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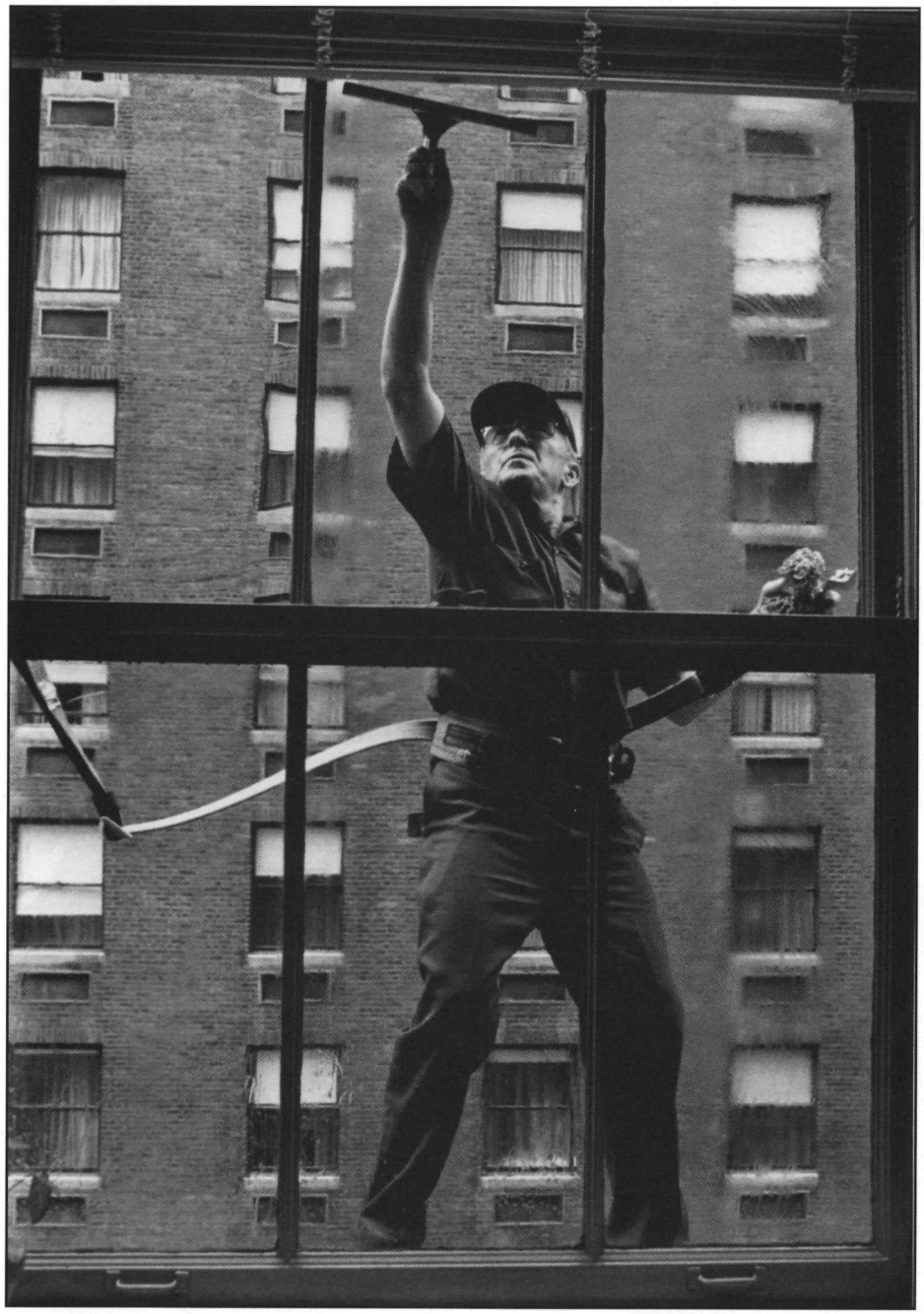
The Witness

WITNESS MAGAZINE



TIME AND FREEDOM

VOLUME 83
NUMBER 1/2
JAN/FEB 2000

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WITNESS MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

8 **Free time for a free people** *by Arthur Waskow*
"Overwork" and "underwork" are closely related, says Waskow. We live in a culture that cultivates both, despite deep human needs for rest and reflection, for family time and community time. The biblical call, he says, is for "times of freeing the earth from human exploitation and times of release from attachments and habits, addictions and idolatries."

12 **Punching back at the clock: fighting for a living wage** *by Camille Colatosti*
At the urging of workers, churches and unions, more than 35 municipalities across the country have passed living-wage ordinances. The movement's power lies in linking moral arguments to economic arguments.

18 **Time without price: following a thread of silence into a place of no-time** *by Rosanna Kazanjian*
Kazanjian has discovered in the ancient craft of weaving a spiritual practice that helps her "cross that border between distraction and attention, which in turn introduces me to the empty space of mystery."

22 **Time travel: When three hands bridge an abyss** *by Robert DeWitt*
"Alzheimer's," says DeWitt, "does not march, like a soldier. It moves quietly, like an Indian scout, sliding stealthily from one vantage point to the next, not in straight lines, doubling back, then streaking to the next point of vulnerability." As the disease takes over the mind of his wife, Bobbie, he realizes that since she cannot live in his world, he must enter hers — a world unbound by the usual conventions of time.

26 **On death and time** *by Jeanie and Bill Wylie-Kellermann*
Witness co-editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann meditates on death and time in light of her brain cancer. Her partner, Bill Wylie-Kellermann, offers a counterpoint to her reflection as he recalls theologian William Stringfellow's thoughts on the same topic — while Stringfellow, too, was facing a life-threatening medical condition.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editor's Notes
7 Poetry
11 Keeping Watch
21 Book Review
28 Short Takes
30 Witness Profile

on the cover

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Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists recieve a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

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World Sabbath

On January 22, 2000 we will be celebrating a World Sabbath of Religious Reconciliation — an interfaith holy day — at Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. The event has two goals: to create the first holy day to be shared by all religions of the world, and to teach religious leaders how to publicly oppose hate campaigns and religious wars. I think this event is one of the true hopes for the church and all religious institutions as we enter the new century. There will be thousands of peace events around the world over the New Years week-end, but this event is meant to be a continuing and eternal day of prayer and recommitment for peace, justice and an end to religious war. After the year 2000, the World Sabbath is to be held on the fourth Saturday of January. Out of all the millennial hoop-la, this will still be around once the dust settles in a decade or so.

Besides, this is the first holy day specifically designed to be celebrated equally by all religions. In a world filled with religious persecution and war, a day of interfaith repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation is just what God, however we may experience God, calls us to celebrate.

Rod Reinhart
Farmington Hills, Michigan

[Ed.note: Reinhart's World Sabbath project has been endorsed by the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, a synagogue (Temple Israel of Ann Arbor), the Detroit Muslim Center, the United Religions Initiative, the Parliament of the World's Religions and the National Council for Community and Justice (formerly known as the National Conference of Christians and Jews).Reinhart hopes other religious groups and congregations will take up his idea and hold services or events on 22 January. He has received phone calls from Africa, Australia and Israel about the event, and pastors from four churches — in New York, Texas and California — are planning their own events for the first World Sabbath.]

Science and faith

The Working Group on Science, Technology and Faith was established at the 1997 General Convention to be an educational resource of and for the Episcopal Church. Our mission is to be an educational resource of and for our Church at all levels. We need more members, more ethnic diversity and more dioceses represented.

Become a member — if you are interested in the interactions between science and religion, technology and ethics, etc., whether or not you have training in a scientific or technical field or in theology; if you are willing to lend your expertise and experience for specific projects, as requested; if you are looking for better integration between your vocations as a Christian and as a scientist/engineer; if you want some help in organizing a parish or diocesan dialogue on science and religion.

For more information, write Claire Lofgren, n/SSM, Working Group Membership Director, Society of St. Margaret, 17 Highland Park St., Roxbury, MA 02119.

Barbara Smith-Moran, Co-chair
Working Group on Science,
Technology and the Church

Spiritual growth program

On July 5, 2000, the Community of the Holy Spirit (CHS) will initiate a year-long residential spiritual growth program entitled "Deepening the Center" at its convent in Brewster, N.Y.

Under the direction of a sister, participants will form a community which will live and work alongside the monastic community, and will experience retreats, instruction in bible study, and other aspects of spirituality, spiritual direction, study and rest. Participation in community life and involvement in some aspect of the work of the monastic community are also important elements to the program. There is no charge for the program. Room and board, health insurance and a small living allowance will be provided. Enrollment is limited and highly selective. Women between 20-40

years of age, who are committed to their spiritual growth and are in good health, may apply. Those interested should write by April 25, 2000, to the Community of the Holy Spirit, Attn: The Rev. Mother Madeleine Mary, CHS, 621 West 113th St., New York, NY 10025-7916.

Pamela Mosley
New York, NY

Human rights action

SIPAZ (a coalition of organizations supporting the peace process in Chiapas, Mexico, which combines violence reduction and peacebuilding strategies in Chiapas with efforts to inform and mobilize the international community) requests that you take action in protest of the threats and attacks that have been suffered in recent months by the members of Mexico City's Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Human Rights Center (PRODH Center). Particularly, action should be taken in protest of the kidnapping and violence suffered on two occasions by attorney Digna Ochoa, legal coordinator of PRODH, whose life has been put in grave danger. In addition to letters to Mexican government authorities, we believe it is necessary to undertake other kinds of actions to pressure the Mexican government in a way that calls into question its international image and obliges it to take serious and effective measures to stop the escalation of violence against members of PRODH.

In recent years, the PRODH Center has suffered from repeated periods of threats, harassment, surveillance and other actions that have never been properly investigated by the authorities. Various members of the Center have been threatened with death at different times. In August of this year, attorney Digna Ochoa was kidnapped and held in a car, with her head covered, for several hours during which she was subjected to threats and interrogation. Recently, on the night of Oct. 28-29, she was the victim of an attempted homicide as well as verbal aggression, interrogation and intimidation by unknown individuals who entered her house.

She was subjected to a harsh and prolonged interrogation session about PRODH's work and the activities and personal information of each individual member of the center. The questions were punctuated by verbal aggression and threats.

They repeated again and again their questions about supposed "contacts" of PRODH in Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz, Puebla and Hidalgo. They also asked her about alleged contacts and safe-houses connected to the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army) and to the APR (Popular Revolutionary Army, active in Guerrero and Oaxaca).

They pressured her to sign blank pieces of paper, which she refused to sign. They also took photographs of her and went through her things. This went on all night and into the morning (approximately nine hours). Digna remained seated on the edge of the bed and one of the men pushed her until she was lying down. They tied her feet and hands behind her back with bandages and an elastic waistband. They placed an open gas tank next to her. Minutes later she managed to untie herself. When she attempted to use the telephone she realized that her line had been cut.

That same morning, Oct. 29, 1999, the door to the main entrance of the PRODH office was found open, and the Legal Defense Department offices, located on the second floor of the building, had been broken into. The window was left open and the desks were in disarray, with papers thrown around. On one desk a folder was placed in an obvious position with the words "PODER SUICIDA" (SUICIDE POWER) printed on it in red. We feel that these developments are quite serious and that they place in danger the lives of Digna Ochoa and her colleagues at the PRODH Center. Hence they call for an energetic response. We know that the Mexican government is extremely sensitive to anything that affects its international image. So it is necessary to act, but it is also necessary to give the greatest possible visibility to those actions.

A. Send letters to the Mexican government, or better still, go directly to the Mexican embassy or consulate in person and present a written protest requesting:

1. That there is an immediate cessation of physical and psychological aggression against the members of PRODH.

2. That the Mexican government should honor its obligation to respect, protect and defend the professional work of lawyers.

3. That the appropriate authorities take the necessary steps to guarantee the personal security and work of the members of PRODH, as well as all defenders of human rights in Mexico (as established in the corresponding December 1998 United Nations Declaration and the June 1999 Organization of American States Resolution both signed by Mexico).

4. That the security of the equipment, buildings and documents of PRODH be guaranteed.

5. That the investigation initiated in response to these aggressions produce convincing results as quickly as possible.

6. That the government accept the presence of observers and international escorts as a measure of protection for threatened people (as has been the practice in other countries).

B. Send copies of all actions to the Mexican press as well as your local press.

C. Broadcast these facts in print, radio and television media, as well as in all other communications media available. You may write letters to the editor, and send a copy to the Mexican embassy or consulate in your city.

D. Solicit government representatives or individuals or organizations of influence and prestige to undertake personal contacts with the Mexican government or its diplomatic representatives, expressing their concern about these alarming developments.

ADDRESSES:

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon, Presidencia de la Republica, Palacio Nacional, Mexico, D.F. 06067 MEXICO.

Lic. Diodoro Carrasco, Secretaria de Gobernacion, Bucareli 99, 1er piso, Col. Juarez, Mexico D.F. 06699 MEXICO.

Lic. Jorge. Madrazo Cuellar, Procuraduria General de la Republica, Paseo de la Reforma 65, esq. Violeta, Colonia Guerrero, Mexico D.F. 06300, MEXICO.

Dra. Mireille Roccatti, Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Periferico sur 3469, 5 piso, Col. San Jeronimo Lidice, Mexico D.F. 100200 MEXICO.

Dr. Samuel del Villar, Procuraduria General de Justicia del Distrito Federal, Ninos Heroes 61, tercer piso, Col. Doctores CP. 06720, Mexico, D.F. MEXICO.

Please send a copy of your letter to Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez A.C., Fax (int-52) 5535 68 92. ●

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Deadlines

by Julie A. Wortman

FOR PEOPLE IN MY LINE of business, working on deadline is a way of life. Plenty of people have time-specific goals to achieve, of course, but journalists and editors seem to exercise special ownership of the concept, expecting that when they talk about being "on deadline" people they encounter will somehow understand the particular urgency of the situation and will be willing to rearrange their calendars to fit in a last-minute interview, say, or postpone their own urgent dealings to give the publication's timeliness a priority.

I try to act casual about it, of course, but it is absolutely true that for me editorial deadlines are deeply serious — sacred, almost. Sacrosanct. Inviolable. You don't ever miss one. Ever. The stories must be completed, the art collected, the issue laid out and proofed and the print date honored, come hell or high water.

So I was dumbfounded this past year when a writer sent me a regretful e-mail only a couple of days before his story was due stating that, owing to a death in his family, he was bailing on the assignment. Perhaps dumbfounded is too flimsy a term. I was non-plussed. Then irate. Then frantic, as I wondered how, at this late moment, I was going to fill the hole this insult to the journalistic code left in the issue.

Needless to say — but at the time it seemed miraculously — we in very short order were able to find another way to approach the topic, perhaps a way that was even considerably fresher. My nervous system got more of a workout than I would have hoped for in pulling the new piece off, but I have to confess that the results were very satisfactory.

I say this now, in part, to force myself to admit publically that good things can come out of unmet deadlines, though I shudder as I form the words (I'm writing on deadline, of course, so I'm understandably on edge). But I also wish to offer my belated apology to the errant writer at the center of my tale. He missed his deadline because life — in the form of death — had intervened.

Time is not, as we in the journalism trade so easily suppose, absolute. Or sacrosanct. But most of us in this culture mourn its passage, denounce its wasting, fear its finalities — and feel prevented from allowing life to intervene on its demanding schedule because we accept that "time is money."

The commodification of time is a sad inheritance from the industrial revolution, I'd guess. But our modern, post-modern or extra-modern lives seem to take it for granted. My time is valuable, we all say, but we know bone-deep that our time is beyond price. Few deathbed reflections involve the wish that more time had been spent on the job.

Unless, of course, the work is vocation. And the time-consuming demands of it contain satisfaction when met. Satisfactions of the most basic kind — ones that nurture self-respect, the common good, creativity. Work that is worthy requires time carefully spent and justly compensated — but, also, freedom from time spent working. This is a critical freedom, in fact, one necessary for recalling our relationship to the larger life and to give us a chance to reflect on where we and our communities are headed and whether the course we've set needs adjusting.

More and more, I'm glad to say, people at every point of the economic spectrum seem to be challenging the time-is-money mantra of this culture. The assault comes from an infinite variety of venues — from living-wage campaigns, simple-living experiments, the re-invigorating of hand craftsmanship and right-livelihood business enterprises.

And, painfully enough for people like me, it must also come from questioning the tyranny of deadlines. ●

Julie A. Wortman *is publisher and co-editor of* The Witness, *<julie@thewitness.org>.*



Imagined Dolphins by Jackie Beckett

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No time, no space

by Peter Russell

THE TWO GREAT PARADIGM shifts in science this century have been Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Quantum Theory. The conclusion of Special Relativity Theory is that any observation, any measurement of space and time, is not absolute. We think that space and time are fixed — the distance from here to that wall is 40 feet, and that's fixed. What Einstein showed is that somebody zipping through this room at half the speed of light would measure that distance at 35 feet. And that isn't an illusion — distance really is different at different speeds. Time is also different at different speeds. If someone could travel at the speed of light, space would contract to zero and time would stop completely. This is interesting, because if light travels at the speed of light, then, as far as light is concerned, there is no time and there is no space. We think space and time are real, but as far as light is concerned, space and time don't exist. What Einstein showed is that light is the absolute, not space and time. The speed of light never varies. However far or fast you go, light will always pass you at the speed of light.

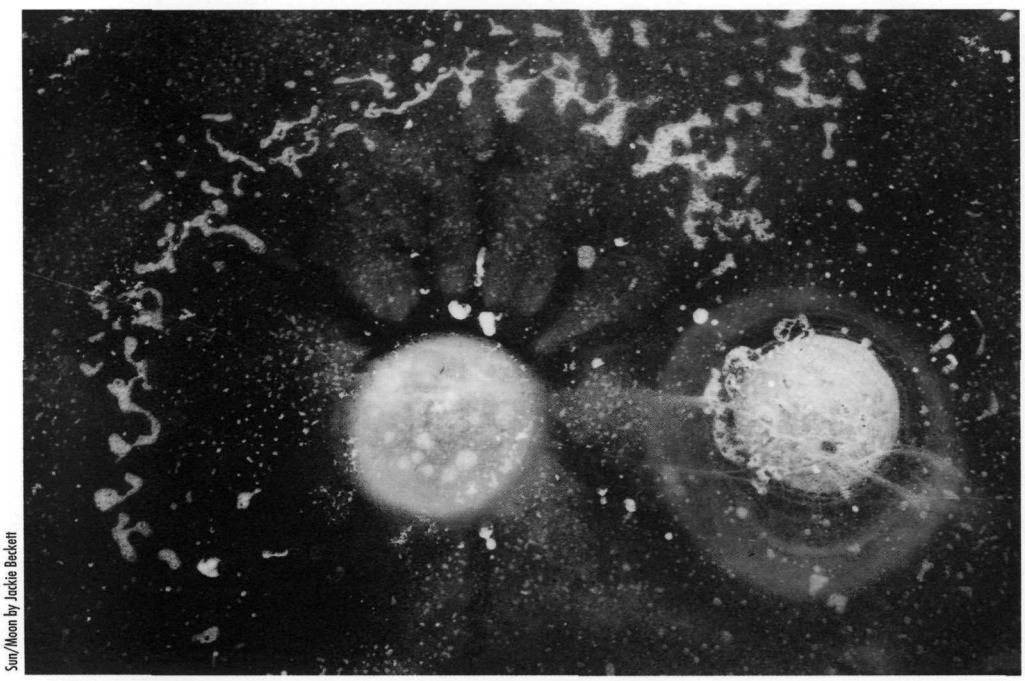
Light is the absolute also in quantum physics. Quantum physics says that if you increase the energy of a system, it doesn't go up smoothly, but in jumps. A quantum is an amount, the jump. Each jump is exactly the same. Every single jump of energy is an exact number of quanta. Moreover, every photon of light is an identical quantum of action. Every interaction in the Universe above the atomic level is mediated by the exchange of quanta, by photons. So you can say the whole Universe is inter-connected by light.

Did I hear somewhere, "God is light; in the beginning there was light; let there be light?" I also find it interesting how we use the word "light" for the life within us. We talk about the light of consciousness, the inner light, seeing the light, being illumined. It isn't dark inside. Just as everything in the physical world really comes back to light, everything in our experience is, in a sense, a manifestation of the light of consciousness. So, "God is light" starts having truth not just in terms of the physical world, but also in terms of our experience of reality. They become more and more fascinating, these parallels.

It is part of nearly all cultures that in the deepest states of consciousness, one realizes a sense of union. In Eastern philosophy, it's often said "Atman is Brahman." Brahman is the universal essence of everything. Atman is the essence of your own consciousness. So the essence of consciousness is the essence of all creation; is "God." Some yogis and very high saints talk about the whole universe being me, or the being within me. Perhaps they are people who, through deep meditation, through lots of inner work, exploration, clarifying their minds, have come to realize that it is all a creation of consciousness, that everything knowable is, in a sense, within them.

It's interesting that you can say the "F" word on television today, and you can use the "L" word, love, in business, but the word "God" is very taboo still. What science has done is to say we can take an idea and we can experiment with it and see what happens. The experiment which I would like to suggest — and it's one to play with — is to take the hypothesis that God is the essence of consciousness, and that consciousness is primary, and that the mystical statement "I am God" means that I am-ness is God-ness. Then say, "Supposing that is true, how do I live my life?"

I believe that when we really understand consciousness, and consciousness as the source of everything we know, we will begin to start forging that bridge across to God. ●



Sun/Moon by Jackie Beckett

Peter Russell *is a scientist and futurist. His books include* The Global Brain *and* Waking Up In Time. *A longer version of this piece first appeared in* Timeline *(3/4-1999), a publication of the Foundation for Global Community in Palo Alto, Calif.* ***Jackie Beckett*** *is a senior photographer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.*

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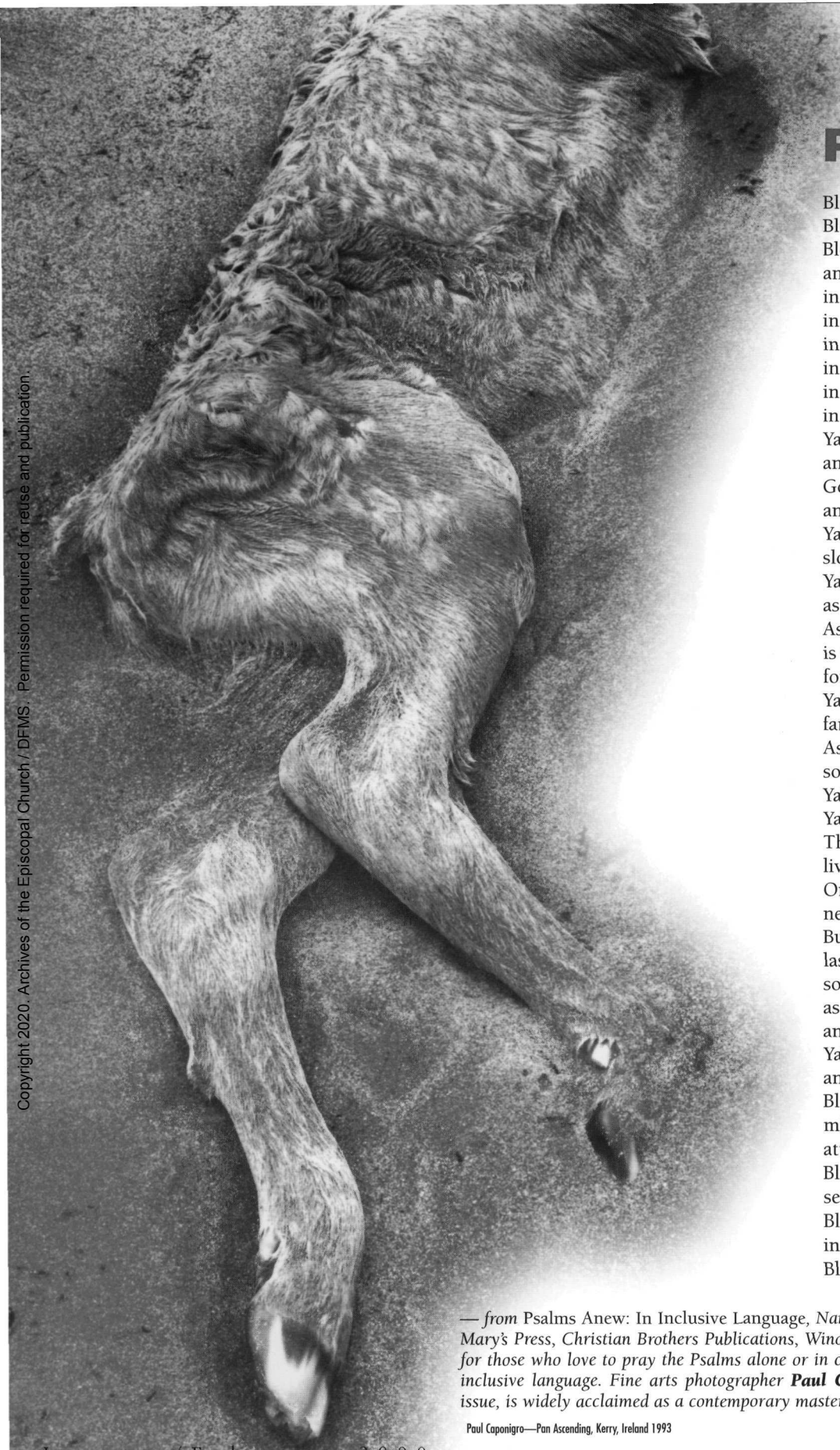

Psalm 103

Bless Yahweh, O my soul.
Bless God's holy name, all that is in me!
Bless Yahweh, O my soul,
and remember God's faithfulness:
in forgiving all your offenses,
in healing all your diseases,
in redeeming your life from destruction,
in crowning you with love and compassion,
in filling your years with good things,
in renewing your youth like an eagle's.
Yahweh does justice
and always takes the side of the oppressed.
God's ways were revealed to Moses,
and Yahweh's deeds to Israel.
Yahweh is merciful and forgiving,
slow to anger, rich in love;
Yahweh's wrath does not last forever;
as our guilt and our sins deserve.
As the height of heaven over earth
is the greatness of Yahweh's faithful love
for those who fear God.
Yahweh takes our sins away
farther than the east is from the west.
As tenderly as parents treat their children,
so Yahweh has compassion on those who fear God.
Yahweh knows what we are made of;
Yahweh remembers that we are dust.
The human lasts no longer than grass,
lives no longer than a flower in the field.
One gust of wind, and that one is gone,
never to be seen there again.
But Yahweh's faithful love for those who fear God
lasts from all eternity and forever,
so too God's justice to their children's children,
as long as they keep the covenant
and remember to obey its precepts.
Yahweh has established a throne in the heavens
and rules over all.
Bless Yahweh, all angels,
mighty in strength to enforce God's word,
attentive to every command.
Bless Yahweh, all nations,
servants who do God's will.
Bless Yahweh, all creatures
in every part of the world.
Bless Yahweh, O my soul.

— from Psalms Anew: In Inclusive Language, *Nancy Schreck, OSF, and Maureen Leach, OSF, Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, Winona, Minn., 1986.* Psalms Anew *has been created for those who love to pray the Psalms alone or in communal prayer and are committed to the use of inclusive language. Fine arts photographer* ***Paul Caponigro****, whose work appears throughout this issue, is widely acclaimed as a contemporary master of the medium. He lives in Cushing, Me.*

Paul Caponigro—Pan Ascending, Kerry, Ireland 1993

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FREE TIME FOR

by Arthur Waskow



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"WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY? WHEN DID THEY TAKE IT AWAY? ... WHEN DID WE GIVE IT AWAY?"

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I went to a folk-song festival in Philadelphia. Many of the singers sang labor songs of the 1930s, civil rights songs of the 1960s, peace songs of many decades. The audience sang along, nostalgia strong in the air.

Then Charlie King began singing a song with the refrain, "What ever happened to the eight-hour day? When did they take it away? ... When did we give it away?"

And the audience roared with passion. Not nostalgia. This was our lives, not something from the past.

I was startled. Suddenly I saw that my own sense of overwork, of teetering on the edge of burnout, was not mine alone. Something was hovering in the air.

Juliet Schor of Harvard wrote a book about it: *The Overworked Americans*. She showed that the promise made to us 30 years ago — that the new computer technology would give us more leisure time — had been betrayed. Most Americans worked longer hours, under more tension, than they had one generation ago.

Other studies followed. Some of them pointed out the increase in temporary workers, part-time workers — suggesting that Schor was mistaken. But it has become clear that "underwork" and "overwork" are in fact closely related. Corporations that seek to keep workers "part-time" and "temporary" so as to pay them less and avoid providing medical or pension benefits drive

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A FREE PEOPLE

workers into finding extra jobs, just to keep hanging on by their fingertips to a barely adequate income. The underwork breeds overwork.

And conversely, the overwork of some — 12-hour days, 60-hour weeks — reduces the numbers and the quality of jobs that are available to others. Overwork breeds disemployment.

Indeed, the overwork, overstress reality runs across class lines. From wealthy neurosurgeons to single mothers making minimum wages at fast-food stop-ins, tens of millions of Americans are overworked.

So — who is to say it's "overwork" if people choose to do it? Anyone who really feels burnt out can just slow down, no? Any malaise that people feel is just a result of their own choices, no? And of their refusal to face the consequences of their own choices, no?

No.

Treating overwork as a private, personal life-choice and a sense of burnout as a result of internal confusion and incompetence is like — very like — saying that women who felt discomforted and disempowered, ill at ease, in the 1950s were simply choosing their lifestyle and their discomfort. Many of those women felt themselves to blame for their unease. For many, it took Betty Friedan to put a name to their lives, and to show that it was a systemic and political structure that was oppressing them. And that they could do something about it.

I think we are in much the same situation today. There is an economic and cultural system that is driving most Americans into overwork. There are deep human needs for rest and reflection, for family time and community time. That system is grinding those deep human needs under foot. And that system can be changed.

Who says there are such human needs?

For all the traditions that take the Hebrew Scriptures seriously, there is a teaching: For the sake of remembering and taking to heart the grandeur of Creation and for the sake of freeing both ourselves from others' pharaonic power and others from our own oppression, we make "not-making": we celebrate Shabbat. (The word is usually translated into English as "Sabbath," but that is really mere transliteration; the word comes from the Hebrew verb for pausing, ceasing, calmly sitting.)

In Exodus 20: 8-11, the reason given for the Sabbath is to recall Creation; in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, it is to free all of us from slavery. In Jewish tradition, it is taught that these seemingly two separate meanings are in fact one. Meditate on them, and we can see them that way.

And we are taught not only the seventh-day Shabbat: there are also the seventh year and the seven-times-seven-plus-one year, the 50th year, the Jubilee (another mere transliteration, from "yovel": translator Everett Fox renders it as "Home-bringing"). (Lev. 25 and 26: 34-35, 43-45; Deut. 15: 1-18)

These year-long observances that the Bible calls "shabbat shabbaton," "Sabbath to the Sabbatical power," "deeply restful rest," are times of enacting social justice, and times of freeing the earth from human exploitation, and times of release from attachments and habits, addictions and idolatries.

Indeed, in these most radical socially revolutionary passages of Torah, the text never uses the word "tzedek" — justice — but instead the words "shmitah" and "dror," which mean "release." What Buddhists today call "non-attachment." The deepest root of social justice, according to these biblical passages, is the profoundly restful experience of abandoning control over others and over the earth. And conversely, the deepest meditation intended to free us from our egos cannot be experienced so long as we are egotistically bossing other human beings or the planet.

Not that the tradition of Shabbat taught this restfulness and utter non-attachment was the only path to walk. The tradition taught a rhythm, a spiral of Doing and Being in which the next stage of Doing was always to be higher, deeper, because a time of Being had preceded it. And in which we could bring a fuller, more whole self to the Being because we had Done more in the meantime. In which both Doing and Being were more holy because we had integrated them into a life-path.

Already in 1951, in the aftermath of those grotesque mockeries of triumphant Making — the Holocaust and Hiroshima — Abraham Joshua Heschel (who later marched alongside Martin Luther King against racism and the Vietnam War) wrote in *The Sabbath*: "To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, ... on which [humanity] avows [its] independence of that which is the world's chief idol ... a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow [humans] and the forces of nature — is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for [humanity's] progress than the Sabbath?"

Christianity, Islam, and Rabbinic Judaism all reinterpreted these biblical teachings in their own ways. But all of them, as well as Buddhism and perhaps all the world's other spiritual traditions, taught the necessity of periodically, rhyth-

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mically, calming one's self for inward reflection, for time to Love and time to Be.

Who can — and will — do something about the denial of these needs, the subjugation of human beings and the earth to the pharaonic notion that Shabbat is a waste of time, that tireless work is the real proof of one's worth?

You might think the labor movement would do something about it. After all, the eight-hour day that now seems lost to many of us was the result of labor struggles beginning in the 1880s: "Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for what we will!" Similar in meaning was the slogan of women Wobblies, garment workers who were members of the IWW, Industrial Workers of the World: "We want bread — and roses too!"

And there have indeed been some recent stirrings of interest in the American labor movement toward curtailing overtime — often in the hope of opening up more jobs for the disemployed. In Europe, especially in Germany, unions in several industries have won a 35-hour week. But in America, anxieties among workers about making more money in the short run have so far drowned out most of these wistful desires for more rest.

What would it mean for the different religious communities to undertake the effort that their own traditions teach?

Over the past year, a network of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists, initially brought together by The Shalom Center, have been examining these questions. They have been developing a statement called "Free Time/ Free People," and circulating it among a broader group of religious leaders and activists. Over the next several months, the Free Time committee intends to bring the statement to public attention to encourage the religious and spiritual communities themselves to enrich their own offerings of "sabbath" rest and release in many forms, and to begin developing specific policy proposals that would carry these teachings into the world of economics and politics.

Indeed, the religious communities are in a position to do two things at once:

Reawaken in their own members the wisdom of restfulness, willingness to open more of their own time for Being and Loving, and the richness of prayer, meditation, chant, and ceremony that can make this real; and take action in the world of public policy to free more time for spiritual search, for family, and for community.



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For the sake of this second sphere, there is every reason for the religious communities to reach out to the labor movement, the environmental movement, to groups that seek to nurture the family and "family values," to women's organizations.

Indeed The Shalom Center and the Free Time committee took part in the recent conference of the National Interfaith Committee for Workers' Rights, held in Los Angeles while the AFL-CIO met there as well.

The Free Time committee intends to urge American political, economic, and cultural leaders:

- to reduce the hours of work imposed on individuals without reducing their income;
- to strongly encourage the use of more free time in the service of family, community, and spiritual growth;
- and to make work itself sacred by securing full employment in jobs with decent income, health care, dignity, and self-direction — jobs secure enough and decent enough to let workers loose their grip on fear and seek Free Time.

The creation of Free Time could be accomplished in many different ways. One of them, however, is profoundly and strategically important: making more time available for face-to-face neighborhood and community volunteer activism.

Such a beginning would free volunteers to put new effort into grass-roots democratic change and grass-roots communities and institutions, like our congregations themselves. It would make possible more grass-roots effort to achieve Free Time.

And it would give new breathing-time to many overworked and many ill-worked people to once more meet their neighbors, renew their own selves, and rediscover their deepest visions of a sacred world. ●

Rabbi Arthur Waskow *directs The Shalom Center, <www.shalomctr.org>. He is author of* Godwrestling — Round 2 *and* Down-to-Earth Judaism. *For more about Free Time/ Free People, contact The Shalom Center.*

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International delegation to Washington to save Mumia!

by Baldemar Velasquez

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A rally of close to 10,000 unionists and activists was held in Paris on October 15, 1999, to build support for the Open World Conference in Defense of Trade Union Independence and Democratic Rights (OWC), which will be held in San Francisco on February 11-14, 2000 (contact <owc@igc.org>). The Paris rally, held at the Palais des Sports [Sports Palace], was chaired by Baldemar Velasquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC/AFL-CIO) and co-chair of the Labor Party in the U.S. One of the focal points of the Paris rally was the fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. Lybon Mabasa, president of the Socialist Party of Azania (South Africa) and Tetevi Norbert Gbikpi-Benissan, president of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Togo, proposed to the rally and its keynote speakers that they promote an "Open Letter to Bill Clinton" demanding that he intervene and direct the Justice Department to conduct an immediate investigation into the violation of Mumia's civil rights at the hands of the Philadelphia police in an effort to strengthen the fight to stop the execution and win a fair trial.

According to Jim Lafferty, executive director of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, Clinton cannot commute Mumia's sentence, but he could direct Janet Reno and the Justice Department to conduct an investigation of the Philadelphia Police Department to determine if Mumia's civil rights were violated. "It is important to point out that the Justice Department over the years has conducted a number of investigations of the Philadelphia Police Department," Lafferty says. "It has been disclosed that the Prosecutor's Office was systematically training its subordinates in how to make sure that not too many Blacks would serve on a jury. As a result, it is estimated that as many as 300 to 400 cases might have to be retried. There is a long list of violations of Mumia's rights by the Philadelphia courts and the police. One of the issues in Mumia's trial is precisely the exclusion of Black jurors."

