We Can All Believe In, <http://earthday.net/node/73>.

³² Ibid.

Faith-Based Partnerships Ban Truth & Freedom:

Editor's Note:

Selling our Souls in the Name of Service?

*By Berit Kjos (author of *A Twist of Faith and Brave New Schools*)*

The following article, penned by my friend Berit Kjos, documents the new federal office established by President Barack Obama – the White House Council for Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships. It's an important article on two fronts: 1) At the American level, it demonstrates a nation-wide values-change approach, led by the federal government and directed via American churches and faith groups. 2) While this is an American program, it does reflect an international picture. Through UNESCO and other multinational forums, there has been a concerted attempt to reshape values and ethics around a global paradigm.

“Barack Obama will establish a new President’s Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships within the White House. The Council will work to engage faith-based organizations and help them abide by the principles that federal funds cannot be used to proselytize...”¹

“If you get a federal grant, you can’t use that grant money to proselytize to the people you help and you can’t discriminate against...the people you hire on the basis of their religion.”
– Barack Obama²

“...we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”
– Acts 4:18-19 [The disciples’ response when commanded not to share their faith.]

Why is our government so hostile to the Christian message of God’s love? Why would America follow the intolerant ways of Communist and Islamic nations that outlaw genuine Christian ministries to the hungry and homeless? Which social and political goals are fueling this war on God’s Truth?

One clue may be found in Barack Obama’s “Call to Renewal” speech on June 28, 2006. He said,

“Democracy demands that the religiously motivated translate



their concerns into universal, rather than religion-specific values.”³

Obama hired Pastor Joshua DuBois to head up his Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Considering their diverse backgrounds, the two seem surprisingly compatible. Notice how Pastor DuBois echoes the words of President Obama,

“Our democracy demands that when people are religiously motivated you have to translate your concerns into universal rather than religion-specific values.”⁴

Apparently, our new president wants us to trade our Biblical values for evolving illusions! He tells us to build our faith on the shifting sands of cultural ideals rather than the immovable rock of God’s Word. We would be fools to follow such devious demands!



This paradigm shift began decades ago! Progressive education and compromising churches have paved the way. Trying to please man rather than God, they willingly embraced the enticing “universals” that rule out His guidelines.

No plan will undermine those “divisive” old truths more effectively than Obama’s system of “service learning.” Through a top-down hierarchy of partnerships – government, churches and community groups – trained facilitators will guide group dialogue at every level of this pyramid until all participants embrace the evolving consensus.

While gathering data on each participant, the leaders of this Washington-based communitarian system will...

“...launch a program to ‘Train the Trainers’ by empowering hundreds of intermediary non-profits and larger faith-based organizations to train thousands of local faith-based and community-based organizations on best practices, grant-making procedures, service delivery and limitations.

The Office will host regular training sessions for selected community training partners. These partners – for example, a statewide Islamic umbrella organization, Catholic Charities office, or Lutheran Services branch, or even a secular nonprofit like Public/Private Ventures – would be supported to travel to Washington and learn how to train local faith-based and community organizations on...remaining in compliance, avoiding proselytizing, understanding hiring rules, and reporting outcomes. These organizations would return

to their communities as certified providers of advice...” [see footnote #1]

Sounds like total government control, doesn’t it? Since our president calls each of us to “serve,” participation could be vast. And with next year’s National Census (2010) controlled by the White House, not Congress, Obama may request whatever private information his plan requires.

Obama’s adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski would probably be pleased. This former National Security Advisor, who founded the Trilateral Commission with David Rockefeller, seems to support Marxist totalitarianism. In his book, *Between Two Ages*, he wrote the following,

“Marxism is simultaneously a victory of the external, active man over the inner, passive man and a victory of reason over belief.”

“Marxism, disseminated on the popular level in the form of Communism, represented a major advance in man’s ability to conceptualize his relationship to his world.”

“The technetronic era involves the gradual appearance of a more controlled society. Such a society would be dominated by an elite, unrestrained by traditional values. Soon it will be possible to assert almost continuous surveillance over every citizen and maintain up-to-date complete files containing even the most important information about the citizen. These files will be subject to instantaneous retrieval by the authorities.” ⁵

“I’ve learned an immense amount from Dr. Brzezinski,” said Obama while campaigning in Clinton, Iowa.

