

Editor's Note

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Every age is an age of crisis. Watching television on New Year's Eve a month ago, I vividly remember a woman who, having been asked by a reporter to describe 2002, responded, "Well, that was a tense and neurotic time." As we publish this new issue of *The Journal of Liberal Religion* in February of 2003, we stand on the brink of war and warnings are circulating in the news for Americans make sure they have duct tape and plastic to cover windows and to stock up on bottled water and canned goods to prepare for possible chemical and biological weapons attacks. It seems that "a tense and neurotic time" may describe the years to come as well.

I'm a new father of a gorgeous six-month-old daughter, Chloë. As I imagine every new father has done since the beginning of time, I wonder into what sort of world am I bringing this child? Of course I deceive myself by thinking that the world is a safe place that has only recently become dangerous; yet it is desperately important to me that my daughter understand that life is good, and sacred, and often just; that this world, despite appearances, is God's creation and God does not abandon what she has so lovingly created. I pray that my daughter will have the strength of character to help recreate and reform the world that we are passing on to her. Yet if these first months are any indication, hers is a spirit strong and feisty enough to transform two worlds.

Tense, neurotic times do not promote clear thinking, and fear and anxiety have a way of distorting the way we look at the world -- especially encouraging us to opt for quick solutions to long-term, complicated struggles. The anxiety which pervades our times -- anxiety provoked by a recession, fear of terrorist attacks, a possible war, and a general sense of dis-ease -- makes it all that much more important that we think carefully about the actions that we take today and the kind of world that we are handing on to our children.

What does this have to do with liberal religion? The world has always been in crisis and will continue to be in the midst of crisis. The difference lies in us. In the midst of a tense and neurotic time, the question becomes what will we hold onto, what will ground our lives and determine our thoughts and actions. Liberal religion yields the democratic values of freedom, equality, and tolerance, and the theological affirmations of the sacred character of every human being and of creation itself -- ideals certainly worthy of our aspiration, yet the power that they hold is only as great as the commitment that we bring to them.

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