THE INTERNATIONAL Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal has selected the date of January 12, 2000, for an international delegation to Washington to demand justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Our goal is to bring together in the nation's capital leaders, luminaries and well-known personalities who support the demand for a new trial.

We have written an "Open Letter to Bill Clinton," which we are circulating widely. The text of the letter reads: "Mr. President, We call upon you because you have the power to prevent an irreparable injustice: the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

"The Supreme Court of the United States has just rejected without any commentary the appeal submitted by Mumia Abu-Jamal's lawyers. Whatever our country, our nationality, our political, philosophical or religious opinions, or the color of our skin, we the undersigned are staunch defenders of human rights and justice. Mr. President: You know that any objective examination of the conditions of Mumia Abu-Jamal's trial shows that his elementary right to a fair trial was denied to him. In such conditions, his execution would be but an act of legalized murder.

"You have the power and duty to prevent this. In the name of justice, to which all citizens have a right, we call upon you with a sense of urgency and ask you to use the powers of your office to prevent the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal and to ensure him the conditions for a new and fair trial."

The "Open Letter to Bill Clinton" and the proposal for a delegation have received enthusiastic support the world over. Our aim is to assemble in this delegation members of the Congressional Black Caucus and Hispanic Caucus, as well as other legislators, trade union leaders from this country and abroad, leaders of the civil rights movement, clergy, political leaders from other countries (such as members of the British Parliament), Nobel Prize Laureates, and, of course, spokespersons for the Mumia movement.

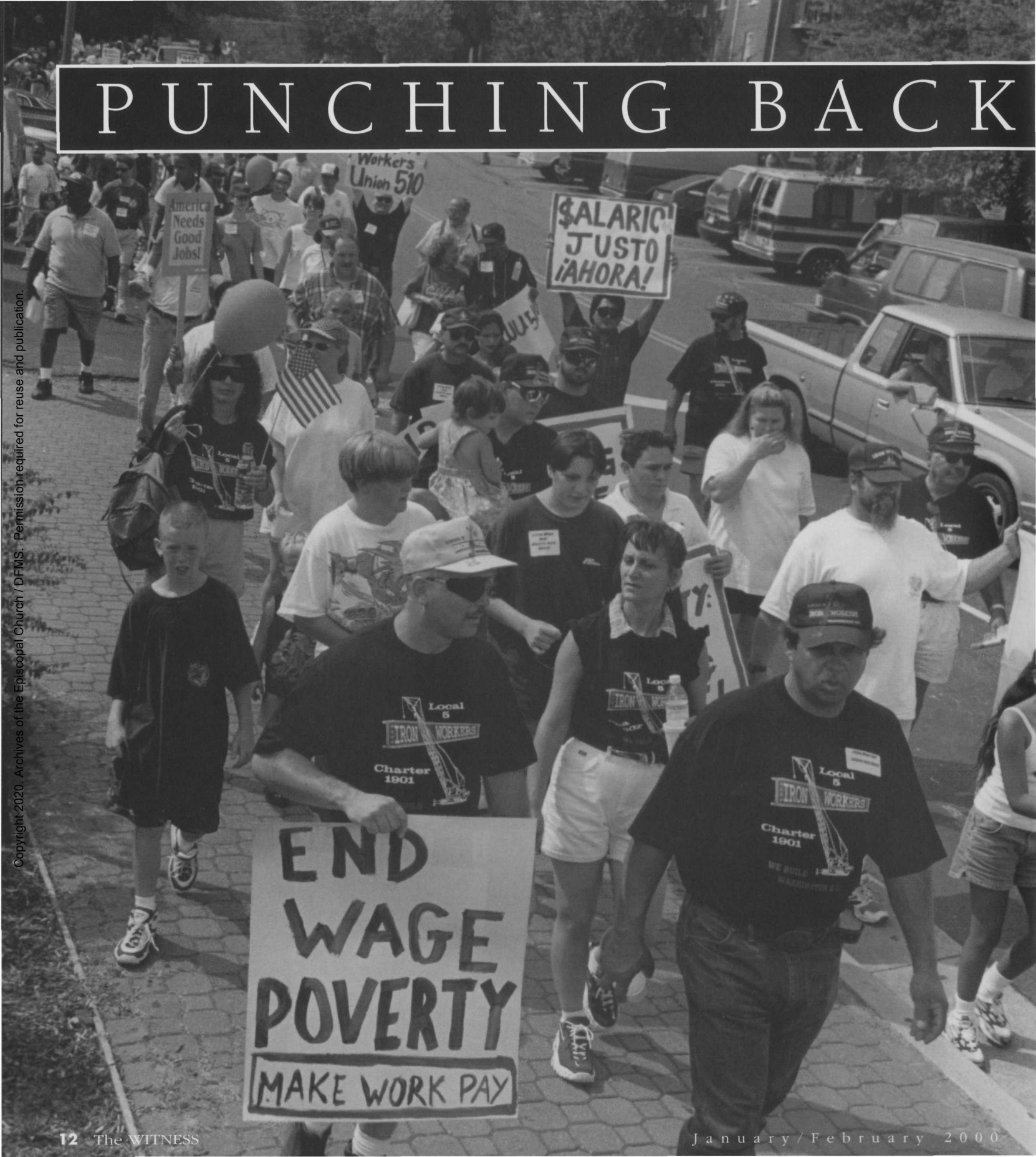
The proposed plan for this event is to hold a well-prepared news conference in Washington, D.C., on January 12 with a broad array of national and international speakers. At the conclusion of the news conference, those assembled would march as a group to the White House and to the Justice Department to deliver the Open Letter, together with lists of all signers, and to make a statement.

An all-out campaign will be waged to get agreement from the White House and the Justice Department to receive our delegation. We are proceeding with the expectation that if the delegation is sufficiently broad, it will be received by top-ranking officials.

I call upon all supporters of democratic rights in the U.S. and across the globe to help us gather hundreds of thousands of signatures in support of the "Open Letter to Bill Clinton." Let us serve notice to Bill Clinton that the eyes of the world are on his administration and that Clinton must use the powers of his office to ensure the conditions for a new and fair trial for Mumia. ●

Baldemar Velasquez *is president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC, AFL-CIO) and Convener, International Delegation to Washington. For a list of the initial members of the International Committee to Save Mumia, and for the list of new sponsors in close to 70 countries to this date, contact <cimumia@wanadoo.fr>.*

PUNCHING BACK



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Fighting for a living wage

by Camille Colatosti

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TWO YEARS AGO, Altagracia Perez, rector of St. Phillip's Episcopal Church in South Central Los Angeles, joined Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE), a group that helped to pass a living wage ordinance in Los Angeles. This ordinance, like the more than 35 that have been passed by municipalities across the country, creates a minimum wage based on what workers need to provide for their families. Perez wanted her parish to be a part of this important movement.

Her congregation, a historically African-American congregation with a growing Latino population, "had been working a lot internally." The older, African-American members and the newer Latino members were "seeing how we could, together, build ourselves into one community."

The living wage campaign was important, says Perez, "because this is an issue that directly impacts the neighborhood and congregation. Without a living wage, one's quality of life is compromised and this includes institutions in the community — including the churches.

"The older members of the church — lots of them — belong to unions and so were able to buy houses and support their families. This campaign enabled them to make a connection with others."

As Perez explains, "Some of the Latino members of my church are the working poor. They won't benefit directly from the living wage ordinance because the folks in my parish are poorer than that. Their jobs aren't as good as ones with companies that contract with the city. Many do factory piecework. But the Spanish-speaking members understood that this would benefit people like them."

Perez continues, "As a church, we're called to work with the poor. As churches we usually spend all of our time doing the service work. In L.A., the gap between rich and poor is tremendous and it doesn't need to be. We do service work. We have an after school program and a soup kitchen, but it would tap all of our energy and resources to provide resources that would be unnecessary if we had a more just system.

"The Bible calls on us to cry out against the injustice of the powerful against the less powerful. Making connections among ourselves and with others, working with unions and other organizations, helps us make a big impact."

Richard Gillett, the missioner for Social Justice with the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles and a leader of CLUE, agrees.

He, too, speaks of the benefits of "making connections."

"The solid and sustained participation in this campaign of the mainstream religious community — Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim — is concrete witness that the Christian right cannot presume to speak either for the whole Christian community or for other faiths. It indicates that the enduring religious traditions that sustain our major faiths can, if evoked, speak effectively on behalf of those who have been marginalized and dehumanized by the economic machine of modern-day capitalism." The campaign was a model of community activists, religious leaders and labor leaders working together to bring about justice. The coalition received grants from foundations,

"THE TEST OF OUR PROGRESS IS NOT WHETHER WE ADD MORE TO THE ABUNDANCE OF THOSE WHO HAVE MUCH; IT IS WHETHER WE PROVIDE ENOUGH FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TOO LITTLE."

— *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*

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Bishop Frederick Borsch speaks at a rally at LAX (L.A. International Airport) supporting living wages for up to 10,000 workers at the airport. Also featured are Madeline Janis-Aparicio, who headed the LA Living Wage Coalition, and Kent Wong, Director of the UCLA Labor Studies Center.

labor unions, and Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish groups, with which it hired staff. The group developed well-researched data on the impact of the proposed ordinance on workers and businesses, and then they formed CLUE.

Gillett explains in the July-August 1997 issue of *Tikkun*, "This was an example of the involvement of top religious leadership." The Episcopal bishop in Los Angeles, Frederick Borsch, as well as a prominent rabbi and a Methodist bishop wrote a joint opinion piece supporting the ordinance for the Los Angeles Times. The American Jewish Congress, Catholic Cardinal Roger Mahoney and the Muslim Public Affairs Council as well as other religious bodies also supported the ordinance. "But the chief work was grassroots," says Gillett.

For Thanksgiving, church members organized children to decorate paper plates that were mailed to the mayor and city council. In Perez' church, children decorated plates in the after school program and at coffee hours. "We had a living wage presentation that was at a children's level," says Perez. On the plates, kids asked that the council support the poor. Some kids wrote, 'Please pass this law.' Others, who were older, wrote more sophisticated things, such as, 'It's hard to feed a family of four with a minimum wage job.'"

In December 1996, a group of CLUE members visited each city council person's office singing "living wage carols" — holiday carols adapted with lyrics promoting the living wage. For the New Year, coalition members sent cards saying, "Ring in the New Year with a living wage."

On the day of the vote, says Gillett, "coalition supporters were packed to the walls of the council chambers." The vote was unanimous in support of the living wage.

What is a 'living wage'?

"A living wage," explains Gillett, "is connected to federal poverty lines. If you use that measure, you have to ask, what does it take to bring a family of four to the poverty line? The answer is that someone in the family needs to work full time for $7.51 an hour, but the poverty line is so atrocious that to think that a family of four can get by on $16,459 a year makes no sense. A living wage should be double what the federal minimum wage is right now ($5.15 an hour)."

Gillett continues, "To understand the severity that even the federal poverty line represents, consider that in Los Angeles, an average two-bedroom house rents for $855 a month. After the rent is paid, a family of four at the poverty level has only about $450 a month left for all other expenses: food, transportation, clothes, health and other basics. Fully 35 percent of all workers in the city have incomes below the poverty line. And the working poor in Los Angeles are getting poorer: from 1979 to 1989, low wage industries here grew by a whopping 40 percent."

Gillett believes that it takes $11 an hour in California to have "a bare bones budget." Nevertheless, the Los Angeles living wage ordinance set a minimum wage of $7.51 an hour for employers that pay health benefits and $8.76 an hour for employers who do not. The ordinance also requires that employees have 12 paid days off a year, protections from retaliation if they choose to unionize and some job security provisions.

The Los Angeles ordinance, like most that have passed in more than 35 other municipalities across the country and are pending in at least two dozen more, applies to employers who do business with the city. That is, employers who receive city contracts of $25,000 or more or who lease city land must comply. In addition, the Los Angeles ordinance goes beyond many of the other local ordinances by mandating employers who receive tax abatements and other incentives from city government also to pay a living wage. In 1997, Los Angeles gave more than $250 million to companies in the form of subsidies and incentives.

While the number of workers who benefit from the city ordinance is small, approximately 7,600, each living wage campaign leads to the next. The campaign in the city of Los Angeles made the recent passage of a living wage for Los Angeles County possible.

"Furthermore," adds Gillett, "there might be an opening here for religious groups to use future living wage campaigns as vehicles to broaden discussion of the responsibility of business to the community beyond that of providing a livable wage."

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Working poor

Last year, 7.3 million American families were officially designated as poor, that is with incomes below $16,459 for a family of four. In over two-thirds of these families, at least one person was working. At $5.15 an hour, the federal minimum wage, a full-time worker earns $10,300 a year, below the national poverty threshold for a family of two. A family of four with one wage earner working for minimum wage falls nearly 40 percent below the line. Contrary to popular misconceptions, 70 percent of minimum wage earners are adults.

Robert Pollin, professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts and co-author with Stephanie Luce of *The Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy* (New Press, 1998), explains that this family would receive an earned-income tax credit, food stamps and Medicaid, "but the need for such programs to support a full time worker's household only underscores the fact that $5.15 an hour is not close to being a living wage."

The real value of the minimum wage, explains Pollin, is 30 percent below what it was in 1968, even though the economy is 50 percent more productive. In fact, if the minimum wage had kept pace with inflation, it would be $11.07 right now.

The living wage movement has, as Pollin describes it, been "strategically astute. It has emerged primarily at the level of municipal politics because organizers correctly assessed that their efforts have a greater chance of success when they attempt to change municipal laws rather than those of states or the federal government, where business has a great capacity to use its money and lobbying clout. Various local campaigns are gaining strength through building national connections."

In May 1998, the first national living wage campaign training conference was held. Organizers from 34 cities came together to discuss strategy and consider ways to coordinate their work.

The Association of Community Organizations (ACORN) serves as a national clearinghouse of information, and hosts a web page dedicated to the subject, <www.livingwagecampaign.org>.

More than 35 living wage ordinances have passed since the initial one in Baltimore in 1994. New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon and more all have living wage ordinances on the books, and most follow the Baltimore model: firms holding service contracts with the city are to pay a living wage, usually between $7 and $10 an hour, with health benefits and paid days off. "If private firms want city contracts," says Pollin, "they must pay their workers substantially better than the sub-poverty wage of the national minimum."

As Pollin explains, "A single mother working full time at $7.70 an hour," the living wage in Baltimore, "would thus be able to live with her child above the poverty line. However, a family of one jobholder, one homemaker and two children would still be in poverty."

The living wage ordinances, then, are a major breakthrough but they are not enough. And some of the newest campaigns recognize this. In Denver and Houston, activists advanced more ambitious proposals but they were defeated at the polls. If passed, they would have required all employers with 50 or more workers to pay a living wage.

A similarly ambitious ordinance is being proposed for Santa Monica's coastal zone. "Some of the wealthiest companies in the world are making money off the city's investment in the coastal zone," says Madeline Janis-Aparicio, the director of the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, the organization that spearheaded the living wage coalition in Los Angeles. "We are pushing the envelope further."

But "pushing the envelope" encounters greater resistance from business. In Santa Monica, the business community is already boasting a $750,000 war chest to fight the ordinance. Employers claim that they will lose money and will have to cut jobs. Such claims, says Pollin, are exaggerated at best.

Assessing the impact of paying livable wages

To illustrate the minimal impact that living wage ordinances have on employers, Pollin takes the Los Angeles example. This raised the pay for 7,600 full and part-time workers. A full-time worker receives, on average, $3,600 more a year under the living wage than he or she did with minimum wage.

The living wage in Los Angeles affects about 1,000 firms, which, together, produce about $4.4 billion in goods and services in a year. The living wage costs about $24,000 a year per firm, or $24 million a year all together. This amounts to only 0.5 percent of their annual budgets, hardly a debilitating sum, says Pollin.

While the living wage directly benefits about 7,600 workers in Los Angeles, it also indirectly benefits approximately 28,000 more, says Pollin. "There will be pressure to increase wages for workers who now earn more than $7.25 in affected firms. There will also be pressure in non-affected firms to increase wages in order to compete for workers." To account for this, Pollin figures an additional one percent per each company.

"This should have virtually no impact on city budgets," says Pollin. "If companies with contracts raise prices to cities, other companies will come in and compete with lower offers."

A study by Mark Weisbrot and Michelle Sforza of the Preamble Center for Public Policy confirms this. Weisbrot and Sforza interviewed business owners in Baltimore. As the study concludes, "Owners were positive about how the living wage law affected bidding." The living wage "levels the playing field," preventing companies from reducing wages in order to put in a low bid.

Temple University Professor of Economics Andrew J. Buck also analyzed living wage ordinances in Baltimore and Los Angeles. In addition, he reviewed studies of other cities, and examined a proposed living wage for Philadelphia. He found no evidence that adopting a living wage hurts cities. In Baltimore, taxpayers pay about 17 cents per person annually for the living wage ordinance. In Philadelphia, Buck concludes that "economic benefits offset any increased cost to the city. By earning higher incomes, the city's lowest wage workers can afford to pay taxes to city hall and are less likely to use public assistance."

When workers earn more, they buy more. There is also lower job turnover, increased productivity, and higher morale.

Local living wage ordinances are tremendously popular. In November 1998, for

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example, more than 80 percent of Detroit voters approved the living wage there. This was the first living wage ordinance to pass by voter approval rather than legislatively. Unable to convince the Detroit City Council and meeting resistance from Democratic Mayor Dennis Archer, the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO circulated petitions to put the initiative on the November 1998 ballot. But politicians and business leaders are not giving up easily. Now the Michigan state legislature and Republican Governor John Engler are proposing a Michigan House bill, HR 4777, to prevent local units of government from creating laws which "overlap, duplicate or conflict" with state legislation. If passed, this bill would prevent municipalities from creating living wages that exceed the minimum wage. Likewise, cities would be unable to pass environmental protection ordinances or even smoking bans that exceed state standards.

Ultimately, there will need to be a national living wage. Pollin argues that the minimum wage should be raised to at least $7.25 an hour and, better, $11 an hour — in keeping with productivity increases.

Madeline Janis-Aparicio agrees. She explains that activists must focus on the living wage not as an end in itself, but as a stepping stone to a larger goal. She states that the goal of the Los Angeles living wage campaign was, of course, "to directly affect the lives of workers who are getting a raise but the campaign is also a tool to build a movement for worker justice. We have a long-term approach."

Keeping this idea in mind, explains Philip Chmielewski, an associate professor of Christian ethics at Loyola University in Chicago, we see that "living wage ordinances challenge the currently favored model for revitalizing the urban fabric — a model that depends on tax abatements for businesses, enterprise zones and industrial development bonds."

Living wage advocates hope to build a "new" economy. In using that phrase, says Janis-Aparicio, "we try to capture some of the language of the other side. They mean 'team' workers. We mean an economy based on the values and principles of bringing up the bottom, and providing a decent standard of living for those on the bottom, as well as respect."

Working in coalition with religious organizations is fundamental to this long-term approach, says Janis-Aparicio. "We believe that if we are going to create a movement for economic justice we have to have the moral arguments connected to economic arguments. We believe that we need this to build a mass movement. It's really powerful when faith-based issues are linked to economic issues."

A theology of work

To many, building a new economy is essential work for people of faith. Gillett explains, "We must understand and recover a basic biblical truth. People don't engage in work in order to serve the economy; the economy of any country should exist to serve the people."

He continues, "The theology of work is to recognize that the activity of human work has a religious dimension. That sounds very strange because very few have found that work has any connection with religion. But people who engage in work of any kind are supposedly, according to the Old and New Testaments, participating in the upbuilding of the human community. They are stewards of what God has given us."

An important document on this subject, says Gillett, is *On Human Work*, an Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, written in 1981. Human life, the document says, "is built up every day from work. From work it derives its specific dignity." And the church "considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated," and to promote authentic progress.

As the Encyclical suggests, and Gillett explains, "Inherently, work should have a creative and even a moral dimension. But the great preponderance of work either has no necessarily moral human dimension or it is degrading. Perhaps to very few people — teachers, nurses, doctors, writers — to very few people does work feel creative. To the vast majority it is a way to make a living.

"The industrial revolution, among other things," continues Gillett, "made work a degrading activity for so many people, but this isn't the way it is supposed to be. We need to think about work as having some kind of divine dimension. At the least, people who work should have respect and be accorded dignity in what they do. We need to bring work to a place where people can earn a decent living."

In 1997 the Episcopal Church's General Convention passed a resolution on the theology of work. The resolution called for a report, on which Gillett has been working, to be presented at this year's convention in Denver. The report will call for action on three levels: parish and personal, community and public policy.

Gillett explains, "At a personal level, a lot of parishioners can, at their place of business, if they are in a position to do so, pay a living wage to the people who they hire. We've found that living wages should be paid to full- and part-time people. If you hire someone to work in your home, pay him or her a living wage and pay social security."

Those working on this report may also request action by the church's pension fund.

"In particular, we may request a meeting with the Service Employees International Union, to get the assistance of the church pension fund to settle a longstanding labor dispute of low-wage janitors in Washington, D.C.," Gillett says.

We must make a real commitment to the working poor, says Gillett. For, as Bishop Borsch explains, "People of faith are called to ensure that everyone receives fair compensation, participates fairly in life, has enough to eat, adequate health care and the right to organize."

As church activists like Gillett, Perez and others have been noting, many in government and society expect churches to compensate for economic disparities in this post-welfare era. But, as Perez suggests, churches need to realize that they have to do more than feed and clothe the poor — they need, also, to help transform society.

"Charity work is important," concludes Perez, "but justice is better than charity." ●

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ON THE LINE



Resisting work-faster oppression

by Jane Slaughter

MEAT PROCESSING COMPANIES — slaughterhouses — prefer not to give plant tours. This past summer at IBP, the world's largest processor of beef and pork, company spokesman Don Willoughby remarked to *The New York Times*, "People like to visualize the cow out in the pasture and the steak on the plate, but they really don't want to visualize what goes on in-between."

What goes on in-between is disturbing not only for the hamburger customer but also for the workers who kill the cows and cut their meat off the bones. In June 1999, at IBP's plant in the tiny town of Wallula, Wash., a thousand meatpacking workers pulled a month-long wildcat strike to protest their working conditions. The company policies that leave workers cut and crippled, the strikers made clear, are also what cause unsanitary — disgusting — conditions for consumers.

Who takes these nasty and low-paying jobs? Workers at — pardon the expression — the bottom of the food chain. The workforce at Wallula, as throughout the meatpacking industry, is almost all immigrants, mostly Mexicans, but also Salvadorans, Laotians, Vietnamese and Bosnians. A majority are women.

Speed is the main cause of both worker injuries and massive violations of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food safety rules. Management continually urges workers to work faster. Maria Martinez, who was elected chief union steward in a landslide when workers became fed-up with their do-nothing, Anglo-led Teamsters local, says, "The working conditions are so bad due to the speed of the chain. They get carpal tunnel, they pull their back, they pull muscles on their shoulders."

Of direct concern to consumers is the fact that the speed of the line leaves little time for hygiene. Workers place their cut meat on small tables. "When the line is so fast you can't keep up, you stack it," she explains. "And if it falls on the floor you don't want to take time to go wash your meat, because every second it gets stacked up more."

Even worse, says line steward Melquiades "Flaco" Pereyra, when a worker cuts into a hidden abscess, pus squirts everywhere, and there's no time to do more than wipe face or meat with a paper towel. "The company loses money every minute the chain stops," said Pereyra, interviewed in Spanish.

Another cause of injuries, Martinez says, is falls on floors made slippery by fat, blood, or the hosing down at the end of the shift. "If you fall on your butt you mess up your tailbone," said Martinez. "We have two men in wheelchairs now. The worst part is, once you're hurt they'll find a way to get you out the door."

Pereyra and Martinez work in the processing department, where meat is cut up into salable units. They say that workers in the slaughter department have similar complaints. Their hands — and thus the meat — become contaminated with cow feces and pus. When cows are not slaughtered properly, workers must skin them alive. "They kick," says Martinez. "The people that cut off the feet have had their fingers cut when the cow kicks their clippers."

In 1996, the last year for which numbers are available, the Wallula plant was cited for enough USDA violations to place it in the worst 5 percent of all meat and poultry plants. One hundred seventy-six violations were "critical" — of the type likely to cause contamination that would make consumers sick. Of the 544 largest plants, Wallula was in the worst quarter.

"On June 4," says Pereyra, "we went to work like every day. A *compañero* was taken to the office for stacking his meat, because the speed of production was very fast." Other workers gathered at the office to support him. When Martinez asked the superintendent, "What's the problem?" he responded, "They have 60 seconds to return to work, or they're fired. You're all fired."

Most of the shift walked out in protest. Although later that day management rescinded the firings and begged the workers to return, they stayed out for a month, pressuring for a new union contract with better pay and the right to stop the chain to correct unsafe or unsanitary conditions.

In the end, the workers gained none of the safety improvements they had sought, but, remarkably, the IBP workers were not disheartened by this setback. They vowed to take over their local — in which they are the majority — in the next election, and to continue pressing for cleaner and safer conditions.

Recounting what they'd learned, Pereyra said, "We got to know each other. We're more united than ever in the history of this local. We lived for a month on strike. We made the world realize how this company was treating the workers and also the public. Because our strike wasn't just for money, but to protect the workers and to protect the public, the consumer." ●

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Following a thread of silence into a place of no-time

by Rosanna Kazanjian

THERE IS NOTHING PRACTICAL about weaving dishtowels. Measured in minutes and hours, spinning yarn is an expensive way to make a sweater. Handmade socks are an outrageous project when the supermarket sells them in the household aisle for $2.50. Nevertheless, this slow paced economically absurd activity takes up a large part of my time these days. I spin and knit and weave with a passion that totally surprises me. In fact, the creation of these homey products has become a spiritual practice.

I am rapturous about every aspect of the process of making yarn: the sheep, the grassy pastures, the smell of lanolin, the feel of wool fiber in warm sudsy water, the smell of damp, drying wool, the tangle and untangling of tiny threads and the twisting into usable yarn, holding the fluff of fleece and the triangle web that releases the threads into the twist, plunging my hand into a bas-

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ket of clean, combed fleece ready to spin, holding a lap full of soft skeins of yarn.

This passion is tactile. My hands take the clue from the fiber as I shape, tease or structure it. I am engaged in an ancient language without words. As I follow this thread of silence I come to a place of no time and no sound — a space for my own personal language of touch and smell and sensation.

Randall Darwall, a talented contemporary weaver, says this about our culture: "In regard to verbal articulation, the reading and writing public of today is enormous[ly advanced]. But we have certainly grown increasingly insensitive in our perception by touch, the tactile sense. Our tactile experiences are elemental. If we reduce their range, as we do when we reduce the necessity to form things ourselves, we grow lopsided. We are apt, today, to overcharge our gray matter with words and pictures ... with material already transposed into a certain key, preformulated material, and to fall short in providing for a stimulus that may touch off our creative impulse, such as unformed material, material in the rough."

As the external fabric takes shape, I connect to the unformed material within. I am discovering hidden aspects of myself. Following the long thin threads inward, I am being changed and these changes are silent friends leading me home.

Is it outrageous to call this a spiritual practice? Is it presumptuous to believe one can encounter the Holy through fiber and warp and weft?

I think of the beautiful linens and vestments fashioned over centuries by women of the church. What prompts such detailed, loving stitchery? Is there a longing for God so strong that no stitch is too fine, no fabric too dear, no effort too great because what they are really doing is clothing the mystery and it is their spiritual practice? Are the silk and linen threads wordless connections to God? Perhaps theirs is a tactile love affair with the Holy. I know that when I have handled exquisite vestments or fine linens I am deeply moved, transported. Is it possible

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that the anonymous women who bring the fabric to the sacristy know as much about the Mystery as those who raise the chalice at the altar?

I am beginning to learn that I may, if I am patient, experience God (however named) through the silent, wordless, timeless space created by this ancient craft. How surprising to find the Holy in a basket of newly washed fleece, or in the miracle of fabric appearing on the loom from separate threads of weft and warp!

As touch and silence become my teachers in this spiritual practice of fiber-making, so does time. My previous notion of time has shifted, its value, its insistent edge, its guilty insinuations. The newer understanding lets me engage in a relatively time-free space as I spend long hours slowly putting fibers together, spinning, knitting or weaving.

Time comes in many forms — the tracking of seasons, the noting of moon cycles, the rising and setting of the sun, the ticking of the minutes, the time it takes for a cake to rise, time spent, time wasted, time to get up, time to die, time watched so closely that there is no time to notice life.

So much of my life I have asked time to tell me who I am. The ticking of the clock has been a constant dictator whispering orders just below my consciousness. In our culture time has become a false god to whom many of us have sacrificed all the subtle nuances of mystery in order to be "on time."

But of late, I have fallen into time in a new way that only now I see has been a life journey and this slow-motion, impractical business of making fabric is my current teacher.

Glancing back I see my life as a collection of stories, a simple staggering toward the Holy. The most constant thread always has been some deep longing to know the sacred in everything, to be able to respond to the mystery in all things with respect, compassion and love. In the staggering there has been great falling down and falling short. There have also been precious times when doors of awareness opened.

When I was young, very young, I would wander through the woods of my beloved Colorado mountains fully in the world around me and fully connected to the world

within. The hours of solitude, where time was not a companion, were simple, uncomplicated moments of being very present. One particular day I was sitting next to a small stream when I heard a great crashing coming toward me. My heart beat so fast I definitely thought my time was up. Then through the bushes burst a fawn. The fawn stood frozen. I sat frozen. I looked straight into its eyes and saw what I now name God. I have carried that sacred moment inside me all my life. A small doorway opened to an experience for which I have never ceased to hunger, moments of total attention to and absorption by the Holy.

Later, in the middle of my life in a different woods, in Bethel, Me., I was obediently following the directions of one of the trainers in a personal growth lab. The task was to spend 24 hours moving in slow motion. I was a woman in a hurry, a hungry learner on the move, so this assignment was torture. After a few hours of resistance, feeling silly, trying to slow down my frenetic dance with life, I fell into the blessedness of a walking stride that felt like being in the zone. I glanced to my right and saw that I had a walking companion, a bird. We were walking at the same pace. Time shifted down, down, down, into a whole different rhythm. Time flowed like a thick river of oil. I fell in love with my escort and our shared cadence. My tiny teacher opened a door to a faintly remembered experience of tempo below the manufactured tempo of the invented life. I found myself once again in a moment of total absorption with the Holy.

Though I did not know it then, it was my introduction to the Buddhist practice of walking meditation. The same resistance I felt to slowing down on the bird walk rose up in me when I was instructed to engage in walking meditation. Only when I again experienced, after some time of feeling silly, that deeper tempo did I recall the long ago walk with my feathered companion. Then I remembered myself and the resistance dropped away.

In this latest love of my life, fiber work, the resistance is gone. Each day I can hardly wait to get to the practice. The release into the no-time space of weaving, or spinning or carding and combing, helps me cross that border between distraction and attention, which in turn introduces me to the empty space of mystery.

In this fiber-making, spirit-spinning process there have been many tangled mishaps. There have been failures, time thrown away to mistakes, warps ruined. There are imperfections in finished pieces that I can't just let be, I have to point them out and apologize for them. And this, too, is my teacher. I have discovered marvelous new textures and effects through mistakes. I am learning to let go of control and preconceived notions of how a piece will look and let myself enjoy the surprise of the unexpected. I am learning to forgive myself, to be more tender and accepting of what I am and what I am not.

This practice of working with my hands in a timeless space takes me, without words or sounds or expectations, home. I am not in a hurry and once again I am beginner, yet again, always a beginner. I am serving my novitiate in black lamb's wool and gray Shetland and brown Merino, and white Churro.

I am simply following a long thin thread, without sound, through touch, outside the usual constraints of time, accompanied by a hungry longing into the absorbing presence of God. ●

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Running out of time

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann



Richard K. Fenn, *The End of Time: Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul* (SPCK/Pilgrim Press, 1997).

RICHARD K. FENN is a sociologist teaching at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is also an Episcopalian — so it is little wonder that his writing occasionally echoes the *Book of Common Prayer*. He has authored a number of other books, including *Liturgies & Trials* (Pilgrim, 1982), which treats the liturgical character of courtroom trials (and vice versa) including Catonsville and Karen Ann Quinlan, not to mention Cuento and Nemikin (ECUSA employees subpoenaed for information about the whereabouts of Puerto Rican nationalists with whom they ministered and in which connection *The Witness* resisted government seizure of its own files). Little wonder this current volume is dedicated to Robert L. DeWitt.

The End of Time concerns what might be called "temporal panic," the individual and social anxiety that time is running out. Fenn argues that when a variety of rituals, cultural and religious, fail to replenish the store of time as a social construction, fascist tendencies spill out into movements exploiting that generalized dread.

Fenn presents a scheme and typology mapping social systems based on their degree of differentiation from environment and their level of internal integration. On this basis he identifies four primary functions of ritual. "Rituals of transformation" rely on resources within the social order, and are particularly concerned about the transformation of youth into adults and the dead into ancestors. "Rituals of restoration" make up for lost time by renewing an idealized or mythic past. "Rituals of aversion" are largely military in example and avert disaster by psychic imposition of martial discipline. Finally, "rituals of purification" purge social pollutants and enemies from within.

The examples by which these are illustrated range across history and the planet: New Guinea Highlanders and Argentine *disaparecidos*, "Crusaders" and "witches," Nazis and Millenarians, the Jesus movement and Roman-occupied Jerusalem. Church history examples run as a thread through the text. Hence, "the Church promulgated the doctrine of purgatory, which gave to the dead time to purify themselves ... and, to the living, opportunity to satisfy unfulfilled penances and obligations of the dead. ... It may also have been a means of buying time ... for the Church itself."

Just as the book was coming to completion, the Federal building in Oklahoma exploded. Fenn argues that the militia movement and its counterparts ought not be treated as isolated extremists, however conveniently bracketed, but as the public shadow, the sign of deepseated and widespread rage or resentment.

Under conditions where time is not only commodified, but its price is rapidly escalating, "corporations and communities compete with each other for a larger share of the individual's time," demanding sacrifice as normative. The velocity of information and the instantaneous fluctuation of global markets hugely expands the time pressure under which both state and corporation operate, passing these pressures on to individuals whose psyches are expected to "come up to speed," to synchronize with the culture.

Fenn would argue that the explicitly fascist eruptions (he looks at everything from Branch Davidians to Pat Robertson) are part of a larger cultural response to the assault of "running out of time."

"To remove aliens, cut welfare and lower taxes are the outward and visible signs of fascist tendencies in American society. ... More intractable forms of pollution or degeneracy call for the restoration of a time of relative innocence or vitality."

His solution largely concerns psychic space. (He acknowledges at the outset to writing on the boundary of sociology and psychoanalysis). Social dread is a pervasive contagion because in the barrage of images, "not only family members and close associates but the specialized co-workers, the homeless on the street, distant consumers, and the victims of terror and famine in other countries, take up psychic space in the mind."

Intolerance of these presences can lead to the "fascist state of mind," a "delusional narcissism," killing the inner enemy. His remedy, a crucial one, involves embrace of the "other," both inner and outer.

It would be, I suppose, a pleasant irony to say the least, to resolve in psychic space, this problem in time. ●

Bill Wylie-Kellermann *is book review editor of* The Witness *and director of the M.Div. program for the Seminiary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education in Chicago, Ill.*

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TIME TRAVEL

When three hands bridge an abyss

by Robert DeWitt

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"YOUR LIFE STYLE will change now", the doctor had said in giving me the diagnosis of Bobbie's Alzheimer's. He recommended I get a paperback entitled *The 36-Hour Day*. And he was right. Our lifestyle has changed in many ways. And still is changing month by month, as the disease proceeds down its one-way street. Alzheimer's does not march, like a soldier. It moves quietly, like an Indian scout, sliding stealthily from one vantage point to the next, not in straight lines, doubling back, then streaking to the next point of vulnerability. The only thing about it which is predictable is that finally it will inevitably reach its goal, which is death.

Help, it is said, often comes from unexpected sources. I have been both surprised and relieved to note how helpful it has been to me to try to write down these impressions of how I feel about my experience with Alzheimer's.

Elsewhere I have mentioned my surprise at finding how therapeutic it can be for Bobbie to do tasks and chores of which she is capable — doing, in place of "being done for" by someone else. Reading in the Alzheimer's literature, and conversations with some qualified others, have been strategically helpful. But the on-the-job training has been basic — the core curriculum.

Come with me early, come with me soon
Come with me while you may
Life is so fleeting, life is so swift
Life is so brief a stay

When I was young, when I was lost,
When I was blue, you came
Fresh as spring water, fresh as new snow
Fresh as a word that's true, you came

So come with me early, come
with me soon

Come with me while you may

Life is too fleeting, life is too swift,
Life is too brief a stay

LATE ONE AFTERNOON Bobbie interrupts my setting the table for supper. "Here", she says, bringing three more place settings. "You will need more plates. The boys will be here, and I saw Mother upstairs a bit ago, and she said she would have supper with us."

