

WHAT KAUTSKY REALLY SAID

Appendix to Mystery Babylon and the Wonders of Atlantis Revealed!

In the December 1973 “Feuerbach” *Campaigner* article, Lyndon LaRouche’s notorious footnote on Judaism made it clear that he believed Judaism never was a valid religion even in its “pre-Christian form.”¹ When LaRouche also asserts that the “only rational view” to understand “the Jewish Question” is his “own analysis of the evolution from Egyptian-Mesopotamian ‘hydraulic’ into Hellenic culture,” his use of the word “hydraulic” highlights the fact that he considered ancient Judaism a by-product of an Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP)-based society. He further claims that a “self-subsisting Judaism never existed and never could exist” because pre-Philo Judaism (“the earlier, Hebrew doctrine”) was in reality “a syncretic hodge-podge of chiefly Mesopotamian legends.” In fact:

Ezra’s Persian version of Hebrewism was, in turn, significantly influenced by an earlier pre-Pentateuch version created in conformity with Babylonian edicts. . . . From Ezra onwards, and even before, Hebrewism was an assimilationist doctrine developed to provide special juridical status (and ideological self-image) for a caste of merchant-usurers within a pre-capitalist society.

In his footnote LaRouche also praises two books, Karl Kautsky’s *Foundations of Christianity* – which he describes as Kautsky’s “one truly important contribution” to history -- and Abram (Abraham) Leon’s *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*.² By so doing, LaRouche implies that both authors are in agreement with his views. But is it really the case? In this appendix I want to examine Leon and Kautsky’s views of ancient Babylon. Yet since neither Kautsky nor Leon are well known, some quick background notes are in order.

Karl Kautsky was a long-time leader of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and an acknowledged world expert on the ideas of Marx and Engels. He died in exile in Amsterdam in 1938 having first fled the Nazi seizure of power in Germany in

1933 and later Hitler's takeover of Austria. As for far more obscure Abram Leon, he was born in Warsaw but for most of his life he lived in Brussels. He was active in the left-wing Zionist organization Hashomer Hatzair and also spent a year as chairman of the Belgian Zionist Federation. In 1940, however, he abandoned Zionism and became a Trotskyist. Not long after the Allied invasion of Normandy, he was arrested by the Nazis and sent to Auschwitz where he was murdered in a Nazi gas chamber at age 26.³

In his footnote, LaRouche writes of Leon:

Despite some jarring notes of orthodox mechanistic "Marxist-Leninist" economic theory, the work of the 26-year old Leon is a remarkable masterpiece, which no defender of "Jewish cultural nationalism" has ever attempted to rebut by any other means than invective. This writer's own analysis of the evolution from Egyptian-Mesopotamian "hydraulic" into Hellenic cultures, and Hellenic cultures' supersession by feudalism and then capitalism provide the "political economic" context in which Leon's situation of the "Jewish Question" becomes the only rational view.

In other words, LaRouche claims that his previous work on the "hydraulic" (AMP) world of ancient Mesopotamia in the 1950s provides the real "political economic" context that Leon failed to develop in his own book. Leon's views had no impact on LaRouche's earlier study of Babylon for the simple reason that LaRouche only came across Leon's book after it was reissued in 1970. Although Leon's book mentions Babylon only in passing, it is still worth briefly mentioning before we take a closer look at Kautsky precisely because Leon's remarks contradict LaRouche. From Leon:

Certain historians attribute an important role to the Babylonian exile in the transformation of the Jews into a commercial people. In Babylonia, “the Jews became transformed into a commercial people, such as we know them in the economic history of the world. They found highly developed economic relations among the Babylonians. Recently uncovered cuneiform texts show that the exiled Jews participated actively in commercial life. They were involved in credit business, highly developed among the Babylonians; they were also big traders.” [Leon here is quoting from a 1929 work by Lujo Brentano.]