Twisting the First Amendment

On February 5, 2009, President Obama signed an Executive Order amending EO 13199 signed by George W. Bush and establishing the new White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. In Section 1 on Policy, it states,

“The American people are key drivers of fundamental change in our country, and few

institutions are closer to the people than our faith-based and other neighborhood organizations. It is critical that the Federal Government strengthen the ability of such organizations... to deliver services effectively in partnership with Federal, State, and local governments and with other private organizations, while... forbidding the establishment of religion...

...Through rigorous evaluation, and by offering technical assistance, the Federal Government must ensure that organizations receiving Federal funds achieve measurable results in furtherance of valid public purposes.”

Last summer, Obama gave us a specific outline of his planned “partnerships between government and faith-based and other nonprofit community groups.” Much of it was based on the new interpretation of the First Amendment. To our nation’s founders, and to all who came to America seeking religious freedom, it meant the wonderful promise of the “free exercise of religion” and “free speech.”

Since that foundational promise clashed with the socialist vision of solidarity [one of Obama’s “universals”], those words have been reinterpreted. Now they are used to silence Christian expressions in schools, public places and public “partnerships.” Obama’s section on “guiding principles” includes the following,

“Barack Obama believes that our problems require an ‘all hands on deck’ approach... Obama also respects the First Amendment... Obama’s initiative will be governed by a set of core principles for federal grant recipients. In order to receive federal funds to provide social services, faith-based organizations:

- * Cannot use federal funds to proselytize or provide religious sectarian instruction.
- * Must comply with federal anti-discrimination laws...cannot discriminate with respect to hiring...
- * Can only use taxpayer dollars on secular programs and initiatives...”[See footnote #1]]

In other words, participating Christians who long to comfort the needy can no longer share God’s encouraging truths. If their church receives government funds to help pay the cost of food for the poor, they cannot pray with a hurting child or sick mother. Nor can their church refuse to hire leaders whose beliefs and values clash with Biblical values. For example,

“A Baptist agency in Kentucky provides shelter and love to abused and neglected children. But it has also accepted public funds. Since the government regulations tied to federal funding forbid discrimination in hiring practices, the agency has been sued by an openly gay woman who claims she was fired because of her sexual preference.”⁶

When President Obama announced the new Executive Order that established this program, he included this warning. Notice how it defines “faith.”

“As the priorities of this Office are carried out, it will be done in a way that upholds the Constitution...The separation of church and state is a principle President Obama supports firmly – not only because it protects our democracy, but also because it protects the plurality of America’s religious and civic life...

...the change that Americans are looking for will not come from government alone. There is a force for good greater than government. It is an expression of faith, this yearning to give back, this hungering for a purpose larger than our own...”⁷

Apparently those ambiguous feelings represent the kinds of “universals” Obama prefers over God’s unchanging promises. In our troubled times, how many churches will discern the deceptions and resist the temptation to compromise? After all, collective community service sounds good to those who don’t count the cost: free speech and God’s favor!

Global Change

Remember, the First Amendment assures us that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech...” Though intended to protect faithful believers, that assurance has been turned upside down.

No organization has done more to twist that promise into a ban on faith-based expressions than the ACLU. Small wonder, since its founder, Roger Baldwin, despised Christianity. “Communism is the goal,” he wrote in 1935, aligning its ideology with Karl Marx’ war on Biblical Truth.⁸

Hilmar Von Campe, a former Hitler Youth and repentant German soldier, is now spreading the warning of totalitarianism through his book, *Defeating the Totalitarian Lie*.

“The Nazis knew that a commitment to God and His absolute moral standards before government would be a great obstacle to exercising their power based on immorality and contempt for life and other people’s rights...Just as the Nazis did, [the ACLU] strives to cut the connection of the American people to God...

When I point out that Nazi stands for National Socialist and the ACLU has a Communist/Socialist background, it demonstrates the ideological similarities in the two groups.”⁹

Obama’s vision of church-and-state partnerships fits into a global government scheme that extends far beyond any visible service. His offer of federal funding to help the poor is intended to sound compassionate, but that’s a planned delusion. Instead it will speed the implementation of the massive global management system envisioned by previous administrations.