The "boys" are now in their 40s, living with their own families in their own houses nearby. Bobbie's mother died some 30 years ago.

The days grow shorter this time of year, especially in the latitude of Maine's Penobscot Bay, and on one of its outermost islands. Continental America is here reaching out toward Greenwich as far as it can, anxious to start the day. But off to such an early start, it is sooner spent. Four-thirty in the afternoon is approaching night. For an elderly couple playing host to Alzheimer's disease, this pause between the dark and the daylight is definitely not "The Children's Hour" as Longfellow's poem saw it. More often it is a time for the Invisibles of our imaginations to become palpable people, ones to be reckoned with, even claiming a place at the table. Late afternoon is commonly referred to in Alzheimer's circles as the time of the "sun-downing syndrome." For the patient with that disease, perhaps partly due to fatigue, reality tends at twilight to lose some of its firmness, and phantasms can come crowding in, tensions increase.

It is not just Bobbie's mother who shows up at this witching hour. Also her father, my parents, my brothers (I have three), and also (says Bobbie) my wife, and a host of others who are nameless and invisible — they all can be at our house singly, or in groups. I marvel again and again at Bobbie's prevailing equanimity in the face of this crowded household over which she presides. She

finds "them" just as intractable and unpredictable as do I, even though she "sees" them in a manner I do not. I note she often mutes her voice in speaking to me of them, lest she be overheard. And just the other day she said of our daughter Kathy, who lives hundreds of miles away, "She is around here a lot, but I don't see much of her."

There is another aspect of this fluidity of reality, as seen by Bobbie, which has been manifesting itself for some time now. She asks me, out of the blue, whether I "have thanked them."

"Thanked whom, for what?" I reply.

"Why, the people that own the house, of course, for letting us stay here." When she says that I feel ejected from my own home, as though the bank had foreclosed on my mortgage — or as though some owner of the house I had been renting had suddenly sold it out from under me to some new owner. Bobbie is not that worried or threatened. She finds it a very nice house, frequently speaking admiringly of appointments, and of this or that furnishing, sometimes even saying, "This looks just like our house!" But she was schooled in the social graces by her mother, and a house guest always expresses appreciation to the hostess.

"No, I haven't," I confess, "but I will."

Bobbie's "Invisibles," however, are not only friends and family visiting in our home — or whoever it is who really owns it. Occasionally there are also foreboding, nameless others who lurk just beyond the fence. Sometimes they drive right up to the fence and get out of their cars. Bobbie is as ignorant as I of why they are there or what they want. They never come to the house — at least not yet; but there is always the apprehension that they might. We know absolutely nothing about them, but there is something inherently threatening in their anonymity, their silence, and their encroaching on us. Often Bobbie draws my attention to them, looking out the window. I see nothing. No one. At first I was foolish enough to get the binoculars — even to go out to the fence with her, hoping to demonstrate to her that there was no one there. But ever and again they come, these unknown Invisibles.

Another factor so familiar to many caregivers is the patient's recurring urge to go "home." For Bobbie this means her childhood home in north Jersey. One time I remember was in October. The weather was good, the foliage in northern New England as breathtaking as usual. Daughter Becky now lives in Saratoga Springs, and that is not far from the Adirondacks, where some close friends of ours live. It seemed a good combination of visits to justify a three-day trip. So off we went, Saratoga being some 400 miles from our Maine home, a nine-hour trip. On the way Bobbie seemed increasingly tense, and began to speak of wanting to go to her childhood home in New Jersey. I tried to distract her with other topics, but without success. When we arrived, our seeing Becky again was overshadowed by Bobbie's still wanting to go "home." She was not about to be distracted by a visit with Becky nor with our Adirondack friends. She wanted to go "home."

FOR AN ELDERLY COUPLE PLAYING HOST TO ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE, THE PAUSE BETWEEN THE DARK AND THE DAYLIGHT IS DEFINITELY NOT "THE CHILDREN'S HOUR" AS LONGFELLOW'S POEM SAW IT. MORE OFTEN IT IS A TIME FOR THE INVISIBLES OF OUR IMAGINATIONS TO BECOME PALPABLE PEOPLE TO RECKON WITH, EVEN CLAIMING A PLACE AT THE TABLE.

I realized I had to accommodate her concern; but also knew it was unwise to make a return trip of another nine hours without a break, since I would have to do all the driving. So I insisted we would have to spend the night at Becky's, then we could leave in the morning. Reluctantly she acquiesced; but the following morning she had but one objective — New Jersey.

Becky and our Adirondack friends had no difficulty accepting our abrupt departure. They understood. But I confess to a lot of anxiety on that return trip. Several times she observed that we did not seem to be heading toward New Jersey. Nor were we. But suppose my dissembling did not work, and she insisted on going to New Jersey? To a house no longer standing? To a community where now she knows no one, and no one knows her? But her memory disability spared us, her concern eased, forgotten, and we made our way home to the Island without incident.

Many times since then in the process of doing post-supper chores I have been surprised by Bobbie's appearing from upstairs with an incongruous assortment of clothing, toilet articles and bedding, and announcing that she has to go "home." She states this as a matter of fact, as though we had both known it, but that I had somehow forgotten. There is no mistaking her intention. She is determined to do it, with or without my help.

After two or three experiences of this I learned that she was not about to be influenced by such considerations as that

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there is no mailboat at that time of night to take us to the mainland. At that time she is incapable of being a part of my world, so I must enter hers. So I tell her I will go with her. Putting on such overwear as is appropriate to the weather, armed with a flashlight and carrying the aforementioned luggage, we make our way out to the garage and clamber into the Model A Ford.

The starting of the car seems a signal to her that the tension can cease, that all is and will be well. I bear in mind that going home meant to her, five or ten minutes earlier, a long trek of 10 to 12 hours by car to New Jersey. But now she is relaxed, talkative, while we negotiate the bumpy, glooming road which traverses the perimeter of a small island 30 miles off the coast of Maine! We have really a very pleasant time, as our auto trips together typically have been over the years. We chat casually about this and that, complain about the road, exclaim about the moonlight or lack thereof, hold hands (my right, her left) as any right-thinking couple would do.

Indeed, there is one such night that stands out in my mind.

During the day preceding, Bobbie had seemed a little more distant from reality than usual, though not appearing anxious or stressed. Supper went well, and at about the usual time between eight and nine she went upstairs with the little dog, presumably to retire. I followed her up to be sure her bed was made (she typically makes and unmakes it several times each day), toothbrush found, and the other bedtime routines attended to. She seemed very casual about it all, except I noted she insisted on going into the guest room to retire — where she had never before slept. But once there it did not seem right to her, and she was obviously very confused. When I led her back to her own room it became evident that going to bed was not what she wanted. I could not understand her responses to questions of what she did want — her words and thoughts were too incoherent, probably to her as well as to me. Although she did not mention "going Home," that seemed to me the best interpretation, based upon past experience.

BOBBIE IS INCAPABLE OF BEING A PART OF MY WORLD, SO I MUST ENTER HERS. SO I TELL HER I WILL GO "HOME" WITH HER. PUTTING ON SUCH OVERWEAR AS IS APPROPRIATE TO THE WEATHER, ARMED WITH A FLASHLIGHT AND CARRYING THE AFOREMENTIONED LUGGAGE, WE MAKE OUR WAY OUT TO THE GARAGE AND CLAMBER INTO THE MODEL A FORD.

So I helped her put her shoes back on, found a warm coat for each of us, got the flashlight, called the dog. Out we went to the garage and got into the car and started off down the road. In all of this she seemed most willing to come along, but showed evidence of not knowing where we were, whose house we had just left, nor where we were going nor for what purpose. Several times as we travelled along that familiar Island road she repeated she had "never seen this before," and my explanations of our whereabouts were met with polite disbelief — or incomprehension. I reached with my hand for hers as we drove along, and she responded warmly. As we continued riding it became increasingly evident to me that she indeed did not know where we were, and probably not who I was. We were living in different worlds, and her only contact with my world were those two hands — three, because now both of hers were holding mine. And it was palpable to me that how her wandering alone in a strange and unknown world could be endured was at least in part attributable to those three hands reaching across an unfathomable abyss, the only point of contact between two people each living in a world unknown to the other.

That contact, however, is not a fixed fact but a flickering reality, coming and going. More usually on these night rides, having gone as far as seems reasonable, perhaps four miles, we turn around and retrace our steps. When we approach our driveway, she indicates I should turn in there. We drive into the garage, get out of the car. As the flashlight guides us through the dark to the house, she thanks me for "being so good to her." I don't really know what was going on in her beleaguered mind. What I make of it is that an appreciative soul is expressing thanks for being taken at her word, for someone seriously sharing with her the strange new world in which she finds herself. ●

Robert DeWitt *and his wife, Barbara De Yoe DeWitt, live on Isle Au Haut, Me. DeWitt was Bishop of Pennsylvania from 1964 until 1974 and then editor of* The Witness *from 1974 until 1981 (he is profiled in* TW *5/98). This article is exerpted from his forthcoming book,* Ebb Tide, *presently seeking a publisher.*

Paul Caponigro *is a fine arts photographer now living in Cushing, Me.*

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ON DEATH

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

"We may never pass this way again..."

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Jackie Beckett—"Ascension"

I HAD THE MISFORTUNE to finish high school just as this song peaked in its popularity in my small Michigan town. At an all-school assembly, it was announced as our class' song and I fled. A friend tagged along. She knew that my father had just died — in New York City in 1974. I was glad for the company but also frustrated that she seemed self-absorbed, "I've never been this close to death before ... ."

"Yeah, well, get a grip," I wanted to yell. Or, had I known it then, I could have quoted Julie Wortman's favorite Emerson line, "Life is real; life is earnest."

So now I'm about to turn 43 and have a high-grade cancer in my brain. I spent the whole last year struggling to digest the news that the seizures I had Labor Day weekend in 1998 were caused by an anaplastic glioblastoma. I fought believing that it was actually cancer until there was no other conclusion. Until that moment, I kept thinking, "Unhuh, I won't join that club 'til I have to. I'm not the cancer-personality type!"

Since then my partner Bill and I have read more than anyone wants to know about the theories on cancer, the composition of cancer, the treatments for cancer. I was quickly overwhelmed — even on the lack of agreement about what cancer is. And then there is lots of literature on how to develop the right attitude, how to grip something in this world so strongly, that dying is not an option. Some people refuse to die because they have kids to raise. One farmer-type said, "Nope, I got to get home to my garden." Doubtless some people live for their pets or the view or their neighbors. Perhaps they simply want to praise God in some particular way.

Recently I was sitting at my kitchen table talking with my 13-year-old. It's easy to forget that she's 13. She is extremely attentive and has always had a mind like a 35-year-old. She's good on details and usually right. It's hard when parenting her to try to recall that she is a child and needs to be protected like a child.

So, there I was, having an insight and she was my companion. I said to my own kid, "You know, I've been thinking about time. While it matters whether I die at 42 or at 82, in many ways it doesn't matter at all."

Ever so gently, testing what I could bear, she said, "Mom, do you want to hear some reasons why it does matter?"

As it crashed in on me that I was having this conversation with the very last person in the world who should hear my philosophizing, I nodded. She told me that if I live to be 82, I would meet our grandchildren (should the girls choose to have any). I would have time to walk in the woods.

She tailored the list to the things I love, with a strong but gentle bias toward my being there as our kids grow up. At the same time, she managed not to put pressure on me. She was artful — as usual. It's challeng-

ing parenting a child who is often older than you. (Lydia does have her faults, not to worry. And meanwhile Lucy is a bundle of joy and challenges of a different type. Lucy is much less likely to tell you what's on her mind. You have to notice. And she'll notice you notice! Both girls are smart and loving in radically different ways.)

But, despite my regrets for announcing my great insight about death and time to my oldest child, the thoughts remain true.

Daniel Corrigan preached at my Dad's installation as rector at the Church of the Advent in Boston in 1960. I've heard that he leaned forward with a twinkle in his eyes and said, "Sam Wylie is my best friend — and I don't care if he lives or dies!"

It's the great tension of our faith. What is it we are about? Are we living or dying? Does it matter?

Knowing some of the stats on cancer, I look around rooms now and wonder. If it's one out of three, who else shares this ailment? How can we help each other? What worldly things need to change? Which factories close? Which polutants get screened out of smoke? How can we learn to walk in beauty and trust, while also fighting back? To model what it means to be an elder, yet also be effective at bringing change? And most of all, how can we praise God without ceasing in this time-bound world? ●

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann *is co-editor of* The Witness, *<jeanie@thewitness.org>. Photographer* ***Jackie Beckett*** *is a senior photographer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, <foto@amnh.org>.*

AND TIME

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann

"I looked at my watch once more. It was time to go to the hospital. I laughed about that. I had no time left: I had all the time in the world."

IT IS PERHAPS NO COINCIDENCE, that William Stringfellow began to brood theologically about the matter of time as he faced the exigencies of life-threatening illness and the approach in 1968 of radical surgery. When, providentially and against all expectation, he awoke from the operation, he had been rendered a complete diabetic, thoroughly dependent on an elaborate regimen for day-to-day survival, a strict timetable of multiple mealtimes and insulin injections.

"The peril of death is concealed in the issue of whether a person with such health necessities is so obedient to time as to become enslaved to it, allowing the whole of existence to be regimented," he wrote. "Such a person ... becomes a chronic victim and morally dies. Then the very procedures commendable for sustaining life become radically dehumanizing and the actual state of the person is the moral equivalent of death."

Some years latter, at a public forum in Michigan, a friend of mine asked Stringfellow to identify some marks of resurrection. The questioner was astonished when the first thing Stringfellow named was "freedom from bondage to time." He mentioned the ailments and his refusal to be dominated or tyrannized by the strict regime, however necessary. He also mentioned the monastic rhythm and freedom of his homelife with Anthony Towne on Block Island, to which he'd moved following surgery, for healing and recuperation. As he wrote:

"There is little idolatry of time on the Island. In fact, the prevailing spirit of the community is somewhat contemptuous of time, having more a sense of history than destiny, and the style of life there implicitly ridicules the ethics of mainland society which makes people slaves of time."

Many recipients of his and Anthony's hospitality over the years there, will attest to its healing character, the easy respite from the time-driven realm. They called their home "Eschaton" — the end of time.

Stringfellow expected that end imminently. In his view, the consciousness of imminence was normative in the biblical witness and the earliest Christian community. Admittedly, the notions of destroying death and the abolishing of time so tax language and thought as to push temporal categories beyond the capability of human vocabulary. Hence Scripture speaks, he said, "in marvelously versatile and appropriately diverse ways of the Second Advent: prophetically, metaphorically, parablolically, ecstatically, sacramentally, dogmatically, poetically, narratively — in every tongue or style or syntax or idiom available."

As far as Stringfellow was concerned, to expect the end at any moment, to hope for it, and to live in its anticipation implied a biblical ethic and politics. Or at least a radical freedom from which to improvise the other two.

In fact, it was to the loss and confusion of this consciousness that Stringfellow attributed the church's dependency upon political principalities and other institutions of power. In time it was a quick descent into ecclesiastical anxieties about survival, into elaborate false hopes and Constantinian arrangements, into collaboration and complicity with empire, into reliance on Death itself.

Conversely, living in the imminence of the Eschaton, living in freedom from bondage to time or necessity or any form of death, "That is the only way, for the time being, to live humanly." ●

Bill Wylie-Kellermann *is editor of* A Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow, *Eerdmans, 1994.*

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Free Burma

In the November/December 1999 issue of *Utne Reader* Dan Orzech reports that efforts to model the campaign to bring democracy to the people of Burma on the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s has hit a snag.

"Like the anti-apartheid campaign, the Burma movement has used divestment and purchasing laws to pressure an oppressive regime into political reforms," Orzech writes. "More than two dozen U.S. cities and counties have passed Free Burma purchasing laws. One of the first of these measures was enacted in 1996 by the Massachusetts state legislature.

"But a recent court decision threatens to pull the rug out from the Free Burma laws — and lots of other laws at the same time. As a result of a lawsuit brought by the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC), a Washington, D.C., lobbying group, a federal judge ruled in November 1998 that the Massachusetts Burma law was unconstitutional. A U.S. Appeals court upheld the decision last summer."

The author of the Massachusetts Free Burma law is state legislator Byron Rushing, an Episcopalian who provided strong leadership in persuading the Episcopal Church's General Convention to declare its support of the anti-apartheid movement through divestment. "If this court decision had happened 10 years ago," Rushing said, "Nelson Mandela might still be in prison today."

The state has announced it will appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"The Burma purchasing law itself is pretty simple," Orzech says. "It adds a 10 percent penalty to bids for state contracts from companies that do business in Burma. And it seems to be accomplishing its objective of cutting off financial support for Burma's brutal military regime. A number of companies, including Apple Computer, Eastman Kodak and Hewlett-Packard, pulled out of Burma soon after the law was passed."



But, Orzech notes, "some multinationals are concerned that the Burma law is only the beginning. Already, a few cities have passed similar purchasing laws focused on places like East Timor, Tibet and Nigeria."

Labor and environmental groups are also worried — that the appeals court decision may be upheld. Affected could be environmental purchasing preferences now on the books in 48 states that involve such matters as: recycled content, alternative fuels and ink and sustainable forestry standards; at least 43 "Buy American" or "Buy Local" laws; laws that enforce the MacBride Principles; fair labor standards laws for goods purchased by cities and states.

Asks Orzech: "Does the Massachusetts law violate the U.S. Constitution? 'Private individuals and corporations can base their purchasing decisions on their own moral standards,' says Professor Robert Stumberg of Georgetown University's school of law. 'Will the Supreme Court bar states from doing the same thing? I doubt it.'"

Unjust in the much

Unjust in the Much: The Death Penalty in North Carolina, edited by Calvin Kytle and Daniel H. Pollitt (my uncle), collects talks from a 1998 symposium of North Carolinians involved in fighting the death penalty. You don't often hear grassroots voices like these in the death penalty debate — local lawyers, clergy and activists talking simply and from their own experience about poverty and racism, about police who persuade retarded people to make false confessions and about court-appointed lawyers who show up drunk to trial.. Such abuses have caused the American Bar Association to call for a moratorium on the death penalty, but *Unjust in the Much* (the title is from Luke 16:10) also argues for opposition on principle. Order the book from Geoffrey Mock, 1008 Lamond Ave., Durham, N.C. 22701; <geoff@dukenews.duke.edu>.

— Katha Pollitt, *The Nation*, 11/15/99

Students 4 Justice

In the Denver public school system, some students are learning more outside of class than inside. While researching Nike's exploitation of Third World workers, students discovered that one of the company's corporate strategies was "bro-ing," the practice of using urban culture to sell high-priced products to youth of color. The students, who were primarily white, middle class and suburban, decided they needed to involve others in their efforts.

"When they realized that they were not necessarily the best messengers, they stepped aside so youth of color could lead," says Soyun Park, an organizer with Students 4 Justice, an 800-member multiracial organization.

The group is taking on not just Nike but the local school district as well. Some schools do not have enough desks, so students sit on the floor or on stacks of newspapers, says Elsa Bañuelos, an organizer and a student at West High School. The buildings are deteriorating. with rat holes, broken light fixtures and dangling ceiling tiles. Textbooks are older than some students' parents and there are not enough to go around. Bañuelos also objects to the heavy military recruitment, especially for minorities, in the schools.

Students 4 Justice activists investigated the extent of school neglect and analyzed school budgets. Then they approached the school board. As a result of the group's testimony, West High School was moved to the top of the list of schools to be painted. Meanwhile, students raised $2,500 for trees and shrubs.

"If you can voice your complaint about Nike, you can voice your complaint about your school, the treatment you get in a department store, anything," says Janet Damon, an organizer with the group and a student at Metro State College of Denver.

— Lisa Durán, *The Progressive*, 11/99

Bono rocks on debt

In a recent *Nation* editorial (12/6/99), David Corn comments on U2 rock star Bono's lobbying efforts on behalf of Jubilee 2000, the international coalition of religious and non-governmental groups working to win forgiveness of the crushing debt of the poorest nations. In June the industrial nations agreed to a U.S.-led proposal to relieve up to $90 billion of $127 billion owed by 33 nations, but without Congressional action nothing will happen.

"Bono's two-day rush through Congress — organized by the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Episcopal Church — was a blur," Corn writes. "He thinks he may have briefly met House majority whip Tom DeLay, but he isn't sure. Bono did have sit-downs with House speaker Dennis Hastert, majority leader Dick Armey and Senators Mitch McConnell, Paul Coverdell and Ted Stevens. Most of the questions he faced concerned the gold matter — lawmakers from gold-mining states fear that an IMF gold sell-off would depress the market price. 'But,' he notes, 'they clearly were concerned, because there is support from the conservative side and the religious right.'"

Corn says Bono turned to the issue of debt relief "when he was shopping for a way to use his celebrity status to do good. In the mid-1980s he had participated in LiveAid, which raised money to fight famine in Africa, after which he and his wife worked for a month in Africa. 'I became interested in the structure of poverty,' he recalls. 'There's an intellectual and moral absurdity in a country like Niger spending more on debt payments than education and healthcare combined.'" ●

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CLASSIFIEDS

Lenten Reflections

The Coming World War: Forty Reflections on Themes of Peace and Justice with Jeremiah for Lent. By James G. White. $6.00 to Mark Stone Press, 1826 2nd Ave. #132, New York, NY 10128.

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Scripture Conference at CDSP

Jan. 20-22, the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, Calif. will sponsor Healing Leaves: The Authority of the Bible for Anglicans Today. The conference will take a close look at the role Scripture plays in the life of the Anglican Communion. Presenters will offer a perspective from southern Africa, examine the effect of increasing diversity on interpretation, learn what the Bible says about the nature of work, and explore how we can see the Bible as a source of hope. Jan. 18-19, CDSP will also offer a pre-conference class. Lectures will review the role of Scripture in the Anglican tradition, the dialogue of scriptures with other traditions, and issues of biblical authority emerging from the 1998 Lambeth Conference. For more information or a registration form, call 800-353-CDSP.

PROFILE

Working at right livelihood, 24 hours a day

by Marianne Arbogast

WHEN ANN AND JACKIE Perrault-Victor pledged their lives to each other in a commitment ceremony a year-and-a-half ago, they also pledged to follow a common spiritual path based on the Buddhist precepts, one of which is Right Livelihood. But their groundwork for living out this precept was already firmly established: Two months earlier, they had celebrated the Grand Opening of their joint business venture, Avalon International Breads.

Seven hundred people showed up to offer support for the new organic bakery located in one of Detroit's toughest neighborhoods, the Cass Corridor. For the Perrault-Victors, this validated the staggering commitment of time and energy it took to establish the business. For months on end, 100-hour work weeks had been the norm.

"For that first year-and-a-half or two years, the physical nature of the work was just unreal," Jackie says. "And the hours we were working — we were starting production at 3 a.m. We just gave up, after about three weeks, the notion that we would ever do anything else with our time. Basically, we just had to check out in the same way that new parents do — everything else takes a backseat. You can't parcel out time for something like this — you either give yourself over to it completely and unconditionally or you don't do it."

"It's our total life, still," Ann adds. "We're peeking out a little bit more at a life for ourselves, but we're small business owners, and that's the story of a small business owner."

But for Ann and Jackie, Avalon Breads was much more than a way to earn a living. "It was our passion," Jackie says. "I felt this was all my political beliefs and all my ethics as well as my very practical vision for the kind of world I want to live in, and if we could make it work here, it could be a bit of an example — or at least I could feel that I used my life to do something that made a difference. And we knew when we had the Grand Opening that something was definitely happening here. We had 700 people show up and we had bread out and we had people from the suburbs talking with homeless people, and it was like, we did it! This is it!"

Like breadbaking itself, the founding of the bakery took time. In the summer of 1996, the Perrault-Victors apprenticed themselves to a group of bakers working in northern Michigan. They learned breadbaking and bakery management from the ground up, returning to Detroit with new expertise and a lot of enthusiasm but few resources.

"We didn't have any capital to start, really," Jackie says. "So we wrote about 300 letters to friends and family and people we had been involved with in the community, asking them to be 'bread dough starters.' They would pre-purchase bread, and they could redeem their 'bread dough' for bread once we started, in combination with cash."

"They turned us on to other people who gave us larger amounts of money, too," Ann says. "There's a group of 10 women that helps womens' businesses open, and they loaned us $10,000. And the Zen temple in Ann Arbor, where we attended a class by Geri Larkin [author of *Building a Business the Buddhist Way*, which is dedicated to Ann and Jackie Perrault-Victor], has a right livelihood fund — they gave us $2,000 dollars."

Gradually, the women raised enough money to obtain a bank loan, wrote a business plan, found and remodeled a space for the bakery in a former art gallery, and purchased an oven. In their mission statement, they spelled out their understanding of right livelihood.

"For us it meant three things," Jackie says. "It meant having a business that was gentle and healthy for the earth. It meant having a business that was in right relationship with the community around us. And it meant having right relationships with our employees — paying good wages, providing benefits, profit-sharing."

It was the third principle that put them through "spiritual boot camp," she says.

"The thing that caught us out of left field was that third one — trying to figure out this thing about being bosses, but doing it in a different way and being compassionate and keeping our hearts open. It was unbelievable discipline to — no matter what happened — always keep our hearts open, sometimes even while creating a very difficult boundary, like letting someone go who doesn't perceive themselves as having choices. Or having someone steal from you."

The neighborhood, where they live as well as work, also presented them with challenges. Twice last fall, they were held up at gunpoint.

"In this neighborhood, with the amount of homelessness and people on the street, if you don't pay attention you just get hard," Ann says. "You have to make the choice of keeping your heart open, getting to know people."

The Perrault-Victors count the diversity of people surrounding them as a benefit of their work. They now employ 13 people, including a baking staff of African-American men and a handful of young anarchists from a nearby community.

"Our midnight baker is a very devout Muslim, and on his résumé he said his

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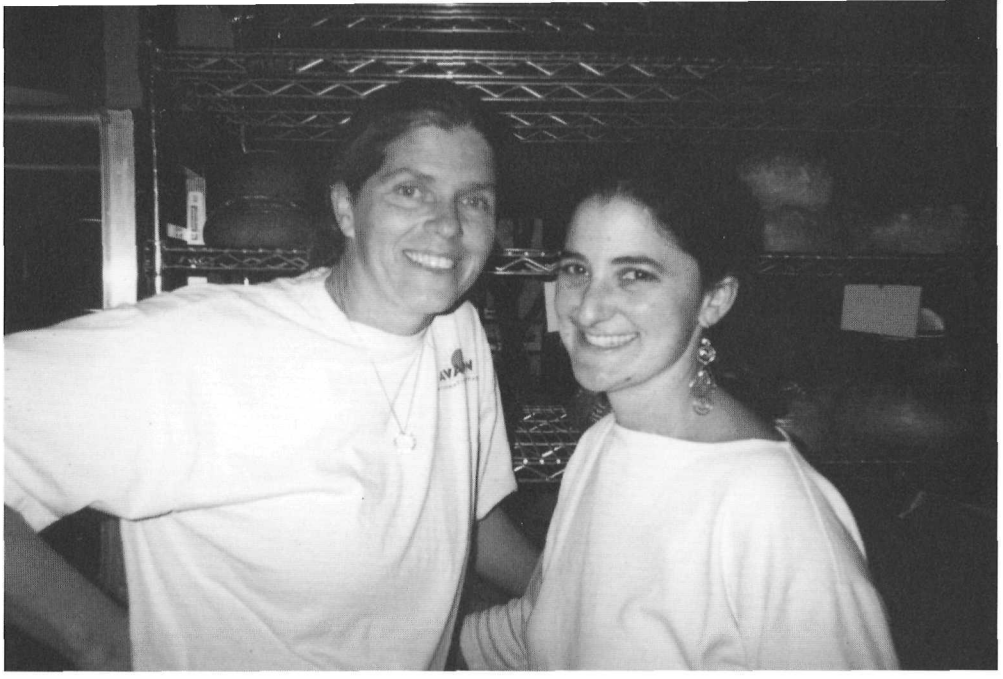

Ann and Jackie Perrault-Victor at Avalon International Breads, located in Detroit, Mich.

goal was to find work that would allow him to further his religious studies," Jackie says. "You would think, what would an African-American Muslim have to do with Jewish-Christian-Buddhist lesbians? And yet the fundamentals of our spiritual outlooks are very close. And he really gets the subtleties that we don't say about why we're doing what we're doing.

"Then we have these young anarchist kids — they're a great group. They're anarchists, so they don't believe in waiting for someone else to tell them what to do. We have gay and straight, we have college-educated people and people without their G.E.D.s. It's a wonderful mix."

The spirit in the bakery is companionable and easygoing. Customers from the neighborhood, which includes Detroit's cultural and medical centers as well as Wayne State University, chat or read papers while sipping Equal Exchange coffee with their Poletown Rye, Leelanau Cherry Walnut, Brioche, or one of the day's selection of pastries. Most, perhaps, can't imagine the level of commitment needed to maintain the serene ambiance.

"Training employees is really difficult," Ann says. "Just the physical handwork — you don't even get good bread knowledge 'till after a year."

"We do naturally leavened bread, a very traditional way of baking — it's something between a craft and a science, really," Jackie says. "There are recipes, but nothing's ever exactly the same, because temperature changes, humidity changes, moisture content of the flour changes. Organic flour changes as the weather and the rains change."

The choice to use organic flour is a matter of justice as well as health, Ann explains.

"Organics are more expensive for a reason. They profit-share with people all the way down the line, to the person who's picking the grain, the person who's milling the grain. It's a different way of distributing wealth."

These days, the staff works on shifts round the clock to produce each day's breads and pastries. "We're trying to put together some good training procedures and develop managers, so we're at a different point now," Ann says. "The big break was, Jackie took me to Paris for my 40th birthday in September. We prepared our staff to run the place by themselves and they did it."

They now take two days off each week, and longer breaks as needed.

"Sometimes I need to go away for a few days to a meditation retreat or a yoga retreat," Jackie says. "Ann goes horseback riding. We have to plan that in or it does not happen."

Ann is now able to devote some of her time to overseeing the renovation of a century-old house, as well as working with the Detroit Women's Coffeehouse, a forum for women artists which she has produced for the past 20 years. And she and Jackie plan to begin a family together.

It takes vigilance to avoid getting caught up in an unnecessary momentum, Jackie says.

"Now that our business is working, of course, the next impulse is grow, franchise, get bigger, change. At first, part of us said, we should do this, but then we just looked at each other and said, to what end? We don't want more money. We live very well and the idea for this was not us becoming rich and powerful. It is everything we can do to put the brakes on and say, what we have is enough.

"We're providing a livelihood for people and we are moving people and we are working with people we never would have had the opportunity to meet. I think we are making this neighborhood a little richer. And there's no better way to change the economy in terms of the environment than have a business that uses organic products and supports other businesses that use organic products."

Having previously spent much of her time doing political organizing around nuclear disarmament and Latin American issues, Jackie sees her work at the bakery as "the other side of the coin.

"With one, you're spending your time engaging with the powers-that-be in Washington, hoping that they're going to change their minds, that they're going to make a difference. With the other, you try to make a difference. Whether they change their minds or not, you still have an opportunity to change the way peoples' lives are. It's really how you choose to spend your time, addressing which part of that wheel." ●

Marianne Arbogast *is assistant editor of* The Witness, *<marianne@thewitness.org>.*

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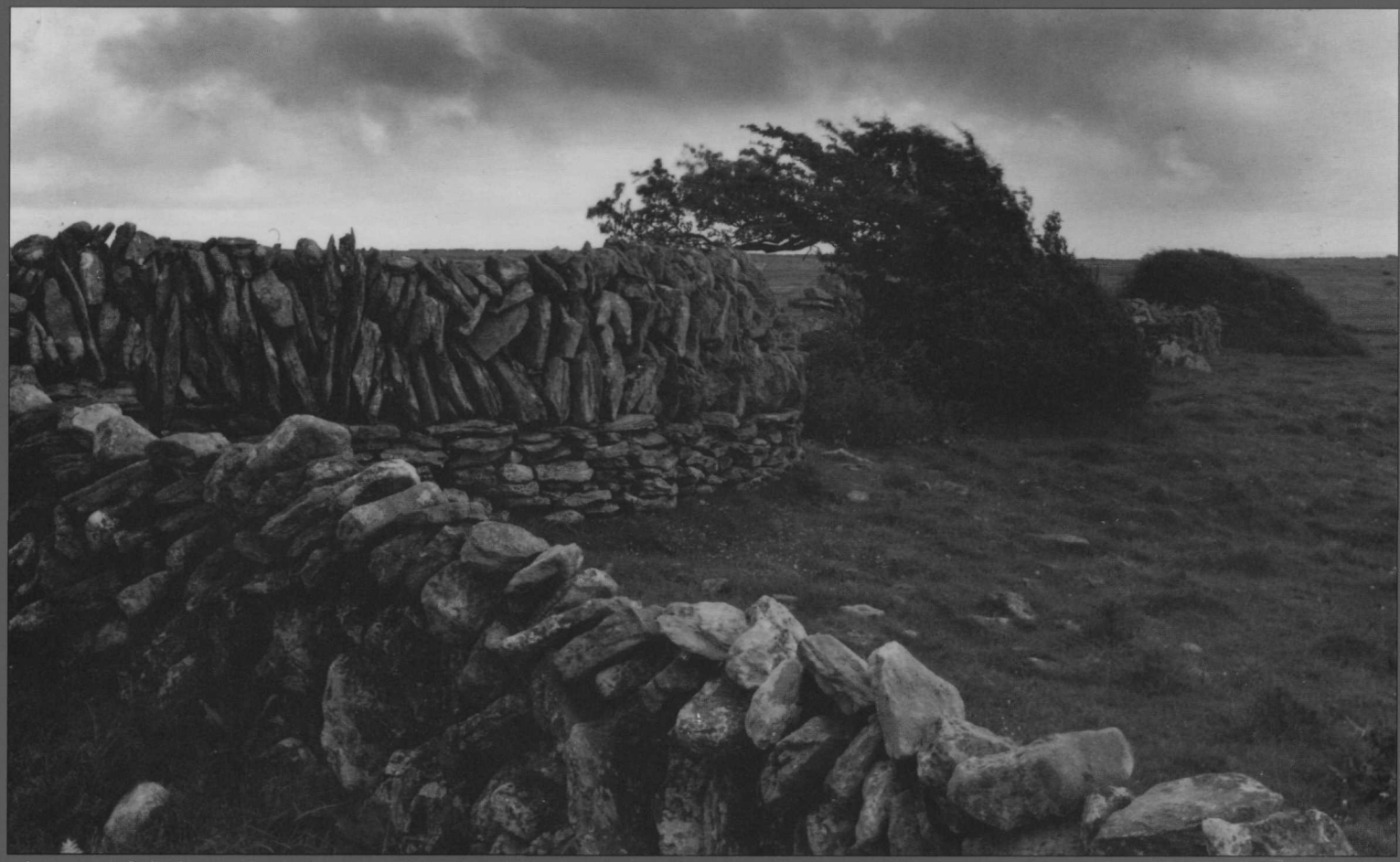

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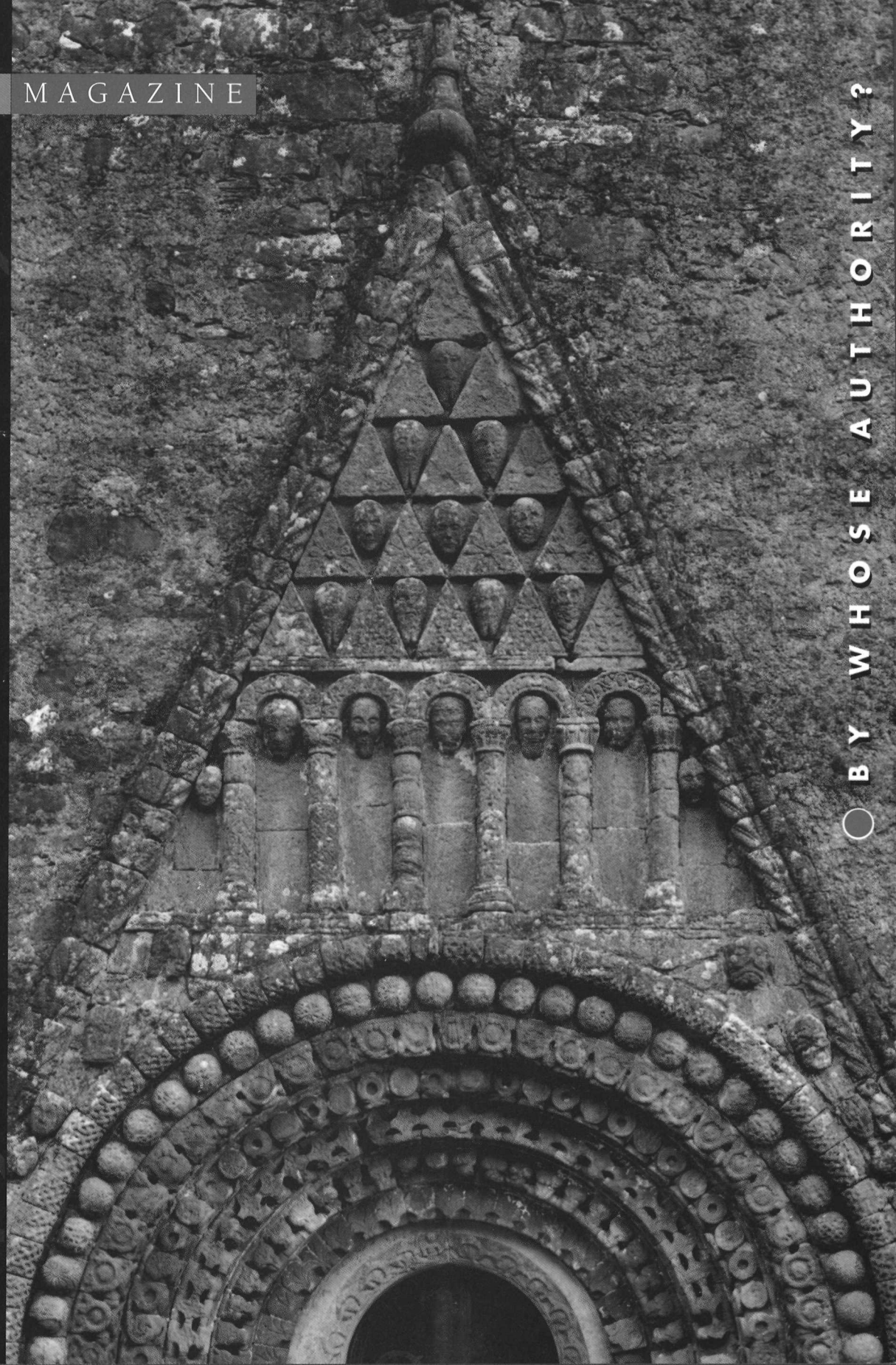

BY WHOSE AUTHORITY?

