

Who will save your soul? In search of a humane God

BY MICHAEL BROCK

I
Serving Two Masters
“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other...”

At the end of last summer I went to a celebration of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, with a friend of mine. My background is Irish Catholic, but everyone was cordial and welcomed me to the celebration. While watching the Tiger game I got into a brief discussion of religion with one of the guests and I told him I didn't believe in human gods.

He laughed and said, “Maybe you'll become Jewish.”

I said, “There are worse things to be, but I have too much faith in God to believe in religion.”

He laughed again, but that is really how I feel. As much as I am convinced there is a God, I see why others don't believe. Most non-believers' arguments don't have as much to do with God as they do with religious trappings: All religions ask you to believe things that you know are scientifically impossible. They tell you in subtle or not so subtle ways that you are better than other people, and that those who believe otherwise are wrong or misguided, or perhaps fundamentally evil.

Religion is based in culture and most people believe what they believe because that is their culture; it's what they were born into. Hence, historically, while religion has tried to teach its adherents to behave morally toward those of its own persuasion, it has been the rationale for mistreating those who don't believe as we do, or who worship differently. These differences have even served as a justification for genocide, especially in the 20th century.

Ethnocentrism, the belief in the superiority of one's culture and beliefs, probably predates civilization. The need to band together against the elements, wild animals and hostile tribes, and for the individuals to sacrifice their own immediate needs for the needs of the group requires the belief that those needs are somehow superior to one's own needs and that it is right and just to make sacrifices for the good of the group. One rationale for making that sacrifice is patriotism, and religion has often been married to patriotism, as evidenced by the phrase, “God and country.” The notion that God sanctions the killing of those who have a different language or culture, even though they may share the same God and fundamental beliefs, has persisted throughout history, and is as prevalent today as it ever was.

Nor is this a belief and attitude that is confined to wartime. A few years back I read an authorized biography of the Beatles in which they confirmed that they had stopped touring because of multiple death threats made from America's “Bible Belt” after John Lennon's comments that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. In fact, as William F. Buckley pointed out at the time, local gods have always been more popular than the Universal God, so it was probably the case that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus, and no one should be surprised by that. But the reason for the death threats against the Beatles was the threat some Christians felt to themselves and their world view by someone as transient as a pop star saying in essence that he was more important than the person they believe is a human incarnation of God. Moreover, any truth to the statement aside, and regardless of the tenor of the times, for one to be audacious enough to

claim that the message of “sex, drugs and rock and roll” in a benign anarchy was more important than Jesus' Message of universal, altruistic love, non-violent mercy and forgiveness, and self-control, seemed to many unforgivable, and deserving the ultimate punishment of violent retaliation.

Despite the seeming contradiction of that position, the reaction resonates for the same reasons that others have reacted violently to perceived or real insults to religious leaders. Such attacks or insults represent a threat to the underlying presumptions of an entire culture or people about the meaning of life and one's existence on the planet. For all the hard evidence we have about the makeup of the atmosphere of Jupiter, or what happens when you split a uranium atom, or power aircraft by controlled burning of carbon fuels, nobody really knows why we exist, what the ultimate meaning of life is, or what happens when we die. The best we have are someone's opinions. It is the unknowability of absolute truth and the importance of the questions religious leaders answer that give those opinions such great weight. We need to feel that we matter, whether individually, or as extension of our culture—we need certainty about the uncertain.

Isn't this ultimately why we are willing to argue in favor of something we know can't be true? To believe that the world was created in six days? That a human can be divine? That God will listen to the pleading of humans and subvert the laws of physics to alter the course of human history? And isn't this why we offer these alleged “miracles” as proof of what might be true, but for which there is no irrefutable proof: that there is a Master of the Universe and that this Master is aware of and cares about my race and myself as an individual, small as I am in the vast, unexplained and unknowable expanse of space?

However, by explaining God and the Universe in a way that favors myself and my group, I have also succeeded in placing others in a less favorable position, not only in my eyes, but in the eyes of the Ultimate Authority. And by despiritualizing others, I have committed perhaps the most common and the most grievous of all human sins, I have given God my attributes and my preferences, and rationalized my dehumanizing of other humans, and indeed all other life forms because of my perception that I am God's favorite and that others are less favored. Therefore, they are less worthy of what I have or want, perhaps even less worthy of existence than me or those like me.

In the studies of what traits distinguish a murderer, researchers consistently find that murderers have the ability to objectify others, and see them as less than human. For whatever inherent or cultural reasons, some humans have an easier time dehumanizing others than most of us. The great irony is that this person, when given the rationale of religious superiority, is capable of atrocities they would not think of without it. And while religion may make most of us more moral and less self-centered than we would be without it, this particular personality now has a free pass to indulge whatever antisocial impulses they may have because it is what God expects—even demands—of him.

A relationship with God, particularly the relationship talked about by mystics—those who believe in a direct person relationship with and experience of the infinite, like Jesus, Gandhi, Buber and Hafiz—is something that is quite different, and in many ways

diametrically opposed to this ethnocentric and political view of God, and something much more universal. For them, what one believes, or whether one strictly follows the “rules,” is not as important as a growing experience of, and relationship with a God that cannot be manipulated or used for one's own purposes. He/She/It must be approached in humble prayer and/or meditation; and will then leads us through subtle pressure down a strange and unforeseeable path to serve Its will through surrender of our will and ego to a Higher Purpose.

The mystic is characterized by a disinterest in immutable absolutes of behavior, hard and fast rules, however good, are perceived as guidelines that may define the boundaries of a relationship, but can never address all aspects of the subtle course of life or interaction with others. There is an understanding that one who feels they own the truth is perhaps the one who is furthest from a relationship with God; that the universe is in constant motion and no hard and fast rules can apply to all situations.

Love is the common theme that runs through all mystical writings; love of God first of all, then by extension love for our fellow humans and, ultimately, all of God's creation. Moreover, love is not a feeling, love is service and sacrifice of pride, ego and selfishness. “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” Jesus is quoted in Matthew², and, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” Gandhi saw the psychological advantage in doing this. By treating his enemies, the representatives of the occupying British Empire, with respect and dignity he ultimately shamed them into leaving India to work out its own issues without resorting to violent rebellion. There were exceptions to be sure, but it was a comparatively peaceful transition to self-rule.³

Persian Sufi poet Hafiz has a poem in which a he is asked in a hypothetical conversation about the truth of his guest's visions, and whether they are from God. He answers the guest, “You asked me if I thought your visions were true. I would say that they were if they make you become more human, more kind to every creature and plant that you know.”

Love and kindness are the recurrent themes of the mystics of all faiths and all ages. It is their passion and their obsession, and goes far beyond concerns about the rules or the minimum requirements. The question they ask is, “How can I give more?” “How can I be a better servant?” “How can I surrender more of myself, and in so doing, merge with God, who is both the source and recipient of all love?” It was this question Francis of Assisi addressed when he wrote: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.”

And, as Hafiz states the same concept somewhat differently: “Admit something: Everyone you see, you say to them, ‘Love me’...Why not become the one who lives with a full moon in each eye that is always saying, with that sweet moon language, what every other eye in this world is

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THE EXPERT WITNESS

Allegorical economics: Storytelling with mathematical allegories (part two)

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“Wise men talk because they have something to say, fools because they have to say something. Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.”