It is all part of the United Nations’ plan for worldwide transformation. Its implementation follows the guidelines of Agenda 21 – a UN treaty ratified by nations around the world. Its strategic steps for America are detailed in its huge manual titled *Sustainable America: A New Consensus*. Here’s just a tiny piece of the enormous puzzle,

“Partnerships and collaborative decision making must be encouraged and must involve all levels of government, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, community groups and the public at large.”

This system has been called The Third Way, Communitarianism, Consensus Democracy, and neo-socialism – and all the labels fit. They all point to a network of global control. Local community groups (the social sector) – partnering with business (the private sector) – are manipulated like puppets on strings by governments (public sector), which pull those strings through financial incentives and global standards.

According to *Sustainable America*, new indicators must be developed to measure,

* **SOCIAL CAPITAL.** Increase in citizen engagement and public trust...

* **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION.** Increase in community participation in such civic activities as professional and service organizations...and volunteer work.

* **COLLABORATIONS.** Increased use of successful civic collaborations such as public-private partnerships, community-based planning, goal-setting projects, and consensus-building efforts.¹¹

The worth of the individuals in the community – **HUMAN CAPITAL** – must be measured as well. Obama’s offer of “technical assistance” will help make sure every detail is included. In the facilitated group setting, a person’s views would be documented, their ideas challenged, their values compromised, and their minds molded to fit group consensus. Those who refuse to conform to the new standards for cooperation and mental health would face the consequences. (See the article titled, *The UN Plan for your Mental Health* at www.crossroad.to).

The standards for 21st Century spirituality [**SPIRITUAL CAPITAL**] are outlined in UNESCO’s 1994 “Declaration on the role of religion in the promotion of a culture of peace.” Notice that it begins by focusing on a crisis (points 1 and 2),



partners are fast connecting links in this huge Communitarian system [Agenda 21], which is designed to force everyone into small dialectic groups where they can learn to “participate” in their community – on internationalist terms. Obama’s plan fits right in.

The Christian Response

Obama’s “faith-based partnerships” are not based on faith in our God! The phrase is designed to deceive Americans, eradicate “offensive” truths, replace Christian ministries with secular service, and silence the gospel among those who most need it. As Hilmar Von Campe warns us, it will instead “cut the connection of the American people to God...”

“We must obey God rather than man,” said the apostle Peter two thousand years ago. Committed Christians cannot yield to rules that would quench our freedom to share God’s Word.

Meanwhile, we must prepare to face the kind of hostility that would have been unthinkable in this “land of the free” six decades ago – even when it seemed normal in totalitarian parts of Europe. The pressure to compromise is spreading fast. How can we resist?

We can learn a lesson from ancient Rome. In his book, *How Should We Then Live?* Francis Schaeffer points to the heart of today’s battle,

“Let us not forget why the Christians were killed. They were not killed because they worshiped Jesus...Nobody cared who worshiped whom so long as the worshiper did not disrupt the unity of the state, centered in the formal worship of Caesar. The reason the Christians were killed was because they were rebels...”

If they had worshiped Jesus and Caesar, they would have gone unharmed, but they rejected all forms of syncretism. They worshiped the God who had revealed himself in the Old Testament, through Christ...And they worshiped him as the only God. They allowed no mixture: All other Gods were seen as false gods...

and in point number 6 it identifies those who have exacerbated the problem.

1. We live in a world in which isolation is no longer possible...
 2. We face a crisis which could bring about the suicide of the human species or bring us a new awakening and a new hope...
 6. Religions have contributed to the peace of the world, but they have also led to division, hatred, and war...
- * “Peace entails that we understand that we are all interdependent...collectively responsible for the common good.”
 - * “We will promote dialogue and harmony between and within religions...”
 - * “We call upon the different religious and cultural traditions to join hands...and to cooperate with us...”¹²

The word “cooperate” points to consensus. To make sure everyone cooperates, the UN and its

No totalitarian authority nor authoritarian state can tolerate those who have an absolute by which to judge that state...Because the Christians had an absolute, universal standard by which to judge not only personal morals but the state, they were counted as enemies of totalitarian Rome and were thrown to the beasts.”¹³

FC

Berit Kjos is the author of *A Twist of Faith* and *Brave New Schools*. Her website, which contains a vast archive of pertinent articles, is www.crossroad.to.