Leon then continues:

But the dispersion of the Jews is certainly prior to Babylonian exile. There are serious reasons for conceding the existence of a pre-exile Diaspora. The scope of the Jewish exile under Nebuchadnezzar is very greatly exaggerated. Only a part of the ruling classes was hit by the measures of the Babylonian king. The majority of the Jews established in Palestine continued to live there. Consequently during the Persian epoch the Jews were to be found spread over all parts of that enormous Empire . . . it would be childish to view this fact as a consequence of the Babylonian exile, an exile which lasted altogether some fifty years. It is equally puerile to believe that the Jewish people returned to Palestine in the period of Ezra and Nehemiah. Their work was primarily of a religious character. It was a matter of rebuilding the temple and of reconstituting a religious metropolis for dispersed Judaism. Most historians have considerably exaggerated the role of Palestinian Judaism in the Persian epoch. . . . In reality, in this epoch, the Jews of Judea represented only a part, and the smallest, of Judaism. And undoubtedly it was the least vital part. . . . During the Persian epoch the

principal colonies of the Diaspora were situated in Mesopotamia, in Chaldea, and in Egypt.⁴

Leon wrote his study after he had broken from leftwing Zionism. He clearly wanted to highlight the international character of Judaism and possibly for that reason he stressed that Judaism should not simply be defined in a narrow way that only focused on Babylon and Jerusalem. The point here, however, is that Leon's argument about the significance of both Babylon and Jerusalem is in sharp contrast to LaRouche's views.

KAUTSKY'S BABYLON

As for Kautsky, his book *Foundations of Christianity* first appeared in Germany in 1908 as *Der Ursprung des Christentums*. Although an earlier English edition existed, in 1953 it was retranslated by Henry Mins, a member of the board of *Science and Society*. Although LaRouche praises Kautsky, he never cites from Kautsky's actual book. And with good reason. Nowhere in Kautsky's almost 400-page book is there a description of the Jewish exile in Babylon that remotely resembles anything asserted by LaRouche. For one thing, Kautsky does not analyze Babylon using an "AMP" template. Kautsky's interest in Babylon is merely one small aspect of a much larger story that he is trying to tell.

However, like LaRouche, Kautsky does believe that the Babylonian exile had a significant impact on Judaism's future religious development. Yet for Kautsky that effect was largely positive. Kautsky argues that it was the exposure of the Jews to the far more advanced culture of Babylon that encouraged them to embrace monotheism. Nor does Kautsky say anything about the Jews being "a caste of merchant-usurers with a pre-capitalist society" or that Judaism was somehow an ideological concoction to rationalize usury.

As for Babylon itself, Kautsky viewed it one of the most advanced and cosmopolitan societies of the ancient world, a vast entrepot filled with sophisticated thinkers and institutions. In contrast, the Jews who went there came from one of the many cultural backwaters of the ancient world. From *Foundations of Christianity*:

Another powerful stimulus to Jewish thought must have been the magnificence of the city of Babylon with its millions of inhabitants, its world-wide trade, its ancient culture, its science and philosophy. Just as in the first half of the last century a stay in the Babylon on the Seine [Paris] elevated German thinkers and spurred them to their highest and best works, so must staying in the Babylon on the Euphrates in the sixth century B.C. have affected the Jews from Jerusalem and burst open their horizons.

In Babylon, however, as in all the Oriental commercial centers that were not situated on the Mediterranean coast but inland, science remained mixed up with religion and bound to it, for reasons we have pointed out. In Judaism too, all the new strong impressions came through in religious form.⁵

From Babylon:

The priesthood of Judea borrowed the pretensions of the Babylonian hierarchy, and also adopted many of their religious notions. A whole series of legends in the Bible are of Babylonian origin: for example, the Creation of the world, Paradise, the Fall, the Tower of Babel, the Deluge. The strict observation of the Sabbath is equally Babylonian.⁶

The Jews also learned something else in the great city, monotheism:

It may be safely assumed although there is no direct evidence, that the Jewish priesthood learned not only popular legends and customs from the lofty Babylonian hierarchy, but also a higher, more spiritual conception of the divinity. . . In contrast to the naïve ideas of God among the Israelites, many of the priests among the civilized peoples that surrounded them had attained monotheism, at least in their secret teachings.⁷

