

on the diameter of the world by those prior positions with respect to the surface: i.e., the distances of the angles.

In other words, by observing a celestial body from two distant places on the Earth's surface, or from two different points in the Earth's annual orbit around the Sun, we can increase the baseline of our measuring triangle, to the point that astronomical calculations can be made.⁴

The astronomical sections of the *Optics* are mainly devoted to working through calculations of parallax, using data from solar or lunar eclipses. This work, in turn, would feed into Kepler's still-ongoing effort to calculate the orbit of Mars. He intended to write another work, his *Hipparchus*, which would work out the distances of various celestial bodies; while this plan was never carried out, some of the information he intended for it appeared in other locations.

If all this discussion of God's intention in creating the universe in such a way that man might explore it, strikes you as somehow "quaint" or "old-fashioned," perhaps "mystical," maybe there is a reason why Kepler was a creative genius, and you are not. You have been brainwashed by four centuries of anti-Keplerian propaganda (Galilean, Newtonian), whose primary purpose was to *remove* the cognitive being, the scientist, from the world which he is observing. (That's being "objective," we are taught in school.) It is no accident that it has taken four centuries for a few of Kepler's major works to become available in English translation (he wrote 80 books, and many shorter works). In a Newtonian world, Kepler is routinely denounced as a mystic, and his actual work suppressed.⁵

Think it through again. As LaRouche teaches, Kepler's extraordinary intellectual potency can reawaken the mind of the reader, bringing to life what occurred in the mind of that great discoverer, long ago.

4. This method is not new to Kepler, but dates to antiquity. It allowed quite accurate calculations of the distance between the Moon and the Earth to be made by Hipparchus, for example, in the Second Century B.C. Calculation of the much greater distance of the Sun or the stars from the Earth proved far more difficult, since the parallax is harder to detect, and Kepler's own calculations of the Sun's distance were too small by nearly an order of magnitude. It was only with the development of high-powered telescopes, that a more accurate measurement could be made. See Albert van Helden, *Measuring the Universe: Cosmic Dimensions From Aristarchus To Halley* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). My point in quoting Kepler here, is to emphasize his methodology: the coherence among the cognitive, biotic, and abiotic domains.

5. A typical example is from Anton Pannekoek's *A History of Astronomy* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., reprint of 1961 edition), concerning Kepler's *The Harmony of the World*: "But among all these fantastic relations [the harmonies] we find one precious discovery, afterwards always cited as *Kepler's third law*. . . . Later science has accepted from the entire work on 'The Harmony' only that one page containing the third law."

'Nathan The Wise': Timely Attack On The 'Clash Of Civilizations'

by Anita Gallagher

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's 1779 play, *Nathan the Wise*, is, if anything, a more powerful attack today on the "clash of civilizations" pathway into which the different religions could be manipulated, than at the time it was written. Likewise, the alternative it clearly poses—that Christian, Jew, and Muslim should deal with each other by *competing to do good* and to improve the world—emerges even more starkly against the war which now threatens the world should it fail.

In a stroke of good fortune, the play was recently staged outside Washington, D.C., at George Mason University in Virginia. University playwright and professor Paul D'Andrea presented a two-hour play, adapted from Lessing's five-act drama, under the same title. *Nathan the Wise* is the centerpiece of The Jerusalem Project, an effort to promote understanding among diverse groups at GMU, its theater, the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, various high school classes studying the play, and others. With the near-collapse of Mideast peace efforts, and the attempts to trap the United States into a war against Muslim nations, the performance could not be more timely, or more vital for allowing the audience the opportunity to re-create the solution today, by observing the characters on the stage.

The History Behind The Play

Lessing set the play in 1192, in the Third Crusade, after the Muslim warrior Prince Saladin retook Jerusalem from the Christians. Saladin then established the Peace of Ramla, which lasted until his death in 1195. During those three years, Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived in peace in Jerusalem, which Saladin believed possible because all three religions believed in the same God and revered the Hebrew Old Testament.