Endnotes:

¹ http://obama.3cdn.net/c2c74198bb57fc007c_e906mvlj.pdf

² http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/29/us/politics/29faith.html?_r=1

³ http://www.barackobama.com/2006/06/28/call_to_renewal_keynote_address.php

⁴ The Megachurch Primaries at http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=52627

⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages: Americas Role in the Techtronic Era*, (Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1982), pp. 72, 83. [I don't have the page number for the third quote, which is mentioned in numerous articles on the Internet.]

⁶ Julia Campbell, "Faithful Giving: Will Bush Plan to Support Faith Charities Work?" www.abcNEWS.com, February 6, 2001.

⁷ www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/ObamaAnnouncesWhiteHouseOfficeofFaith-basedandNeighborhoodPartnerships

⁸ www.stoptheaclu.com/archives/2005/07/12/american-communist-lawyers-union

⁹ Hilmar Von Campe, *Defeating the Totalitarian Lie* (Crane, Missouri: HighWay, 2008), p.3.

¹⁰ *Sustainable America: A New Consensus* (President's Council on Sustainable Development, 1996), p.29.

¹¹ See, *Sustainable America*.

¹² "Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace" at www.crossroad.to/Quotes/globalism/declaration-on-religion.htm

¹³ Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1976), pp.24,26,29.

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Fast Facts on World Change

A World Central Bank and World Currency?

“The only sure way to stabilize the world economy is to create a world central bank and a single reserve currency.” So wrote Hossein Askari, professor of International Business and International Affairs at George Washington University.

Published in the *Asia Times Online* (Feb 6, 2009), Professor Askari proposed a global central bank to oversee the world’s economy. Askari also suggested the creation of a world reserve currency, an economic unit that all nations could peg their currencies to. There was, in the past, such a standard; it was gold, and the professor recognizes this fact in the article. However, tomorrow’s international currency will not likely be gold, but a paper denomination issued from a world-styled Federal Reserve.

Askari recommended that the United Nations should tackle this ambitious project,

“A conference on a world central bank and a single reserve currency should be organized under United Nations sponsorship. Such a conference should set the stage for the creation of a world central bank, and examine all technical and legal issues pertaining to its foundation.”

Professor Askari’s proposal is not surprising. Others, such as the Single Global Currency Association, have

made similar suggestions.

An oversimplified, but not wholly inaccurate way of looking at this situation is to use the human body as an analogy. Under this metaphor, the World Central Bank would be the heart controlling the monetary circulation system, and the United Nations would be the brains behind the organ.

Russia Forming a Regional Force

On February 4, 2009, Russia announced at a Collective Security Treaty Organization summit that it is forming a joint rapid reaction military force “to curb U.S. influence in energy-rich Central Asia.”¹

According to Associated Press writer Vladimir Isachenkov, this new military force will consist of approximately 10,000 personnel from Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.



Russian KA-50 advanced attack helicopter

The announcement of this joint rapid reaction force came the day after Kyrgyzstan officially announced that it would end America's lease on an airbase that supported strike operations in Afghanistan (Note: in 2003 Russia established an air field in Kyrgyzstan). Kyrgyzstan's announcement mirrors Uzbekistan when, in 2005, it evicted US troops from a Uzbek base located near the Afghanistan border. In essence, the ex-Soviet block is re-building an openly, anti-Western stance in the Central Asian zone.

As Isachenkov explained,

"Russia, the U.S. and China have been increasingly vying for influence in the Caspian and Central Asia region, which is believed to contain the world's third-largest energy reserves. The rivalry has been widely compared to the 19th century Great Game for dominance in the region between the British Empire and Czarist Russia."²

Further note: Russia has recently voiced its support for the creation of a common currency for the region, and has endorsed the development of an international reserve currency to replace the US dollar in global trade.

Who Needs Children?

According to *LifeNews*, China aborts approximately 13 million children annually, and about 25% of "women in their 20s have had an abortion." This staggering number, in a nation with a long-time one-child policy and a preference for boy children over girls, reflects a host of social problems in the nation. As noted by *LifeNews*, these problems include a miss-balanced male to female ratio, a shortage of workers, difficulties in finding wives, and a growing sex trade.