—Plato, ancient Greek philosopher

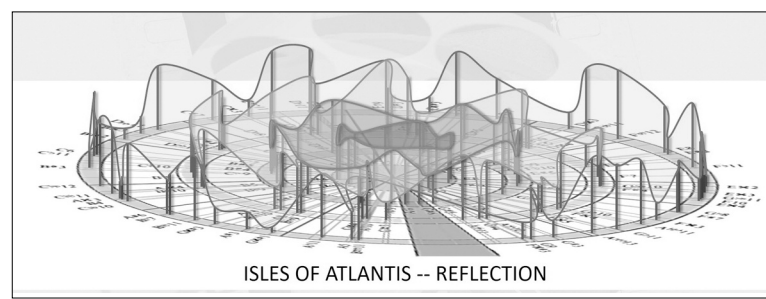
Last month, we began to explore Allegorical Economics by delving into the source of all economic understanding—ourselves as human storytellers. Economists and Attorneys tell stories in both the classroom and the courtroom. Attorneys need to condense client backgrounds and their respective cases in order to evoke understanding and empathy from jurors. This month, we address the issue of using numbers in the stories that we tell in the courtroom and the classroom.

Having taught more than 10,000 students of Economics and Business, I (Dr. Sase) have learned to keep math-laden examples as simple as possible without losing the meaning and intent of the underlying economic story. I accomplish this by using “easy” numbers. For example, instead of using a number such as \$357.84, I have found that the rounded value of \$360 appears more comprehensible for students, especially when the story contains numbers and calculations throughout the tale. I find that limiting the math (when appropriate) to elementary addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division tends to provide both understanding and a universal appeal. However, the simplicity in the calculations, as well as the numbers themselves, are not enough. The interrelation of the values provides the necessary ingredient for following the mathematical progression in a story.

Plato understood this concept of simplicity and clarity well. He developed allegories by using the mathematics that his predecessor Pythagoras brought to Greece. As a young man, Pythagoras traveled from his home on the Aegean island of Samos to Giza, Egypt, where he devoted two decades of his life to being an initiate at the Temple School at Giza. Following the Babylonian invasion of Egypt and the burning of the school, Pythagoras, fellow initiates, and teachers were captured and taken to Babylon. During their years of captivity, they assimilated knowledge from Babylonia as well as from more ancient civilizations. Finally, Pythagoras returned home to the Isle of Samos at the age of 56. He devoted the remainder of his life to teaching in the Mediterranean region and to apply his knowledge of mathematics to the fields of Art, Music, and the Sciences. One still can observe the influence of his mathematical methods throughout these fields, where we find a basis in the sums, products, and dividends of the powers of “2” and “3.” Before we begin our tutorial example, we will consider the methods of Pythagoras in greater detail.

Within the century after the death of Pythagoras, the mathematical relationships that he introduced found their way into the allegories composed by Plato, especially those concerning the cities of Atlantis, Athens, and Magnesia. These stories continue to resonate with economists, musicians, and others in modern times.

Contrary to popular belief, the elaborate descriptions of the structure of and behavior in Atlantis were created by Plato as an allegorical tale rather than a factual one. He appears to use the Atlantean story in order to present a cosmology based upon the interrelationship of numbers. Plato's other allegories about the ancient Greek cities of Athens and Magnesia support this current view. The real cities of his time bore little resemblance to those in his stories, which use the locales and basic details of these cities as a



springboard into mathematically-based morality tales.

Four centuries later, John the Theologian constructed a similar allegory while living on the Aegean Isle of Patmos, which is twenty-one miles from Pythagoras's birthplace of Samos. This writing of John has emerged as the text known throughout Christianity as the Book of Revelations. In his writing that has with colorful apocalyptic images embedded, the text contains many of the same numerical constructs and relationships used by Plato, based upon the work of Pythagoras.

The ancient tools of Pythagoras have been brought forward in western civilization through other writings of the past two millennia. In our following tutorial, we explore the application of these tools to develop a tale about the growth of financial assets through interest rates and inflation rates. Here, Economics interfaces with Law.

Our simple example contains four essential elements: the locations, the players, the storyline, and the number palette. Some aspects of our story come from “old wisdom” that I learned from my grandfather along the shore of Tawas Bay as well as from other interesting childhood experiences. Other aspects emerge from various writers whom I respect and who have influenced me. As we begin our tutorial, let us identify these essentials in further detail.

The Locations

For our tale, we borrow two locations from Zothique, a series of short stories by the American writer Clark Ashton published in *Weird Tales* magazine in the 1930s. In 1970, Ballantine Books published these stories in a paperback edition edited by Lin Carter. This work collects all sixteen tales of the Zothique cycle as well as a related poem by the author. Smith sets his stories on Zothique, the last continent on Earth, in a far-distant future. His locations include this continent along with the mysterious Isle of Na'at that exists in the sea beyond. These locales provide the necessary basis for the circular-story progression known as “The Hero's Journey.” (We discussed this concept, which was made popular by American mythologist Joseph Campbell, in last month's column.) In this month's column, we use Smith's locales to describe a journey that takes a fishing boat and a crew of 24 on a challenging odyssey from the known land of Zothique to the unknown Isle of Na'at and back home again. I have used this article as an homage to Smith to create my tale. Some of the details herein also are taken from my song “Zothique” that I wrote between undergrad and grad school.

The Players

The crew from Zothique is an egalitarian group with subgroups identified by the special tasks that they perform. For example, a traditional fishing boat that can hold a crew of 24 along with their prospective catch may include twelve interchangeable rowers as well as two crewpersons on the steering board at the stern. Also, some of the crew members ply their navigational skills at various moments of the voyage. For example, one guides the boat out-

ward to the best fishing “grounds.” Later, the one-at-the-head (the head being the large timber that extends upward at the bow from the stem that rises from the keel) stands and guides the vessel, crew, and catch safely back to shore.

In the land of Zothique, we encounter a group of six wise women who pass along a “special gift” of 360 Magifish to the crew through a chosen steward. These powerful, magical fish appear as the “McGuffin.” Film director Alfred Hitchcock used this term to describe something of value that everyone wants to get. The Magifish McGuffin forms the basis for our economic calculations.

On the Isle of Na'at, the crew encounters groups of Na'atians attired in long dark robes. Some of the Na'atians share vast learning and knowledge; however, others have a darker side. They are necromancers who raise the corpses of sailors who have drowned after crashing upon the rocks. Restored to a semi-life, these zombies must do the bidding of the necromancers.

The Storyline

Our economic storyline focuses on the Magifish that propagate at a rate of 7% annually. As these fish age, their value diminishes at a rate of 4% per annum. Our story spans 60 years in this exercise of nominal and real interest rates compounded “simply” each year. When the crew returns home from their odyssey, the steward will divide the cache of Magifish that had been left behind in the care of the aquarist, a professional caretaker of fish. The steward will make this distribution of Magifish through a pre-determined formula.

The Number Palette

The core set of Pythagorean numbers used in many allegories of the past 2,500 years include the values of “2” taken to the zero through the ninth power and “3” taken to the zero through sixth powers. The ratios of the powers of “2” to the power of “3,” along with their sums, differences, and products, form the basic building blocks for these economic stories. With a heightened intuition, the resulting values allow the audience to follow the progression of simple interrelated numbers.