For example:

Just at the time of the Jewish Exile, when a sort of monotheism was becoming predominant among the Persians, now in contact with Babylon, there are signs that “in Babylonia too the germ of a monotheism had been planted, which must have had a strong similarity to the Pharonic sun-cult of Amenophis IV (Amenhotep).”⁸

Kautsky then states:

It was easy for the Jews in exile, among whom those from Jerusalem predominated, to accept the monopolistic position of the Temple at Jerusalem. Under the influence of Babylonian philosophy and their own national catastrophe, and perhaps of the Persian religion, which developed in a similar direction at much the same time as the Jewish religion and came into contact with it, stimulating it and perhaps receiving stimulation from it as well – under all these influences the efforts of the priests to create a monopoly for their fetish took the form of an ethical monotheism in which Jahveh was no longer merely the particular tribal god of Israel but the only god in the world, the personification of the good, the sum and substance of all morality.

Thus, when the Jews returned to Jerusalem from captivity, their religion had developed so highly and become so

spiritual that the crude religious ideas and practices of the Jewish peasants who had been left behind must have seemed to them no more than revolting heathen abominations. If it had not yet taken place, it was now possible for the priests and masters of Jerusalem to see to it that these competitive provincial cults were done away with and the monopoly of the Jerusalem hierarchy permanently established.

Thus Jewish monotheism arose. It was ethical in nature, like that of the Platonic philosophy, for example. But among the Jews the new concept of the deity did not arise outside of religion, as with the Greeks; it was not propounded by a class standing outside the priesthood. Thus the one God did not appear as a new god, standing above and outside of the old world of gods, but as a reduction of the old society of gods to a single most powerful god, standing closest to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that is to the old warrior, ethical, tribal and local god, Jahveh.

This introduced a number of knotty contradictions into the Jewish religion. As an ethical god Jahveh is God of all mankind, since good and bad are concepts that are taken as absolute, as valid for all men alike. And as an ethical god, as personification of the moral idea, the one God is everywhere, as morality is considered to be universally valid. But for Babylonian Judaism religion and the Jahveh cult were also their strongest national link; and any possibility of reestablishing their national independence was inseparably linked to the reconstruction of Jerusalem.⁹

As a result Judaism faced the challenge of trying to resolve the “strange contradictions” between the particular and the universal:

These are strange contradictions, but contradictions which come out of life, out of the contradictory position of the Jews in Babylon. There they had been placed within a new

civilization which revolutionized their whole way of thinking, while all the conditions of their lives drove them to conserve their old traditions as the only way to conserve their national existence, which had become so especially dear to them; for a difficult position lasting for centuries had developed their national feeling to an unusually marked degree.

The task of the thinkers of Judaism was to reconcile the new ethics with the old fetishes and to reconcile the narrow views of a little mountain people with the knowledge of the world and of life achieved by the broad civilization centering around Babylon.¹⁰

If I am reading him correctly, Kautsky's view of the impact of Babylon on the Jewish exiles is similar to that other scholars who stress the positive impact that the advanced society of Egypt had on the far more backward Greeks. For Kautsky, then, Babylon is a great cosmopolitan city filled with spectacular wonders.¹¹

FROM KAUTSKY TO DES GRIFFIN

Given Kautsky's actual views, it seems obvious that when LaRouche positively cited Kautsky's long forgotten book he was bluffing big time. But where did LaRouche really derive his hatred of Babylon? The simple answer seems to be that he imbibed it from his fundamentalist Protestant family. Years later LaRouche would say as much when he stated that he derived his special interest in ancient Mesopotamia from his "Bible-thumping" grandfather George Weir.