LifeNews reports that,

"...a Family Planning Commission survey showing 70 percent of the [Chinese] women questioned want to be allowed to have two or more children...That's no surprise considering the Asian nation has prohibited most residents from having more than one child and are subjected to forced abortions, sterilizations, and other human rights abuses..."³

And in Australia, obstetric professor Barry Walters has publicly stated that a baby tax be levied on mothers. Such a move, he believes, would curb childbirth. Why take this measure? Because of "global warming."



“Every newborn baby in Australia represents a potent source of greenhouse gas emissions for an average of 80 years, not simply by breathing, but by the profligate consumption of resources typical of our society. What then should we do as environmentally responsible medical practitioners? We should point out the consequences to all who fail to see them, including, if necessary, the ministers for health.”⁴

Author Frank Furedi laments the tactics used by population control advocates to pressure society against births. In his critical response to the Dr. Walter’s assertion, Furedi writes,

“Robbing babies of what we perceive to be their endearing innocence makes it easier to scare people off having them. In recent centuries, babies were described as a blessing; now some argue that not having a baby is a blessing, at least for the environment.”⁵

Calls for World Order

Since the start of the new-year a number of international figures have been calling for a “new world order.” Two examples are listed below.

- Mikhail Gorbachev: In an *International Herald Tribune* article titled “A New International Agenda,” Mr. Gorbachev called for a “new vision of global political leadership, a new willingness to work together in this globalized world.”

Gorbachev noted, “we are finally beginning to understand the importance of global governance...This amounts to a new agenda for international politics.”⁶

In the past, the ex-Soviet leader has been a vocal advocate for a United Nations empowered system of world management.⁷ This call for a “new agenda for international politics” resonates with his old mantra of “developing a new civilization” – one based on Earth-centric principles and international socialism.⁸

- Ban Ki Moon: During the World Economic Forum that took place earlier this year, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon urged international leaders to launch a Global Compact, an international agreement/commitment to “create jobs” and fight “climate change.”

Going beyond official treaties, Ban Ki Moon openly called for a new definition of leadership – “a global leadership” to tackle the problems of economic recession and environmental issues.⁹

Sharia Compliant Financing

Now that we’re in the midst of a bona-fide economic crisis that’s spanning the globe, it’s no surprise that an Islamic alternative is rapidly gaining ground with major financial institutions. Enter Sharia Compliant Financing – a system of monetary management that has its roots in Islamic law.

Although the Middle East is struggling due to low petroleum prices, years of debt leveraging and considerable social imbalances (among other issues), the region still contains a substantial level of wealth. Over the last thirty-five years, this wealth base has gained in significance. And with the current global economic shake-up, major banks and financial institutions are looking to the Islamic community as forming the basis of an economic parachute.

Toby Birch, a British investment manager writes that, “Islamic philosophy may offer a beacon of light in the midst of the global credit slump.”¹⁰

But Bridges for Peace, a group that monitors Islamic nationalism and influence, asks a valid question: “At what cost?”¹¹ **FC**

Endnotes:

¹ Vladimir Isachenkov, Associated Press, “Russia hosts ex-Soviet security summit,” February 4, 2009.

² Ibid.

³ “More Than 13 Million Abortions a Year in China, 55 Percent of Women Have One,” *LifeNews.com*, February 18, 2009

⁴ As reported by Frank Furedi, “New King Herods targets babies as potential polluters,” *The Australian*, on-line edition, February 4, 2009.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mikhail Gorbachev, “A New International Agenda,” *International Herald Tribune*, January 1, 2009.

⁷ Mikhail Gorbachev, *On My Country and the World* (Columbia University Press, 2000), p.227.

⁸ See, Mikhail Gorbachev, *The Search for New Beginning: Developing a New Civilization* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995). Other books and reports of his that postulate a new international socialist architecture include, *Manifesto for the Earth* (Clairview, 2006); *Socialism, Peace and Democracy: Writings, Speeches and Reports by Mikhail Gorbachev* (Atlantic Highlands, 1987); *Documents and Materials: Report by Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee* (Soviet Life, n.d). See also *Gorbachev’s Gamble: The 19th All-Union Party Conference* (Westview Press, 1990, edited and introduced by Baruch A. Hazan).