In the following example, we use these values:

“4” (“2” squared);
“6” (“2” times “3”);
“7” (“2” squared plus “3”);
“12” (“2” squared times “3”);
“15” (the sum of “2” plus “3,” times “3”);
“24” (“2” cubed times “3”);
“25” (the sum of “2” plus “3” times itself);
“36” (“2” squared times “3” squared);
“45” (the sum of “2” plus “3,” times “3” squared);
“60” (“2” times “3” times “2” times the sum of “2” and “3”);
“108” (“3” times “36”);
“72” (“2” cubed times “3” squared);
and “144” (“24” times “2” squared).

Also, “10” (“2” times the sum of “2” and “3”) to the first, second, and third powers are used as multipliers to take values to the

hundreds and thousands.

A Fisher's Tale: Similarities to Any Fish, Living or Dead, Is Purely Coincidental

In this section, let us use the six wise women from Zothique as examples. These women own a 25% interest in a fishing boat, secured by 360 Magifish. Before leaving for an unknown place, these wise women transfer their school of Magifish to the crew of the boat with explicit instructions on how to care for them. The wise women place these valued fish in the care of the one-at-the-head, whom they have chosen to serve as the steward.

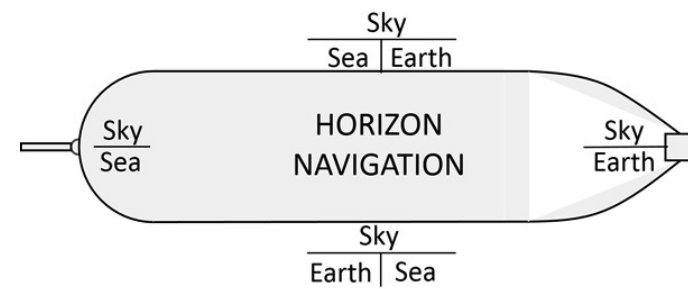
Magifish breed once per annum. However, most of these fish live longer than a human lifetime. On average, the fish propagate at a rate of 7% per year. The one-at-the-head contemplates the task at hand and asks, “If I spend my day babysitting a school of Magifish, what does that make me at the end of the day?” In response to this concern, the wise women find an aquarist and entrust the feeding and breeding of the fish to him or her. This decision frees the one-at-the-head and the rest of the crew to set out on their long odyssey.

The crew sets the sails of its crimson craft in order to brave the dark waters that surround the mystical Isle of Na'at. The crewpersons feel the necessity to embark on this mission covertly and quickly because many in the land of Zothique misunderstood the crew due to their involvement in the matter of the Magifish. Some members of the crew were berated and even beaten for their thoughts about the matter, which they held as good. As the crew heads outward to sea, they find themselves engulfed by an inexplicable storm, which is swirling with weird energy and strange lights. The terror of this storm puts them at risk of running aground on what they believe is the mythical Na'at, a belief that comes from their spotting of the legendary natives dressed in long dark robes. The navigators of the fishing boat manage to bring the crew to safety on shore. However, other vessels have smashed upon the rocks. The dead bodies of their crews have washed ashore, and the necromancers turned into zombies.

Upon the Isle, our crewpersons remain alive outside of the bounds of space and time through the darkness of the long night. Upon this island retreat, they “inherit” good powers from the dawn of life through the source of all creation. The crewpersons develop higher levels of awareness and wisdom than they could have achieved in Zothique through delving further into the caverns of their subconscious. The crew proceeds to gather the intellectual and emotional means that will allow them to avoid the confusion that they expect to find among the various collective schemes in Zothique when, or if, they return home.

Space and time re-emerge as the morning breaks. The Na'atians signal the crew that the hour has come for them to return to the land of Zothique, laden with the knowledge that they begot on their journey outside of time and space. The power that envelops them speaks softly as their new life-purpose resounds within. As boat and crew return from Na'at, the navigators bring the vessel past the shoals and rocky cliffs that separate the sea from the earth along the sky/sea/earth horizon. The one-at-the-head focuses on the sky/earth horizon along the shore to guide the boat to solid ground. The crew members reenter Zothique but hear not a sound. Some people of Zothique gathered on shore gaze at the crewpersons in silence. Though the members of the crew feel the same as they did when they departed the day before, they soon discover that sixty years of “real” time have passed in their homeland.

This long passage of time and (See SASE, page 3)



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BROCK: Who will save your soul? In search of a humane God

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teachings were those of Jesus. And though he ultimately decided to remain a Hindu, it was more likely for cultural reasons rather than spiritual.

Indeed, Gandhi hated many aspects of Hindu teachings, especially the caste system; and though he loved the Bhagavad Gita, he did not teach war as a spiritual undertaking—far from it. He believed that peace was the spiritual path. His take away from the Gita was that when one is certain of God’s will in a situation, he needed to follow God’s will without concern for the outcome.

He was not, however, arrogant enough to think he had a lock on the truth, and when he was convinced by Nehru that there would be a rebellion that no one would control among Hindus if Gandhi allowed Jinnah to form the first government of a free India, he capitulated. Ultimately, it was a Hindu who felt he had given away too much power to the Muslims that assassinated him, but not before he was heartbroken to see India divided along religious lines, spawning a conflict that has continued with varying degrees of intensity until this day. That Gandhi felt access to God was something that no person had control over was apparent in his respect for adherents of all religions and is well documented in his book of autobiographical writings called, “All Men Are Brothers.”

That disputes such as those noted above could be disruptive to political harmony was undoubtedly more apparent to people of earlier times and other places than it is to Americans of today, who have a secular government and who agree to disagree about religion. In most places in the world and for most of human history, religion and politics have been closely linked, and war over religious issues has been a constant up until today. So, when Constantine convened a counsel in 325 to standardize Christian worship, it was not entirely for his own personal religious reasons. He was riding the tide, as was Clovis when he unified France under the Christian banner around 500 CE.

Both leaders unquestionably saw one religion as beneficial to their political purposes. It seems not only possible, but extremely likely that Constantine had some influence over the bishops in attendances at the Counsel of Nicaea regarding which tenants of the faith became the standard. It is also worth remembering that when Romans wanted to shore up their power, it was not uncommon to have themselves deified. Constantine did not attempt to do this, and it is not clear that he put pressure upon the bishops at Nicaea to find that Jesus was divine, but it way all religious leaders take the ultimate power out of God’s hands and place it in their own. They are able to define the Undefined and to control Its actions at least in so far as they believe this is possible to be done by anyone. And while kings, presidents and dictators hold the lives of thousands (and today even the total population of the earth—over seven billion people) in their hands, religious leaders purport to hold eternity in theirs.

Despite the evolution of a separation of church and state in the West, there has been a movement back toward political control by religious leaders in some areas of the world. Examples of this can be seen in the division of India into Hindu and Muslim states, a government controlled by Shia clerics in Iran, the definition of Israel as a Jewish State, and the rise of ISIS (or ISIL) in the Middle East. Some of those who would like to have political activity dictated by religious leaders tend to go about it in a humane way and others less so, but the goal is ultimately to give ascendancy to religious values and to relegate democratic principles of freedom and equal treatment under the law to a subordinate position.