VOLUME 83
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WITNESS MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

6 **'There is a river'** — *a conversation between Carter Heyward and Kelly Brown Douglas*
Liberation theologians Carter Heyward and Kelly Brown Douglas both see justice as the basis of theology. Together they ponder the nature of authority in a Christian movement that seeks to resist institutionalism.

10 **Authority after colonialism: power, privilege and primacy in the Anglican Communion** *by Ian T. Douglas*
In these post-colonial, post-modernist times, the Anglican Communion is becoming more pluralistic, sparking a crisis of authority and leadership. Ian Douglas, a longtime observer of Anglican Communion life and politics, provides an analysis of the forces contending for power.

16 **An African revisioning of leadership**— *an interview with Simon E. Chiwanga by Julie A. Wortman*
Simon E. Chiwanga, the Bishop of Mpwapwa in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, spent a sabbatical year reflecting on his ministry as bishop in a culture guided by three cardinal principles: respect for everyone, hard work for everyone and mutual caring by everyone.

IN A SIDEBAR William Kondrath shows that at the heart of the Total Ministry movement is a radical call to Christians to create "a ministering community, rather than a community gathered around a minister."

20 **Anglicanism's entangled sense of authority** *by L. William Countryman*
The Anglican Church, says Old Testament scholar William Countryman, doesn't stand on a clear, eternally-guaranteed system of doctrine, having since the Reformation rejected the possibility of absolute authority in this world.

26 **A commitment to Scripture that rejects appeals to Catholic 'order'** *by Robert Tong*
The controversial vote by members of the Diocese of Sydney to allow lay persons and deacons to preside at the Holy Communion is symbolic of these Australian Anglicans' evangelical perspective. Both rejection of women as priests and acceptance of their qualification to preside at the Holy Communion stem from a fervant commitment to biblical authority.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
4 Editor's Notes
5 Poetry
15 On the Theme
25 Book Review
28 Short Takes
29 Classifieds
30 Witness Profile

on the cover

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Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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LETTERS

Harvest feast?

I was much uplifted with Marianne Arbogast's "Thanksgiving without apologies." As a vegetarian — (vegan) I sent copies to a few friends (along with Donella Meadows excellent article). Indeed, that issue (as always) was a Venerable feast.

Jim Burlingham
Cedar Rapids, IA

Nuclearism today

The October *Witness* (10/99) continues to cope with the hard issues of today in Peter Werbe's "Campaigning for nuclear abolition now: an interview with Jonathan Schell." However, this particular piece offers some critical problems.

[My reading] clearly states that national policy is aimed at abolishing nuclear weapons. The real issue is when. Gradual, not immediate, abolition is the national policy. Mr. Schell is free to disagree, but errs in not dealing with the reasons for gradual versus immediate abolition. His claim that we now "have the chance" to abolish them completely is, actually, highly debatable.

What concerns this reader is Mr. Schell's implication that our policy makers do not face the possibility that a "chance" exists. The fact is that the policy of gradual abolition is the result of long-term debate about the timing of abolition.

A continuing reality that Mr. Schell fails to cite is the international anarchy that reigns today. The collapse of communism has lulled us into a false sense of security. Possession of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — is, now, possible not only for nation states but for individuals and organized crime as well. This reality is what argues for gradual rather than immediate abolition of nuclear weapons. Perhaps, the call for immediate abolition of nuclear weapons reflects today's desire for easy answers?

Inquisitive readers might well begin with the March 31, 1998 statement of Edward L. Warner, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Threat Reduction before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Follow this document with the President's *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, October 1998. Then read the *National Military Strategy of the United States of America* written by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Finally, Eric K. Shinseki, Army Chief of Staff, sets forth his vision for the U.S. Army as of October 15, 1999 in *The Army Vision: Soldiers On Point for the Nation ... Persuasive in Peace, Invincible in War.*

First, as I read these documents I was struck by their explicit or implied recognition of the breadth of human need in this world. More important, I was surprised to find from the military a whole body of thought that was both self-critical and humbly aware that their concerns were not the only factors to be considered. The experiences of Viet Nam and the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., founded in the early 1980s have resulted in a posture of reflection and self-awareness that permeates all of Army life today.

Mr. Schell refers to "launch on warning" as the policy in force today. He errs. "Launch on warning" means that as soon as we detect a missile has been launched, we automatically launch a counter attack. In fact, this policy is no longer in effect. Further, the ground observation available today gives us knowledge that something is underway well before a launch. This means there is more than Mr. Schell's "half an hour" to decide on our response.

Further, Mr. Schell tells of many among the military saying nuclear weapons should be abolished "from a strictly strategic and military point of view since they're unusable and, hence, useless." In the midst of today's international anarchy, such views ignore deterrence as a substantive strategic reason for keeping some nuclear weapons as we work for their total abolition in the longrun.

Does not responsible journalism call for *The Witness* [to present the other side]?

A. Wayne Schwab
Essex, NY

An authority that doesn't need guarding

by Julie A. Wortman

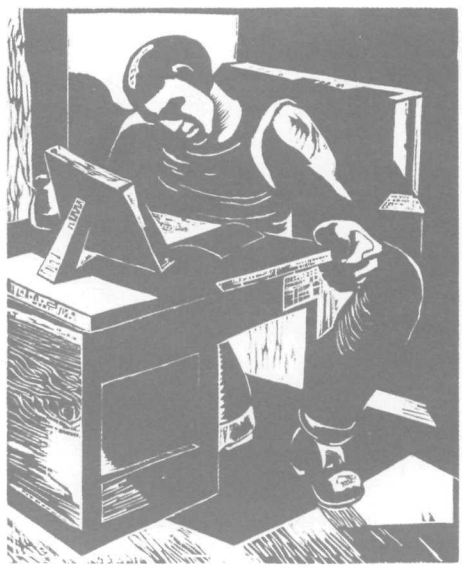
TUESDAY AFTERNOONS I spend two hours at Jump Start, a county program designed to help local juveniles who have gotten into trouble with the law learn to make more positive life choices. For most, it is also an all-too-rare chance to receive the undivided attention of community adults who listen rather than lecture.

Much of our time together during these sessions is spent puzzling out responses to various fictional dilemmas in the hope that the students will begin to gain insight into how to handle the confusions of their own lives. These exercises get a mostly lukewarm reception from the students — all of whom would admittedly rather be somewhere else — but recently there was a qualitative shift. The case study under discussion had to do with Joe, a general laborer who had been on the job for only a month. In this hypothetical situation, Joe's boss puts Joe in charge of getting a crew to dig a trench while the boss goes off to a meeting for two hours. But when the boss leaves the site, the other workers sit down and begin playing cards. What should Joe do?

Initially, I was as uninspired by Joe's problem as the students seemed to be. One of the other Jump Start mentors looked the same. But Woody, a longtime mentor whose normally outspoken manner can be intimidating, lit up. Eagerly, drawing on his own history in the construction industry, he began urging the students to note the key points of the problem. Joe was a "new hire," a general laborer. Someone, in other words, in a position in which any one of them might well find themselves sometime in the not-too-distant future.

Woody's genuine enthusiasm in this instance was engaging rather than overwhelming. Illustrating his points with amusing real-life examples, he step-by-step made Joe's dilemma come vividly alive. Students and mentors alike slowly adopted Joe's problem as our own, eventually reaching unanimous agreement about how Joe could best proceed with integrity.

It was a deliciously satisfying moment. Thanks to Woody's unexpectedly skilled tutelage, our solution to Joe's dilemma is not one I will soon forget. More importantly, I suspect our Jump Start students won't, either.



Reflecting on Woody's mentoring role in that Jump Start circle, I've found myself thinking of the Jews who were "astounded" because Jesus taught "as one having authority," while the scribes, those charged with mentoring the community and guarding its religious traditions, did not (Mk. 1:22; Matt. 7:29; Lk. 4:32). I don't see Woody as a Jesus figure, but in that Jump Start situation, he, too, taught with the sort of authority that changes lives.

And, as was true for the scribes of Jesus' day, I believe it is very difficult for the institutional church today to accept this sort of authority from its members.

I have no doubt that both the scribes and the priests and elders who later question Jesus' right to step forth as a teacher and healer cherished the religious tradition they were charged to guard. But I wonder if they hadn't lost touch with an important truth: That a faith tradition meant for saving lives isn't for guarding, but for engaging — for engaging everyone's "empowerment" as persons of conscience.

I also take as significant that, while Jesus taught with authority, his parables and puzzling sermons apparently frequently left people buzzing among themselves. The medium, I imagine, was much of the message. Jesus probably never countenanced that God's ways might be closed to questioning and interpretation. Or that insight would require anything less than a communal effort. His focus, it seems to me, was solely on helping his neighbors and friends live lives free from the power of death, self-possessed as God's own — like Jump Start's fictional Joe, with integrity intact.

The stories in this issue testify to both the struggle and the progress attending the church's efforts to free itself of the scribes' error and accept itself as a living, changing people of faith — a body with no useless parts, no inferior members and no single source of understanding about what its present vitality requires. As biblical scholar William Countryman points out, Anglicans long ago rejected the idea that there was any single, absolute this-worldly voice of authority for our denominational life. Questioning authority, one might even say, has been our founding vocation. That, I can't help thinking, is something to which my young Jump Start friends — who have an embarassingly accurate fix on the clay feet of most of the authorities in their lives — could all too easily relate. ●

Julie A. Wortman *is publisher and co-editor of* The Witness, *<julie@thewitness.org>.*

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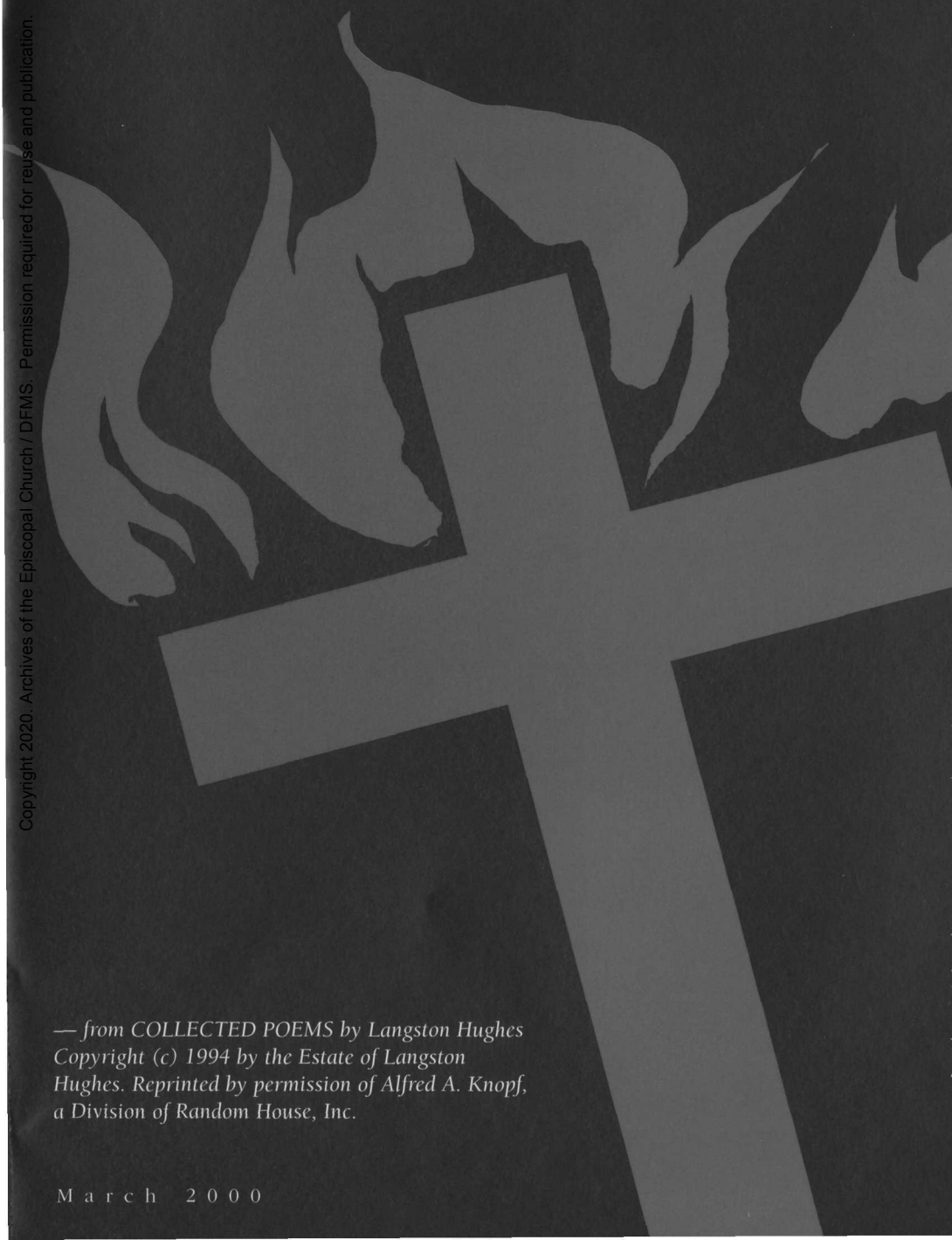
Ku Klux

by Langston Hughes



They took me out
To some lonesome place.
They said, "Do you believe
In the great white race?"

I said, "Mister,
To tell you the truth,
I'd believe in anything
If you'd just turn me loose."

The white man said,
"Boy, Can it be
You're a-standin' there
A-sassin' me?"

They hit me in the head
And knocked me down.
And then kicked me
On the ground.

A klansman said, "Nigger,
Look me in the face —
And tell me you believe in
The great white race."

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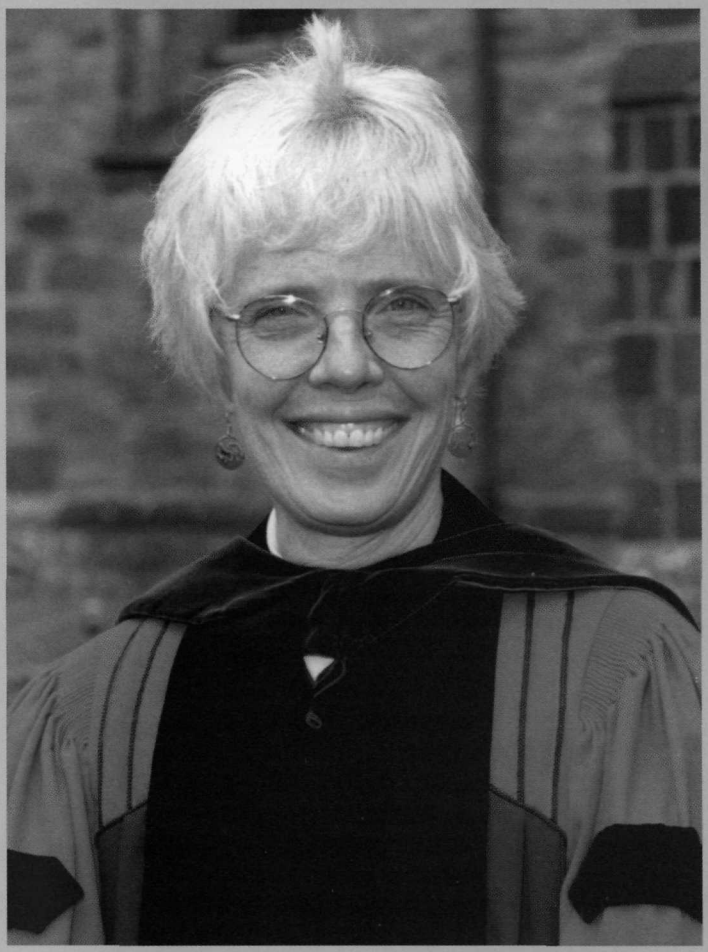

"IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD AND SAVIOR. IT NEVER HAS BEEN."

— Carter Heyward

Jet Commercial Photographers Inc.

'THERE IS

A conversation between Carter Heyward and Kelly Brown Douglas

CARTER HEYWARD, Howard Chandler Robbins Professor of Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., is the author of numerous books, most recently, *Saving Jesus From Those Who are Right: Rethinking What It Means to Be Christian* (Fortress, 1999). She is a founding member of a small community of writers, activists and justice-workers in western North Carolina. Kelly Brown Douglas is an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Her latest book is *Sexuality and the Black Church* (Orbis, 1999).

Heyward and Douglas were speakers at the annual gathering of the Episcopal Women's Caucus held in Alexandria, Va., last autumn. During that conference they began a conversation about authority in the Episcopal Church, as seen from their vantage points as ordained women doing theology out of a liberation perspective (Heyward was one of the first 11 women ordained to the priesthood in a controversial service held in Philadelphia in 1974 and Douglas was ordained in 1983). *The Witness* asked them to continue their conversation in these pages.

Julie A. Wortman: How would the two of you self-identify in terms of a tradition or a point of view?

Kelly Brown Douglas: Clearly, broadly speaking, one could talk about me as a liberation theologian, someone who always starts from the vantage point of being concerned about justice. But more particularly, I come to that table through the black community, understanding myself as being accountable to the masses of poor black women who get locked out of social, economic and political kinds of institutions, women at the bottom of society — as has been said, "the ordinary woman sitting in the pews, struggling every day to make it." And so, more particularly, I am a womanist theologian.

Carter Heyward: Kelly said very well why I, too, am a liberation theologian — I am someone who believes that the basis of anything that we name theology should be a concern for justice in the world. I speak of myself as a feminist liberation theologian as a way of locating myself more particularly within the convergence of certain cur-

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rents. Feminism at its best is a commitment to justice-seeking for all women that leaves no one out — a commitment to women of different races, classes, sexual identities, ages and cultures. Therefore to be actively feminist in my work means to be about trying to make connections between and among the structures of oppression that keep women marginalized or cast out.

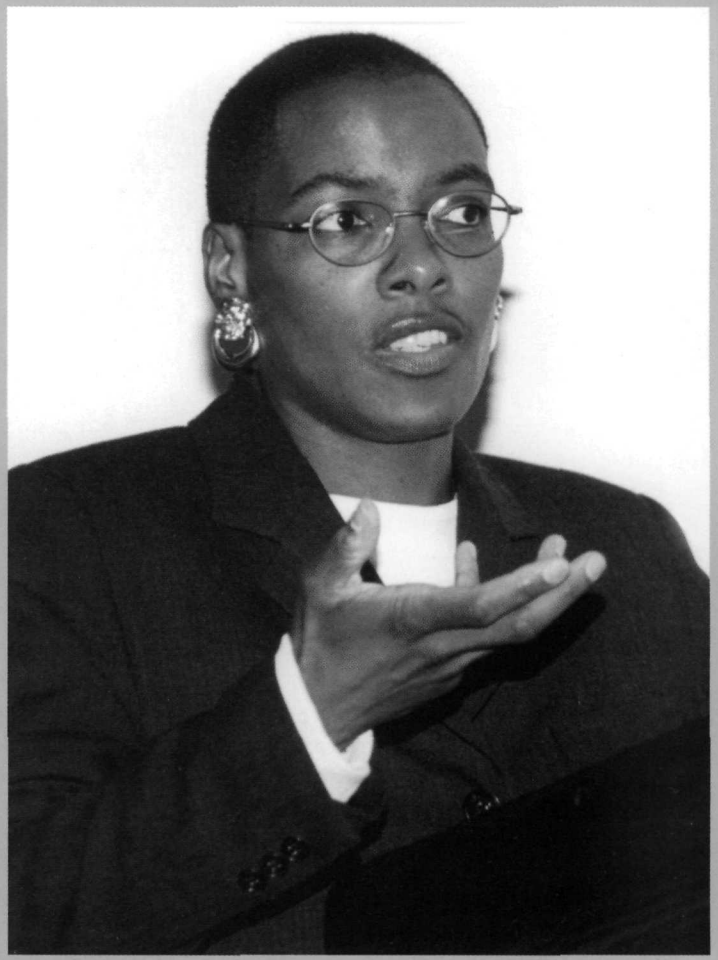
I'm also a lesbian who identified myself many years ago as a lesbian feminist. That has put me very consciously into a relationship of accountability with other queer people who are working in churches and in other institutions.

JW: Is your understanding of what has authority in your lives different from your sense of accountability?

CH: We have to be clear that accountability does not necessarily mean agreement and therefore to say that I hold myself in some sort of creative tension with others — other white women struggling against racism, with other lesbians and gay men who are in the church — means not letting myself go spiraling out into the ozone layer by myself just because I happen to have an idea that I think is interesting. Instead, it means trying to keep my ideas about God, about the world, about Christology, grounded in what Kelly was calling the people — the people in the pew who are at the margins of the church and society. And I would say, yes, it is from within those relationships with those people who are involved in the struggle that I find my authority to speak theologically.

KBD: I, like Carter, believe that when I talk about being accountable to, say, the ordinary poor, black woman who sits in the pew, accountability for me does not imply a non-critical, non-dialogical relationship. What it means is those are the people I'll fight it out with. Those are the people with whom I ultimately live in — as Carter says — creative tension.

When I talk about black theology and blackness, I like to talk about them in two ways. You see, it's one thing to happen to be born black. It's another thing to be committed to the black struggle for life and freedom. And so to me blackness takes on also a sort of ethical or moral dimension. It takes on an existential commitment. Cornell West said a long time ago that we need to move beyond racial reasoning and I agree with that. There's more to being black than having that on your birth certificate — as evidenced by some people sitting on the Supreme Court. It has something to do with one's existential commitment to justice for all black people. And so what makes one a black theologian is not whether or not one is black doing theology, but the kind of theology that one does. There are a lot of black people doing theology that aren't black theologians. And I think the same is true for womanist theology. You have to be more than a black woman doing theology to call yourself a womanist theologian. It has some-



"THE REAL TENSION LIVES BETWEEN MAINTAINING THE INSTITUTION AS IT IS AND SOMEHOW BEING CHURCH. THE CHARGE OF THE PEOPLE IN AUTHORITY IS TO DO ONE THING: MAINTAIN THE INSTITUTION. AND TO ME THAT RUNS AT COUNTER PURPOSES WITH WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CHURCH."

— Kelly Brown Douglas

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thing to do with one's fundamental existential commitment to the life and freedom of every black person. Which automatically means we're committed to creating a just society.

JW: What about those who say that we should forget about such distinctions, that if we all just concentrated on proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we'd all be answering to the same authority and therefore be united?

KBD: To proclaim Jesus as Christ means that we have to come to understand what it is we are proclaiming in the midst of the messiness of the world in which we live. That is the context out of which Jesus understood what it meant for him to be Christ and that is the context out of which we come to understand who he was as Christ. So proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord is a vacuous proclamation unless we understand it in the context of the world in which we live.

CH: Recently I was in a meeting which highlights this point. A law enforcement department here in North Carolina allowed about a dozen of us from different religious traditions to come and view a film on satanism and ritual abuse being used in public school systems, in which, basically, the claim is made that if you're gay, you're likely to be satanic. The film is also anti-Semitic, racist, you name it. But the film kept talking about "Christian" values, "Christian" families, "Christian" this and "Christian" that. And we church people kept asking "Now wait a minute, what does this mean?" And the police officers were saying, "Well, you know, it means that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior." But we were asking, "Who is this Jesus Christ you're talking about?"

We really need to be concrete and specific about what we mean when we say Jesus Christ, because you can sit in a room with 12 Christians and get some very different images of Jesus Christ: the brother who's feeding the hungry? the guy who's ranting at the money changers? the obedient son of a not-so-gentle father? And what do any of these images mean to us today in the context of our lives? We cannot know who Christ is in a particular context unless we know who is using that kind of power in relation to whom. It's not enough to say that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. It never has been.

KBD: Exactly. It's so easy to abstract these things out of their context and then you don't have to deal with what they mean — in any *real* context.

CH: That's right! I believe that one of the things that's going on right now in the Anglican Communion is that rather than working hard to find some creative ways of dealing with real difference our religious leaders are running too easily to religious formulas.

KBD: The church to me is most church or most alive when it remains dynamic. You can't have this static ideal of authority, because when you do that you've institutionalized authority. And when you've institutionalized something, it looks like somebody; it looks like a culture; you've created a norm — a normative measure which excludes. And so the church has to be dynamic. As you wrote early on, Carter, one of the church's first mistakes was to accept Constantine's conversion. As the church became the religion of the state it became a full-fledged social institution.

But from time to time the church cries out in these dynamic movements of people who are seeking justice within this institution. In so doing they are trying, still, to witness to being church. And so that's what women have done for the church. That's what African-Americans have done and now that's what non-heterosexual people are doing.

CH: And it seems to me if a little creative authority were exercised in the Anglican Communion right now, a global movement of dialogical learning could be underway. We could be learning from those on the margins in each culture what the church needs to be about, how we can stay a movement.

KBD: The real tension lies between maintaining the institution as it is and somehow being church. That's why you get so often this hostility or non-listening between the "people in authority" in the Episcopal denomination and those who are locked out of positions of authority. Because the charge of the people in authority is to do one thing: Maintain the institution. Keep the ship afloat and going. And to me that runs at counter purposes with what it means to be church.

JW: As clergy, you both have a pretty institutional identity. If you had it to do over again, would you still choose to be ordained?

CH: Well, I could take the easy way out and say that the church would not ordain me today! I know that for a fact. Because if I had had the audacity to say the things we've just been saying to a bishop or to a ministries commission people would have said, "Hello? And you want to be ordained an Episcopal priest?" But the church is still filled with my people and there's still work to do! What I can't do is be an obedient daughter of a static authority. I've always believed that the Philadelphia ordinations were at least as much about authority as about the ordination of women. They were a real challenge to how we understand that people are called forth and authorized to act in the world. On that occasion not only the 11 women deacons and the ordaining bishops, but thousands of other people who were in solidarity with us, came together and believed ourselves authorized to do what we did. We believed that the spirit herself was moving among us in that moment. From that point on, even as a priest in the church, I couldn't pledge obedience to a bishop who, in turn, is collegial with his brothers, or her brothers and sisters, and therefore cannot break rank regardless of what they, or we, may believe is God's will. That's a bankrupt understanding of authority and a corrupt morality!

KBD: I, like Carter, am always asked, "Why are you in the Episcopal Church?" for the more obvious reason of white church, black person. I also probably wouldn't be ordained today, saying the things that I'm saying. But even at the time I was very hesitant about the ordination process. It was always very clear in my growing up that the Episcopal Church was a white institution — it's sort of hard to miss! Ours was the only black Episcopal Church in Dayton, Ohio, so most black folks we knew weren't Episcopalian. And women weren't being ordained — and girls were not even allowed to be altar girls. So I didn't go to seminary because I had a dream of becoming a priest. I went to seminary to study black theology. Ordination came later. That was because a mentor of mine, Fred Williams, said to me once, "Kelly, if you're a priest, that's between you and God. The church as an institution may or may not recognize that, but that will not stop you from being a priest." And then I suddenly began to be in touch with a whole different tradition in the Episcopal Church and that's the tradition that

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issues forth from an Absalom Jones, a tradition that is the movement that is the church.

Absalom Jones and others like him never saw their authority as coming from white men wearing purple and sitting on thrones. They never viewed it that way, just as when the first enslaved came over and white people were telling them who Jesus was, they never believed a word.

There's a whole different sort of prophetic strand in the black church and that's what I began to tie into, and still tie into. And to me, Carter, that's the history of which the Philadelphia women are a part.

CH: What you have just described is a helpful response to people who are outraged when they hear us say we don't accept the authority of the white, male-dominated institutional church. I'm thinking of people who say, "You're just being subjective and making an idol of yourselves — who are you to think you know God by yourself?"

There's always an assumption that somehow we are making decisions and acting alone, by ourselves. And that my authority, for example, is forged between me, myself and God, without community and apart from the movement that is the church. It took me a long time to realize the problem with that critique, but I had always known that by "authority" I didn't simply mean my own inner voice telling me that I should be a priest or come out as a lesbian, or do the theological work that I do. There has always been something larger going on.

KBD: Vincent Harding wrote a book, *There is a River*. There IS a river; there is a tradition that we are talking about here and I refuse, just as Absalom Jones and you 11 women did in Philadelphia, to give the Episcopal Church over to this white, static, patriarchal, heterosexist authority. Episcopalians like "tradition" and they act like if it's not their tradition, then you have no tradition, you have no roots, no anchor. Let's go back to Nicea or you don't have anything. Well, there are other, justice-seeking traditions even under the banner of Episcopalians!

The thing that keeps me going in the church, struggling to find voice and seeking justice, are the people who have gone before me. I am driven by that first enslaved African who must have said: "What does God have to do with this?" How in the world did those folk maintain faith in the God of Jesus Christ in light of the travesty and atrocities of their life? I think of my grandmothers, to whom I dedicated my first book, and how their faith was unquenchable. I am accountable to them. Because they believed Jesus Christ loved them, then that's why I continue to believe. It's a history of a people's faith that runs through my blood. That's where I get my sense of authority.

CH: You've put your finger on something very important when you talk about it being the people who have gone before who in many ways become the brightest lights of authority for us. Some of those beacons for me are people in the Episcopal Church. One of the first people I remember was William Stringfellow. I heard him in North Carolina when I was about 16. It was the first time I'd ever heard a white person speak on racism. This would have been in 1962, and it was a transforming moment for me.

Within about a year I found myself in the position of being the chair of the Episcopal Young Churchmen in the Diocese of North Carolina. We were trying to have a meeting of our youth commission and there was a black boy on the commission and the diocesan camp and conference center was not integrated. So this meant that those of us who were the officers had to talk with the bishop about this and we wound up refusing to have the meeting at all because they would not integrate that center for us. This set me on an opposition course with this particular bishop who later turned me down for ordination. He told me, "You have an authority problem!"

JW: Where do you see the church struggling to be church today?

CH: Kelly and I were talking at the Episcopal Women's Caucus gathering last fall about the Presiding Bishop's call for everybody to put aside disagreements at this upcoming General Convention — in a spirit of Jubilee. But we are at a pivotal moment in the history of the church and of the world where the claims of justice are intense and present and need to be taken very seriously and not backed off from. Regardless of Bishop Griswold's intention, a call to quiescence is a call to silence. Silent dissent is not what God's Jubilee is all about.

KBD: I agree. This is where Archbishop Tutu and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission have it right [see *TW* 12/99]. We understand that "reconciliation" means coming together again. Now it's on the coming together AGAIN that I think we have to focus. How do we decide that we can come together again? There are prerequisites to that. One is telling the truth. Truth precedes reconciliation.

Now, telling the truth doesn't mean that afterwards we can all say, "Oh, we're all hunky-dory friends." It means that we have to deal with the pain, the agony, the tensions, the frustrations of the truth. But until we tell the truth, we can't come together again. For our church to talk about a time of quiet, or of peace is for our church to turn it's back on dealing with the agony of the truth!

CH: We are created as sisters and brothers in the Spirit. That is basic to the faith that we share. And if that's who we really are, spiritual siblings in this world, and we're broken apart in a myriad of ways, what greater call do church leaders have than to try to help us see who we really are together? But you can't be together and not be struggling for justice and bringing compassion — not as a soft and easy feeling, but as a deep statement of solidarity won through the struggle of learning with one another who we can be when we are together learning the wisdom that can only come from different quarters!

None of us has that wisdom alone. We can only have it together, it seems to me, if we're really talking about the wisdom of God.

KBD: Unity is not in the peace and quietude of the church. It lies in the tensions.

CH: Right! And it's certainly not in making statements about unity.

KBD: Because all those do is squelch the dialogue and say, "You know what? We can't come together in our differences. I can't appreciate you for who God has created you to be. Therefore let's not even talk about it. Let's just be quiet and let's just be — and you all do what I say."

And so what it really means in our church is we have said we cannot deal with the diversity of this church. ●

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AUTHORITY AFTER



U.S. Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold and the Archbishop of Canterbury chat as bishops of the Anglican Communion pose for a group photograph at the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

Power, privilege and primacy in the Anglican Communion

by Ian T. Douglas

EVEN TO THE CASUAL OBSERVER, Lambeth 1998 was not the garden party of yesteryears. For the first time, Anglicans in the industrialized West had to wrestle deeply with the reality that the Anglican Communion is no longer a Christian community primarily identified with Anglo-American culture. We in the West can no longer rest in the economic and political structures of colonialism or the theological and philosophical paradigms of the Enlightenment. We must admit that the Anglican Communion is moving into a post-colonial, post-modern reality, no matter how much that scares us. And scare us it does; especially those who have historically been the most privileged by the way things have been, namely: straight, white, male, Western clerics.

The changes in contemporary Anglicanism, from a white, predominantly English speaking church of the West to a church of the Southern Hemisphere, are consistent with the changing face of Christianity over the last four decades. Anglican mission scholar David Barrett has documented that in the year 1900, 83 percent of the 522 million Christians in the world lived in Europe or North America. Today only 39 percent of the world's one and a half billion Christians live in the same area. Barrett predicts that in less than three decades, in the year 2025, fully 70 percent of Christians will live in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific.

Up until the summer of 1998, however, most Anglicans in the West could pretty well ignore these radical shifts in the world Christian community and thus avoid the hard questions of identity and authority implicit in them. Our cultural, economic and political hegemony shielded us from deeply engaging the realities of our increasingly multi-cultural and plural Anglican Communion. But Lam-

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beth 1998 signaled a turning point for Anglicanism. In debates over international debt and/or human sexuality, it became abundantly clear that the churches in the Southern Hemisphere would not stand idly by while their sisters and brothers in the U.S. and England set the agenda. Aided by some in the West who stood to gain ground in sexuality debates by siding with bishops in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it became abundantly clear to all that a profound power shift was occurring within Anglicanism. For the first time ever, the Anglican Communion had to face head-on the radical multi-cultural reality of our post-colonial, post-modern Christian community. Anthems of Titcomb and Tallis sung by boy choirs in chapels at Cambridge and Oxford can no longer hold us together. Even bishops taking tea with the Queen in the garden of Buckingham Palace during Lambeth is not what it used to be.

To understand how the demographic and cultural shifts in the Church have begun to challenge historic patterns of authority in the Anglican Communion, we must first consider two roadblocks to change — one economic and political, the other philosophical and theological — which have historically characterized the Anglican Communion.

Legacy of colonialism

The first force limiting our living into the possibilities of a multi-cultural plural community in Christ is the ongoing legacy of colonialism. For the majority of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century the Anglican Communion (as it existed) was dominated by Western Churches, chief among them the Church of England and the Episcopal Church in the U.S. From the 1850s to the 1960s mission was inextricably linked to Western colonialism and imperialism, for wherever the Crown went so too did the Chapel. Looking at a map of today's Anglican Communion reveals the undeniable fact that the majority of the churches of the Anglican Communion lie in areas of the world that at one time or another were territories of either England or the U.S.