⁹ “WEF told to create global Green New Deal,” *Environmental Data Interactive Exchange*, February 3, 2009 (www.edie.net).

¹⁰ Quoted in “Sharia Compliant Finance: Deal or No Deal,” Bridges for Peace commentary (www.bridgesforpeace.com).

¹¹ Ibid.

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The Shack: A Book Review

By Gary E. Gilley

(author of *This Little Church Went To Market*)

Editor's Note: Books come and go. Some, such as *Pilgrim's Progress*, have impacted numerous generations – causing thousands to ponder the deeper spiritual truths wrapped in allegory. Others volumes rarely see the light of day, being consigned to a forgotten shelf, a warehouse corner, or – in the case of self-publishing – a garage or musty basement.

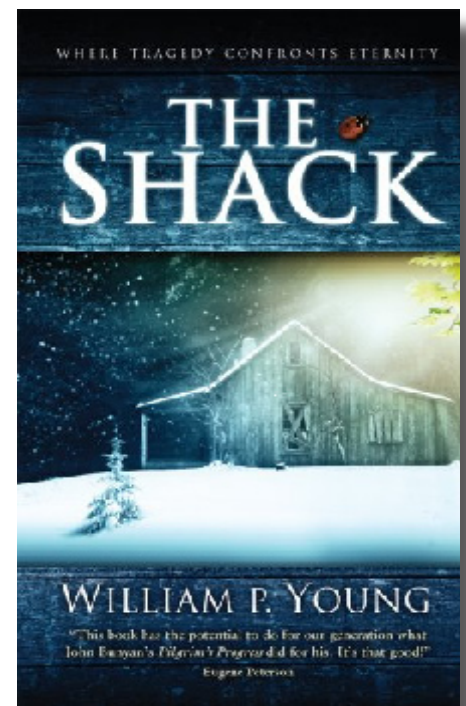
Some books, like *The Shack*, move from obscurity to best-seller status, stirring the thoughts of young and old alike. With so much interest in *The Shack*, I felt it was important to present a review of the book. Hence, I called Gary Gilley to ask permission to reprint his analysis of the popular text.

Mr. Gilley, a pastor and author, has a keen interest in following trends within the Christian community. He has penned a number of book reviews, and approaches the task with a sharp eye regarding truth/error and the social change impact of a particular trend. As editor of *Forcing Change*, I recognize that many FC subscribers may have read *The Shack*, and have strong opinions about the book – both pro and con. I would ask that you seriously consider the analysis Mr. Gilley presents.

One of the most popular and controversial Christian books of recent years is the fictional work by first time author William Young. Evangelical recording artist Michael W. Smith states, “*The Shack* will leave you craving for the presence of God.”

Author Eugene Peterson believes “this book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* did for his. It’s that good!”

On the other hand, seminary president Al Mohler says the book “includes undiluted heresy” and many concur. Given its popularity



(number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list for paperback fiction), influence and mixed reviews, we need to take a careful look.

Good Christian fiction has the ability to get across a message in an indirect, non-threatening yet powerful, way. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the most successful in the genre and has been mightily used of the Lord to teach spiritual truth. What determines the value of fiction is how closely it adheres to Scripture. It is by these criteria that we must measure *The Shack*.

As a novel, while well written, its storyline is not one that would attract many people. The plot is developed around the abduction and murder of six year old Missy, beloved daughter of nominal Christian Mackenzie Philips (Mack). This great tragedy has, of course, shaped the lives of Mack and his family in horrific ways. Mack's life is simply described as living under "The Great Sadness." Then one day, four years later, God drops Mack a note in his mailbox and invites him to the isolated shack where Missy was murdered. Obviously skeptical, Mack takes a chance that God might really show up and heads alone to the shack. There God, in the form of all three members of the Trinity, meets with him for the weekend. God gives Mack new insight about Himself, about life and about pain and tragedy, and Mack goes home a new man.

It should be mentioned that the Trinity takes human form in the novel: the Father (called Papa throughout) appears as a large African-American woman who loves to cook; the Holy Spirit is called Sarayu (Sanskrit for air or wind) and is a small Asian woman who is translucent; and Jesus is a middle-age man, presumably of Jewish descent, who is a carpenter. Much interesting dialog takes place as members of the Trinity take turns explaining to Mack what they want him to know.