Inevitably, a government in which religion has a say, or the ultimate say, in political matters imposes its values on a population which is not all in agreement with those values. And it may also be that the government has a right to impose certain values on a population that are in contradiction with the teaching of a particular faith. Some religions believe in allowing a man more than one wife, while others reject modern medicine. Even many mainstream Christian sects teach that counseling is unnecessary if one

been successfully challenged by Luther, Henry VIII of England was able to use the precedent in 1534 to successfully (after some back and forth) establish an independent Church of England, that changed little of Catholic theology, but which made the King (and subsequently the Queen) of England also the spiritual head of the church. The intent and effect was clearly to diminish the political power of Rome. The Pope fought back by excommunicating protestant Queen Elizabeth in 1570, clearly hoping to incite rebellion among the Catholics in the population, but this effort ultimately failed.¹⁷

The notion that religion is an affair between each human and his God is gaining increasing acceptance in the West. There is the rise of the New Age movement, and ecumenical movements that deny the existence of a central authority. Perhaps it is as George Bernard Shaw states in his introduction to the play, “St. Joan,” that a true protestant is one who invents his or her own religion. In his exposition of this topic, however, what Shaw defines as “true Protestantism,” is Joan’s personal relationship and interaction with God. She talks to God, and God talks back; which might be more accurately defined as mysticism.

Luther’s statements about the priesthood of all believers notwithstanding, Protestants look as much to their clergy for leadership and interpretation of spiritual texts as Catholics, and the same can be accurately said of any organized religion. Any theology is ultimately a political statement of corporately held beliefs and agreed upon rules for personal and social interaction. However successful a sect is in separating itself from its parent religion, it ultimately winds up establishing its own rules and ecclesiastical hierarchy, which like any rules devoid of spirit tend to stifle more than inspire, and to leave the individual participants to discover on their own who God is, and what is their ultimate relationship to the universe and their place in it.

IV

The Keys to the Kingdom Are Power

Every monotheistic religion begins by telling us that God is infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal. But each faith then proceeds to tell us that only their religious leaders understand who God is and how He/She/It works, and that only by following their instructions can anyone hope to achieve the glory of the afterlife. Those who believe otherwise are thrown into the fiery pit for all eternity (or doomed to return to earth as a lower form of life or in worse circumstances), and in this way all religious leaders take the ultimate power out of God’s hands and place it in their own. They are able to define the Undefined and to control Its actions at least in so far as they believe this is possible to be done by anyone. And while kings, presidents and dictators hold the lives of thousands (and today even the total population of the earth—over seven billion people) in their hands, religious leaders purport to hold eternity in theirs.

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truly has faith in God, and some more fundamentalist teachers hold that a spiritually based solution for addiction treatment that is not focused on Jesus is ultimately a cult. (Paradoxically, one former Harvard professor of psychology maintains that AA is a Christian fundamentalist sect.)

Where the mix between religion and politics really becomes dicey is in the decision about what constitutes a human life and who, if anyone, has the authority to take human life. Humans may find themselves on one side of the religion/secular divide on one issue, but on the other side on another issue. Barack Obama, for example, is a practicing Christian who believes, “Though Shalt Not Kill,” but who authorized drone strikes against America’s enemies, and has come down on the side of a woman’s right to terminate a pregnancy for any reason. Someone may be for abortion, but against the death penalty, or vice versa. Or one may espouse strong Christian values, but be in favor of a strong military, and military intervention in the affairs of other states when it suits his country’s purposes. The Koran clearly states, “Don’t kill yourselves (4:29),” but suicide bombing has become an accepted tool of warfare among Muslim extremists.

There is an admonition against killing those of your own kind in most religions, but not all hold the lives of those from other cultures in as high esteem. The Jewish Bible maintains that God told the Jews to kill all of the Canaanites¹⁸, and even their animals. As a practical matter, there are few “conscientious objectors” among adherents to any religion, though there are some who refuse to fight in wars and have paid a high price. Gandhi thought that even Hitler could have been defeated by non-violent resistance, but there are not many who agree. However, it must be noted that Gandhi himself, (and also undoubtedly his family) suffered greatly because of his nonviolent resistance of the British occupation and India’s involvement in WWII, including doing significant amounts of time in prison and under house arrest.

When I was a child I recall that my mother, who had a lifelong interest in politics, liked to say that you can’t legislate morality. But of course, all law is legislated morality, and the most fundamental purpose of government is to maintain order and relative safety of its citizens. I think what she was trying to say is that you can’t legislate a moral society.

That is probably true, and most people in a free society would agree that positive incentives to behave in a legal/moral manner are better than negative reinforcement, but no matter how well a socioeconomic system of government provides for the needs of its citizens (or, some would say, because of it), there are always going to be some who disregard the needs of others to the extent that the government will have to impose laws and penalties on those who do so.

The reality is that some situations are rather murky regarding what people’s inherent rights are and what should be done to protect them. If it were not so, there would not be a need for continuing legislation, and a system of appellate courts to make sure society got it right. Even with a system of appellate courts, societies don’t always get it right. It could be argued that faith holds us to a higher standard of morality than law. Consider the following from the Tao Te Ching (38):

“...Failing Tao, man resorts to Virtue.

“Failing Virtue, man resorts to humanity.

“Failing humanity, man resorts to morality.

“Failing morality, man resorts to ceremony.

“Now, ceremony is the merest husk of faith and loyalty;

“It is the beginning of all confusion and disorder...”

But there are certainly cases where the law offers more protection than religion. There is an inevitable tension between the two, but there are very few absolutes in life, and as individuals as well as societies, we are either evolving or devolving. The goal of the spiritual person is to be constantly in the process of evolving, and, hopefully, to evolve to the point where our desire and our goal is to have a close enough relationship with God that we would not be brought into conflict with either law or religion. If we are evolving and growing, howev-

er, we will inevitably reach a point where we see that some of the tenants of a particular faith serve more political than spiritual needs. The failure to see that the political or economic interests, of a particular faith may actually put us in conflict with God, suggests that we are not really growing in our own relationship with the Absolute.

An example of this are the recent scandals regarding sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. Surely they are not the only ones to ever abuse the high level of trust they enjoy from their followers, but their situation is unique in two ways: first, they are one of the few major denominations in world, and the only Christian clergy, who are forbidden to marry. The origins of this requirement were several, none of which were dictated by scripture, but from the beginning, Christians took a dim view of sex:

1. Jesus remarked that it was anyone who lusted after a woman had already committed adultery with her in his heart.¹⁹
2. St. Paul declare that it is better to remain celibate, but if one can’t remain celibate, it is better to remain celibate than to burn in Hell.²⁰
3. The concern of the Catholic hierarchy that if priests married, they would bequeath their land and possessions to their offspring and not the church. This concern was one of material gain that did not take into account either the normal sexual needs of the clergy or the potential impact of priests’ repressed sexual needs on their congregations.²¹

Though quite inconsistent throughout its history, the Catholic Church did not consider it unreasonable to require most men and women (nuns) to commit to a life of celibacy, or worry about in what ways these people may have chosen to express their repressed sexual needs, though the seriousness of this problem was discussed.²² Nor did the church seem to take into consideration that it might draw persons into a religious life because they were having difficulty with sexual adjustment; and that their church members with less serious problems would seek and follow advice and counsel from priests who had neither the experience nor the stability sufficient to justify such trust.