All of this began to change, however, in the 1960s. In the wake of political independence for colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the missions of the Church of England or the Episcopal Church, USA struggled to "grow up" into autonomous churches of the Anglican Communion. Although many of the countries where newly independent Anglican Churches have come into being still suffer at the hands of economic colonialism (witness the sin of international debt), the growth of the church in the Southern Hemisphere has occurred since the close of the colonial era. Whether we in the West are prepared to accept it or not, the Anglican Communion today has begun to move from a colonial to a post-colonial reality. As a result, the political and economic structures of power associated with colonial dominance have begun to lose their efficacy in the new Anglican Communion.

Limitations of 'modern' world view

The second major force hindering those historically privileged in Anglicanism from embracing a radically different world and church is the philosophical and theological confines of modernity. Whether we mark the beginning of the Anglican Communion at 1784 with the consecration of the first bishop for an autonomous Anglican Church outside of the British Isles (Samuel Seabury for the U.S.), or with the first Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1867, the Anglican Communion as a family of churches is no more than a couple of centuries old. As such the Anglican Communion is a thoroughly modern phenomenon; with "modern" understood as the age of modernity, the last 500 years, the Age of Enlightenment. Anglicanism, up until very recently, has thus rested on the philosophical and theological constructs of Enlightenment thought that values either/or propositions, binary constructs and dualistic thinking.

The Enlightenment mind prides itself on being able to figure things out, to know limits, to be able to define what is right and what is wrong, who is in and who is out. Modern man (and I use this non-inclusive term deliberately) values clear lines of authority, knowing who is in charge, a hierarchical power structure. Plural and multiple realities are an anathema to the modern mind and thus to many who have been in control in the Anglican Communion for most of its history.

But all of this is changing as the majority of Anglicans today are located in places where the constructs of Enlightenment thought have less efficacy. I do not mean here that sisters and brothers in the South and those who are more free from the constrictions of modern thought are less educated or caught in a world of superstitions, as Jack Spong, Bishop of Newark, asserted at Lambeth 1998. Rather, the majority of Anglicans in the world today are able to live in multiple realities — both the Western Enlightenment construct as well as their own local contexts. It is important to emphasize that the maginalized in the West, especially women, people of color, and gay and lesbian individuals, have always lived multiple realities — their own particularities and that of the dominant culture. It is only those in power, namely straight, white males in the West who have the privilege of believing and acting as if there is only one reality — theirs! The movement within Anglicanism from being a church grounded in modernity and secure in the Enlightenment to a post-modern or extra-modern reality is as tumultuous as the shift from colonialism to post-colonialism.

Fear of change

These transitions in the Anglican world are terrifying, especially for those of us who historically have been the most privileged, most in control, most secure in the colonial Enlightenment world. The radical transition afoot in the Anglican Communion is frightening, for it means that we in the West will no longer have the power and control that

we have so much enjoyed. As a result we are anxious, confused, lost in a sea of change.

The movement from being a colonial and modern church to that of a post-colonial and post-modern community in Christ, with its concomitant specter of loss for the historically most privileged, is vigorously countered by many who have been in charge to date in the Anglican Communion. Various attempts to maintain control, reassert power and put Humpty Dumpty back together again are dominating inter-Anglican conversations at this point in history. Two attempts to maintain old structures of power and privilege in response to the changing face of Anglicanism are particularly insidious and thoroughly un-Anglican.

The first is a rather diffuse attempt to claim "historic documents" of the church as authoritative for all time. Driven by fear of change, some want to look backward to a perceived simpler time to claim clear definitions of what it means to be an Anglican today. There are thus new attempts in various corners of Anglicanism, especially in the West, to raise the 39 Articles of Religion or even the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral to be the defining statements of what Anglicans are and are to believe. What results is a "new confessionalism" as insecure individuals and those who fear loss of power in these changing times struggle gallantly to nail down Anglican theology and beliefs. Armed with clear doctrinal definitions and limits, the same folk are then able to count who is in and who is out. Control is reasserted, ambiguity is overcome, and traditional authority is maintained.

A 'new curialization': the 'Virginia Report'

The second response to these changing times are attempts to construct a new central structure of authority for the Anglican Communion, what I call a "new curialization." There are those who believe that without well articulated lines of authority, or "instruments of unity" emanating from a strong center (such as the one our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers have), the Body of Christ, the Church catholic, will fly apart in a disorganized mess. And so some set about to develop a new kind of headship, a new form of primacy, with the Archbishop of Canterbury at the center and the Primates as a kind of "college of cardinals."

The much celebrated "Virginia Report" of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission represents this trend to greater centralization of power and authority in the Anglican Communion. A close examination of the history, tenets and use of the Report shows how this seemingly balanced and affirming document in fact leads in a direction that might not best serve the increasingly multi-cultural and plural nature of the Anglican Communion. In these changing times, do we really want to imbue bishops, especially the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates, with more power and authority than they have historically enjoyed, even in the bad old times of colonialism and modernity?

The instigation of the Virginia Report lies in one of the most significant challenges to straight, white, male, Western clerical hegemony in the Anglican Communion: namely the ordination of women, particularly their ordination to the episcopate. In the wake of the Diocese of Massachusetts' election of Barbara Harris as Suffragan Bishop in 1988, the 1988 Lambeth Conference empowered the Archbishop of Canterbury to call for a Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate under the leadership of Robert Eames, Archbishop of Armagh, Ireland. The "Eames Commission," as it came to be known, met five times between 1988 and 1993. Lambeth 1988 also saw an urgent need for "further exploration of the meaning and nature of communion with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church, and the unity and community of humanity" (Lambeth 1988, Resolution 18).

In response, the Archbishop of Canterbury called together a group of theologians for a consultation on the nature of authority in the Anglican Communion, which met at Virginia Theological Seminary in 1991 and produced an initial report, "Belonging Together." Three years later, a successor group to the initial consultation, to be known as the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), was called into being. This group met in December 1994 and January 1996, on both occasions back at Virginia Seminary. IATDC was to be composed of representatives from around the Anglican Communion. Leadership of the new commission was provided by the principals of the now retired "Eames Commission" — Archbishop Eames, once again in the position of chair, and Mark Dyer, previously the Bishop of Bethlehem, Penn., and now Professor of Theology at Virginia Seminary. It was no surprise that Virginia Seminary announced its willingness to host the group, given Dyer's participation. The Commission would reciprocate by naming their findings the "Virginia Report."

Tensions and a surprise ending

Although the IATDC was ostensibly inclusive and diverse with respect to geographic origin, gender and ordination status, reports emerged of tensions over process and theology between the commission's Anglo-American male bishops and both its women and Southern Hemisphere members.When the final consultation ended in January 1996, a consensus or "report" of the proceedings had not yet been achieved. It thus came as a surprise, even to some members of the commission, when the Virginia Report appeared in its final version with an added section on "The Worldwide Instruments of Communion: Structures and Processes."

Speculation as to the authorship of this new section has varied, but most informed observers believe that this section was drafted by Anglo-American male bishop-members of the group. If true, it is completely consistent, then, that the four instruments of unity outlined, namely the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates Meeting, have a decidedly episcopal emphasis.

Arriving in Canterbury for the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the bishops from the many corners of the Anglican Communion, were presented with the Virginia Report as a crowning statement of the common life of contemporary Anglicanism. As an observer and reporter at Lambeth, acknowledging my limited access to its meetings and conversations, there did not appear to me to be an organized opportunity for substantial discourse on the content and recommendations of the Virginia Report. As a result, little or no open disagreement with the report surfaced. Resolution III 8 of the conference welcomed and affirmed the Virginia Report and requested "the Primates to initiate and mon-

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itor a decade of study in each province on the report and in particular whether *effective communion, at all levels does not require appropriate instruments, with due safeguards not only for legislation, but also for oversight* [italics in the original] as well as [noting the Papal Encyclical *Ut unum sint*] on the issue of a universal ministry in the service of Christian unity."

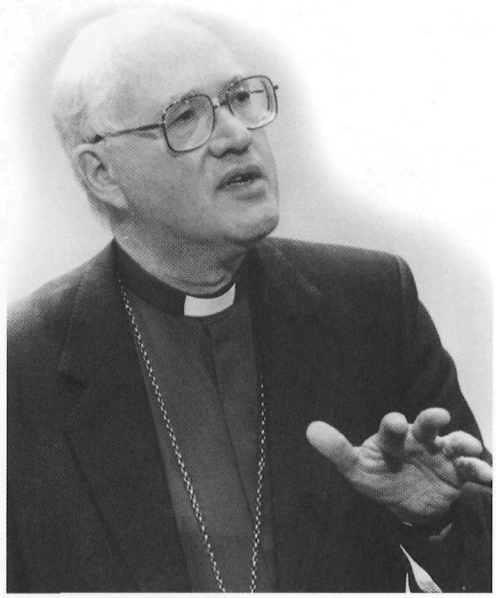
The fact that the archbishops, and not the church's entire leadership, were asked to initiate a study on the need for structures to safeguard and legislate "effective communion" portrays the real intent of the Virginia Report. Behind the resolution was the presupposition that, in these changing times, the Primates' have the responsibility to advance a clear authority structure centered in the Archbishop of Canterbury .

Those who missed the subtle slide toward centralization and increased primatial authority in the Virginia Report need only consider the 1998 Lambeth Resolution III.6 on the "Instruments of The Anglican Communion." This resolution not only calls for the Primates to be the episcopal presence on the Anglican Consultative Council, but, for the first time ever in the history of Anglicanism, imbues the archbishops of the Anglican Communion with heretofore unheard-of pan-Anglican authority and power. The resolution "asks the Primates meeting, under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, [to] include among its responsibilities ... intervention in cases of exceptional emergency which are incapable of internal resolution within provinces and giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity." Resolution III.6 gives the Primates enhanced responsibility for pan-Anglican doctrinal and moral matters and unheard-of extra-metropolitical authority to intervene in the life of Anglican provinces locally when issues of diversity become "problematic." Such all but guaranteed that traditionalists in the U.S. would appeal to the Primates for intervention in the Episcopal Church over questions of human sexuality, as has come to pass.

Canterbury an Anglican pope?

The 11th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC 11) in Dundee, Scotland in September 1999 contrasted sharply with the Lambeth Conference's reception of the Virginia Report. This diverse body of the Anglican Communion, made up of lay people, priests and bishops from every church in the Anglican Communion, would not accept uncritically the slide to increased central authority implicit in the Virginia Report. Many ACC representatives were especially put out that the early sessions of the meeting, six hours in total, were given over to Bishop Mark Dyer's careful and deliberate presentation of the Report.

It was during Dyer's three presentations



Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey

that his bias toward authority resting in the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates was revealed. Owning his Irish Roman Catholic roots in New Hampshire and South Boston, Mass. (although not many knew that this extended to his having been a Roman Catholic Benedictine monk for more than a decade), Dyer's description of the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury as the first "instrument of unity" had a distinctly papal ring. He stressed, "the incarnation of Jesus Christ at the center [of the Church] must be personified in face-to-face people. It must be embodied in that literal sense of embodiment as the Church has carried [it] out throughout its history. [For Anglicans] the Archbishop of Canterbury, as an instrument of unity, is a personal embodiment of that particular ministry for us."

ACC representatives from Edinburgh, Scotland to Sydney, Australia (seemingly unlikely bed-fellows!) were aghast at Dyer's assertion that the Archbishop of Canterbury is the "personal embodiment" of Anglicanism's continuity with Christ and saw in it strong parallels to Roman Catholic understandings of the pope as the Vicar of Christ. Their fears were not allayed when Dyer noted that the theory of subsidiarity, central in the Virginia Report, was taken directly from Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical, "On Reconstruction of the Social Order." Members of the ACC reacted strongly to the centralizing ethic being advanced, with John Moses, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, asserting, "The Virginia Report could be an instrument to increase the curialization drift of the Anglican Communion." Likewise, Glauco Soares de Lima, Primate of the Episcopal Church of Brazil, emphasized that "the report is a sign of a still colonial mind, even in the structures described."

Suspend Lambeth 2008?

Dyer's ownership and defense of the Virginia Report and its instruments of unity, in the face of the ACC's attempts to consider different types of Anglican relationships and authority, heated up when the ACC came to consider the possibility of a worldwide Anglican Congress for lay people, priests and bishops. When it became clear that the Communion could not afford to pay for both an Anglican Congress and a Lambeth Conference in the next decade, the Archbishop of Canterbury, unexpectedly enthusiastic about the proposal, suggested that perhaps the Congress should take precedence and replace Lambeth as the common gathering of the Anglican Communion. This idea was well received by many members of the ACC, especially lay people and priests, and a draft resolution affirming this was quickly set in motion.

Mark Dyer (who also served as a representative to the ACC from the Episcopal Church) rightly saw that such a resolution would be disastrous for the Virginia Report and its views on authority, for it would negate one of the four instruments of unity, namely the Lambeth Conference. Clearly agitated and chagrined by the direction of the discussion, Dyer led the successful charge to table the resolution on the Congress. By the time the issue surfaced again at the end of the

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James Solheim

ACC meeting 10 days later, the resolution had been watered down to read, "that there should be an Anglican Congress in association with the next Lambeth Conference."

Embrace Rome's 'Gift of Authority'?

The slide to increased primatial authority in the Anglican Communion found in the Virginia Report has wider ramifications beyond Anglicanism. The Introduction to the Virginia Report notes, "Resolution 8 of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission [ARCIC I], also had a direct bearing on the exercise of authority in the Church. It encouraged ARCIC to explore the basis in Scripture and Tradition of the concept of a universal primacy in conjunction with collegiality, as an instrument of unity." Is it any surprise, then, that the most recent statement of the Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) under the dubious title "The Gift of Authority," concludes by challenging "Anglicans to be open to and desire a recovery and re-reception under certain clear conditions of the exercise of universal primacy by the Bishop of Rome?"

In addition, a quick glance of the membership of ARCIC II reveals that of the 17 members of the Commission, 15 hail from the industrialized West, with eight members coming from England alone! How can ARCIC begin to think outside of historic patterns of authority identified with straight, white, ordained men of the West when its membership includes only two women and two representatives from the Southern Hemisphere?

Perhaps Tanzanian Bishop Simon Chiwanga, Chair of the Anglican Consultative Council, said it best in his address to the ACC Dundee gathering: "In these times of profound change, many who are fearful of the future seek security and solace in what they perceive as safe and sound. ... Whether confession or curia, catechism or conference, constitution or council, the fearful are looking for easy answers."

Looking beyond Anglicanism

Easy answers based on a shared Anglo heritage, it seems clear, will no longer hold the Anglican Communion together. In these changing times we must not put our hope in either tighter doctrinal definitions or a more centralized authority structure. Instead, a new understanding of Anglican identity is needed if we are to remain in communion across the colors and cultures, nations and nationalities that Anglicanism now embodies. This new identity must look beyond the historic structures of colonialism and the Enlightenment — must, in fact, look beyond Anglicanism itself. For only in a shared commitment with sisters and brothers in Christ from all races and cultures is there hope for genuine participation in God's mission of justice, compassion and reconciliation for all creation.

Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, has been quoted recently as saying, "Anglicans have become much, much more self-conscious and interested in protecting Anglicanism than in furthering the process toward genuine unity of the church." He has further written, "The imposition of a particular form of doctrinal or canonical unity can become the cause for stifling the dynamics of Christian mission. ... Searching for unity means to be engaged in the constant process of discerning the Spirit so that those telling the stories of God's great deeds in different languages can understand and affirm the witness of the other community as being truly inspired by the Spirit. It is this mutual resonance to each other's witness in the one Spirit which is the manifestation of unity, which constantly looks beyond itself towards the fulfillment of God's promise when God will unite and sum up all things on earth and heaven in Christ."

The "mutual resonance" of a multi-cultural community dedicated to God's mission offers the only true authority for the Anglican Communion; in fact, the only true authority for all the baptized, not just bishops and archbishops. ●



William Killough/Anglican World

Episcopal Church bishops join in the opening worship service at the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

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Authority begins with baptism

by Fredrica Harris Thompsett

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OF LATE I HAVE BEEN NOTICING the steadily creeping habit of putting the adjective "lay" before the names, identities and actions exercised by many Christians. There are "lay" readers, "lay" eucharistic ministers, and more generically "lay ministers" and "lay persons." Yet the adjective "lay" does not in common parlance convey authority or expertise. Thus we end up with oddly convoluted references to "lay leaders," "lay social justice workers" and "lay professionals" (although this latter example is clearly an oxymoron). In standard North American usage, the adjective "lay" suggests a second-class, diminished and (at best) amateur status. Byron Rushing, a longtime deputy to General Conventions from the Diocese of Massachusetts, rightly observes that few people in search of serious help would go to a "lay doctor" or a "lay lawyer." Then why, he rhetorically challenges, would we go to a "lay minister" to learn more about God's presence our lives?

The term "lay ministry" is redundant since "ministry" in its formative biblical understanding belongs to the whole community. Similarly, although I am a seminary professor, no one calls me a "lay teacher." The authority of the teacher can stand alone. Yet I wonder what skewed power dynamics are at work when I and others like William Stringfellow and Verna Dozier are called "lay theologians." Who with historical accuracy could claim that theology has been or is the exclusive preserve of the ordained?!

What is going on here? Several things. At the level of liturgical practice, those in the Episcopal Church who worked to revise the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* sought to ensure that "liturgy" became true to its original meaning as "the work of the people." The new 1979 book expressed a bold, inclusive declaration when it defined the "ministers" of the church as "lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons." The direct naming of laity along with clergy as "ministers" of the church was intended to reflect biblical references to laity, the *laos*, as designating the whole people of God. Thus up-front participation was actively encouraged by "lay" readers, by those who would lead the aptly-named "Prayers of the People," and eventually by "lay" chalice bearers. Yet clericalist assumptions continue to mar American religion. William Countryman in his magnificent new book, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Morehouse, 1999), contends against cultural patterns that persistently see clergy today as the "real," the "serious" and even the "graduate" Christians. Countryman's analysis reminds us of the need to engage stronger biblical and theological foundations for claiming authority for all people of God.

THE TERM "LAY MINISTRY" IS REDUNDANT SINCE "MINISTRY" IN ITS FORMATIVE BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING BELONGS TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.

When I was a child, there were three words that stood out in the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*: "Name this Child." This naming was key to the sacramental actions of Holy Baptism as the named child (or an older person) was then received and welcomed as Christ's "own." Today as an adult, I am emboldened by the authoritative promises and responsibilities conveyed in the Baptismal Covenant found in the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*. The authority of Christians begins first with naming and then with baptism. In her book *The Calling of the Laity* (*Verna Dozier's Anthology*, The Alban Institute, 1988), theologian Verna Dozier reminds us that "religious authority comes with baptism." Still, it is important to pay attention to William Stringfellow's warning in the preface to an uncompleted book titled *Authority in Baptism: The Vocation of Jesus and the Ministry of the Laity* (see *A Keeper of the Word: Selected Writings of William Stringfellow*, Eerdmans, 1994), that American churches persistently "belittle the authority that baptism vests in the laity." Sometimes this is done inadvertently, sometimes by passivity among laity and sometimes by clergy who believe that in matters religious they really do "know best."

As one modest step toward affirming the authority of the people of God, I propose that we suspend using the adjective "lay" to describe any group of Christians. This empty term in current institutional usage implies only that those signified are "not clergy." It is also an unnecessarily separating way of speaking about our common mission as Christians at work in the world. I prefer to speak instead of the ministry of all the baptized, the community of the baptized, the high calling of the baptized, and the authority of the baptized. I tend whenever possible to refer to "the people of God" and more simply to "Christians." I believe, as Dozier once observed, that we are primarily called "to make a difference in the structures of society." This urgent call shared by all people of God confirms the power and promises affirmed sacramentally in baptism. This authoritative mission does not call for second-class witnesses! ●

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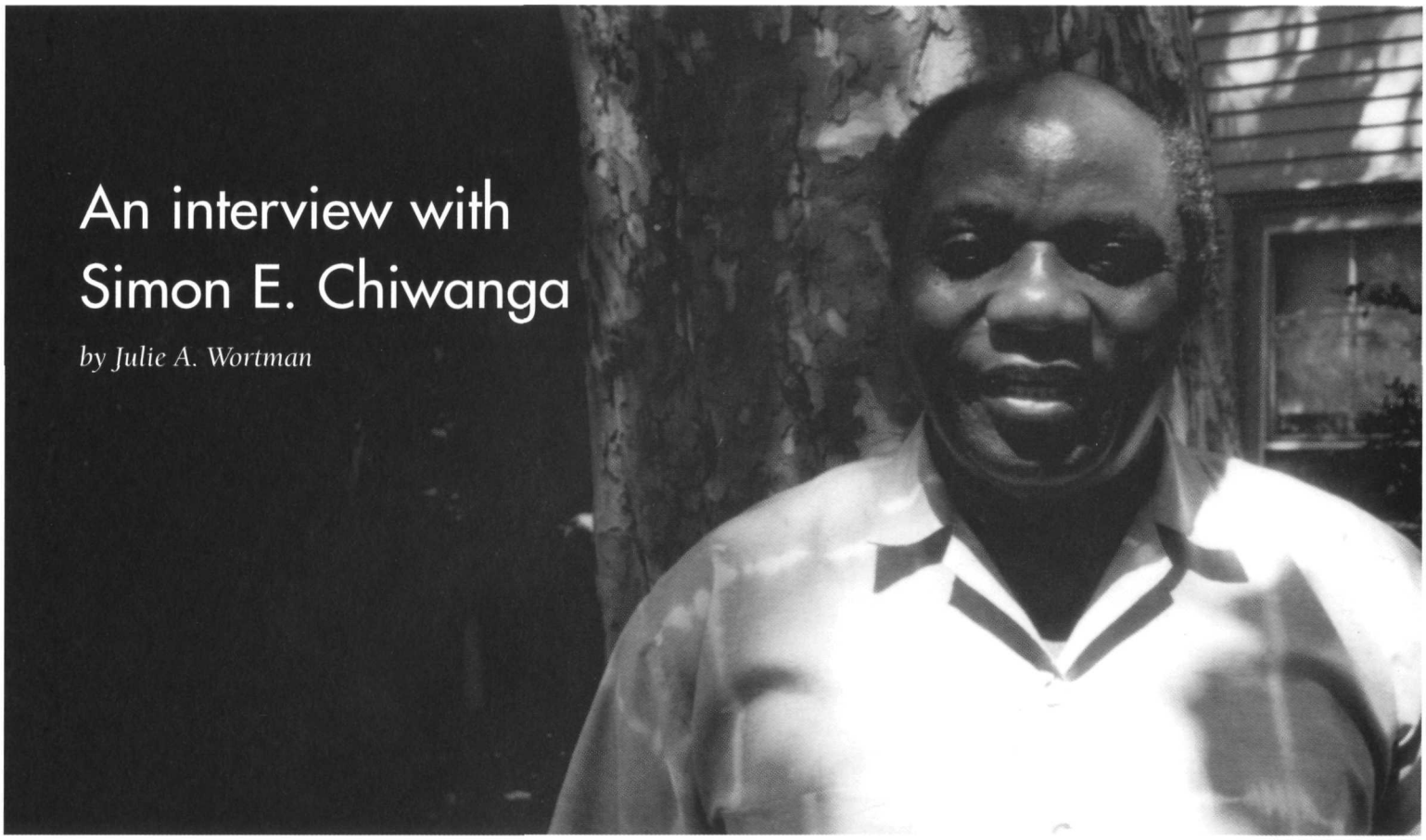
AN AFRICAN REVISIO



An interview with Simon E. Chiwanga

by Julie A. Wortman

Julie A. Wortman

I TEND TO THINK THAT THE VALUES OF COMMUNITY, OF *UJAMAA*, SHOULD BE SEEN AS GOD'S "PREVENIENT GRACE" TO AFRICA. AND IF WE THINK OF THE CHURCH AS *UJAMAA* COMMUNION, WE ARE CALLED TO MINISTRY THAT IS COLLABORATIVE.

SINCE 1992 Simon E. Chiwanga has served as Bishop of Mpwapwa in the Anglican Church of Tanzania. He is also Chair of the Anglican Consultative Council, one of the so-called "instruments of unity" of the Anglican Communion (see p. 6). Chiwanga served as Minister for Education under President Julius Nyerere from 1970 to 1984.

During the academic year 1998-99 he completed a Doctor of Ministry degree at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. The title of his thesis was "From Monarch/Chief to *Mhudumu*: An African Re-Visioning of Episcopacy."

Julie A. Wortman: What were your reasons for coming to this country to take on a study of the episcopate?

Simon E. Chiwanga: I wanted to step aside and look at the seven years that I've been bishop to see what I've learned. I've always chosen an academic program to provide the structure for this kind of reflection. The last time I did this I studied at King's College at the University of London. This time I wanted to study in the U.S. because England and the U.S. are the two giants among the big players in the Anglican Communion. The American church for a long time has had a lot of influence in the government of the Anglican Communion so I want-

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NING OF LEADERSHIP

ed to get to know it better, to feel some of its heartbeats and see what strength I can draw from it.

JW: When did you first begin being drawn to the idea of shared leadership?

SC: One of the circumstances of my life is that although I was born poor, my mother came from a chiefly family. In fact, if the Independence government of Tanzania had not come to power and abolished the institution of Chiefs, I would have been made a Chief. If that had occurred, perhaps I wouldn't care about shared leadership. Instead, I became involved with the government of Julius Nyerere, our first president. To this I owe my enthusiasm and commitment to community-based thinking, self-reliance and empowerment of the people.

Nyerere was a devout Catholic whose heart was with the poor. He deplored our country's heavy reliance on foreign aid. And he spoke often about how a poor person cannot depend just on money as a weapon in the war against poverty, ignorance and disease. Gifts and loans, he said, can be turned into agents of enslavement instead of empowerment, if the receivers do not develop their own self-reliance. To me, this was very much Paul's image of the church as a body, every part working together for growth.

JW: So the community — in your thesis I believe the concept is *ujamaa* — is a very important part of your vision of leadership?

SC: Yes. God is a communitarian in the Trinity! And God's mission is one of reconciliation, which is essentially the work of Christ — and as Christians, reconciliation is our work, too. That means bringing every person and the whole creation into harmony. I seek to live in peace with my neighbor. There cannot be peace if justice is not present, and therefore I have to respect my rights and I have to respect my neighbor's rights. My rights are influenced by my neighbor's rights and vice versa. That's why the community is there: because I cannot be complete without my neighbor. There has to be always that meeting point, that meshing, that interaction. All the time. That is dynamic! It's not the same as emulating or copying or simply compromising. It's a dynamic and creative interaction.

Ujamaa in Swahili means familyhood, a way of life that can be found within a nuclear family or an extended family. Through belonging to a family, clan and tribe, the African learned to say, "I am because I participate." The life of the community was made possible through an interplay of three cardinal principles which permeate all aspects of life: respect for everyone, hard work for everyone, and mutual caring by everyone. These principles guided traditional African life; they guided Julius Nyerere's government and they still pertain today despite the great changes that have swept Tanzania. I tend to think that the values of community, of *ujamaa*, should be seen as God's "prevenient grace" to Africa. And if we think of the church as *ujamaa* communion, we are called to ministry that is collaborative. The leader in this type of communion would be a servant leader or *mhudumu*.

I grew up in what is called the East African Revival Movement which resulted in the breaking of all sorts of barriers. One of the very important features which made it grow and remain for a number of years was this fellowship, this community. When we met in a Bible study group, everyone felt free to share and to

▶ *Continued on page 18*

Creating a 'ministering community'

by William Kondrath

Perhaps as many as 20 dioceses in the Episcopal Church have Total Ministry or Mutual Ministry (the terms are used almost interchangeably) programs where members of congregations match their gifts to their ministerial needs. Together a team of members receive training and are then ordained or commissioned as priests, deacons and ministers of education, outreach, social justice and pastoral care.

Historically, the Total Ministry movement owes much of its inspiration to Roland Allen, the maverick early 20th-century missiologist. The more immediate crafter of Total Ministry as an overall diocesan strategy was Wesley Frensdorff, who, before his fatal plane crash in 1988, was the bishop in Nevada, having also served in Navajoland and Arizona. In addition to Allen's work, Frensdorff built on the work of liturgist Boone Porter and on the efforts of several bishops — Norman Foote, William Gordon, David Cochran, and George Harris — who pioneered the ordination of "local priests" and who helped change the face of ministry in many communities which are "small, isolated, remote, or distinct in respect of ethnic composition, language, or culture" (Title III, Canon 9). And while it is still those sorts of communities that find most resonance with the Total Ministry message, others are joining the caravan.

Radical call to community ministry

At the heart of the Total Ministry movement is a radical call for Christians to join in discerning the needs of their own local community and to be trained together to exercise their particular gifts in the service of the wider community. On one level, fostering the ministry of the whole people of God is a matter of "de-centering" clergy in the life of the community, or as Frensdorff said, creating "a ministering community, rather than a community gathered around a minister." For this to happen, priority must be given to baptism, not to ordination, as the center and source of ministry. Boone Porter put it succinctly when he quipped: "When we look for the Christ figure in the Eucharist, we see the priest. When we look for the Christ figure in Baptism, we see the one baptized."

▶ *Continued on page 19*

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THE IDEA THAT ONE PART OF THE BODY IS ABOVE THE REST IS INCONSISTENT WITH PAUL'S TEACHING IN CORINTHIANS THAT WE ARE ALL MEMBERS OF THE SAME BODY AND EACH PART IS ESSENTIAL.



learn from the others, regardless of position. We could see that the same text impacts different people differently. Together, there was tremendous richness. In a way you have to have different readings of Scripture to get its fullness. So if someone says that they have comprehended the whole truth, I can only envy them!

Now, one more thing about community. I've said that in sharing we enrich ourselves and each other by each individual's contribution and perception. But also, we correct each other. Community sharing is correcting. I may begin with an assumption, but when I listen to others, if I really adopt an open mind and spirit to receive — which is always very crucial in community — then by the time the third person has made his or her contribution, I may have changed my original position, because they have thrown in more light without necessarily criticizing.

JW: No one leaves with their position the same?

SC: Exactly.

JW: So it's suspicious if anybody leaves unchanged?

SC: That's right! Absolutely! And that's why qualities like listening and the willingness to risk vulnerability are indispensable in community.

JW: In your thesis you say that because of Tanzania's history, both colonial and indigenous, the nature of the leadership in the church today makes it difficult to achieve that sort of mutual transformation?

SC: That's right. Over the years I have observed an enormous problem in Tanzanian society as a whole: a dependency mentality. The colonialists didn't trust Africans. Some missionaries for a long time didn't trust Africans. Hence the delay in developing the ordained ministry in our church. There was this idea that Africans can't lead themselves. So now many in the church don't trust that they can.

JW: So what's needed?

SC: As Minister of Education I always emphasized that the first important thing is to create an environment conducive to learning. That is very difficult because it means making sure that each person is free to speak their mind; each one is assured of safety and that their dignity will be respected. You create the norm that no question is silly.

I began to try to create this sort of environment in 1994, in preparation for our diocesan synod. The slogan that I publicized was, "Vision is not a monopoly of one person or one position." You see, traditionally the so-called bishop's "charge" in synod gives the vision, the direction, which the diocese should follow. But then you are perhaps blocking better visions than yours from the floor.

JW: Better visions than the bishop's?

SC: Yes, absolutely. So from the beginning of that synod I said that the bishop's charge would be debated afterward, that people could be free to say, "The bishop here is wrong. Our church needs to go this direction and not what he's proposing." My idea was that I've made my contribution, the members of synod should make their own contributions and then we'll meet.

Community sharing also must include the empowerment of the participants. For example, for a long time women in our culture were very, very slow speakers. The men were up front and always had a chance to speak. So to change this, we said that the lay representation from each congregation had to be one man and one woman. Of course, we don't have women ordained, so that balance is still tilted in the sense that of the three from each parish, two will be men because the priest will be a man. But now we have women participating in synod.

We also prepared people to understand the rules of order used at synod because to know them — and to understand that using them is a kind of game — is to be free.

JW: At the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops in 1998 I saw African bishops, especially, espouse an attitude that the bishops speak for the whole church. There were also those asking that the Archbishop of Canterbury and the primates be given greater powers. So by urging a more shared kind of church leadership aren't you bucking a movement in the opposite direction?

SC: The idea that one part of the body is above the rest is inconsistent with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are all members of the

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same body and each part is essential. We bishops also make the mistake of setting ourselves up as THE theologians of the church. There was a time in the history of the church in Tanzania when a priest was the highest educated person in the community. That time passed away long ago. More highly trained theologians are emerging, many lay people. We need to recognize that fact.

Instead of being preoccupied with the hierarchy of orders, or with building the church by increasing members, we ought instead to travel towards preoccupation with God's work of reconciliation in God's world. The *mhudumu* idea of leadership that is associated with *ujamaa* communion would have little to do with "my lord bishop." A *mhudumu* bishop is accountable to the community and will ensure the sharing that the community requires for transformation.

The monarchical model of church leadership involves an ordained ministry independent, though aware, of the laity. It stresses a chain-link Apostolic Succession. It creates a pyramid structure in which all orders derive from the "fullness of ministry" possessed by the bishop. Clergy shape policy and make plans. The laity are then enlisted to assist in carrying out those plans.

In the *mhudumu* model of leadership the structure is circular, with no higher or lower rankings. Each ministry has its own integrity, function and type of authority which is derived not from the bishop, but from the community in the power of the Holy Spirit, who bestows gifts.

JW: The monarchical model seems pretty well entrenched, though, doesn't it?

SC: I'll tell you one very simple thing. To change from the priest or bishop being chair of every committee in our diocese was an active task. So now these committees are chaired by a lay person, man or woman. But I had people ask me, "Are you sure what you are doing is Anglican? Because we've never seen this."

JW: So the people are saying that Anglicanism is a top-down, clerical-led enterprise?

SC: Anglicanism is what we received from the missionaries. ●

Julie A. Wortman *is publisher and co-editor of* The Witness, *<julie@thewitness.org>.*

Creating a 'ministering community'

▶ *Continued from page 17*

On a deep level, what is called for is a profound understanding of the doctrine of the Incarnation, which implies that every space is sacred, every people holy. Such a view, says Mark MacDonald, who is Bishop of Alaska, gives authority to the individuals' gifts for ministry and to the nuances of local belief and culture, potentially the source of liturgical and ministerial freedom. The pitfall, MacDonald, says, is too strong an adherence to the mantra that "the local community has within it all the gifts that it needs, " although this may be an important corrective for the more prevalent view, that the local community "is a complete zero until you download all of the ideas of the so-called universal church."

Order and structure

With Total Ministry, the notion of career clergy takes a back seat to the needs of the local congregation and its ability to meet those needs from within its membership. Here, seminary-trained clergy function more like the apostle Paul, setting up new churches or providing education and formation for congregations and, by implication, for their leaders.

According to Steve Kelsey, Bishop of Northern Michigan and convener of Leavenners (a cooperative of ministry developers from the northeastern U.S.), one of the major obstacles the church faces is that "we have confused itinerant and indigenous leaders," meaning we have confused ministry development with ministry delivery. In the Total Ministry paradigm, ministry development — helping people identify their gifts and offering them training for ministry — is more the domain of the seminary-trained professionals. Ministry delivery — actually doing hands-on ministry — is more appropriately handled on the local level by locally trained lay persons, deacons, and priests.

Still, with the increase of Canon 9 (local) ordinations, there's a hidden problem — a two-tired system of ordination which can relegate the locally ordained to second-class status. It is not uncommon to hear seminary-trained clergy, for example, question this newer order's influence in diocesan decision-making — even as others wonder the reverse: Is it fair that the seminary-trained have such a disproportionate amount of influence? In an effort to establish a new model of diocesan life that focuses on neither, the Diocese of Northern Michigan has gone to a unicameral diocesan convention to which each congregation can bring four representatives — in any combination of laity, clergy, or both.

Mission imperative?

One of the promises implied in Total Ministry has been that a congregation — freed from the burden of devoting the vast majority of its budget to a full-time priest and freed from the myth that the priest is the minister — would engage more fully in missionary work, proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed. But the movement has yet to live up to that promise in most areas. Perhaps slaying the dragon of clericalism has distracted too many advocates of Total Ministry from the work of evangelism and communal social change.

And, for some, there is also a larger question. "We don't need to add to the Episcopal Church," says Edmundo Desueza, executive secretary of the Episcopal Province of the Caribbean, "but to enter into the life of the community." From this mission-focused perspective, the energies Total Ministry congregations are now directing toward surviving as Episcopal Church congregations might more faithfully be redirected toward ecumenical models of worship and ministry.