The Shack, like many books today, decries theology on the one hand while offering its own brand on the other. A story has the advantage of putting forth doctrine in a livelier manner than a systematic work can do, which is why we find most of Scripture in narrative form. The question is, does Young's theology agree with God's as re-

vealed in Scripture? The short answer is "sometimes," but often Young totally misses the mark.

Scripture and the Church

Young's message centers on the Trinity and salvation, but before we tackle Young's main objective, it is significant that he has a couple of axes to grind concerning the Bible and the church. Young passionately rejects the cessationist view of Scripture, which his character Mack was taught in seminary,

"In seminary he had been taught that God had completely stopped any overt communication with moderns, preferring to have them only listen to and follow sacred Scripture, properly interpreted, of course. God's voice had been reduced to paper, and even that paper had to be moderated and deciphered by the proper authorities and intellects...Nobody wanted God in a box, just in a book." (pp.65-66)

Young would prefer a God who communicates with us in our thoughts rather than on paper (i.e. the Bible, p.195). Realizing the subjectivity of such revelation he assures us that we will "begin to better recognize [the Holy Spirit's] voice as we continue to grow our relationship" (p.196). Scripture comes in second to inner voices in Young's theology. Scripture puts God in a box; inner voices make God alive and fresh. This is what Young wants to convey.

Young also has little good to say about the church or other related institutions. While Mack had attended seminary, "none of his training was helping in the least" (p.91) when it came to understanding God. He consistently depicts the activity of the church in a negative light: Mack is pretty sure he hasn't met the church Jesus loves (p.177), which is all about relationships – "not a bunch of exhausting work and long list of demands, and not sitting in endless meetings staring at the backs of people's heads, people he really didn't even know" (p.178).

Sunday school (p.98) and family devotions (p.107) both take hits as well. Systematic theology

itself takes a postmodern broadside as the Holy Spirit says, “I have a great fondness for uncertainty” (p.203). While Scripture does not place such words in the mouth of the Holy Spirit, Young’s love for uncertainty becomes frustratingly clear as he outlines his concept of salvation.

Salvation

When Mack asks how he can be part of the church, Jesus replies, “It’s simple Mack, it’s all about relationships and simply sharing life” (p.178).

On an earlier occasion Jesus tells Mack that he can get out of his mess “...by re-turning. By turning back to me. By giving up your ways of power and manipulation and just come back to me” (p.147).

Yet nowhere in *The Shack* is the reader given a clear understanding of the gospel. When Mack asks what Jesus accomplished by dying he is told, “Through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world.”

When pressed to explain, God says that He is reconciled to “the whole world,” not just the believer (p.192).

Does this mean that all will be saved? Young never goes that far, however he certainly gives that impression when Mack’s father (who was an awful man and showed no signs of being saved) is found in heaven (pp.214-215), when God says repeatedly He is particularly fond of all people, when God claims that He has forgiven all sins against Him (e.g. 118-119), that He does not “do humiliation, or guilt, or condemnation” (p.223) and, contrary to large parts of Scripture, God is not a God of judgment.

“I don’t need to punish people for sin, sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it; it’s my job to cure it” (p.120).

While Young’s comment has some validity, it does not faithfully reflect the teaching of Scripture, which portray God as actively involved in

the punishment of sin.

Young further muddies the waters as he has Jesus reply to Mack’s question, “Is that what it means to be a Christian?” Jesus says,

“Who said anything about being a Christian? I’m not a Christian...Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrat, Republicans and many who don’t vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions...I have no desire to make them Christians, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, into my beloved.”

With Mack we are confused. “Does that mean,” asks Mack, “that all roads will lead to you?”

Jesus denies this but then says, “What it does mean is that I will travel any road to find you” (p.182). Jesus apparently means that He will travel any road to “join them in their transformation.” The implication is that people are on many roads that lead to their self-transformation. Jesus will join people where they are on that road and apparently aid in that transformation. This is certainly not the teaching of Scripture, which tells us that we must come to the one road – the narrow way that leads to God through Jesus Christ.