Undoubtedly, some persons with a religious calling were and are able to remain celibate, and some may even feel that it is preferable to the concerns sexual involvement brings with it, as the apostle Paul suggested was the case for him. However, he was also expecting Jesus to return in the near future, so the need to procreate—or indeed, any of the needs that one would have about providing for his own future, or for future generations—was not a serious concern for him.

Over time the established Church acquired enormous wealth and power, and the notion that sex was inherently sinful²³ and the economic and political interests of the church served to reinforce each other. The motive of preserving these economic and political interests conflicted sharply with Jesus teaching that, “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”²⁴

V

God Working or Placebo?

If it is the case that all the stories of miracles and God’s preference for one person, people, or form of worship are fictions made up to inspire the adherents of those particular religions, then is there any specific way that God can be said to work? There is some research that refutes the effectiveness of intercessory prayer; that is to say, that one person’s prayer has the capacity to heal someone else, for example.

As for the broader philosophical question of whether God will intervene on the part of those who are more righteous than their enemies, Spinoza and Einstein said no, that as the designer and law-maker of the universe, God is subject to the laws this Intelligence creates. And as to the question of whether God is loving, Spinoza said that God could inspire love, but could not love back,²⁵ and Ein-

stein said that the idea of a personal God was naïve and childish.²⁶

If they mean by a personal God, one who listens to the pleas of men and interacts with them, altering the course of history according to His whims, then I would agree. Such a God would indeed be inconsistent with the laws of science. Spinoza must be right about this: if God is the designer of the universe and the maker of scientific law, It cannot violate those laws without inherently contradicting Itself, and scientific research does not support the belief that God does so. Moreover, belief in such a Deity is not only naïve, but dangerous in that it gives those who believe license to do whatever they want and say they are doing the will of God, who sanctions their behavior. Give a sociopath religious justification and they are immediately capable of not only criminal, but atrocious behavior.

But the idea of a God who “answers prayer” is dangerous not only for those who would use divine intervention as a justification to mistreat others, but also for those who would seek a genuine connection with a Supreme Being. If God must prove himself to mortals by doing their bidding, then the time must inevitably come when His choice will be other than what humans request, no matter how reasonable or just that request might seem to be. Inevitably, some human wishes requests must conflict with others.

Upon being denied a reasonable request, a human may, and often does, decide that they have been abandoned by God because his request has not been granted. The most common reason I hear for people not believing in God is that God didn’t behave in the way the person thought a Supreme Being should. God was unjust, either to them personally, or to those they thought deserving of better treatment. Such a faith is truly naïve and childish.

But it is possible that God could be both infinitely personal and infinitely impersonal without violating his own principles? Said another way, is it possible that the same mechanism that makes God infinitely impersonal also makes Him/Her/It infinitely personal? In science there is something called the uncertainty principle which says in effect that a thing is changed by the very fact that it is being observed (or, more precisely, but the way in which it is being observed). Isn’t it also true that the observer is changed by the simple fact that they are observing?

It is undoubtedly the case that mature persons of all faiths who do believe in a personal God have always believed that it is more important to find out what God wants than to tell God what they want. The point of the Old Testament story of Abraham being told to sacrifice his son is not whether the request was absurd (as Bob Dylan suggests in Highway 61 Revisited²⁷), or whether Abraham was deluded and deranged, it was that Abraham was willing to go to any length to obey God’s will. Likewise, the completely unreasonable suffering visited on Job so God could win a bet with the Devil. The point of the story is Job’s response, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”²⁸

Sufi Poet Farid Ud-Din Attar put it this way: “The way grows longer every hour, and we / Each hour sink deeper in perplexity; / Do you know what travelers see? They see that they / Must go ever further on the way—”²⁹ And Christian writer C.S. Lewis said, “I pray because I can’t help myself. I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time—waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God—it changes me.”

Jesus said to pray that God’s will be done. But if God’s will is going to be done anyway, is there any reason to pray for the inevitable? And are any changes to the person praying merely placebo effect; that is, because the prayer believes it will have the desired effect, it does? Perception alters reality, but is that the same as prayer and meditation?

As a mental health professional, it is my belief, probably shared by most is my line of work, that perception on the level of psychological insights has more power to impact behavior than a placebo because it changes our cognitive

reality. Said another way, to believe that man can fly does not make flying a reality, but to understand that a bird’s wing is curved in a manner as to provide lift may ultimately result in heavier than air flight by man, as indeed it has. Insight has a profound effect on both mental health and effective human interaction, but insights can only come when the mind is open to them.

Psychiatrist Abraham Low once observed that “Temper blocks insight,” and also that “Temper produces tenseness and tenseness produces [neurotic] symptoms.” In those two statements he is saying that our ability to perceive an appropriate response to a situation, as well as our sense of well-being and mental health are tied to the ability to attain a state of calm. Though not a religious man, he shared with religion the belief that our inner environment could be manipulated to enable a healthier and more effective response to external environment, hence resulting in a better quality of life.

Today, most mental health patients expect this to all be done by medication prescribed by their physician and dispensed by a pharmacy, but though medicine may tend toward the reductionist, the field of mental health requires more effort on the patient’s part to achieve any true measure of success. This may be true of medicine also to some degree, but it seems to me truer of mental health/behavioral issues than say, a bacterial infection. For the most part, pneumonia can be cleared up without a lot of effort from the patient, except perhaps the necessity that they not walk around naked in the snow. All they really have to do is stay out of their own way if they expect to achieve recovery.

Mental health requires a great deal more effort on the part of the client, according to available research and in my experience. Medications can be helpful, but they are generally not sufficient, and if they are used as the sole treatment of a serious emotional disturbance, the patient is not likely to ever heal sufficiently to regain his former activities and effectiveness.

So, while there is no evidence that prayer changes external reality, if it produces a substantial change in the psyche of person doing the praying, it is likely to have a much greater impact that the mere feeling of security that one gains from taking a sugar pill, because it also changes the behavior of the one praying; and by reducing temper (which Low defines as both fear and anger) it is also likely to improve insight, and therefore the effectiveness of any subsequent actions taken by the person. In the best case scenario prayer may provide a realistic optimism of the sort described by the proponents of “positive thinking” or “possibility thinking,” and leading one to take meaningful action they would have dismissed as not worth their time or trouble in their former negative state.

When people make what appear to be a dramatic turnaround in their life, it is often based on their seeing a possibility of victory where they previously saw certain defeat. I am not a huge sports fan, but I recall seeing this phenomenon a couple of times in the sports arena, once when Dwayne Wade lifted the Miami Heat on his shoulders to come back from a 2-0 deficit and win the 2006 NBA Championship against Dallas Mavericks; and another time when the Pittsburgh Penguins turned the 2009 Stanley Cup Finals around beginning with a goal they scored shorthanded in game four, with Detroit on the power play (playing with a man advantage because of a penalty). They also came back from a 2-0 deficit to win a championship. And what about the 2004 Boston Red Sox coming back from an unprecedented 3-0 deficit to win the American League Championship, and subsequently baseball’s “World Series”? This happens frequently enough in sports to cause Yogi Berra to have famously quipped, “It ain’t over ‘til it’s over.”