Lessing, the son of a minister, wrote the play as an intervention into his own times. It was a continuation by another means—irony—of his philosophical war against the theologians who believed in salvation through revealed religion alone. Lessing based his Jewish character "Nathan" on Moses Mendelssohn, Lessing's close personal friend and collaborator in uplifting the culture of the German nation. Mendelssohn, in turn, had studied the works of the great Jewish-Arabic writer and philosopher Moses Maimonides, who was the his-



The Ring Parable: During the climactic religious trial which concludes Paul D'Andrea's adaptation, Nathan (Mitchell Hébert) receives from Sittah the prized opal ring which has passed down in the family of the Sultan.

torical Saladin's physician at court. Mendelssohn credited this play with having a part in Joseph II's magnanimous gesture in giving the Jews of the Austrian Empire rights, through the Edict of Toleration in January 1782. Lessing and Mendelssohn collaborated to defend the great thinker G.W. Leibniz, and made possible the German Classic period of Friedrich Schiller and the von Humboldt brothers. (See, David Shavin, "Philosophical Vignettes from the Political Life of Moses Mendelssohn," *Fidelio*, Summer 1999.)

The Parable Of The Rings

We see the noble character of Saladin's soul early in the play, when he spares the life of his enemy, the Knight Templar. The young knight is shocked, and expects to remain a prisoner in one way or another. Saladin, who adopts as his title "Improver of the World" in D'Andrea's adaptation, explains that he has recognized the image of his deceased brother, Assad, in the Frankish knight, and therefore is moved to show goodness; i.e., he recognizes the brotherhood of man (close to literal truth in this case). Inviting the knight to abide in his household, Saladin says, "As Musselman, as Christian . . . all one to me. . . . I have never desired that one bark grow on all trees of the wood."

In Nathan, we encounter a Schilleresque sublime soul. We hear that Nathan refuses to lend money to anyone in need—because if he lent it, he would not be able to *give* as much to them (perhaps this inspired Schiller on the character of the Good Samaritan). Nathan has taken in a Christian infant to raise, three days after Christians murdered his wife and seven

sons; after wrestling with his despair, he gives up hatred and thanks God, saying, "Oh God, for seven already one Thou givest!" He would be pleased to give his beloved adopted daughter Recha in marriage to the Knight Templar if it were possible, all demonstrating that to practice one's religion is to do good, not to believe a dogma. This is the application by Lessing of the "Peace of Westphalia" principle which ended the Thirty Years War (1618-48): The only way to end a religious war is to walk away from it, forget all injuries, and work for the benefit of the former enemy.

In D'Andrea's adaptation, the conniving of doctrinal zealots produces a trial of Nathan. These are either professional theologians like the Patriarch, or the shallow Daya, the Christian companion whom Nathan has hired to care for his daughter, and who still believes that Recha belongs with her own blood—Christians—in their own soil—Europe. In this trial at the conclusion of the play, where Nathan is defending his life in answering the no-win question—"Which is the true religion?"—Nathan delivers Lessing's parable of the three rings:

A man was given a ring, which made its bearer beloved by all men. The gift was to be passed down to the son the father loved the best. So it was, until one father had three sons he loved equally. When he was alone with each, he imagined he loved that son the best, and promised each the ring. When he was in old age, he could not bear to disappoint two, and determined to have two exact copies made, so each son would think he had inherited the ring.

After the father died, each son believed he had inherited

the true ring as promised to him, and that his brothers were lying. They went to a judge, who said that none of them seemed worthy of love at that moment; perhaps after a thousand years, the true ring might be recognized, when its bearer would be loved for the good he had done.

Thus, whichever brother does the most good, will be recognized as holding the “true” ring. So let it be with religions, Nathan says. Thus, Lessing’s Nathan forces the audience to discover, through mentally re-enacting Lessing’s parable, that the truth of the ring cannot be known by the ring’s appearance to the senses, but rather, by the goodness it inspires, as demonstrated in the real world.

Ecumenism means neither doctrinal compromises resulting in a mush, nor a collection of religions with equal rights in a pantheon, but rather, acting on those religious truths which can be known and demonstrated by reason, such as that all men are made in the image of God in their capacity to make creative discoveries.