The Godhead

The main thrust of the novel concerns itself with an understanding of God and how we are to be in relationship to Him. As already noted, the method by which mankind comes into the right relationship with God is cloudy at best in *The Shack*. Young’s Trinity is equally confusing. The author does not develop his understanding of God exclusively from Scripture and, in fact, often contradicts biblical teaching. The first issue is that of imagining and presenting human forms for the members of the Trinity.

While some slack might be given for Young’s portrait of Jesus, who came in human form (although we don’t know what He looks like), the

first two of the Ten Commandments would forbid us depicting the Father or the Holy Spirit in physical form. When we create an image of God in our imagination we then attempt to relate to that image – which is inevitably a false one. This is the essence of idolatry and is forbidden in the Word.

Further, the portrayal of God throughout the novel is one which humanizes Him rather than exalts Him. Young quotes Jacques Ellul,

“No matter what God’s power may be, the first aspect of God is never that of absolute Master, the Almighty. It is that of the God who puts Himself on our human level and limits Himself” (p.88).

Really? This quote is in contradiction to the entirety of biblical revelation which first and often declares God to be absolute Master, yet in no way mitigates the incarnation, as Young and Ellul are trying to claim.

Young further humanizes God and contradicts Scripture by teaching that all the members of the Trinity took human form at the incarnation: “When we three spoke ourself into human existence as the Son of God, we became fully human” (p.99).

Is Young advocating modalism, an ancient heresy which teaches that the Trinity is not composed of three distinct members but three distinct modes in which God appears throughout human history? If not, it is abundantly clear that Young believes that the Father died on the cross with the Son and bears the marks of the cross to this day (pp.95-95, 164). He does not believe that the Father abandoned Jesus on the cross as Scripture declares (p.96). And any concept of authority and submission in the Godhead is denied (pp.122, 145), although 1 Cor. 11:1-3 is clear that such authority/submission exists. More than that, God submits to us as well (p.145). By the end of the book God is reduced to being our servant as we are His – it’s all about relationships, not authority (pp.236-237).

The very essence of God is challenged when Young, quoting from Unitarian-Universalist, Buckminster Fuller, declares God to be a verb not a noun (pp.194, 204). In a related statement,

Young has Jesus say of the Holy Spirit, “She is Creativity; she is Action; she is Breathing of Life” (p.110).

Yet the Bible presents God as a person (noun) not an action (verb). When this truth is denied we are moving from the biblical understanding of a personal God to an Eastern understanding of God in everything. Thus, we are not surprised when Mack asks the Holy Spirit if he will see her again he is told,

“Of course, you might see me in a piece of art, or music, or silence, or through people, or in creation, or in your joy and sorrow” (p.198).

This is not biblical teaching. This idea seems repeated in a line from a song Missy creates; “Come kiss me wind and take my breath till you and I are one” (p.233).

At what point do we become one with creation? Again, this is an Eastern concept, not a biblical one. Young reinforces his Eastern leanings with a statement right out of New Age teachings: Papa tells Mack, “Just say it out loud. There is power in what my children declare” (p.227).

Ronda Byrne would echo this idea in her book, *The Secret*, but you will not find it in the Bible. Further, we are told Jesus “as a human being, had no power within himself to heal anyone” (p.100). So how did he do so? By trusting in the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Spirit says, “is just the first to do it to the uttermost – the first to absolutely trust my life within him...” (p.100).

There is enough truth here to be confusing but not accurate. Jesus, never ceasing to be fully God, had all Divine power dwelling within Him. That He chose to limit His use of that power and rely on the Holy Spirit while on earth in no way diminishes His essence. While Jesus is our example He is not a guru blazing a trail in which in this life we too can be like God. This idea smacks of New Age teaching, not Scripture.

Jesus even tells Mack that, “God, who is the ground of all being, dwells in, around, and through all things – ultimately emerging as the real” (p.112). This is pure New Age spirituality.

The Shack, while occasionally getting things right is, in the end, a dangerous piece of fiction. It undermines Scripture and the church, presents at best a mutilated gospel, misrepresents the biblical teachings concerning the Godhead and offers a New Age understanding of God and the universe. This is not a great novel to explain tragedy and pain: It is a misleading work that will confuse many and lead others astray. **FC**

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Endnotes:

¹ God IN everything is known as panentheism – an Eastern belief akin to pantheism that teaches that God IS everything. In reality there is very little difference between the two.

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