Still, it is in the ordering and structuring of ministry that Total Ministry proponents offer the greatest challenge to the rest of the church. A new understanding of the diaconate and the priesthood is emerging as priests and deacons are called forth by a congregation, formed alongside other members of that congregation, offering their gifts without compensation. In these congregations, the priesthood and the diaconate of the community is replacing the priesthood and diaconate as an individual's personal possession and career. ●

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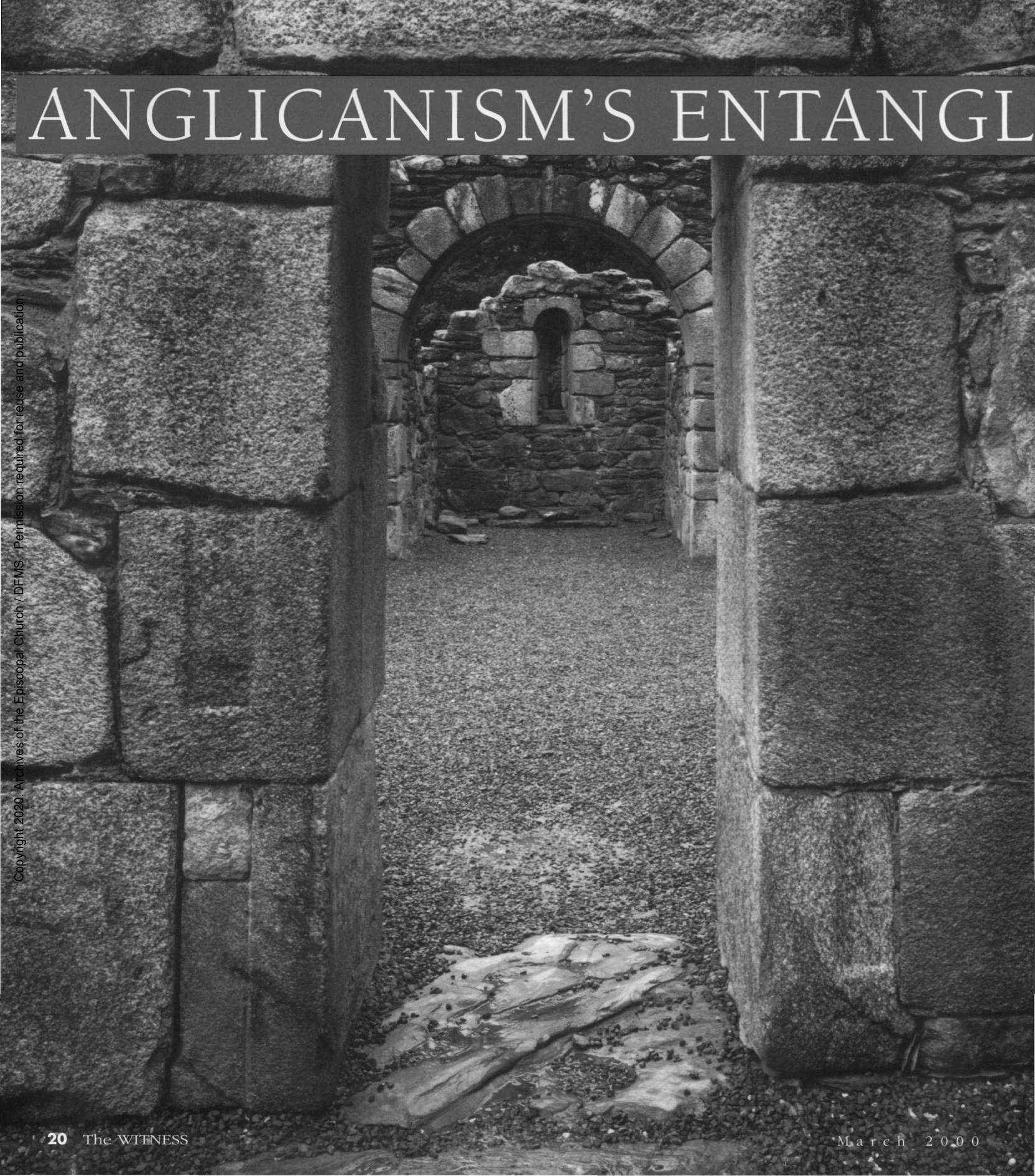
ANGLICANISM'S ENTANGL



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ED SENSE OF AUTHORITY

A tradition that allows for great disagreement

by L. William Countryman

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SOME TIME AGO I was asked to present the "liberal position" on authority in Anglicanism to a diocesan conference. I found myself a bit perplexed. The word "liberal" means different things to different people; but, to tell the truth, I seldom use it of myself. In matters of theological reasoning, I'm a rather traditional Anglican, and about all I could offer was the tradition that I learned from parish clergy, from bishops, from my teachers at The General Seminary and, of course, from the writings of such venerable Anglican divines as William Temple, Brooke Foss Westcott, F. D. Maurice and Richard Hooker. Over the years, I have discovered that I am not alone; in fact, most Anglicans of whatever stripe seem to think themselves rather traditional in theological terms.

What, then, is this common tradition that occasions (or at least allows) so much disagreement? The tradition is complex, because Anglicans have always had mixed feelings about authority, as we still have today. We insist on conducting the life of the community with decency and order, with a certain degree of predictability and conformity. We're not individualists. But we've also been suspicious of the tendency in some other Christian traditions to make too much of authority. We rejected the authority of the pope in Rome in the 16th century. And we also rejected the authority of the "paper pope," the Bible in the way that the Puritans used it, in the 17th century.

In both cases, what we rejected was a certain way of using (or, from our perspective, abusing) authority. We were happy to retain the traditional ministry of the church. We claimed the Bible as our own. But we were suspicious of those who claimed absolute authority to define the will of God, whether they did so through the office of the papacy or in the name of the Bible. E. J. Bicknell, who wrote a venerable (and certainly not radical) book on the 39 Articles of Religion, says: "Since God is perfect Wisdom and perfect Truth, to refuse belief in any truth that He has revealed would be not only presumptuous but unreasonable. The real difficulty is to prove the genuineness and accuracy of what is claimed to be a revelation from God."

ANGLICANS HAVE BEEN SUSPICIOUS OF THE TENDENCY IN SOME OTHER CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS TO MAKE TOO MUCH OF AUTHORITY. WE REJECTED THE AUTHORITY OF THE POPE IN ROME IN THE 16TH CENTURY AND WE ALSO REJECTED THE AUTHORITY OF THE "PAPER POPE," THE BIBLE IN THE WAY THAT THE PURITANS USED IT, IN THE 17TH CENTURY.

Do we believe what God says? Certainly! Are we certain what God says? That is another matter. We have no direct access to God of a kind that could resolve our uncertainties and disagreements once for all. God has become incarnate in Jesus; but Jesus, too, is unavailable to answer our specific questions. At a kind of third level of authority, we speak of the Bible as God's word; but if you read it carefully, you quickly discover that it was written with an eye to the issues of distant places and times — related, no doubt, to our questions, but not identical with them.

The Anglican risk: dispensing with absolute authority

Anglicanism did a daring thing in the Reformation when it took the risk of dispensing with absolute authority in this world. We all hanker after certainty. But if we insist on having it, we run the danger of idolatry — the danger that having a pope, whether human or on paper, will lead us to trust in an accessible, this-worldly authority rather than in the true God, the hidden Holy One, the One who alone fills all in all. "The real difficulty is to prove the genuineness and accuracy of what is claimed to be a revelation from God." We chose the difficult — but spiritually safer — course of seeking the will of God not from a single this-worldly authority but in the confluence or congruence of several witnesses.

Anglicans acknowledge not a single authority, but a group of witnesses to God's will. We have traditionally summed them up as the three legs of a tripod: Scripture, tradition, and reason. Why a tripod or, as it's commonly called, a "three-legged stool"? Perhaps it's because it is an inherently stable object. It will stand on its own, even on rough ground, and unlike a chair with four legs, it will be solid—not rocking back and forth. The image of the tripod is, in other

words, an image of our hope and longing for theological stability!

In one respect, however, it's a misleading image. It suggests that the three elements — Scripture, tradition, and reason — are all quite distinct and separable from each other, as if each one had a pure and unique existence, unrelated to that of the others (except, of course, that they're all holding up the stool we sit on). If we look at the three more carefully, however, we shall find that this isn't the case. Each of the three is dependent on the other two; indeed, at times, they tend to merge into one another.

The Bible: always entangled with tradition ...

Of course, someone might be thinking, "He's off his rocker. I can hold a Bible in my hand. I know what it is. It's not the same as tradition. It's not the same as reason. It's a book." Well, yes, the Bible is distinct from tradition and reason. But it's always entangled with them. Consider how the New Testament came into existence. It is very much a story about tradition. The church, of course, is older than the New Testament books; from the start, it preserved the traditions about Jesus and created new traditions of church life. And the church is much older than the collecting up of the New Testament books as a canon. In fact, the church did the collecting and canonizing.

How did it go about that? To begin with, it looked at tradition. What books were actually being read in the churches as legacies from the earlier days of Christianity? That's how we came up with the somewhat odd business of four gospels. It isn't very convenient. Some early Christians tried various ways to reduce the number. But it was hard to get rid of any of them because they were all traditional.

Forming the New Testament canon required the use of reason, too. The early Christians employed historical reasoning in an effort to determine which books were really from the first generations of Christianity. The Epistle to the Hebrews, for example, almost didn't make it in because nobody was sure who had written it. Only when the scholar Clement of Alexandria suggested that the ideas were Paul's and the writing was Luke's did it begin to gain real acceptance. Other works were kept out of the canon on the basis of theological reasoning. If they taught doctrines that sounded Gnostic or Marcionite or Montanist, they were rejected. In other words, the scriptures themselves have always been deeply entangled with both tradition and reason.

Of course, one might think, "That was then; this is now." But even now our reading of Scripture is dependent on both tradition and reason. Think about our Anglican tradition of standing up for the reading of the Gospel at the Eucharist. It seems a small thing; but it has a big influence. Anglican preachers tend to choose the Gospel reading for their text in part because we honor it in this way as central. All reading of Scripture in the church typically begins with the presupposition that we know, at least roughly, what to expect there. We assume the Bible will be more or less consistent with what we've already experienced and learned of the faith. Tradition surrounds and permeates all our reading of the Bible, even if we don't want it to. It's a fact of reading.

OUR DISAGREEMENTS OF THE MOMENT FOCUS PARTICULARLY ON THE MATTER OF SEXUALITY. SCRIPTURE BY ITSELF WON'T SETTLE THIS ISSUE FOR US. IS THERE A SPECIFIC PROHIBITION ON AT LEAST SOME SEXUAL ACTS BETWEEN TWO MEN? YES. IS THERE ANYTHING ON THE OTHER SIDE? YES, AGAIN.

... and reason

What is true of tradition is true of reason, too. Let me quote from our most distinguished theologian, Richard Hooker: "For whatsoever we believe concerning salvation by Christ, although the Scripture be therein the ground of our belief; yet the authority of man is, if we mark it, the key which openeth the door of entrance into the knowledge of the Scripture. The Scripture could not teach us the things that are of God unless we did credit men who have taught us that the words of Scripture do signify those things."

Someone may object, "Wait a minute. I've got a copy of the Bible right here. I can read it for myself." Yes and no. When you read a page of the Bible, you are always reading from the accumulation of centuries of study, thought, and reflection. What did this Hebrew word really mean in the 8th century B.C.? What did that Greek word mean in the 1st century A.D.? Why do New Testament writers sometimes quote the Hebrew scriptures in a form different from the one we know? What is the idea behind this odd expression in the original language? What is the correct text of this passage where the manuscripts do not all agree? What was going on at Corinth that disturbed Paul? Why was it such a problem that a woman with a hemorrhage touched Jesus? Where did the Revelation of John get all those strange images? What do they mean? Even if you are reading the scriptures in their original languages, you are reading them through the lens of reason—all our cumulative human learning about language, literature, history, and culture and all our long history of thought about philosophy, theology and ethics. Without reason, in fact, we not only couldn't read the Bible. We couldn't read at all. All reading is an exercise of reason.

Tradition and reason: always tempered by Scripture

Tradition and reason, in turn, are also dependent on the Bible and on each other. As Anglicans, we look to the Bible to serve as a kind of brake on the free and unconstrained growth of tradition. Our official statements about the Bible are very clear on that. Its primary value, they say, is that of a limiting factor: "... Whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man [or woman, one presumes], that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation" (Article VI). Scripture is our pruning hook—and our compass as well. For tradition can not only grow too luxuriant; it can out and out lose its way at times. Then we

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come back to Scripture to rediscover our center and direction.

Scripture also shapes our reasoning because it helps form our perspective on the world. We would not bother to be Christians if we did not think there was a profound revelation about God and the world to be found in the teaching of Jesus. We expect a lot from Scripture, and it demands much from us. If we find ourselves struggling with Scripture, often it's because Scripture itself requires it. The 20th Article tells us that the church is not allowed "so [to] expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another." Good. The church is not allowed to muddle the scriptures unnecessarily. But we'll still have to deal with the reality that this extraordinary collection of works written over more than a thousand years contains some real tensions within itself. There is, for example, a real tension between Paul's insistence in Galatians on the baptismal equality of men and women in Christ (3:23-29) and the insistence elsewhere in New Testament writings on the subordination of women (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:12-15). We do not create that tension. We find it in the scriptures. And because we expect that in Scripture we will hear the word of God, we have to work with the tension, to reason with it, to try to find in each era what it means for our life together.

Late in the last century, Brooke Foss Westcott wrote: "As the circumstances of men and nations change materially, intellectually, morally, the life [of faith] will find a fresh and corresponding expression. We cannot believe what was believed in another age by repeating the formulas which were then current. The greatest words change in meaning. The formulas remain to us a precious heritage, but they require to be interpreted. Each age has to apprehend vitally the Incarnation and the Ascension of Christ."

Now Westcott has been thought of down the years, by all sorts of Anglicans, not as a radical but as a model bishop, scholar and theologian. Yet, he was recognizing here something that is inevitable. Every age has its own questions, its own problems, its own language and, one hopes, its own God-given vision of our common human and Christian hope. And therefore every age has to grasp anew the vitality of the Incarnation and Ascension of Christ — and indeed of the Trinity, of the creation, of all the great and ancient Christian teachings. It takes Scripture, tradition, and reason, all three in intimate interaction, to help us rediscover the gospel life.

Three-legged stool, three-ply yarn

I'd like to suggest that we stop thinking of Scripture, tradition and reason solely with the image of a three-legged stool and start using, as well, the image of a three-ply yarn — the kind that needle pointers use. Yes, there are three distinct strands. But they all partake of the same dye. And the very process of spinning them has made them entangle themselves with one another in such a way that they do not like to come apart. You cannot, simply as a practical reality, read Scripture without the help of tradition and reason. You cannot safely follow tradition without reflecting on it with the help of Scripture and reason. You cannot reason as a Christian without being part of the ongoing tradition of the community and seeking the word of God in Scripture. The results of our theological reflection will always reveal the interaction of all three strands, even if we are not fully conscious of using them. And the way in which the three interact will never be predictable in a simple way.

WE RECITE THE OLD CREEDS. BUT WE LONG AGO REJECTED THE IDEA THAT ANY ONE THIS-WORLDLY VOICE COULD SETTLE OUR QUANDARIES. OUR TRADITIONAL CENTER IS NOT DOCTRINE; IT'S A COMMUNITY SEEKING THE WILL OF GOD.

Let me point to a few examples. One might be the matter of taking Sunday as the central day for Christian worship. The Bible repeatedly and solemnly commands the observance of the Sabbath, which is the period from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. Nowhere, even in the New Testament, does it explicitly replace Sabbath observance with Sunday observance. A few denominations like the Seventh-Day Baptists and the Seventh-Day Adventists have gone back to the keeping of the Sabbath in obedience to scripture, but I doubt that most Anglicans feel much anxiety on the point. Here, tradition settles the question for us, even against Scripture.

Another example: Most of us probably have savings accounts or other accounts where we receive interest on money. The paying and receiving of interest is specifically forbidden in the Bible. It was forbidden in church tradition, too, until some time in the Middle Ages, when the economic system had undergone changes that made the biblical prohibition seem difficult to defend. Our own Anglican Reformers disapproved of it. Yet, today, while we may well differ among ourselves as to whether the modern institutions of banking are entirely a good thing or not, very few people in today's world try to get along entirely without them. Even the *mullahs* of Iran have been finding it difficult. Christians have allowed reason to take the lead on this one — though, by now, the acceptability of interest is virtually a tradition for us.

Another example: the American Revolution. The New Testament contains explicit admonitions to "honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:13-17; cf. Rom. 13:1-7, Titus 3:1). In 1776, we Americans decided not to do that any more — at least not in any literal way. Anglicans split down the middle on the issue and even killed one another over it. Many of us were Tories, including Samuel Seabury, who later became our first bishop. Others were Patriots, including William White, who later became our second bishop — not to mention a prominent layman named Washington. Part of the argument between them was about the scriptures: Which was more important, the specific command to honor the king or all that proclamation of liberty to be found in the Law and the Prophets? But another big part of the argument came from the changing political philosophy of the 18th century. Here again reason was a critical factor.

Another example: In the mid-19th century, American Christians of all sorts argued about the Bible and slavery. Some held that the Bible ordained slavery, others that the Bible

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made it unthinkable. One of the pro-slavery writers was Bishop Hopkins of Vermont, who published a book in the middle of the Civil War maintaining that the Bible commanded the institution of slavery. Today, we're appalled that one of our forebears could make such an argument. But, for them, it was the same kind of difficult, distressing struggle that we are encountering on other issues in our own day. In this case, reason and one way of reading the Bible eventually prevailed over tradition and other ways of reading the Bible.

Currently, we Anglicans are still struggling over issues of racism and of the roles of women and men in the church. But our disagreements of the moment focus particularly on the matter of sexuality. Scripture by itself won't settle this issue for us. As often, there are tensions with the Bible. Is there a specific prohibition on at least some sexual acts between two men? Yes. Is there anything on the other side? Yes, again, for the prohibition is framed in the language of physical, ritual purity; and there are teachings in the gospels and in Paul that say the physical, ritual requirements of purity no longer apply to Christians. Even within the Old Testament, we encounter one male-male liaison that certainly sounds sexual (that of David and Jonathan) and nonetheless plays a critical role in salvation history.

EVEN IN TIMES WHEN OUR DISPUTES OCCASION DISTRESS, WE STRIVE TO STAY TOGETHER BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS CALLED US AND LOVED US.

Anglicans have traditionally read the scriptures in a way that prohibits honorable gay-lesbian partnerships. But Anglicans also have a tradition of asking, "Is the tradition always right? Or has it gone off on its own tangent in this matter?" In any case, we ask these questions in a new way that had not been raised before. Just as the questions about democracy had not really been asked until the 18th century and the questions about slavery until the 19th century, significant questions about racism, about the status of women, and about sexual orientation simply were not asked until our own time. Now that they are being asked, we have to seek appropriate answers that are continuous with Scripture and the faith of the church—and, as Westcott forewarned us, with the legitimate concerns of our own day. To find these answers, we will employ Scripture, tradition and reason in combinations that we will fully understand only as we work our way through the process.

A unique kind of authority?

When all is said and done, what is really central to Anglican faith? The central thing in our faith is a message known to us from Scripture: the proclamation of God's love for every one of us, of God's forgiveness which doesn't wait on us to be perfect, of God's open arms welcoming us home, of the opportunity this good news gives us to welcome one another as well. The truly distinct thing about Anglicanism, I think, is its strong grip on this last thing — the opportunity for Gospel community. Our church doesn't stand on a clear, eternally guaranteed system of doctrine. We recite the old creeds. But we long ago rejected the idea that any one this-worldly voice, whether papal or biblical, could settle our quandaries. Our traditional center is not doctrine; it's a community seeking the will of God. We know ourselves as a people called together by God, even through the most painful of dissensions. (And we've been through some real troubles: In the Revolution and the Civil War, remember, we actually killed one another over these issues.) Even in times when our disputes occasion distress, we strive to stay together because we believe that God has called us and loved us. We even hope that, somehow, that makes it possible for us to love one another. Our tradition, we expect, will ultimately prove to offer a unique kind of authority: a sturdy, stable three-legged stool to sit on and also a strong three-ply yarn to bind us together in unity. ●

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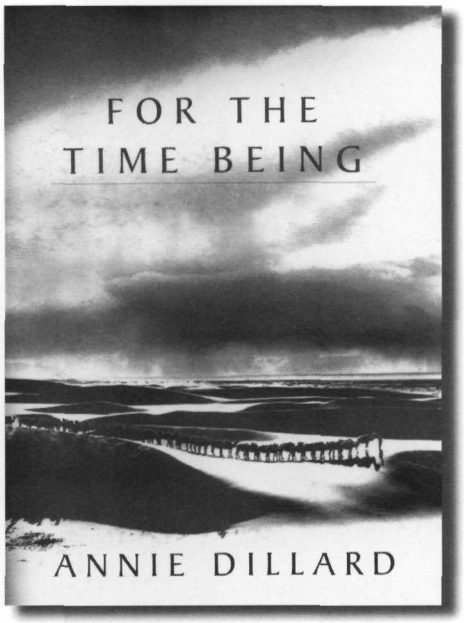
BOOK REVIEW

For the time being

by Anne E. Cox



For the Time Being
by Annie Dillard
(N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1999)

DOUGLASS ADAMS, in *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was content to let "42" be the answer to "life, the universe and everything." In *For The Time Being*, Annie Dillard intuits the answer in the relationship between rounded grains of sand, layers of dust, Hasidic dancers, galaxies and God; the testimony of the paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin, an Elvis-imitating skycap in Israel, Chinese Emperor Qin, the Shekinah — the divine Presence.

"Given things as they are, how shall one individual live?" she asks in her introductory note. And while Dillard explores the question more readily than she provides an answer, she does tip her hand in the book's title: We are, each individual one of us, "time beings" — living in this time, now. This book is for us.

Dillard's text skates between the big and the small. The "big" is the truth that individually, like single grains of sand, we don't matter; we humans are puffs, clouds that change and disappear in an instant. In the grand sweep of history, we each mean nothing.

Dillard looks at this reality — and the different statistics that can convey it — with wry amusement. "At any one time, the foam from breaking waves covers between 3 and 4 percent of the earth's surface. This acreage of foam — using the figure 4 percent — is equal to that of the entire continent of North America. By another coincidence, the U.S. population bears nearly the same relation to world population: 4.6 percent. The U.S. population, in other words, although it is the third-largest population among nations, is about as small a portion of the earth's people as breaking waves' white foam is to the planet's surface."

The numbers she stirs up are often sobering: Sixty million people die every year; 138,000 Bangladeshi drowned in a typhoon on April 30, 1991; every 110 hours, a million more humans arrive on the planet than die, but the dead outnumber the living, something like 85 billion to 5.9 billion.

Yet, in the face of this bigness, we have smallness — that is, we have the particularity of our lives, and the significance of every action, every thought, every person born on this earth. Witness the care every infant born in an obstetrics ward receives as Nurse Pat Eisberg washes and swaddles it.

But Dillard doesn't lead us into an innocent "his eye is on the sparrow" specificity. Rather, her tendency is to slam us up against specific horrors and injustices. She describes photographs of human birth defects in *Smith's Recognizable Patterns of Human Malformation*, fourth edition, spending particular time with the phenomenon of bird-headed dwarfs. Elsewhere, she reveals how in the 5th century Christians killed the lady Hypatia: "They stripped her flesh with oyster shells, and threw the shellfuls of flesh, 'quivering' in a fire."

We live in specificity, Dillard's knife-sharp descriptive method forces us to understand. We can imagine the bigness of the world, be numbed by the numbers, confused perhaps, or distressed, but the truth is that we must dwell in our own specific, incarnate and small situations. Genocide ennervates, but the death of one we love rips us apart.

Jesus, too, must have known the reality that we are puffs of clouds, lilies of the field, blades of grass as he counseled us not to worry about our lives, what we will eat or drink or wear (Mt. 6:25). We are free, then, to live fully in this physical reality.

Jesus could do the things that caused his death because he knew that whether he lived or died he was in God. That was the source of his authority. He was free. Nothing much matters, every act matters much. No wonder he taught in parables: The twist is too fast to capture in regular discourse. Truly incarnate living is astounding.

Dillard intimates that we all can choose to live this way. We can live free from the oppression of bigness and insignificance and because of this, we can live free to hunt the divine or holy in the world.

So she ends with her own sort of parable:"In Highland New Guinea, now Papua New Guinea, a British district officer named James Taylor contacted a mountain village, above three thousand feet, whose tribe had never seen any trace of the outside world. It was the 1930s. He described the courage of one villager. One day, on the airstrip hacked from the mountains near his village, this man cut vines and lashed himself to the fuselage of Taylor's airplane shortly before it took off. He explained calmly to his loved ones that, no matter what happened to him, he had to see where it came from."

When we feel impelled to strap ourselves to the airplane, I think, we'll know we've finally chosen to toss in our lot with God. ●

Witness contributing editor ***Anne E. Cox*** *is an Episcopal priest who lives in Martinsville, Me., where she makes twig furniture and designs gardens.*

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A COMMITMENT

Lay presidency and appeals to Catholic 'order'

by Robert Tong

APPEALS TO "CATHOLIC ORDER" OR CHURCH TRADITION FALL ON DEAF EARS HERE IN SYDNEY. THIS IS BECAUSE THESE CONCEPTS CANNOT BE SUSTAINED IN THE BIBLICAL TEXT.

THE LATEST REPORT from the Anglican\Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) is called "The Gift of Authority," a document which offers a biblical image (2 Cor. 1.19-20) as a key to understanding how the universal primacy of the pope is a gift to be shared (see <www.anglicancommunion.org>).

ARCIC argues that primacy is about authority and authority, rightly exercised, is a gift of God to bring reconciliation and peace. Christ's commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel authorizes his apostles to make disciples, baptize and teach. In a unique way those in succession to the apostles who are ordained to the ministry of bishops continue to exercise that authority.

Although past differences between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches are recognized, the report urges that "the exercise and acceptance of authority in the Church is inseparable from the response of believers to the Gospel, how it is related to the dynamic interaction of Scripture and Tradition and how it is expressed and experienced in the Communion of the churches and the collegiality of their Bishops."

The local church, says the report, is centered on the bishop. Contrast this with Article 11 of the 39 Articles of Religion (agreed to in 1562 as a means of defining the Anglican view of the faith in light of Reformation controversies) where the "invisible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly administered."

Remember however, the Bishop of Rome, in exercise of his authority, still refuses recogni-



Jeff Sells

The order of things ...as bishops at the 1998 Lambeth Conference prepare to discuss unity and diversity.

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tion of Anglican clerical orders — so of what value is an Anglican bishop? Is an Anglican bishop just a lay person and, by extension, is each celebration of the Eucharist by Anglican clergy really lay administration? And if celebration of the Mass is the heart of Roman Catholic belief and practice where is the genuine collegiality?

In October 1999 the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Australia, which is predominantly evangelical in character (clergy serve an average of 60,000 church attenders in 260 parishes each Sunday; the archbishop is assisted by five regional bishops), made a preliminary response to the "Gift of Authority." It noted that ARCIC did not speak for the diocese and dissented from any notion that the Bishop of Rome had "a special ministry to discern truth" and that tradition had a "dynamic interdependence" with Scripture. The Diocesan Doctrine Commission will produce a full response for this year's synod (see <www.anglicanmediasydney.asn.au>). There will be little support for ARCIC.

Appeals to "Catholic order" or church tradition fall on deaf ears here in Sydney. This is because these concepts cannot be sustained in the biblical text. If you ask in Sydney, "What is church?" the answer runs like this: The word "church" translates the Greek *ekklesia,* which means assembly. Nearly every reference in the New Testament refers in its context to an actual meeting of believers. The first great congregation of believers occurred at Sinai around God who had just delivered his people from Egypt (Exodus 19). This pattern continues in the New Testament with Jesus building a congregation around himself (Matthew 16:18). The Epistles present the same picture. The church is a meeting with Christ as its head. Local assemblies of Christians are local manifestations of the perpetual meeting of believers around Christ in heaven. Thus, at the same time, there is the local (intermittent) church meeting and the continuous heavenly one (Ephesians 2:6 and Hebrews 12). This textual result permits a critique of notions of Catholic order, the authority of bishops, church tradition and denominational church structure.

A vote for lay presidency

Although North Americans are familiar with the reality and caricature of the fundamentalist "Bible believing" Christian of the "deep south," it would be a mistake to dismiss Sydney Anglican Evangelicals in the same way. Serious theology undergirds both our practice — and innovation. The controversial vote by the Diocese of Sydney to allow lay persons and deacons to preside at the Holy Communion (which did not, however, receive the necessary assent of the Archbishop — in the name of Anglican unity) is symbolic of the theological perspective which has framed our debate on this issue for the past 10 years (see <www.acl.asu.au>). A Sydney theologian, Robert Doyle, puts it like this: "Since the Reformation there have been two competing views of spiritual reality. The first and dominant view is that of Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism, whether traditional or liberal. Here, the understanding of Christian ministry, or how God works in the world, is set in the context of a firm belief in a relentlessly sacramental universe. On this view, in a fundamental way, God works downwards through his creation to reveal himself and to redeem, through a hierarchy of sacraments or sacred symbols. ... Within this understanding grace flows down from God through Christ to the earthly church via the priestly performance of sacramental rites ... without the bishop or the priest as his sacramental deputy or vicar, there would be no valid holy communion. This older and dominant view of spiritual reality is that of Roman Catholicism and with the rise of Anglo-Catholicism in the 19th century it has also become the majority view in Anglicanism. ... [By contrast the Reformers] saw that God works in the world personally and directly by his word and Spirit. They based this on the promises of Christ, that when the Spirit comes to us, both the Father and the Son, all of God in his very person, comes and dwells and does his work in us. God is not 'at a distance' at the other end of a chain of sacraments."

Under the lay presidency legislation, deacons and laity, female and male, would have been authorized to "administer" the Holy Communion, there being nothing in Scripture to contradict this. In classic Anglicanism, the minister is minister of word and sacrament. Word precedes and explains sacrament. Without the word, the sacrament is meaningless. At ordination the minister is given a Bible (not a cup and bread) and exhorted to preach the word of God and to model his life on it.

Sydney's decision to vote in favor of lay presidency was no isolated act of bravado. In 1995 the Australian General (National) Synod authorized an additional prayer book for use alongside the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) and an Australian prayer book (1978). Sydney representatives, outnumbered in the General Synod, were unable to delete passages they believed not agreeable to Scripture. As no General Synod measure takes effect in an Australian diocese unless specifically adopted, the 1995 prayer book was decisively rejected by the Sydney Synod.

Likewise, the issue of women priests and bishops. According to the "Eames Report on Women in the Episcopate" (Toronto, 1998), the Anglican Communion is now going through "a process of Reception" of women in these orders That is, a period of transition where a new order takes root. Given the longstanding Sydney commitment to biblical primacy — and the belief that Scripture stands in opposition to women priests and bishops (see <www.anglicanmediasydney.asu.au>) — Sydney is unlikely to receive this new teaching.

Is Sydney alone? Is Anglican commitment to Scripture now a pretence? Richard Holloway, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, apparently thinks so:

"The single most potent sign of [the Anglican Communion's departure from the commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture] has

been the ordination of women. There is far more in Scripture about the subordination of women than there is about the theological status of gay and lesbian people but we have come to terms with the ordination of women ... whatever is going on in the debate about homosexuality it cannot be mainly about Scripture because we have already shown great versatility in our interpretative approaches" (address at Derby University, 2/6/99).

But Sydney does not stand alone in the Anglican world. Deeply concerned at the apparent widespread American dissent from the Lambeth resolution on homosexuality and driven by an overriding commitment to the norms of Scripture, orthodox bishops have applied pressure on the Episcopal Church USA to be obedient to the Word of God (see <www.anglicanmediasydney.asu.au>).

And so the insistent biblical stance of Sydney Anglicans is unlikely to evaporate. Fuelled by scholars in the forefront of biblical commentary writing and a theological college full to bursting, trained men and women are taking up positions of full-time ministry.

Newman, Keble and Pusey in a few short years changed the face of Anglicanism (mostly!). Do the signs now point to an evangelical renewal? Will the old wineskin of the Anglican Communion bear the strain? The last word should remain with the gospel writers: "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth" (John, 1:14). "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; ... and everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand ... and when Jesus finished these sayings the crowds were astonished at his teaching for he taught them as one who had authority and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:24-28). ●

Robert Tong *is a lawyer and one of three elected representatives from Australia to the Anglican Consultative Council, <Robert-Tong@bigpond.com>. He is a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Sydney and of the Anglican Church of Australia's National Synod.*

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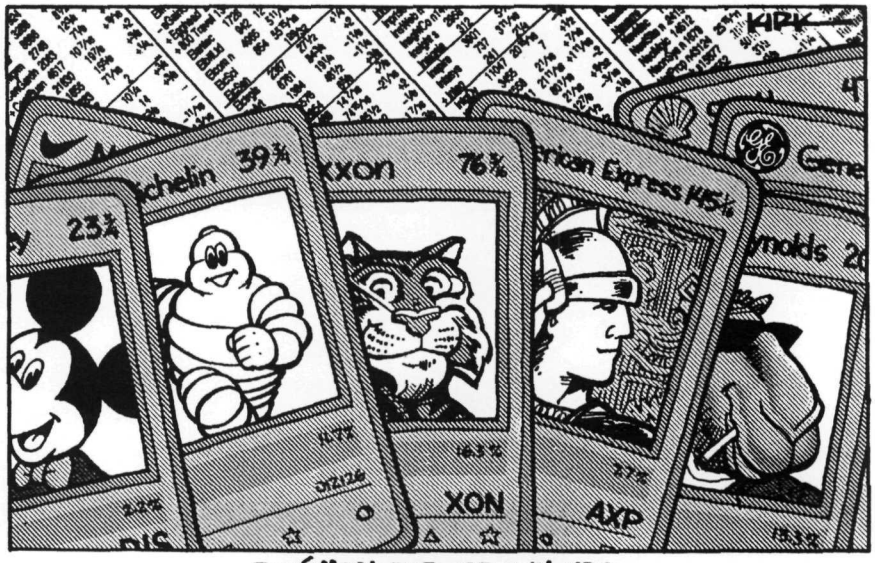
SHORT TAKES



POKÉMON FOR GROWN-UPS

Women and terminator technology

"The basmati rice which farmers in my valley have been growing for centuries is today being claimed as 'an instant invention of a novel rice line' by a U.S. Corporation called RiceTec," writes Vandana Shiva, of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in New Delhi, India (*Resist*, 9-10/99). "The 'neem' which our mothers and grandmothers have used for centuries as a pesticide and fungicide has been patented for these uses by W.R. Grace, another U.S. Corporation.

"Women farmers have been the seed keepers and seed breeders over millennia. The basmati is just one among 100,000 varieties of rice evolved by Indian farmers. Diversity and perenniality is our culture of the seed. In Central India, at the beginning of the agricultural season, farmers gather at the village deity, offer their rice varieties and then share the seeds. This annual festival of 'Akti' rejuvenates the duty of saving and sharing seed among farming communities. It establishes partnership among farmers and with the earth.

"Intellectual property rights on seeds are, however, criminalizing this duty to the earth and to each other by making seed saving and seed exchange illegal. The attempt to prevent farmers from saving seed is not just being made through new IPR laws, it is also being made through the new genetic engineering technologies. Delta and Pine Land (now owned by Monsanto) and the USDA have established a new partnership through a jointly held patent to seed which has been genetically engineered to ensure that it does not germinate on harvest, thus forcing farmers to buy seed at each planting season.

"When we sow seed, we pray, 'May this seed be exhaustless.' Monsanto and the USDA on the other hand are stating, 'Let this seed be terminated, that our profits and monopoly be exhaustless.'

"There can be no partnership between this terminator logic which destroys nature's renewability and regeneration and the commitment to continuity of life held by women farmers of the Third World."

A 'second round of feudalism'

In a world where corporations wield more power than governments, our notion of democracy must expand to include economic life, says Frances Moore Lappe, anti-hunger activist and co-founder of the Vermont-based Center for Living Democracy.

"At the time of our nation's founding, for the majority of people, economic life consisted mainly of managing one's family farm or shop," Lappe says in a Nov., 1999 interview in *The Sun*. "In that environment, it made sense that people thought of econom-

ics as private and politics as public. But what made sense then is now standing in our way, preventing us from embracing economic life as part of democratic public life. Now 'private' corporations have more public impact than governments.

"The result is that, while economics exerts a powerful influence on political decisions about jobs, the environment, and so forth, we have almost no voice in the process. We have some minimal voice in politics, but virtually none in the economic system. ...

"We are now experiencing what I think of as a second round of feudalism, where the corporation has replaced the manor. Until we see this new economic structure for what it is — a world-governing system that exists alongside governments but outside democratic accountability — we cannot create life-serving societies."

Earth-friendly choices that count

Automobiles and meat rank first on the Union of Concerned Scientists' list of consumer choices that harm the environment, according to a new book reviewed in *Timeline* (9-10/99). *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists* by Michael Brower and Warren Leon (Three Rivers Press, N.Y., 1999) evaluates "everything people buy and use — from distilled liquors to shoes," and "shows how each thing impacts the environment in four areas: global warming, air pollution, water pollution, and alteration of natural habitats.

"Personal automobiles and light trucks are the worst overall environmental offenders," reviewer Mac Lawrence writes. "Meat and poultry come in second overall, causing 20 percent of 'common' (not toxic) water pollution, and using 860 million acres for livestock grazing and animal feed.