In the novel, “The Life of Pi,” by Yan Martel, the author spins a tall tale that is very entertaining, but also makes some serious points. At the beginning of the book the protagonist finds himself alone on a life raft with a Bengal Tiger after the ship he was sailing in sinks in the Pacific. The main character makes the observation

that when faced with an impossible task, most people will immediately throw in the towel. A somewhat smaller group will make a half-hearted effort before throwing in the towel. But there is very small third group who will do whatever it takes to survive. He states that he realized right away he was in the last group, and the rest of the story is one of survival against the odds. The author begins the book by saying he will tell a story to make the reader believe in God. Perhaps it would have been more accurate to say that he was going to tell a story of the kind of mental/psychic power and resilience one may gain through a deep faith in God.

What does it mean ultimately to have faith in God? It means to be convinced of the innate meaning and purpose of the universe. If everything has innate meaning and purpose, then so do I, as an extension of the universe, have inherent meaning and a reason for existence. Even if I am never able to fully define or completely fulfill my life’s purpose it is worth the search to get as close as I can to that meaning. If I believe in an essentially nihilistic universe I may still strive to imbue my life with meaning, but this effort presumes that if meaning is not inherent, it can be created.

What is truly unlikely is that I could believe there is no meaning, either inherent or of my own creation, but that I would still strive to live morally, to achieve something, to want to make a better life for myself, my children, or for future generations. The true nihilist is likely to be destructive to himself and others because it is the easiest way to go, and because there is no reason to want or seek to achieve anything more.

The seeming paradox is that one may be quite religious and nihilistic at the same time, but this points out a fundamental difference between religion as a set of beliefs about one’s superiority and a relationship with the infinite that seeks to understand how one can work effectively within the system of universal moral laws rather than needing to be dominant at all costs. Einstein said that, “My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God.”³⁰ The need to dominate is born of fear and is essentially antithetical to a faith that seeks understanding of or direction from a Higher Being.

We live in a time when the mass killing of strangers has become quite common in our country. These killings seem to be driven by three major factors, the media attention they garner, the availability of guns to unstable people, and the lack of any real anchor or guiding principle that so many people suffer from. It is probably also an indication of how difficult it is to conceive of an external meaning in this time and place in history. For all the flag waving Americans do, there is no real evidence that we have a sense of community, or that people are motivated to live for anything besides themselves and whatever seems to make their lives tolerable at this point. For some, this is professional sports teams, their friends at the local tavern, the challenge of running marathons, or working their way up the corporate ladder. Most can find or create meaning for themselves, but those who cannot seem intent on having others notice them for any reason at all.

When John Lennon was murdered in 1980, the prosecutor said in his opening remarks that Mark David Chapman had killed Lennon to steal his fame. In articles covering the trial, Chapman posed for pictures reading a copy of “The Catcher in the Rye,” which he cited as the inspiration for the killing. Chapman seemed to be basking in his ill-gotten fame, and the prosecutor’s words appeared to be at least in part true. It often seems as if the only people valued in our society anymore are celebrities, and that those who are not celebrated for doing good feel compelled to turn their energy to destruction. Perhaps it has always been that way. If Hitler had been a successful painter, would he have reeked such destruction on the world?

In his very popular self-help (See BROCK, Back Page)

Michigan schools deal with more students skipping classes

DETROIT (AP) — Michigan education officials are looking for ways to address an increase in chronic absenteeism among students.

The number of students chronically absent rose to 15.6 percent in the 2016-2017 school year, up from 14.7 percent the year before, the Detroit News reported.

That means more than 233,500 students were absent for 10 percent of the academic year. Students can be absent for a number of reasons including lack of transportation, illness, anxiety, suspension from school and mental health issues, experts say.

The highest rates of chronic absenteeism last school year were among kindergarteners and high school seniors, with rates of about 20 percent, according to state data.

“We have a lot of kids missing a lot of school,” said Carolyn Claerhout, a truancy expert at Oakland Schools, which serves local districts in Oakland County. “We get it — that this is what we need to have districts focus on.”

Michigan’s Every Student Succeeds Act was

approved last month and requires chronic absenteeism rates to be a factor in measuring school quality.

Absenteeism increases the chances that children will have reading issues in elementary school, fail classes in middle school and drop out of high school, according to education experts.

“The data is clear on the negative outcomes. If you aren’t there, you aren’t being successful,” said Kyle Guerrant, deputy superintendent of finance and operations with the Michigan Department of Education.

Detroit Public Schools Community District Superintendent Nikolai Vitti has moved attendance agents into schools to help locate absent students. Vitti’s staff will meet with principals to see how they’re improving attendance and share best practices.

The district will also launch a formal plan next school year to address chronic absenteeism by using more in-school suspensions in place of out-of-school suspensions, Vitti said.

Mortgages Recorded

Lisa Brown
Clerk/Register of Deeds
As recorded in the office of the
Register of Deeds
\$50,000 and above
Oct. 2-6, 2017

Latanya M Johnson 208 Raleigh Ave Auburn Hills 48326-3072 MICHIGAN MUTUAL \$177,000

Curtiss Richardson 790 Island Lake Dr Oxford 48371-3725 MICHIGAN MUTUAL \$254,000

Mark James Heikkila 25178 Birchwoods Dr Novi 48374-2101 MICHIGAN MUTUAL \$347,000

Scott Stevens 9550 Garforth Dr White Lake 48386-3231 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$266,000

Cary A Matthews-Pennane 13700 Hart St Oak Park 48237-1175 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$104,000

Laura Bulak 3197 Melvin Ave Rochester Hills 48307-4869 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$10,000

Mark Szlaga 3081 Otter Dr Troy 48063-5725 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$39,000

Brittany Jury 627 E Windemere Ave Royal Oak 48073-5604 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$188,000

Eric Cobb 965 Granger Rd Ortonville 48462-8633 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$162,000

Randall J Groya Jr 1314 Woodsboro Dr Royal Oak 48067-1115 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$60,000

Benjamin Arron Marchese 431 Shrewsbury Dr Clarkston 48348-3671 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$120,000

Michael J Lopez 342 Woodward Ave Rochester 48307-1166 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$20,000

Edward V Gruzwalski Iii 2226 Cumberland Rd Rozzville Hills 48307-3707 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$50,000

James Siler Jr 18890 Lincoln Dr Lathrup Village 48076-4444 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$100,000

Heath Pangel 1502 Donald Ave Royal Oak 48073-2092 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$25,000

Bonnie J Kepes 313 Crane Ave Royal Oak 48067-1717 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$44,000

Wayne T Jackson 21000 Turnberry Blvd Northville 48167-2197 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$1,990,000

Ryan Stipp 132 Linden Ave Royal Oak 48073-3428 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS & GOVERNMENT CREDIT UNION \$200,000

Adam Lawing 1025 Elmsmere Dr Northville 48167-1067 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$50,000

David L Jenkinson 6332 N Milford Rd Highland 48356-1068 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$91,000

Gregory M Barnes 210 Mead Rd Rochester Hills 48306-2842 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$65,000

Jeffrey D Fox 16280 Reedmere Ave Beverly Hills 48025-5553 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$50,000

John G Sinko 2610 Norton Lawn Rochester Hills 48307-4434 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$187,000

Kristi A Stepp 5463 Maple Leaf Ct West Bloomfield 48322-3338 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$35,000

Michael D Dupont 7211 Danbrooke West Bloomfield 48322-2925 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$22,000

Michael G Nowakowski 1959 Edgemont Ct Rochester Hills 48306-4007 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$77,000

Nicholas K Gaydos 1370 W Gunn Rd Rochester 48306-1641 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$50,000