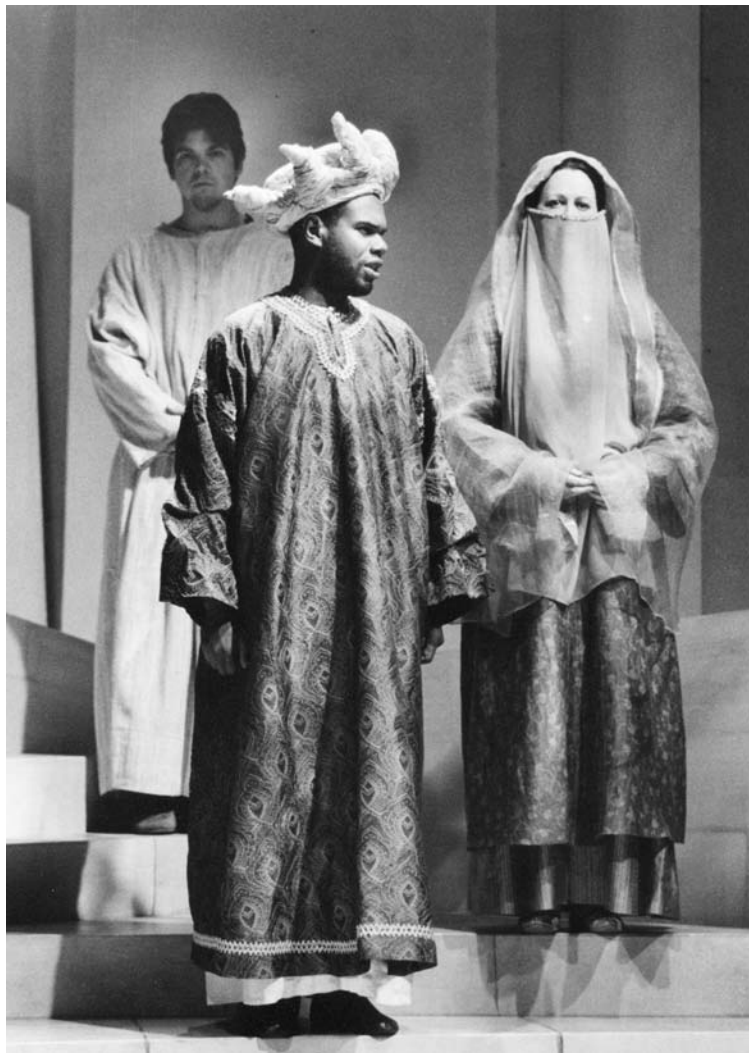
Moses Mendelssohn, the model for Nathan, in his *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*, written in 1782-83, cited the great Old Testament teacher Hillel the Elder, who, when pressed to deliver the entire Law in brief, said, “Love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the text of the Law; all the rest is commentary. Now go and study!”

Today, as U.S. Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche has pointed out, “The world’s leading voice against a degeneration of religion into a new pantheon, is Pope John Paul II. In everything I have observed him to say and do on this account, I have found nothing which is not fully consistent with my own ecumenical outlook as expressed over more than a quarter-century to date.” Iranian President Seyyed Mohammad Khatami’s call for a “Dialogue of Civilizations” on this basis, has been adopted as the theme of the current UN General Assembly.

Lessing further insists that miracles are performed by human beings, not by Heaven: The design of creation allows the scope for potent human action, which the credulous call miraculous.

Dramatic Changes In New Production

D’Andrea’s production is an adaptation, with substantial divergences from the original. This works best in the stretto created with the parable of the rings being dramatized at the conclusion, rather than simply recited in the middle. There is the typical problem of too much playing for laughs by the characters. Worse, Nathan himself is not consistently played as the sublime character which Lessing intended him to be.



Sultan Saladin (Craig Wallace) orders a truce between Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem after taking the city in 1198; behind him is his sister and confidant, Sittah (Kimberley Schraf), in the adaptation of Lessing’s Nathan The Wise at George Mason University in Virginia.

In fact, it is exactly the lack of education in the quality of the Sublime which has made so few people ready to act outside popular opinion, to avert tragedy. LaRouche has described the Sublime as the quality such that “in the bowels of horror, people come forth as individuals, who are able to grasp the situation, intervene into the situation, and, by the method described by Plato [posing a paradox], to transform themselves, and thus gain from that, the ability to rise above the situation, to save a people that is not worth saving, but to lead them to safety.” (The reader may reflect, whether that does not describe LaRouche himself, in his efforts to save mankind.)

Nathan and Saladin demonstrate the Sublime, and this company has largely succeeded in bringing out the fundamental intention of Lessing in this play, which is all too rarely performed.