"Conventional cultivation of fruits, vegetables and grains comes next on the harmful list because of the large quantities of pesticides, herbicides, artificial fertilizers, and irrigation water used. Then come home heating, hot water and air conditioning; household appliances and lighting; home construction; and household water and sewage."

Some choices — including paper or plastic grocery bags, cloth or disposable diapers, or occasional use of disposable plates, cups and utensils — actually make little difference, the authors say.

The bottom-line advice? "Choose a home no larger than you really need in a location that involves as little driving as possible. Buy a car that gets good gas mileage. Eat less meat, buy certified organic produce, install efficient lighting, buy efficient appliances, choose an electricity supplier offering renewable energy, buy things made of recycled materials, and be a 'weight watcher' — all things being equal, the purchase of a heavy item will have a larger impact than the purchase of a light one."

Pentagon.com

The Pentagon is now offering "excess defense articles" on-line, the Council for a Livable World Education Fund reports.

"The Pentagon, not about to miss the opportunities provided by e-commerce, has created a 'virtual warehouse' web site to assist in the sale, transfer or reuse of excess U.S. military arms parts, vehicles and electronics equipment. The Defense Reutilization and Marketing Service (DRMS) is the Pentagon office tasked with disposing of billions of dollars of Excess Defense Articles on the Internet.

"The DRMS site (<www.drms.dla.mil>) services U.S. government agencies, the armed services, and foreign arms buyers.

"The ultimate goal for the web site, the Pentagon notes, is to create a completely automatic process: sales would be made directly from the military agency housing the excess equipment to the foreign customer (which we are assured can only occur if you represent a foreign government and have a valid user-ID), thus eliminating the current intermediary role of DRMS.

"While most items currently for sale on-line are spare weapons parts and some items easily purchased in a military surplus store, our fear is where this might be going. Will the Pentagon one day offer small arms and ammunition on-line? And how secure are those user-ID numbers? Are they changed when the foreign officials leave the military? Can they be given, or sold, to rebel groups or other non-state actors?"

U.S. child soldiers

According to the international definition of "child soldiers" to mean anyone under 18, the U.S. uses children in combat, the Center for Defense Information reports.

"Although conscription is limited to those 18 and over, the U.S. military has a long-standing practice of recruiting youths under the age of 18 and allowing them to be designated to fill combat positions. The Pentagon opposes the Optional Protocol [to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child] because the U.S. wants to preserve its current practice. According to Department of Defense statistics, under-18s make up only one-half of one percent of the total U.S. military force — approximately 7,000 troops. But U.S. 17 year-olds did serve in Bosnia and the Gulf War." ●

CLASSIFIEDS

Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus

Christian feminists: Plan now to attend the Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus biennial conference, "And Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," July 27-30, 2000, North Park University, Chicago, IL. Speakers include Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B. and author/EEWC foremother Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. For information, visit <www.eewc.com> or call 847-825-5651.

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PROFILE

Offering a Gospel-based, personal challenge to wrongful authority

by Marianne Arbogast

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WITHIN THE FAITH-BASED peace movement, the voices of Jim and Shelley Douglass carry a great deal of authority. Co-founders of the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, next to the Trident nuclear submarine base near Seattle, Wash., the Douglasses helped build a community of resistance that spanned 250 towns and cities along the railroad tracks traveled by the "White Train" which transported nuclear weapons to the base. Living in a house so close to the tracks that it shook with each passing train, they vigiled at the base, engaged their neighbors who worked there in serious and respectful dialogue and went to jail repeatedly for praying on the forbidden side of the fence. Through their writing and speaking — Jim Douglass has written four books on the theology of nonviolence and, with Shelley Douglass, co-authored a fifth — they have offered support and guidance to many whose consciences have put them in conflict with the authority of the state.

Now living in Birmingham, Ala., Shelley Douglass runs a Catholic Worker house while Jim Douglass pursues research for a book challenging the official version of the King and Kennedy assassinations — an unpopular subject, he attests, not only with the mainstream media but in progressive circles as well. Last November, when a jury in a civil trial brought by the King family found U.S. government agencies implicated in King's death, the verdict was almost universally ignored or discredited.

"I think it's hard, even for people in the peace and justice movement, to accept systemic evil in our immediate presence," Jim Douglass says. "We can talk about the CIA in Guatemala or the Middle East or Cuba assassinating people, but it seems to be impossible for us to accept that happening in the U.S. — which I think is naive. When Archbishop Romero was shot, the people of El Salvador didn't say, 'There goes another lone nut killing a prophet.' They understood the source of his death.

"I THINK THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IS THE COMMUNITY WE HAVE WITH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS — AND IF CIVIL AUTHORITY SEEMS TO BE VIOLATING THAT AND I FEEL LIKE I CAN DO SOMETHING TO STOP IT, THEN I DO IT."

— Shelley Douglass

"If we don't take King's death seriously, we don't take his life seriously, either. King was killed because he had moved beyond civil rights to a condemnation of the war in Vietnam and an organizing of the Poor Peoples' Campaign, whose purpose was to shut down Washington, D.C. until the U.S. government would agree to eliminate poverty. He envisioned a global poor people's campaign, which would dislocate the functioning of cities across the world without destroying them. That was taken seriously by people who control wealth and that's the issue at the center of the questions about the King assassination."

Both Jim and Shelley Douglass credit the Catholic Worker with helping to shape their understanding of the Gospel and its challenge to wrongful authority.

Shelley Douglass, who grew up in a CIA family posted to Switzerland, Pakistan and then Germany, was surprised when she returned to a U.S. that failed to match the picture she had been given.

"My family was Christian and we read the New Testament and I took civics at army high schools in Germany. When I came back to the States in the early 1960s I didn't know about segregation because that wasn't something that you read about in the military press overseas. It seemed obvious to me that segregation was wrong and we had a Christian and civic duty to do something about it, and the same for the Vietnam war."

As a high school student, Shelley Douglass had been drawn to Catholicism by the Latin mass, which struck her as a stable alternative to her family's practice of changing denominations with each move, going wherever services were held in English. Because her parents were opposed, she had promised to wait until she was 18 to become Catholic.

"By the time I turned 18 they weren't using the Latin any more, but once we came home one of the first things I discovered was the Catholic Worker and that more than made up for the Latin. Here were people doing what I thought the gospels said to do."

Authority in the Catholic Worker community is linked with responsibility, she says.

"We tend to call ourselves anarchists in the Catholic Worker movement, which does not mean that everybody goes around and does just what they want to do. It comes from the personalist philosophy, that each of us is personally responsible. When you see something that needs doing, whether it's mopping the bathroom floor or going out on the picket line, then you do it."

As the sole permanent resident at Mary's House, a house of hospitality for the homeless (the Douglasses maintain another house where Jim Douglass can continue his writ-

ing), Shelley Douglass finds herself the main decision-maker.

"It's a little scary because I call the shots and other folks don't have that power. I hope when people cooperate it's not because they're afraid I'm going to make them move out, but because it makes sense not to do drugs and to be here for dinner, to take care of each other. If I have authority, I would hope to have the kind of authority that comes from the inside and from who I am. That's the authority I recognize in my life. The people I look to are not necessarily the people with the titles, but the people I see who are living out what they believe."

In decisions on matters such as civil disobedience (she is planning a trip to Iraq this spring with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, of which she is past national chairperson), Shelley Douglass says she looks "inside — how it feels in my gut," as well as to Scripture and community discernment.

"I think the ultimate authority is the community we have with other human beings — and if civil authority seems to be violating that and I feel like I can do something to stop it, then I do it."

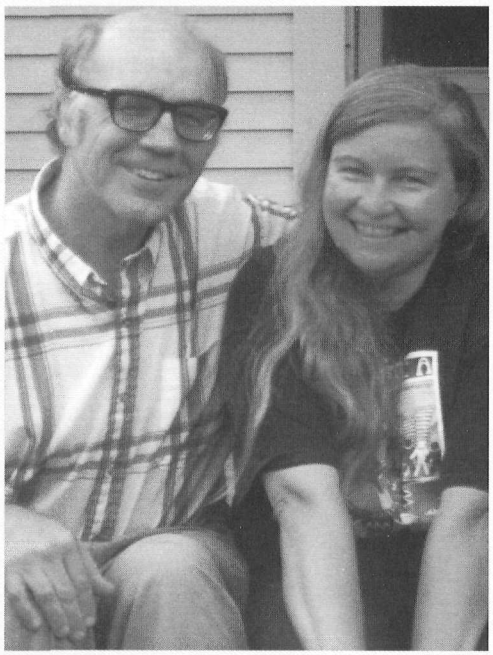
Firmly committed to nonviolence, she stresses the Gandhian principle that "everyone has a piece of the truth — which means the people on the Trident base, or the government of Iraq, or even perhaps the U.S. government. And nobody's perfect, so no matter how deeply I feel about something, I could still be wrong. I may not know all the facts, or I may be interpreting things incorrectly, or I may not be acting wisely on what I know. It's a difficult thing to keep as a duality, because you have to believe pretty strongly that you're right, in order to risk arrest or jail."

Jim Douglass discovered the Catholic Worker after a stint in the army, which he joined after leaving a nuclear physics program at the University of California in Berkeley.

"I kept turning in directions where I didn't have any sense of the end and wound up reading and meeting Dorothy Day. That brought me into an understanding of the gospels. It was through the question of nuclear weapons that I came to nonviolence, because how could one be a Christian and agree to the destruction of all life on earth? That was inconceivable when the question was raised to me by the Catholic Worker."

Taking up theological studies on war and peace, Jim Douglass found himself in Rome during the Second Vatican Council, where he advised bishops who were shaping the document to recognize conscientious objection as an option for Catholics.

"I talked to as many bishops as I could who seemed open to the question and, although I was a person of no import and didn't even have an advanced degree in theology, they listened to me more than I could have imagined, because there were very few



theologians who had dealt with that question," he says. "I was able to work on speeches for some of the bishops, and thanks to a lobbying group that included Eileen Egan, Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, Dorothy Day and, at a distance, Thomas Merton, the bishops did reach a position that turned the church in a new direction on the issue of war and peace."

He describes his relationship with official church authority as "ambiguous."

"I've fasted in support of the pope going to Bosnia and now to Iraq because I believe he has a conscience and a voice that can go beyond all governmental authorities in this world. When he uses it as he did, for example, in Cuba, it's a voice that can transform situations, and that's a voice right out of the Gospel. But on the other hand, when the Vatican demeans gay and lesbian people or refuses to recognize the priesthood of women, the Vatican has rejected the Gospel."

Shelley Douglass, who once considered being ordained in the United Church of Canada, says that she would not now choose ordination — even if it were open to Catholic women — unless church structures changed radically.

"It makes no sense to me for one person to be this sort of supreme being in a parish and it isn't something I'd want to be part of. But when it comes down to feeding the family, being able to consecrate the Eucharist ... someday, if things were transformed, if I were still alive, maybe."

She distinguishes between power and authority.

"Whereas the structure in the church has all the power, they don't have all the authority. What is it they said about Jesus? — 'He taught with authority.' That kind of authority comes from the integrity of a person's life. I do take the teaching of the church seriously, because it's a body of tradition that comes down from our ancestors. Ideally they all go together — the people who have authority in my life, the teaching of the church, Scripture and my own gut feeling."

Jim Douglass also speaks of an authority of those who suffer.

"The experience of being in Iraq four times since the Gulf War has made it impossible for me to read headlines about Saddam Hussein without thinking of the 22 million other people in that country. I think that's an authority that needs to be at the center of our foreign policy so that it becomes, as A.J. Muste said, a foreign policy for children. The suffering of Iraqi children in hospitals that I visited, who die because their water systems are full of sewage and they have no medicines to deal with the illnesses that come from the consequences of war and the result of U.S./U.N. sanctions — that's an authority that has touched me probably more deeply than anything else in recent years." ●

Marianne Arbogast *is assistant editor of* The Witness, *<marianne@thewitness.org>.*

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Paul Caponigro—Stonehenge England 1967

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NO EASY ANSWERS

Gender and sexual ethics for a new age

WITNESS MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

8 **What makes for good sex?** *A farewell to easy answers by Mary E. Hunt*
As sex moves from the bedroom to the boardroom and from micro-ethics to macro-ethics, the arena of sexual ethics is also changing. Feminist liberation theologian Mary Hunt offers a perspective on "just good sex" that might help as Christian churches and base communities struggle with the topic.

14 **'Neither male nor female ... in Christ'?** *Church debates and the politics of identity by Mary McClintock Fulkerson*
Once we realize that the deepest thing that can be said about our identities is not our "sex," argues Duke University theologian Mary Fulkerson, it becomes clear that it is not the disagreements but the agreement shared by liberal and conservative theological positions on sexuality that needs to be addressed.

20 **When does Christian marriage begin** — *before or after the wedding? by Adrian Thatcher*
Christian moralists who view sex before a wedding as immoral should revisit history, says author Adrian Thatcher. Medieval theories of marriage which were responsible for the practice of betrothal, in fact, may be useful in constructing a postmodern theology of marriage.

24 **A sexual ethic of singleness** — *built upon the foundation of celibacy by Diana L. Hayes*
Liberation theology scholar Diana Hayes believes a celibate lifestyle can be chosen as a way of life that provides, not a selfish freedom of self-indulgence and irresponsibility, but a responsible freedom to live a life of service to God.

on the cover

Brooks Walsh
PLUM STILL LIFE

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editor's Notes
7 Poetry
13 On the Theme
26 Short Takes
27 Classifieds
28 Book Review
30 Witness Profile

VOLUME 83
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APRIL 2000

Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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Recovering from human evil

When I used to think of the evil humans do I'd think of war and rape and the torture of political prisoners ... the things written of in your issue on recovering from human evil. I never thought to include my personal experience as a victim of incest. It wasn't "worthy" of being included with the aforementioned. It took years for me (and the professional psychological world) to recognize that I suffered from traumatic shock in many ways identical to soldiers and torture victims. My father used the tactics of tyrants and torturers everywhere to create fear and silence in our home. Child abuse, and especially sexual abuse, may seem too small and personal, or the opposite, too rampant and universal, for most people to want to deal with. That's what I'm telling myself these days as I struggle with the vacuum all around me. I'm trying to understand why good people fail to struggle with, talk about, cry over, preach about the abuse of children. I can think of no greater betrayal among human beings than parents assaulting their own children. If it's too much for most people to comprehend, imagine what it is for the child and the child grown to adulthood, who sees nothing around her — be it church, state, family or friends — that challenges the monster that nearly destroyed her (and at times still threatens to destroy). Silence was, and is, evil's weapon of choice. I'm sorry *The Witness* contained more of that silence. I'm not angry, you understand. I'm just sad, and sadly unsurprised.

So I know I have to speak up, and my thoughts lately have been on how to find the language people can hear. There's a stunning book that provides the vocabulary I've been looking for: Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*. It links all the evils and their effects and makes the kind of sense the wheel must have seemed moments after the first one rolled out ... why didn't we think of this before??? Now if I can just get someone to read it. So I tell my minister at the peace and social justice church I belong to that I've never heard the word "incest" from the pulpit. For that matter, I've never heard it in church or from a minister or priest at all (not even the priest who heard my childhood confession). Silence. My minister does speak it in a sermon, bless him, but he doesn't know what else to say about it and the Herman book he ordered just doesn't seem to get cracked open. I understand why — there's the Iraqi delegation trip and there's the death penalty issue thing and this corporate take-over of the church's neighborhood to deal with ... But I'm beginning to understand that I can't wait patiently in line to give the devil his due on this. The abuse of children is as plain an evil as you can get and the devil has had a field day with the human race's silence and lack of comprehension. My minister confessed to being afraid to read about trauma and recovery and I told him it was good to know he was afraid and that it wasn't that he simply didn't care. "I pray that's not so," he said, and so do I.

I'm asking this splendid publication to witness to the children, all around us in our homes, schools, churches, who suffer in silence and secrecy. Witness, please, to we who are grown and struggle with an evil few seem to care to attend to. *The Witness* is one of the best things I know of the religious community and I am seeking hope within that community for light, light that will conquer an old, old darkness.

Mary Eldridge
Milford, MI

Time and freedom

During my tenure at All Saints Church, heading our peace and justice ministry, *The Witness* became a major resource for me and our various advocacy groups. I clip articles

and share them with my colleagues and family. I reread back issues (the stack has now become a piece of furniture in my study). So it's time I thanked you for this important and abundant support in my work for justice and nonviolence.

This month I want to render very special thanks for the masterpiece of an article on the living wage. As an Executive Board member and one of the founders of CLUE, I can tell you Camille Colatosti got it right! She did a great job explaining our campaign, defining clearly the impact of poverty wages and the benefits to community, business and workers of a living wage. She captured the spirit of our grassroots, interfaith, cooperative movement here in L.A. We are grateful to her and to you for this definitive piece. You may be certain it will be an invaluable boost to our outreach to the "unconverted."

Mary Coleman
Pasadena, CA

Witness praise

I find your magazine wonderful! The articles are so full of real "meat."

Julie Weldon
Monona, WI

Thanks, and an invitation

I am a prisoner in the Iowa Prison System taking part in a Christ-centered, Bible-based program called Innerchange Freedom Initiative. We are a group of 150 men who seek and struggle to transform our old self and ways into the new self and ways that are ours through our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

We are doing this in an 18-month program of intense Bible studies, Life Skills classes, Christ-centered Drug Treatment, and lots of prayer and devotion to our Loving Savior God.

We spend a lot of time and energy praying for the needs and concerns of all. We know that God listens to the prayers of all, but maybe especially to those of the lowest of the low, the poorest of the poor, and even to those hidden away from and rejected by society.

I would like to extend an invitation for prayer requests from you and your readers. We have been praying for the ministry and witness of your journal, as well as for Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann and her family and will continue to do so.

We count it a blessing to be able to pray for others and the world as a whole. All those inside and outside the walls of confinement are in need of the loving arms of God and His people.

Christopher M. Kenline #1102558
Newton Correctional Facility
Box 218
Newton, IA 50208-0218

Great Issue

The Jan/Feb issue of *The Witness* was outstanding in its comprehensiveness. For example, "Free time for a free people" was a great complement to the article on "Fighting for a living wage." In the latter piece, Camille Colatosti did a very thorough job, capturing both the reach and political thought behind the living wage campaign, and its theological rationale. Bob DeWitt's piece was tremendously moving and evoked many good memories of working with him at the Episcopal Church Publishing Company. One correction in the living wage piece having to do with the Church Pension Fund: The meeting between Fund trustees and the Service Employees International Union did take place, two years ago, urged on by a letter of 80 bishops to the president of the Fund. Together with a new approach by the union to the building contractors in Washington D.C., on behalf of the low wage janitors there, the Fund's cooperation resulted in a new labor agreement. The Diocese of Los Angeles last December passed a resolution commending the Fund for this action, and urging it to go further, following the good example of the Executive Council's Committee for Social Responsibility in Investments. Hopefully a similar resolution will be offered at General Convention, to strongly encourage the Fund to become more pro-active in stockholder actions on behalf of peace and justice.

Dick Gillett
Minister for Social Justice
Diocese of Los Angeles

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Sex, gender and Christian liberty

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

We here at *The Witness* are immensely grateful to contributing editor Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Professor of English, Emeritus, at the William Paterson University in Wayne, N.J., and author of numerous books on sexuality and sexual ethics (including *Sensuous Spirituality: Out from Fundamentalism*, Crossroad 1992), for acting as guest editor for this issue on gender and sexual ethics. The topic couldn't be more timely. As this issue goes to press, Episcopalians and their Anglican sisters and brothers worldwide are digesting the startling news of the irregular consecration of two new bishops by two Anglican primates and four other bishops in response to "a crisis of Christian Faith that has left the Episcopal Church divided." This "crisis," it would appear, centers on disagreement over the ordination of women and the acceptance of partnered homosexual persons in the life of the church.

And yet, if anything, the church's debate over sexual ethics (which owes a great deal to its attitudes on women) has been framed too narrowly. We are only at the very beginning of our journey in understanding the full dimension of the issues involved. As ethicist Mary Hunt points out in this issue's lead article, "church discussions are still being carried out as if bisexual and transgendered people do not exist." Or, as British scholar Adrian Thatcher underscores in his article, as if Christian marriage has always begun with a wedding. It may be painful for persons on all sides of the current "crisis," but as Mollenkott gently prods us to understand, if we are to have a sexual ethics that will serve us in this new age, it is absolutely necessary that we "allow ourselves to be disturbed by the facts of other peoples' lives."

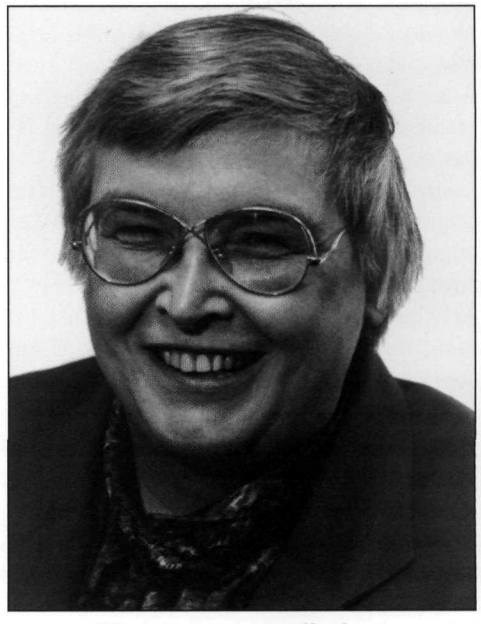
— Julie A. Wortman, publisher and co-editor

AS GARRET KEISER POINTS OUT, "All the divisions that exist in society at large also exist in the church" (*Christian Century*, 2/16/00). And if the church could embrace the kin-dom of God, defined as "an awareness of God as the only real absolute," we would be able to show the world what it means to live in a peace that surpasses understanding. Are we willing to release some of our most dearly prized positions for the sake of God's kin-dom? Our attitudes about sex and gender offer an excellent test case: Are we willing to let our certainties be disturbed by the facts of other peoples' lives?

Many of us have succumbed to an idolatry of the nuclear family. Not just heterosexuals, either; as Kathy Rudy comments in *Sex and the Church*, many lesbian, gay and transgender couples have become adept at impersonating the nuclear family so adored in conservative American religion and politics. "Conventional interpretations teach us to make rules about abstractions," Rudy says: "Sex inside a marriage ... is moral, sex outside marriage is immoral. As long as we are within the boundaries, we never have to think about whether ... our own souls are open, desirable, or even [yearning]." But a truly Christian evaluation of sexuality would "return to the heart of the moral tradition by examining concrete practices in context rather than accepting hollow dictums on abstracts and identities."

Honoring God as our only absolute, Christian people could dare to let go of oversimplified concepts of sex and gender and enter fearlessly into awareness of the splendid biodiversity within the human race God has created. In this issue, the glossary of transgender terminology will provide a glimpse of some diversities that have usually been ignored in churchly discussions of human sexuality. We have truncated ethical discussion by silencing too many voices, ignoring contexts and requiring people to adjust their lives to fit our generalizations.

Churchly debate has tended to deny that sex and gender are socially constructed. Most of us have accepted the essentialist notion that male and female genitals carry with them "masculinity" or "femininity" as well as heterosexuality. This complete notion has been termed the *binary gender construct*. In order to uphold the binary construct, many church leaders have argued that all forms of transgender (including homosexuality) are evidence of humanity's fall from grace, *not* part of God's original creative plan. So homosexuals must either repent of sin or else find healing; cross-dressers must cease and desist, no matter how that might wither their personal fulfillment; transsexuals must live with their sense of dislocation, even if it isolates them or drives them to suicide; and intersexuals must submit themselves to as many operations as it takes in order to conform to binary gender and keep viable the Defense of Marriage Act. For if marriage is to be reserved exclusively for the relationship



Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

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between one man and one woman, as D.O.M.A. dictates, it becomes essential to deny the existence and/or full humanity of all individuals who are both male and female, whether they are physically so (intersexuals) or psychologically so (transsexuals, cross-dressers, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenderists in general).

But what if God truly *is* "above all, through all, and in all," as Ephesians 4:6 asserts? What if we were to take seriously the traditional Christian doctrine of God's omnipresence? If God really creates, sustains and dwells within every person, what gives some of us permission to try to limit the fulfillment of others of us?

In this issue of *The Witness*, theologians Mary E. Hunt and Mary McClintock Fulkerson deal with some of the nuances and contextualizations that are necessary for mature ethical discourse about sex and gender. Ethical pronouncements based on the experience of the normative group may seem correct and universal to that group, but they may, nevertheless, exact major penalties from everyone: stupendous penalties from those excluded from the debate, but less conscious costs from even the most powerful among us. For instance, *Sissies and Tomboys* (reviewed in this issue) emphasizes that training in how to perform masculinity has been conducted chiefly by devaluing females and femininity. The cost has been stupendous for girls and women, placing us in physical danger and limited roles. But it has also been very heavy for boys and men, depriving them of access to and expression of their own feelings of vulnerability, the desire to nurture, and the like.

Similarly, the debate about abortion and reproductive freedom has often been characterized by stereotyped accusations and oversimplifications. In this issue, Marianne Arbogast provides a sensitive depiction of real human kindliness among people who are "pro-choice" as well as "pro-life." And Marge Piercy's poem portrays a woman's right to her own moral agency ("Without choice, no politics, no ethics lives"). But she also emphasizes every baby's right to be welcomed and nourished. As our society ponders the appalling violence among teenagers and preteens, we must consider Piercy's assertion carefully: "Every baby born unloved, unwanted, is a bill that will come due...with interest, an anger that must find a target." Hence mature discussions of sex and gender ethics must begin to emphasize ways of affirming children of every gender, orientation, race, class, shape, and level of ability.

And we must cease discussing sexuality as if everyone were married or soon to be so. In this issue Diana L. Hayes defends celibacy as an honorable vocation for those who are called to it and gifted for it, but she also implies that responsible sexual partnerships can be equally valid. The point is that like everyone else, Christian singles must learn to approach one another's vulnerability with tender loving-kindness.

Furthermore, during churchly discussions of premarital or extra-marital sex, Adrian Thatcher's research suggests that it would be wise for us to overcome our amnesia about Christian history. It is surely relevant, for instance, that two currently widespread practices — cohabitation before the wedding and entering into marriage at later ages (26 or 28) — are similar to the practices of 16th-, 17th-, and 18th-century British and American Christians.

All mature ethical discussion must recognize the tremendous power of social constructs. For instance, when Victorian Englishmen constructed "virtuous femininity" as being free of all sexual responsiveness, many married women sought counseling and even clitorectomies to cure their "illness" and/or "evil" — and prostitution flourished for the men who could not find contentment with wives who regarded intercourse as distasteful duty. For another instance, in a 1920 study, over 50 percent of American college women admitted to having "intense emotional relations" with other women, but in 1938, only 4 percent admitted to any such experience. What could account for a 46 percent drop in same-sex college romance in only 18 years? A shift in the social construction of relationships and singleness among women: During the 1920s and 1930s, lesbianism was pathologized and unmarried women were mocked with names like "pseudo-masculine" or "mental hermaphrodite." And college women got the message loud and clear.

It is because sex and gender are socially constructed that gender roles differ from culture to culture. Social construction also explains why many non-Western leaders deny that homosexuality exists in their culture. For instance, in Kenya the Meru people recognize a powerful religious leader, the *mugawe*, who dresses like a woman, is often homosexual and sometimes marries a man; the Azande people of Zaire and the Sudan have practiced lesbianism and intergenerational homoeroticism for centuries; and gender-variant deities and sex/gender transformations of worshipers have been documented in the religions of 28 African tribes. Yet it is common for African religious and political leaders to assert that homosexuality and transgenderism are white vices unknown to their people until colonialization by Euro-Americans. They are telling the truth as they see it: There is no "gayness" as it is currently constructed in the Western world. Anglican bishops from East and West cannot hope to achieve intelligent conversation about the ethics of sex and gender until awareness of their social construction undergirds the discourse.

Perhaps it is time for American Christians to deconstruct our binary gender rules and reconstruct an omnigender attitude that affirms the efforts of every person to become all that he or she or *s/he* was meant to be. Certainly it is necessary to take transgender experience seriously in our ethical concerns. Just as racism is not adequately described by a stark contrast of black vs. white, the ethical waterfront is not covered by binaries like male vs. female, gay vs. straight. As Mary Hunt implies, opening the moral terrain to transgender issues will be as difficult for many homosexuals as for many heterosexuals. But our ethical discourse must concern itself with what makes sex *good* and with creative grateful response to the gender diversities within us and among us, giving the Spirit elbow room to shape us as She will.

"For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). And, as Sweet Honey in the Rock sings, "We who believe in freedom will not rest until it comes." ●

Statements made in this editorial will be fully documented in Mollenkott's forthcoming book, tentatively entitled Gender Diversities: A Christian and Trans-Religious Approach to Omnigender.

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Right To Life

A woman is not a pear tree
thrusting her fruit in mindless fecundity
into the world. Even pear trees bear
heavily in one year and rest and grow the next.
An orchid gone wild drops few warm rotting
fruit in the grass but the trees stretch
high and wiry gifting the birds forty
feet up among inch long thorns
broken atavistically from the smooth wood.

A woman is not a basket you place
your buns in to keep them warm. Not a brood
hen you can slip duck eggs under.
Not the purse holding the coins of your
descendants till you spend them in wars.
Not a bank where your genes gather interest
and interesting mutations in the tainted
rain, any more than you are.

You plant corn and you harvest
it to eat or sell. You put the lamb
in the pasture to fatten and haul it in to
butcher for chops. You slice the mountain
in two for a road and gouge the high plains
for coal and the waters run muddy for
miles and years. Fish die but you do not
call them yours unless you wished to eat them.

Now you legislate mineral rights in a woman.
You lay claim to her pastures for grazing,
fields for growing babies like iceberg
lettuce. You value children so dearly
that none ever go hungry, none weep
with no one to tend them when mothers
work, none lack fresh fruit,
none chew lead or cough to death and your
orphanages are empty. Every noon the best
restaurants serve poor children steaks.

At this moment at nine o'clock a partera
is performing a table top abortion on an
unwed mother in Texas who can't get
Medicaid any longer. In five days she will die
of tetanus and her little daughter will cry
and be taken away. Next door a husband
and wife are sticking pins in the son
they did not want. They will explain
for hours how wicked he is,
how he wants discipline.

We are all born of woman, in the rose
of the womb we suckled our mother's blood
and every baby born has a right to love
like a seedling to sun. Every baby born
unloved, unwanted, is a bill that will come
due in twenty years with interest, an anger
that must find a target, a pain that will
beget pain. A decade downstream a child
screams, a woman falls, a synagogue is torched,
a firing squad is summoned, a button
is pushed and the world burns.

I will choose what enters me, what becomes
of my flesh. Without choice, no politics,
no ethics lives. I am not your cornfield,
not your uranium mine, not your calf
for fattening, not your cow for milking.
You may not use me as your factory.
Priests and legislators do not hold shares
in my womb or my mind.
This is my body. If I give it to you
I want it back. My life
is a non-negotiable demand.

From The Moon Is Always Female *by Marge Piercy*
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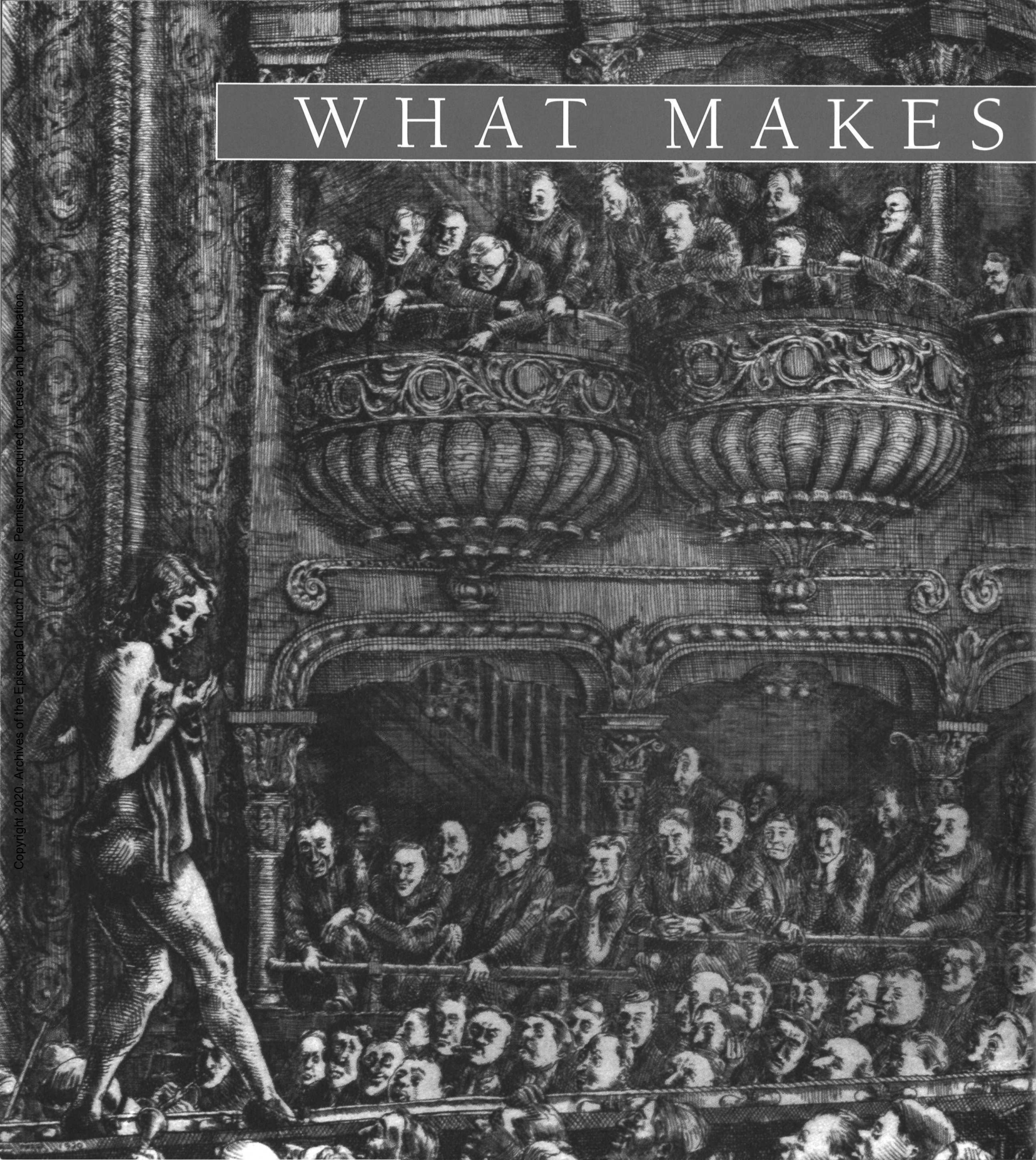

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FOR GOOD SEX?

A farewell to easy answers

by Mary E. Hunt

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THERE IS ONE THING I know for sure about sexual ethics: There are no easy answers. There are not even any easy questions anymore as categories and concepts evaporate like dew in bright sunshine. This will comfort few people. But such a frank admission may pave the way for new discussion in a field where old ways have been tried and found wanting, both by those who seek inclusivity and those who would circle the religious wagons ever more tightly. Indeed the stakes are higher than ever — same-sex marriage, HIV/AIDS, late term-abortions, to mention only the most obvious — demanding of Christian feminist liberationists the most ruthlessly honest analysis we can muster.

Of course there never were any easy answers in the highly charged environment where so many religious battles are fought today. But I, like most people in the fray, was more sure of how to frame the questions last century than I now think warranted. I was more persuaded by my own answers in the 1990s than I am now. This is not to signal any lack of analytic rigor, nor is it to indicate any failure of ethical nerve. To the contrary, it is a public acknowledgement that this is not your mother's playing field, and an equally candid assessment that new data make for new questions.

Good sex in a global, pluralistic world

Most of my ethical reflection has been done in a North American context, with significant time spent in Latin America and Europe, and important visits to Australia and New Zealand. But in a globalized, religiously pluralistic society, that is no longer enough. Parochial views and ways of formulating ethical questions simply will not yield the necessary insight to handle what are now global, plural problems. It was not until I embarked on the Good Sex Project that I appreciated the importance of a new way of working. Under the aegis of the Milwaukee-based Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics, I joined ethicist Patricia Beattie Jung (Loyola University, Chicago) and economist Radhika Balakrishnan (Marymount Manhattan College) in conceptualizing a feminist team approach.

With generous funding from the Ford Foundation, we gathered 13 women scholars/activists from eight countries (Brazil, China, England, India, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, the U.S.) and six religious traditions (Buddhism, Chinese religions, Christianity both Catholic and Protestant, Islam and, the common faith, Capitalism). Our two four-day meetings, in 1997 in Philadelphia and in 1998 in Amsterdam, and our rich communication since then, were opportunities to lay out basic assumptions and discuss myriad aspects of what might constitute good sex if women's religious wisdom were taken seriously within and among our respective traditions.