Paul W Bakeman 27416 Golden-gate Dr W Lathrup Village 48076-3468 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$28,000

Roderic R Dolega 32660 Colony Hill Dr Franklin 48025-1016 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$20,000

Trenton Cummins 21330 Poinciana St Southfield 48033-3543 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$38,000

Dinah R Minor 20845 Winchester St Southfield 48076-3133 MICHIGAN STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$187,000

Kevin R Phelps 4855 Maggies Way Clarkston 48346-1975 MICHIGAN

STATE UNIV FEDERAL CU \$180,000
Kristopher S Brothers 2884 Central Blvd Milford 48360-2200 MID AMERICA MTG INC \$137,000

Christine C Francis 37154 Berkleigh Ct Farmington Hills 48331-3787 MMS MORTGAGE SERV \$276,000

Vanita L Davis 305 Payne Ave Pontiac 48341-1049 MMS MORTGAGE SERV \$142,000

Mihaela Niculescu 3454 Witherbee Dr Troy 48084-2714 MMS MORTGAGE SERV \$356,000

Todd Glance 3515 Ridgeview Ct Bloomfield Hills 48302-1252 MORGAN STANLEY BANK \$766,000

David W Leeper 2600 Elizabeth Ln West Bloomfield 48324-2182 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$361,000

Laura A Turner 3192 Donley Ave Rochester Hills 48309-4125 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$140,000

Michael Narducci 4143 Eagles Nest Dr Waterford 48329-1625 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$242,000

Hayley M Ludwiczak 605 Hecht Dr Madison Heights 48071-5301 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$146,000

Katie Wolf 150 Charlevoix St Clawson 48017-2084 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$165,000

Eddy Daniels 1409 W Oakley Park Rd Commerce Township 48390-1142 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$90,000

Ryan Bieri 5536 Saint Elizabeth Ct Clarkston 48348-4835 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$500,000

Rene Marie Schenk 4810 Ormond Rd Davisburg 48350-3317 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$153,000

Jodi A Huber 848 Aspen Ct Rochester 48307-1000 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$295,000

Laura A Turner 3192 Donley Ave Rochester Hills 48309-4125 MORTGAGE 1 INC \$140,000

Melanie J Sausser-Burke 4750 Sunrise Ln White Lake 48383-1042 MORTGAGE CENTER \$164,000

Stephanie M Heidt 6644 Montclair Dr Troy 48085-1626 MORTGAGE CENTER \$118,000

Steven W Lucev 2207 Huff Pl Highland 48356-2146 MORTGAGE CENTER \$117,000

Jerome Hayes 7520 Red Oak Dr West Bloomfield 48324-2439 MORTGAGE CENTER \$237,000

Steven Spinell 1035 Cosgrove Waterford 48328-1511 MORTGAGE RESEARCH CENTER \$152,000

Tawana Maria Langford 29095 Wellington Rd E Southfield 48034-4522 MOVEMENT MORTGAGE \$92,000

Joel Diffenderfer 9915 Crayview Dr White Lake 48386-2710 MOVEMENT MORTGAGE \$130,000

Peter F Arbour 2269 Flanders Dr Rochester Hills 48307-3713 NATIONAL BANKING ASN \$55,000

Kevin A Hayes 1716 Paramount St Novi 48377-2087 NATIONS DIRECT MORTGAGE \$241,000

Lou Kalaj 3587 Minton Rd Lake Orion 48359-1550 NATIONS DIRECT MORTGAGE \$132,000

Randall Joseph Miller 5001 Sherwell Dr Waterford 48327-3270 NATIONSTAR MORTGAGE \$110,000

Timothy L Negrilla 6226 Parkridge Ct Clarkston 48348-4844 NATIONSTAR MORTGAGE \$169,000

John C Mentzer 4772 Sherwell Dr Waterford 48327-3262 NATIONSTAR MORTGAGE \$334,000

Todd P Groghan 8942 Wild Iris Ct Davisburg 48350-1527 NAVY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION \$352,000

David R Gustin 3301 Morrow Ln Milford 48381-3358 NAVY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION \$25,000

Michael Diedrich 4185 Orchard Way Bloomfield Hills 48301-1634 NEMO MULTIFAMILY CA \$236,000

David G Popa 244 Cove View Dr Waterford 48327-3783 NEW DAY FINANCIAL \$217,000

Joseph Donald Kluck Ii 6828 Strawberry Ln Clarkston 48348-2884 NORTH AMERICAN SAVINGS BANK \$438,000

Kenneth Jackson 35844 Smithfield Ct Farmington 48335-3140 NORTH AMERICAN SAVINGS BANK \$167,000

Sharon Schlitt 3787 Locust Dr Oakland 48363-2841 NORTHPOINTE BANK \$618,000

Valerie Harrison 52565 Horseshoe Ln South Lyon 48178-8997 NORTHPOINTE BANK \$104,000

Charles Stickney 6214 Grace K Dr Waterford 48329-1324 OAKLAND COUNTY CREDIT UNION \$15,000

William M Grantas 4025 Taggett Lake Dr Highland 48357-2239 OAKLAND COUNTY CREDIT UNION \$195,000

Catherine Bemman 825 Little School Lot Lake R Holly 48442-8523 OAKLAND COUNTY CREDIT UNION \$59,000

Scott Mason 424 E Columbia Ave Pontiac 48340-2860 OAKLAND COUNTY CREDIT UNION \$31,000

Steven Percival 187 Glenburnie Dr

Clarkston 48346-1422 OAKLAND COUNTY CREDIT UNION \$70,000
Joyce Mcmurrin-Graham 23978 Scott Dr Farmington Hills 48336-3072 OCEANSIDE MORTGAGE CO \$214,000

Dennis Bostick 5408 Barrington Dr Oakland 48306-4901 OLD NATIONAL BANK \$1,600,000

Evelyn C Clendennin 30611 Whittier Ave Madison Heights 48071-2079 ONE REVERSE MTG \$230,000

Evelyn C Clendennin 30611 Whittier Ave Madison Heights 48071-2079 ONE REVERSE MTG \$230,000

Joe Rogers 2295 Richwood Rd Auburn Hills 48326-2529 OXFORD BANK \$115,000

Charles C Adams 2750 Alorington Ct Commerce Township 48382-5209 PACIFIC UNION FINANCIAL \$244,000

Cody Liles 21 Lincoln St Oxford 48371-3623 PACIFIC UNION FINANCIAL \$201,000

John C Jensen 22001 Abington Dr Farmington Hills 48335-4304 PARKSIDE CREDIT UNION \$64,000

Christopher S Baker 12425 Rat-talee Lake Rd Davisburg 48350-1225 PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES \$207,000

Octaveious Miles 5143 Watergate Rd West Bloomfield 48323-2464 PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES \$277,000

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Thomas W Keyser 3686 Hide Away Ln Highland 48357-3581 PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES \$203,000

Michael D Stephens 1348 Jeffwood Dr Waterford 48327-2029 PENNYMAC LOAN SERVICES \$95,000

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Fadi Eliya 48795 Veneto Dr Northville 48167-9385 PNC BANK \$150,000