Protestant fundamentalist hatred of Babylon went hand in hand with attempts to discredit both Roman Catholicism and Judaism as illegitimate pagan sects. One contemporary example of this once-commonplace argument is the wildly anti-Semitic pamphlet *Anti-Semitism and the Babylonian Connection* by a Christian fundamentalist writer named Des Griffin.¹² I cite Griffin in particular because his books were translated into German and

promoted by Ekkehard Franke-Gricksch's CODE, the same organization that the NCLC worked closely with from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s; a connection that is extensively documented elsewhere on LaRouche Planet.¹³

Here is Griffin on Christ's clash with the Pharisees: "It was the Truth of God against the Babylonian religion of Satan. Christ understood the occult *philosophy* which motivated the Pharisees. It was of their father the devil (*John 8:44*)."¹⁴

A few pages later, Griffin writes:

Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the Jewish people were expelled from Palestine by the Romans. Because of bitter reprisals and persecutions waiting for them in the west, they had no alternative but to return to Babylon, to the east. Of course, most Jews still lived in Babylon from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, but when the Palestine Jews returned they found it a veritable land of promise in contrast to war-torn Palestine.

It was during this same time that the Jews created the *Babylonian Talmud*, which Griffin claims is a Satanically-inspired text:

The *Talmud*, the ultimate authority in Orthodox Judaism, plumbs the depths of moral and spiritual depravity. It reveals an obsessive hate of the gentiles and strives to justify the most obscene practices acquired during the Pharisees' one thousand year sojourn in Babylon, the moral cesspool of antiquity. It also defends the Pharisee's addiction to many of the vices of ancient Babylon. In addition, the *Talmud* reveals a massive acceptance of the Satanically-inspired Babylonian "culture" by Jewish leadership. This culture, which was *purely occult in nature*, included practically everything that was contrary to God's law – demon worship, sorcery, sexual depravity, and demonic traditions that originated with Nimrod and his spiritually deranged wife, Semiramus. *The Occult*

*Babylonian System was (and still is!) the very antithesis of God's revealed will! It is this occult philosophy ("the cause, source or origin of anything; that from which a thing proceeds") of Babylon which dominates Talmudic Judaism today! (Italics in the original)*¹⁵

It is this very same idea of an occult Satan-like conspiracy that LaRouche projected onto the British monarchy and Jewish investment bankers beginning in the late summer of 1977.

For our purposes here, however, it seems obvious that when LaRouche claimed Kautsky as an intellectual ally in 1973, he simply assumed that no one would bother to fact check his claims.

¹ See the December 1973 “Feuerbach” *Campaigner* (pgs. 30 and 37 in particular).

² See Karl Kautsky, *Foundations of Christianity* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1953) and Abram Leon, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* (New York: Pathfinder, 2001). *The Jewish Question* was first published in English in 1950 in Mexico by Ediciones Pioneras. This first English edition was a limited run and is exceedingly rare. *The Jewish Question*, however, was reprinted in France in 1968 as *La conception materialiste de la question juive* (Paris: Études et documentation internationales, 1968). It came with an introduction by the famous Marxist scholar Maxime Rodinson. Thanks to Rodinson, *The Jewish Question* attracted renewed attention even though in his introduction Rodinson criticizes Leon’s idea of the Jews as a “people-class.” A new English-language edition was issued by the SWP’s Pathfinder Press in 1970. LaRouche drew on *The Jewish Question* for his superficial gloss on Jewish history both in his *New Solidarity* article and also in *Dialectical Economics*.

³ On Leon, see Ernest Mandel’s biographical sketch in the Pathfinder edition.

⁴ Leon, 99-100.

⁵ Kautsky, 190.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 191.

⁸ 193.

⁹ 194-95.

¹⁰ 197-98.

¹¹ In the late 19th century German archeologists brought back sections of the ancient walls of Babylon such as the famed Ishtar Gate. Kautsky would have been well aware of these spectacular finds.

¹² Des Griffin, *Anti-Semitism and the Babylonian Connection* (Colton, OR: Emissary Publications, 2007). This pamphlet was first published in 1988.

¹³ See “Breaking the CODE” now posted on LaRouche Planet for the full story.

¹⁴ Griffin, 19.

¹⁵ 23-24.