Jacelyn M Land 3570 John R Rd Rochester Hills 48307-5440 PNC BANK \$80,000

Jay F Simancek 24851 Apple Crest Dr Novi 48375-2605 PNC BANK \$50,000

Kim Pianko Tr 1811 Willowick Dr Wixom 48393-1184 PNC BANK \$30,000

Kristen Rowell 4629 S Quarry Crk White Lake 48383-1872 PNC BANK \$70,000

Lisa Hawkins 3004 Pheasant Run East Dr Wixom 48393-4548 PNC BANK \$30,000

Lisa Butts 4770 Melanie Ln Oxford 48371-5640 PNC BANK \$25,000

Michael J Sova 696 Kingsley Dr Wixom 48393-4514 PNC BANK \$50,000

Morris G Shapiro 6488 Crabapple Troy 48098-1936 PNC BANK \$50,000

Steven Rousseau 2611 Hunters Blf Bloomfield Hills 48304-1824 PNC BANK \$75,000

Young Baik Kim 5569 Whitfield Dr Troy 48098-5105 PNC BANK \$100,000

Elizabeth A Beattie 3874 W Commerce Rd Milford 48380-3110 PNC BANK \$160,000

Michael Hernandez 1560 Columbia Rd Berkley 48072-1914 PNC BANK \$33,000

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David Copenhaver 185 W Hopkins Ave Pontiac 48340-1823 PNC MORTGAGE \$69,000

Donna Pierce 64 S Washington St Lake Orion 48362-3357 PNC MORTGAGE \$166,000

Tajudeen Usman Mustapha 27100 Harvard Rd Southfield 48076-5654 PNC MORTGAGE \$145,000

Thorsten Rittler Tr 5179 Low Meadow Rd Clarkston 48348-3841 PNC MORTGAGE \$1,000,000

Keefe M Gardner 28802 Herndon-wood Dr Farmington Hills 48334-5237 PNC MORTGAGE \$356,000

Michael A Rinkus 2560 Homewood Dr Troy 48098-2302 PNC MORTGAGE \$335,000

Mark R Fralick 563 Cranbourne St Commerce Twp 48382-3021 PNC MORTGAGE \$256,000

Rebecca R Emerson 24101 Seneca St Oak Park 48237-3728 PNC MORTGAGE \$128,000

Ashley D Reygaert 2337 Malena Ln Oxford 48371-4357 PNC MORTGAGE \$185,000

Mitesh Natvarla Patel 19 Sugar Pine Rd Rochester Hills 48309-2231 PNC MORTGAGE \$268,000

JURY TRIALS AND UTILIZATION FOR NOVEMBER 2017

Start Date	Judge	Case Number Case Name	Attorneys	Type of Case	Criminal Disposition	Plaintiff/Defense	Amount	Jury Days	Not Finished
11/2/2017	Alexander, J	2016 152767 CB Shaba Investment V. Barducci	Steven Cohen Jeffrey Thomas	Breach of Contract		Directed Verdict		3.5	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/13/2017	Bowman, L	2016 261073 FC People V. Stephen Myers	Sarah Greene John Holmes	Criminal Sexual Conduct	Guilty			3	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/2/2017	Grant, N	2017 263498 FC People V. Richard Gray	Robert Vanwert Michael J. McCarthy	Armed Robbery	Guilty as Charged			1.5	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/9/2017	Grant, N	2016 155448 NF Ml. Spins & Pain V. State Farm Mutual Auto Ins.*	Carl Jackson III Frederick Livingston	Auto Negligence		No Cause		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/9/2017	Grant, N	2016 155683 NI Thompson V. State Farm Mutual Auto Ins*	William Hatchett Cinnamon Rice	Auto Negligence		No Cause		3	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/30/2017	Grant, N	2017 263812 FH People V. Leonard Warr	Jason DeSantis John Holmes	CCW	Cts. 1-3 Not Guilty; Cts. 4&5 Guilty			1	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/13/2017	Kumar, S	2015 150234 NO Bennett V. Beaumont	Jeffrey Hartkop Jared Trust	Personal Injury		Verdict for Plaintiff	\$350,000.00	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/13/2017	Langford Morris, D	2017 263204 FH People V. Christopher Whitlock	Christopher George Michael McCarthy	Criminal Sexual Conduct	Guilty as Charged			2.5	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/16/2017	Matthews, C	2017 262380 FC People V. Crystal Martin-Lever	David Hutson Paulette Loftin	Murder	Guilty of 2nd degree			4	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/20/2017	McMillen, P	2016 153478 CZ Specks V. Redberry Resto Brands	Kenneth Burch Sr. Loren Blum	Negligence		Verdict for Plaintiff	\$3,500.00	1.5	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/27/2017	McMillen, P	2017 263161 FC People V. Yoongha Lee	Erica Smith Robert Zivian	Criminal Sexual Conduct	In Progress			1.5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11/6/2017	O'Brien, D P	2017 262339 FH People V. Kirk Chapman	Christian Arndt James Amberg	OWIL	Not Guilty			2.5	<input type="checkbox"/>
11/27/2017	O'Brien, D P	2016 260686 FH People V. Angela Sulciman	Christian Arndt Warren Harris	Insurance Fraud	In Progress			2.5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11/27/2017	Warren, M	2014 252234 FH People V. Gary Mahdi	Darcy Jacobs Judith Gracey	Controlled Substance	Guilty as Charged			2	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Cases tried together

BROCK: In search of a humane God

(Continued from page 4)

book, “The Road Less Traveled,” Scott Peck begins by telling us that, “Life is difficult.” And so it is. Not the least of that difficulty is the realization that we can never have total certainty about anything; about why we’re here, where we’re going, how our lives will end or what comes after. We are a long time coming into this world and we’ll be gone a long time, and, as Job observed, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”¹

Henry David Thoreau said, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”² Perhaps it has always been thus, but some are able to quiet that desperation and turn their time to good use. How do we find the strength to discover or create meaning and not succumb to despair? How do we learn to live rather than just exist? To find joy amidst all the uncertainty and disappointment?

Faith is one way of doing that, but to be workable faith cannot be built upon illusion; it must square with reality or we are simply turning our back on the real world, and most of us are unwilling and unable to do that. So, we must ultimately work out our own relationship with the forces beyond our control and understanding, seek to find the flow and the frequency that plays our music, and learn the dance that expresses our unique place and time in the endless universe. How well we do that will ultimately be determined by the love we create and the creative energy it releases.

¹ Gospel of Matthew 6:24, NIV
² Gospel of Matthew 5:44, NIV
³ Gospel of Luke 6:31, NIV

⁴ The internal strife that would ultimately split India into three separate countries was, of course, another matter, and one that would cause the Mahatma a great deal of suffering. But the English ultimately left as a result of Gand-

hi’s successful policy of non-violent resistance.

⁵ Becoming Human, in The Gift, translation by Daniel Ladinsky

⁶ Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu, I

⁷ Einstein...used variants of this quote...For example, in a 1943 conversation with William Hermanns recorded in Hermanns’ book Einstein and the Poet, Einstein said: “As I have said so many times, God doesn’t play dice with the world.” (p. 58)

⁸ Ecclesiastes 1:9, KJV, “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

⁹ The Emperor’s Handbook, Marcus Aurelius (AKA, Meditations of the Emperor) “...accordingly to have contemplated human life for forty years is the same as to have contemplated it for ten thousand years.”

¹⁰ You Can’t Go Home Again, Thomas Wolfe (P. 371), Google Books