Far from being a how-to guide for bedrooms around the globe, our conversations quickly focused on good sex as an indication of women's well being. Well-being was more obvious in its absence — rape, female clitoral excision, restrictions on reproductive options, trafficking in women and girls, prostitution, prohibitions on pleasure, lesbian hating, honor killings and the like — than in its presence. Our initial focus on sex

MOST OF MY ETHICAL REFLECTION HAS BEEN DONE IN A NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT, WITH SIGNIFICANT TIME SPENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE, AND IMPORTANT VISITS TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. BUT IN A GLOBALIZED, RELIGIOUSLY PLURALISTIC SOCIETY, THAT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH.

Reginald Marsh—Gaiety Burlesk 1930

SEX AND GENDER ARE DEEPLY CONTESTED TERRAIN IN POSTMODERN LIFE, WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FAR MORE FLUID IN THEIR SELF-UNDERSTANDINGS THAN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS.

qua sex was hard to keep because it was economic, political and religious matters that framed the issues.

We engaged in a wide-reaching conversation in which we sought neither common assumptions nor least common denominators. Ambiguity was honored and differences were explained, not explained away. We reached no firm conclusions except our commitment to promote women's safety and well-being. We spoke and wrote out of our own starting points and according to the priorities of our local settings, all the while becoming increasingly mindful of the global gestalt that was emerging in all of its horrifying specificity. This method stood us in good stead especially when we disagreed or had to stretch to understand how definitions of even common words like "good" and "sex" could be so varied. Several examples of the contentions will illustrate just how broadly based the conversations were — and how different and innovative the approaches.

Sex and motherhood, enlightenment, profits

Brazilian Lutheran pastor and seminary professor Wanda Deifelt looked at compulsory motherhood in Brazil, standard fare for those of us who cut our feminist teeth on Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*. But Deifelt couched her argument not simply in terms of poor women in her country who are kept from contraceptive and abortive options by religiously influenced laws. Rather, she included wealthy women in Brazil who are now steered toward *in vitro* fertilization, a growing industry in a poor country. Wildly disproportionate resources are spent for some women to conceive while poor women go from pregnancy to pregnancy, their children often dying for lack of prenatal care or malnutrition.

The same could be said for many developed countries. The point is that compulsory motherhood has a new, additional face, not the one that most of us in the affluent West are used to seeing. Indeed, if we take globalization seriously, it may be our faces in the mirror along with wealthy Brazilians.

Suwanna Satha-Anand, a philosopher from Thailand, argued in an equally forceful way that a Buddhist position on women's sexuality needs to be evaluated in terms of the more encompassing relationship between sexuality and enlightenment. For Buddhists, she claimed, reproduction represents the ensnaring power and danger of pleasure, permitted for lay people but something that serious truth-seekers eventually renounce. An enlightened being is well beyond all worldly attachments including sexual entanglements. In this view, the best sex is no sex at all, a hard sell for many western feminists who have made sexual freedom and sexual pleasure an important sign of liberation. Still, we heard her point and want it to be part of the mix when international decisions are made such as went on at U.N. meetings in Cairo and Beijing in the last decade.

Philosopher of religion Grace Jantzen, a Quaker working in England, makes a major point of Christianity's complicity in the capitalist instrumentalization of sex. As arguably the most effective colonizing force in modern life, Christianity, even with its sometimes-ambivalent view of pleasure, has contributed to sex's becoming one more commodity for sale at the highest price the market will bear. Feminist, including Christian feminist, emphasis on pleasure without reference to the larger justice agenda can, however unintentionally, contribute to this problem.

Muslim scholars Pinar Ikkaracan (Turkey) and Ayesha M. Imam (Nigeria) prevented the team from making easy assumptions about Islam and schooled us in the cultural nuances that result in some women's living and others' dying. We were disabused of any latent prejudices that we might have harbored against a tradition that in many ways is no more (though surely no less) oppressive of women than many others. That in itself was a useful challenge.

Indian economist Radhika Balakrishnan laid out the contradictory complexities of capitalism with her vignettes of women working in factories in India. They experience both oppression and liberation in producing the products that poor women in the U.S. buy — oppression in the working conditions, pay and, for some, the demands of prostitution; liberation in that they have their own source of income and the dignity

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of a job.

Meanwhile, poor women in the U.S. experience the same contradictory complexities. Since they cannot afford large purchases, they sometimes feel pleasure in being able to buy a small item, new underwear for example. The fact that they have a choice among brands and styles of underwear makes them feel good as consumers in an economy they see booming for some. But are they buying their pleasure at the expense of their cousins abroad whose exploited work produced the cheap goods?

'Just' good sex as a human right?

It is not easy to parse such situations into ethically discreet parts. But it is clear that sex and pleasure are not primarily bedroom issues, but public, interstructured and often vexing matters. To speak of good sex is to speak of a range of moral goods that go well beyond, though of course include, the genitally sexual. It is to forsake the ethical microscope, at least for now, in favor of a wide-angle lens.

I proposed that we strive for just good sex, as a human right, with "just" being shorthand for justice-seeking. That way we could tie the struggle for economic and social justice to the equally important quest for sexual pleasure and safety. The suggestion evoked consideration, but human rights language is seen by some as excessively individualistic, by others as far too anthropocentric, lacking concern for animals and the earth. Nonetheless, we tried it on for size, and discovered that one size does not fit all in sexual ethics.

Such complexities abound in the sexual arena narrowly defined. U.S. Rabbi Rebecca Alpert pushed the sexual envelope another inch when she laid out guilty pleasures, the claim that sex can be good because it is bad. Religious taboos and prohibitions, she argued, sometimes enhance the pleasure of certain practices with no real harm done. Lots to explore here since virtually all of our traditions have strong taboos in certain areas, e.g., incest, that would need to be evaluated very carefully lest such a potentially useful strategy be misapplied and cause harm.

Catholic ethicist Patricia Beattie Jung made another provocative claim. She suggested that in her tradition it would make more sense to say that sin was involved any time a woman lacked pleasure in a sexual encounter rather than the classic Catholic approach that engenders guilt when there is pleasure. A person who did not help her/his partner to experience sexual delight would be engaging in sinful behavior. Imagine the Vatican theologians pronouncing *that* in grave terms and sonorous tones to a waiting world!

What these and countless other ideas evoked in the team was a deep sense of how much work we have to do on sexual ethics and public policy. Moreover, we all came away from the experience changed in profound ways. We acknowledged the privileged nature of the scholarly experience we had. Nonetheless, we called it a necessary luxury, since adequate sexual ethics and social policy for a globalized and religiously pluralistic world will not emerge simply from our local efforts. Rather, such globalized conversations make our respective in-house differences pale before the stark reality of danger, disease and demand that circumscribe sex for millions of women, especially young women, worldwide. Nonetheless, we went home committed to our local efforts.

Developments in the U.S.

In my local efforts since the Good Sex project, I have come to realize that "act locally, think globally" translates to "make love locally, have implications globally." U.S. sexual discourse is complicated in ways that it was not 40 years ago when the so-called sexual revolution was in full swing, nor even 30 years ago when the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered movements got their impetus. But here on the U.S. scene, several important givens have changed. Unfortunately, many religious conversations are still being carried out as if fundamental changes had not really happened.

The first change is rather basic. We used to talk about men and women, males and females, with fair assurance that we knew what we meant. This is simply no longer the case. Sex and gender are deeply contested terrain in postmodern life, with young people far more fluid in their self-understandings than previous generations.

The first transgendered person I met more than 20 years ago was a Catholic male priest who had married a woman and then become one. She decided that she was heterosexual, so she lived happily ever after, as far as I know, with a man. "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" never sounded so sweet.

Gender bending and sex changes are increasingly common. Martine Rothblatt, a male to female transsexual, describes the apartheid of sex that prevents some people from living out the identity they feel most authentically theirs. Despite problems of essentializing gender stereotypes, life is short and a fit between one's body and one's spirit does not seem a lot to ask. Some people now claim to be bi-gendered, that is, to live in a both/and way as a woman by night and as a man by day, for example. Still others are starting to talk, as Virginia Ramey Mollenkott has suggested, about being omnigendered, encompassing many options in one full life. Much remains to be explored. No easy answers here, nor even any easy questions. But the power of U.S. media assures that such issues have global reach.

The fallout of some courageous people's efforts in this regard is the increasing elasticity of gender categories, greater tolerance for difference, diversity training, and other signs of acceptance of a range of human experiences. Of course, hate crimes and prejudice are part of the same U.S. landscape, and human cruelty is legend. But I imagine that the next census form will need to have a few additional boxes to check, as the binaries of male/female simply do not exhaust the possibilities.

Expanding 'queerness'

A second change that colors the sexual ethical scene is the increasing diversity not only of sex and gender but also of sexual identities, orientations, and options. We are still not sure how to talk about it, but just as male/female no longer covers the waterfront, neither does the binary of homosexual/heterosexual do justice to the forms of love among us.

Right when a critical mass of ever so respectable, job-holding, mortgage-paying, monogamous-acting lesbian and gay people

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was making inroads into a previously closed society, the plot thickened. Bisexual people were first on the scene, claiming that their experiences were passed over. Transgendered people named their particularity and claimed their rightful place in the historic movements for change. Queer became a kind of umbrella category for all such people, despite a lack of consensus about its meaning.

Of course this change upset the apple cart of some lesbian and gay people who were in the vanguard of those being accepted, especially if they were white and wealthy. Might our sexual orientation be less than solidly lesbian/gay? Might we, too, be queer? Might our inclusion be slowed because of perceived connection with those people?

Yes answers (some enthusiastic, some tentative) to all of the above questions were the news of the 1990s for progressives. We were required to retool our sense of ourselves and our efforts in light of new data. Nonetheless, some church discussions are still being carried out as if bisexual and transgendered people do not exist. Once more, the Spirit shows us that it is all of us or none of us.

Decoupling sex and procreation

A third clear change in U.S. culture is the decoupling of hetero sex with the process of procreation. This has been a long time in the works, but it is increasingly the case that we do not assume that heterosexual intercourse should or will eventuate in a new life, nor that all new life will come from heterosexual sex. Birth control is widespread although not used as effectively as it could be. Abortion is a contested given, at least until the next Supreme Court decision on late-term abortions. Poor and young women still need more help, not just in these areas but also in education, jobs and housing, so that they can make real choices. But for the majority of U.S. people who engage in heterosexual sex, doing so with the intention to procreate is an increasingly rare experience, while enjoying it for pleasure and companionship is the norm.

Infertility wrote the book in the 1990s. *In vitro* and other techniques are now well accepted, if still very expensive. But infertility is a misnomer for same-sex couples who wish to have children, as they may well be fertile but not socially paired in such a way as to prove it. The "gayby" boom continues to grow, with some lesbian women doing it the old way, others using *in vitro* techniques at home or in a clinic. Adoption is on the rise among same-sex couples, and of course many raise children from previous heterosexual partnering. In all, the human race is running right along even though we have grown beyond the man-plus-woman-equals-baby stage.

TO ALL OF THESE SITUATIONS WE BRING THE WEIGHT OF OUR TRADITIONAL CONCERN WITH EQUALITY, OUR PERENNIAL STRUGGLE TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE GIFT OF CREATION.

Hints for Christian communities

These changes in the U.S. scene are part of the global conversation. They are also the stuff of Christian denominational struggles that shape contemporary church life. There are no easy answers. But I think it useful to acknowledge that Christianity has relatively little wisdom on sexuality, especially when the ground has shifted beneath its biblical feet. For a tradition whose text was written when we still knew what a man and a woman were, it is asking a lot to provide ethical insight on bisexuality and same-sex parenting. Or is it?

One strategy is simply for Christian ethicists to remain humbly silent and let the scientists do the heavy lifting. That would seem inviting except that we bring expertise that scientists do not share, namely, practice at problematizing the meaning and value of things, and commitment to bringing about love and justice. This is an expertise in short supply and high demand as the human genome is being mapped and mined and parts of the human community are being ravaged by the increasing gap between those with resources and those without. To all of these situations we bring the weight of our traditional concern with equality, our perennial struggle to be faithful to the gift of creation. After all, the Bible is not a ready reference book, but tangible proof that people over thousands of years have sought to live in cooperation with the divine.

Ethicists will find our role, but the real drama is on the pastoral front, where ministers meet the young man who wants to be a woman, the bisexual baby boomer, the two men who want to raise a child. Their racial/ethnic background, their economic status, and their family/friendship circle of support will determine a lot about their successful survival, much less their living out their dreams. Without selling the Christian ministry short, it is obvious that few pastoral people have the training to be fully helpful. Even the most welcoming and well intentioned need to refer, confer and learn about issues for which their seminary training was simply too early to provide.

What we can offer as Christian communities is a place where people feel free and invited to be themselves. After all, we claim to be more than the workplace, though some workplaces are more welcoming than some churches. We can be value-attentive schools where new issues are debated and discussed with the best scientific information available. Our historical values include a preferential option for those who are marginalized, and a commitment to changing structures so that the margins become the center. Perhaps most uniquely, we can be groups with warm hearts and fervent prayers for guidance into the unknown. Only then will we live faithfully in a globalized, religiously pluralistic world without easy answers. ●

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The pro-life, pro-choice debate

Confronting real differences with respect — and hope

by Marianne Arbogast

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I AM NOT PRO-CHOICE. But neither am I the person Marge Piercy is addressing in her "Right To Life" poem [see p. 7]. In fact, I've never met anyone who really fits the image the poem suggests — a male hypocrite hiding behind a right-to-life banner, who cares nothing for women, children or other living beings, except as they impact his own self-interest.

The pro-life people I've known are more like my mother, who used to volunteer at a Birthright office at our church, offering moral and material support to women facing difficult pregnancies. She also sat up countless nights rocking and comforting foster babies she took in as newborns, sometimes drug-addicted at birth, loving them as her own until they were placed with adoptive families. Although she would be inclined to support economic justice programs, oppose exorbitant military spending and want a compassionate criminal justice system, she could never bring herself to vote for a pro-choice candidate.

Or they are like Catholic Worker friends who, one year, held quiet, prayerful vigils outside a clinic where abortions were performed. Some have gone to jail for nuclear weapons protests, and are part of a community that, for the past 24 years, has opened its doors to homeless women and children.

Or they can be like some of our soup kitchen volunteers — religious and political conservatives whose perspective on many issues appalls me. Still, they put in hours of hard work to help feed hungry people.

Undoubtedly, there are pro-life advocates who are deserving of Piercy's indictment. But a great many of us are not.

From talking with pro-choice friends, I know that they, too, take exception to the stereotypes promulgated about them. *Witness* co-editor Julie Wortman — who, with her partner Anne Cox, once offered to adopt a child whose mother was considering abortion — finds herself explaining, over and over, that "pro-choice" does not mean "pro-abortion." She would never deny that there are important moral and ethical questions involved in the choice.

Julie and I would both hope for a world in which no woman would feel compelled to have an abortion. Our differences, as I understand them, center around how we believe we can best move toward that world, and what to do in the meantime. In practice, I think it's likely that we would respond to a woman faced with a crisis pregnancy in much the same way.

At times, the differences of conscience on abortion among *Witness* staff members have been difficult. But they have forced us to struggle to communicate in ways that don't just evoke the same old stereotypes. None of us can fall back into language that unfairly demonizes the other, or rest in untested assumptions about one another's convictions.

For the most part, we have steered clear of the issue in the magazine, unsure as to whether we are practicing an unconscionable avoidance or a commendable silence in a debate that has grown too shrill and too self-righteous. When we have broached the topic, we have tried to do so in a way that respects our differing views, such as the dialogue on abortion rights between Carter Heyward and Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann [6/93] and a story on the Common Ground approach, through which people who disagree on abortion have been able to work together on concerns they share, like nutrition programs for women and children [4/94].

It was sad to hear of the rupture this past year within the Fellowship of Reconciliation over the abortion issue. In June of 1999, Jim Forest — one of the F.O.R.'s most long-term and active members — resigned from the F.O.R., with the Orthodox Peace Fellowship following in his wake, after the F.O.R. National Council issued a statement on abortion that he perceived as shutting the door on a request he and others had made for a dialogue which would take the pacifist pro-life position seriously.

Dan Ebener, another pro-life F.O.R. member who had joined in the request, has chosen to remain in the F.O.R., but continues to call for better communication. Since the F.O.R. includes both pro-choice and pro-life members, he sees it as offering the chance to model a nonviolent approach to conflict.

"Because diversity like this often leads toward violence in our world, it is an opportunity for the F.O.R. to deal with something emotional that divides us," Ebener says. "We can reflect to society how healing can begin to occur. Because we value others in the Fellowship, we value diversity of opinion in the Fellowship."

I think the effort to communicate honestly and fairly with each other has been worthwhile for all of us at *The Witness*. Julie has said that, because of our conversations, she is unable to completely dismiss the pro-life stance. I would say the same, in reverse. Our differences are real, but we've also found large areas of common ground. That gives me hope that there could be a way through this impasse that splits even people who are seriously committed to a just and peaceful world. ●

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'NEITHER MALE NOR

Church debates and the politics of identity

by Mary McClintock Fulkerson

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DEBATES ON THE FULL participation by gay and lesbian persons in the life of the church matter very much to feminist theologians. The feminist vision of God's realm has at its center resistance to relations of domination, whether they be in the form of heterosexism or misogyny. A wealth of lesbian feminist theologies have explored this vision in concrete ways, lifting up the rich biblical and theological imagery for a progressive stance on sexuality and offering powerful interpretations of the meaning of Christian love through their writings about women loving women. But the discourse of biblical and sexual justice may not be the only place to put our energies. Nor is the endless back and forth on what Scripture says on the subject. What is striking about the terms of the ecclesiastical debate is not the differences between the opposing positions — as acrimonious as they sometimes become — but the assumptions shared by both those who would have an inclusive church and those who would not.

Questioning sexed identity

Ostensibly, it is the disagreements that stand out in ecclesiastical debates. They cluster most vociferously around different uses and understandings of Scripture, but also in discussions of what causes homosexual identity. This latter concern plays a major role in determining whether full inclusion into the "status" of other baptized members is possible. The bottom line is whether one's sexual identity as non-heterosexual is affirmed by God or not.

What both sides share in this debate is an understanding of sexual identity which comes from modernist therapeutic and scientific discourses. Both those who refuse gay and lesbian persons and those who insist upon their inclusion in the life of the church share the idea that persons have corresponding sexual identity and sexual preference and that this identity, for good or ill, is an absolutely fundamental reality. It is just this idea of sexed identity, however, that feminist theorists outside of the church and its theological conversations are calling into question. At the same time that gays and lesbians are pressing for full consideration in mainline church denominations, feminists are questioning the stable identities that are assumed by a "politics of inclusion/exclusion."

Feminist theory has long raised the question of the construction of gender and separated it out from the categories "sex" and "woman." Sex is the category for anatomical differentiation of bodies. Thus there are female bodies which are women and male bodies which are men. Gender is a category which has helped identify the way in which the definitions of "masculinity" and "femininity," the features which define men and women beyond their bodies, are social constructions. Gender explorations inquire into the use of these definitions to stereotype and limit the possibilities of male and female "subjects" or persons. As Simone DeBeauvoir claimed, "One is not born a woman."

When gender is opposed to the category of sex, it construes the sexed body as a "given." Although feminist theory and theology typically rely upon the sexed-body "woman" as the starting point for theoretical reflection upon liberation, "post-structuralist" feminists argue that such gendered categories are organized by current power arrangements. The assumption that sex refers to "natural" realities for which we do not need analyses may work fine on the level of everyday interaction. Analytically, however, the binary division of bodies into anatomical men and women has the potential of all naturalized categories. It can support oppressive (gender) relationships. As long as subjects are viewed as sexed (male and female) prior to the considerations of power relationships, some notion of gender is operative. What even DeBeauvoir failed to recognize was that "sex" as well as gender is something one becomes — or is done to one.

'No doer prior to the deed'

Judith Butler takes on the daunting task of attacking the "woman" subject of feminist theology (and, by implication, of all theology) from a poststructuralist position. Nietzsche was right, she says: There is "no doer prior to

FEMALE...IN CHRIST'?



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Brooks Walsh—Deer/Papaya Still Life

the deed." Informed by Foucault's archeology of the sexualized subject, she shows that a notion of the interior self plus a Freudian discourse of identity results in sexed subjects. Defining oneself as having some essential, internal, identity for which the primary feature is one's gendered, sexual desire is a peculiar development of modern discourses, argues Foucault, one which occurs with the medicalization of scientific discourse.

Foucault's work shows that the pair sex/sexuality has a history. It is not a fixed, unchanging natural feature of human being. Since the 19th century, says another historian of sexuality, the West has treated sex — our gendered desire — as "the 'truth' of our being [which] defines us socially and morally; its release or proper functioning can be a factor in health, energy, activity; its frustration is a cause of ill health, social unorthodoxy, even madness." One might compare this view with the medieval corporate "subject" who lacks a separate individual identity and is defined by his/her relationship to the community and place in the divine ordering of things. By contrast, the modern subject is an autonomous self, an entity unto him/herself. As such, s/he is defined fundamentally by her identity. The peculiarly modern move is not only individualist, but identifies sexuality as the central explanatory principle in human subjects — sexuality is the desire that emerges from being male or being female. This way of identifying human subjecthood or personhood produces the notion that one's sex/gender coincides with one's essential self. As Jeffrey Weeks puts it, sex becomes "the supreme secret (the 'mystery of sex') and the general substratum of our existence."

Body, gender and desire

This anatomy of the modern sexed subject exposes a relationship of reciprocity between body, gender and desire. Desire expresses gender; gender expresses desire; and one might even say that sex and gender are collapsed — sex is gendered. Butler says that the "metaphysical unity of the three is assumed to be truly known and expressed in a differentiating desire for an oppositional gender — that is, in a form of oppositional heterosexuality." The clarity of gender identity is discerned by one's difference from the other, opposing, gender. "Woman" has no meaning except as that which is not man. The modernity of this concern with the binary oppositional "sex" of the subject's proper object contrasts with ancient societies in which the class of the partner, not the gender, was the significant issue.

Foucault's account of Herculine Barbin helps Butler confound the modern sexualized subject in a graphic way. Foucault's description of this 19th-century hermaphrodite is a gripping display of the case that sex is not the inner truth of a subject, her/his "intractable depth and inner substance," but a construction of bodies, various pleasures and affectivities and body parts; s/he is legally defined as female at points early in his/her life, and legally a male later on. His/her journals provide access to Herculine's pleasures, which defy easy categorization. Butler points out that the temptation to explain his/her desire for girls by appeal to the "male" parts of her anatomy (and vice versa), is confuted by his/her body, which refuses to be unified. The very temptation to unify this person as a sexual subject is a display of the normalizing heterosexual regime of knowledge/power that "we" bring to his/her body. If we are to take Herculine seriously without "explaining" him/her with the discourse of pathology or subhumanity, we must question the notion that desire is "caused" by an essentially unified gendered body. It is just this configuration — the metaphysical threesome of sex, gender, desire — that keeps the man-woman binary in place.

Power

Recognition of the force of this threesome introduces a third feature of Butler's analysis: power. The unintelligibility of the figure of Herculine is not the result of his/her essential unintelligibility. It is the effect of a particular regime of truth about subjects — not a natural fact. A regime of truth is the set of rules that define the "sayable in any particular social order." It determines what kinds of statements and inquiries will be taken seriously. The regulating regime at stake here is compulsory heterosexuality, and it defines the truth about subjects. As a dominant ordering of reality, compulsory heterosexuality regulates pleasure and bodies; it cuts up reality into two human identities and defines their legitimate and illegitimate experiences. This regulating of identities means that certain kinds of identity simply cannot exist — "Those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender." The normalized relating of the threesome, sex, gender and desire, is predicated upon heterosexual difference. Object choice is defined in relation to the sexed body; desire is channeled and defined by the sexes it connects; and those sexes are two — male and female. Any thinking about desire and human relations is locked into this grid; any subject which does not conform is disciplined.

Feminism without women?

Butler's destabilizing of fixed sexed identity does not have to eliminate feminist practices or support anti-feminist politics, but it can make more evident the problems with identity politics. Butler's is a challenge to the dominations that are effected by a set of rules operative about sexual identity, its relation to desire and the assumption that there are two kinds of subjects. The problem with "the identity woman" is its propensity to reinforce the notion that what is true about a subject is her/his gender and, thereby, contribute to the hegemonic effects of a set of definitions that legislate compulsory heterosexuality.

Feminist politics is about resisting dominations based upon gender. Secular and theological feminisms habitually include resisting dominations of race, class and sexual preference as well. Feminists have discovered from the voices of womanists, Mujeristas, Asian and African women, that we assume women are in some sense "the same" only at our peril. Butler challenges us to ask even more difficult questions about the construction of identity and the work it might do.

If we would resist the dominant sexual arrangements of heterosexism and sexism, we must take seriously the instability of all identities. Butler's call is to resist the implicit notion of "real woman" that continues to define the heterosexual regime. As long as the internal "truth" of our iden-

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tities is given by the regime of binary sex, then the problems identified with the constructed nature of gender have not been totally resolved. She asks us to forgo the belief that being a "woman" is a natural identity, that it is the inner truth about subjects, because that discourse deploys other hegemonic discourses that lock the lesbian and the homosexual as forever wrong, distorted, and deviant in their desire and practice. If we take Butler seriously, we see that the lesbian is no more a "real woman" than is the heterosexual "woman." Their dependence upon these identities often reinforces the heterosexual regime and its assumption that the deepest thing that can be said about our identities is our "sex." The category that merits elimination, in short, is the notion of "real." Our "real" identities are only problematically identified with any fixed feature, not the least of which is our maleness/femaleness.

Destabilizing of the notion of a "real woman" is a move which should not be confused with getting rid of projects which resist specific forms of domination. It is important, however, to recognize the limits of resistance, which do not rule out change but point us toward a different politics than one which relies upon transcendental acts. The clue for gender resistance comes from the unstable social relations of heterosexuality: Women/men are not "natural" and fixed entities. They exist not by ontological truth but by virtue of "repetition" and difference. If we would subvert such identities, we must destabilize the acts that produce them. Through a patient process of denaturalization we can expose the fallible, constructed nature of the thing. Since the target is the notion that heterosexuality is the "original," the response must be a "copy" that calls the feigned original into question. The new category Butler offers for such subversive acts is gender parody.

Gender as performance

Parody, or mimicry with a twist, aims at displacing the reproduction of the difference — man/woman — and is thus directed at the heterosexually-defined boundaries on bodies. This subversion is clearly not accomplished by the idea that the subject's true nature as female or as lesbian is expressed in her emancipatory acts, a version of the notion that one's inner true self is expressed in one's behavior. Neither is this a turn to what is "real" or really true about women, namely, the body. Parody is a subversion of the surface body or the gendered body as it presents itself as male or female. The body, like the subject's sense of self, is always socially coded. Butler's alternative form of resistance proffers an image that moves us out of the identity categories which continue to legitimate and naturalize femininity. If parody is the alternative to invoking the real, it is also a new definition of gender. Subversive acts of parody which contest compulsory heterosexuality categorize gender as performance.

When gender is defined as performance, it can no longer be viewed as the "inner truth" of one's being. As parody, gender refuses the real. Gender is a corporeal style; it is acts, gestures, and enactments which invoke and construct meanings available in the culture, rather than representing or expressing the truth of one's inner sexual self. The mix of styles in punk culture is suggestive of gender performance; drag and cross-dressing; butch and femme styles among lesbians are the more productive examples of parodic gender performance. When I perform a kind of woman, I am invoking a host of cultural signs which reproduce my gender identity. As long as my bodily display is recognizably "female," its difference is with dominant constructions of "male," and my performance makes no gender trouble. It simply repeats the dominant codes. Resistance to oppressive power regimes cannot happen with repetition of the binary codes for gender, but it cannot occur outside of the available codes. That is why resistance requires parody of this order. Drag, cross-dressing and butch/femme lesbians are exemplary of subversive parody because they set up contradictions between the presumed anatomy, the gender prescribed by social code and the gender being performed. The dissonances between the anatomical body, the culturally defined gender, and the bodily display signify decentering challenges to the "real identity" of the performer. They signify parodically with the compulsory cultural system of binary sex.

Addressing liberal/conservative agreement, not disagreements

In light of Butler's critique, it is not the disagreements but the discourse shared by liberal and conservative theological positions on homosexuality (namely, that persons are sexed objects) that needs to be addressed. Even though the progressive inclusionary positions eschew the conservatives' discourse about natural orders for sexuality and sexual desire and refuse to treat biblical texts as divine prescriptions, they share the modern discourse of sexuality as a phenomenon "deeply rooted in a personality structure," as a Presbyterian document puts it. And they share the convergence of binary (male and female) genders with that of sexuality. Both pro and con invoke a sexual preference: Sexuality is something that persons have as an orientation. Sexuality is "our way of being in the world as embodied selves, male and female." Where they differ, of course, is whether it is acceptable to be the kind of person whose preference is for the same gender/sex.

What is troubling about this shared territory is the assumption of both positions that sexual identity is fundamental to a person's being, and that there are two kinds of sexual persons: heterosexual and homosexual. Although that does not lead to the same views of the relation between one's sex and one's desire, since the progressives are free to wonder if sexual orientation is fixed, the frame still assumes that anatomical sex and gender coincide in two types of subject, allowing for desire itself to be defined by difference. The definition of desire on this heterosexual grid means that even the progressive position damns with faint praise the very subjects it wishes to liberate. As always the phenomenon that must be explained is not sexuality in all its complexities, but the veering off of a subject's desire from its proper binary opposite to its mirror image: The search is for the causes of homosexuality, never the causes of heterosexuality.

As a consequence, the only target attacked by progressive positions is homophobia. The goal is equality — achievement of justice by the inclusion of gays and lesbians. I admit

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that this is no small target; the difference between progressives and conservatives is a crucial one, and the strategies necessary to dislodging heterosexual dominance are necessarily multiple. However, this discourse of equality does reproduce the heterosexual frame of sexed subjects. Progressive church positions have yet to become a challenge to heterosexuality as the "real." (The Presbyterian version specifically distances its inclusionary vision from cross-dressers and drag.)

Seeking an alternative to the theology of inclusion

The discourse of inclusion of lesbian and gay persons — of the goodness of non-heterosexual subjects as creatures — does some important work: It names as good what has been branded inherently sinful in church traditions. This discourse, however, does not expose the constructed and unstable nature of all sexual configurations. If identity is the effect of a regime of power, then homophobia is not the only problem. Reproduction of heterosexuality has produced the illusion that subjects are constituted by a real, sexed essence which is naturally or unnaturally expressed by practice. Given the strength of that construction, and the productive as well as juridical nature of power, the only way to contest compulsory heterosexuality is performance of gender that calls the security of that regime into question.

In order to work toward a theological position better suited to challenging contemporary forms of domination than a theology of inclusion, another look needs to be given to feminist reliance upon the fixed subject, woman, as it is habitually invoked. To be sure, there are contexts where appeal to "women's experience" and its validity may be a justifiable strategy to expose the silencing and oppression of women. However, it is not contradictory to feminist practice to conceive of an alternative form of engagement against sexism and heterosexism. That alternative engagement might take seriously the proposal that sexed identity is not an essential given of Christian discourse. This does not prevent us from taking seriously constructions of binary gender in particular situations. My point is that feminist recognition of difference and its use to oppress is not preserved only by practices which accept the notion that differences are fixed essences of subjects. In fact, the obsession with sexual difference as the definitive mark of subjects may be precisely an accommodation to modern cultural discourses. More importantly, it very well may be a modernism that a theological proposal should most strenuously refuse.

One can certainly take issue with my conclusion that Christians are called to challenge the heterosexual as the real. Both the absence and the illegitimacy of a challenge to the heterosexual organizing of our identities and our "normal" sexual identities and objects of desire are defensible on theological and biblical bases. Implicitly, church documents warrant refusals to take up this challenge on the basis of their appeal to biblical traditions that seem to proscribe homosexual behavior. More directly, they appeal to passages from Genesis about the creation of human being as male-female, or the directive to procreate. Theologies of creation make arguments about the God-intended order that rule out of order my challenge to heterosexuality as the "real." However, as defined by Foucault, Jeffrey Weeks, David Halperin and Judith Butler, to name a few, the "modern" character of the operative terms in the self-understandings produced by this heterosexual regime should give us pause with regard to the settled character of this issue. Any assumption that our notions of real sexual identity are somehow identical with the categories and worldviews of ancient or biblical communities — if that is our theological authorization — is simply naive.

A more adequate theological grammar of subjects would wonder about what the Christian gospel has to do with the nature of subjects. How closely tied to the essential vision of a Christian liberationist theology, or any other Christian vision, is a particular cultural code for defining a person? If it is clear that notions of inner sexual identity and the accompanying matrix that routes and normalizes desire from gendered identity are historically constructed, it behooves Christians to ask if these are identical with that which is constitutive of the Gospel. It is not that theology has nothing to say about subjects; a theological doctrine of creatures would define them as *imago dei*, as finite, good in their creatureliness and finitude, vulnerable to temptation and idolatry, distorted by sin and reliant upon God for redemption. Given the judgment that constructions of subject-identities are themselves subject to the ordering of a theological grammar, we might conclude, however, that definitions of sexuality as well as our behaviors are characterized by fallibility, impermanence and finitude and are not essential to the community's ongoing identity.

Iconoclastic criticism and radical love

This is clearly not to say our identities are not God-given, shaped by a grammar of faithfulness, of dependence upon God, of ecclesially-formed practices of forgiveness, self-love, call to confession, and agape for the stranger. It is to rank prescriptions against idolatry higher than the specific cultural codes — physiology of desire in the ancient world; psychological, medical, psychiatric, in the modern — that we are tempted to absolutize in our ethical codes. I appeal, then, to a theological grammar that resists the absolutized notions of sexed identity that support heterosexism.

The Christian community's discourse of fallibility, its beliefs that what is created is finite, partial, subject to error and a candidate for idolatry, come under another ordering in a theological grammar. Iconoclastic criticism in the Christian community is ordered toward a radical love. More specifically, this radical love is displayed in a community whose relations of respect, forgiveness, confession, accountability and agape toward the stranger are made available without conditions. The *kerygma* of the Christian community displaced the conditions that required one to become a Jew for faithful worship; its good news was that membership in the family of God was open to anyone, that salvation was by grace through faith.

If we follow this theological logic, we see that new conditions have been placed on membership in the community which gathers around Jesus, and they endanger the

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kerygma. A modern definition of personhood which relies upon sexual identity places conditions upon access to the status of child of God. Radical love is invoked in the community to support a reality where there is neither slave nor free, male nor female in Christ Jesus, a reality defined by a grammar of justification by faith alone. A contemporary version of this grammar can expand its logic, a logic which refuses to put conditions on access to the Gospel, and do that by refusing to require binary gendered identity just as it refuses to require circumcision. This Christian grammar of iconoclasm for the purposes of life is, in short, intrinsically expandable — even to gendered identity itself. It extends our notion of justification by grace through faith in a new way. It confesses that our conceptions of identity are susceptible not only to the located and limited perspectives of the cultures that produce them, but that we are not saved by making of them requirements for full communion.

If the modern notion of sexualized identity is clearly indefensible as a historically consistent aspect of original and normalized Christian self-understandings — and I think it is indefensible — it is no less problematic when viewed as part of the essence of a transformative Christian theological vision. As long as normalizing discourses create heterosexuality as the "real" way that human beings may relate and are undergirded by the notion that the important thing about subjects is their identity as (real) men or (real) women, extension of theologies that focus on including women are not helpfully made to include homosexuals. It may be that inclusionary readings of Scripture are not subverting of oppression and it is time to read Galatians 3:28 with a new literalness, admitting that we are all performing our sex/gender. ●

Mary McClintock Fulkerson is Associate Professor of Theology at Duke University, <mfulk@mail.duke.edu>. A longer version of this essay appeared in Que(e)rying Religion: A Critical Anthology, *edited by Gary Comstock and Susan Henking, Continuum, 1997. Fine arts photographer Brooks B. Walsh, also our cover artist, works in New York City.*

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TRANSGENDER TERMINOLOGY

TRANSGENDER
An umbrella term for anyone who transgresses societal norms of sex and gender. Although it formerly referred only to people who lived in another gender but did not desire gender reassignment surgery, the term now includes TRANSSEXUALS. All of the following categories are commonly included within the term TRANSGENDER.

CROSS-DRESSER
The preferred term for men who enjoy assuming women's clothing and social roles, usually part-time; the medical term is TRANSVESTITE. Historically, women who have cross-dressed have done it full time in order to serve in the military or gain access to other male-only domains. The overwhelming majority of male cross-dressers identify as heterosexual, and many are married.

DRAG
Adoption of the clothing and behaviors of the other gender for enjoyment, entertainment, or eroticism. Originally used only concerning gay men (DRAG QUEENS, as opposed to CROSS-DRESSERS), the term now refers also to lesbians (DRAG KINGS).

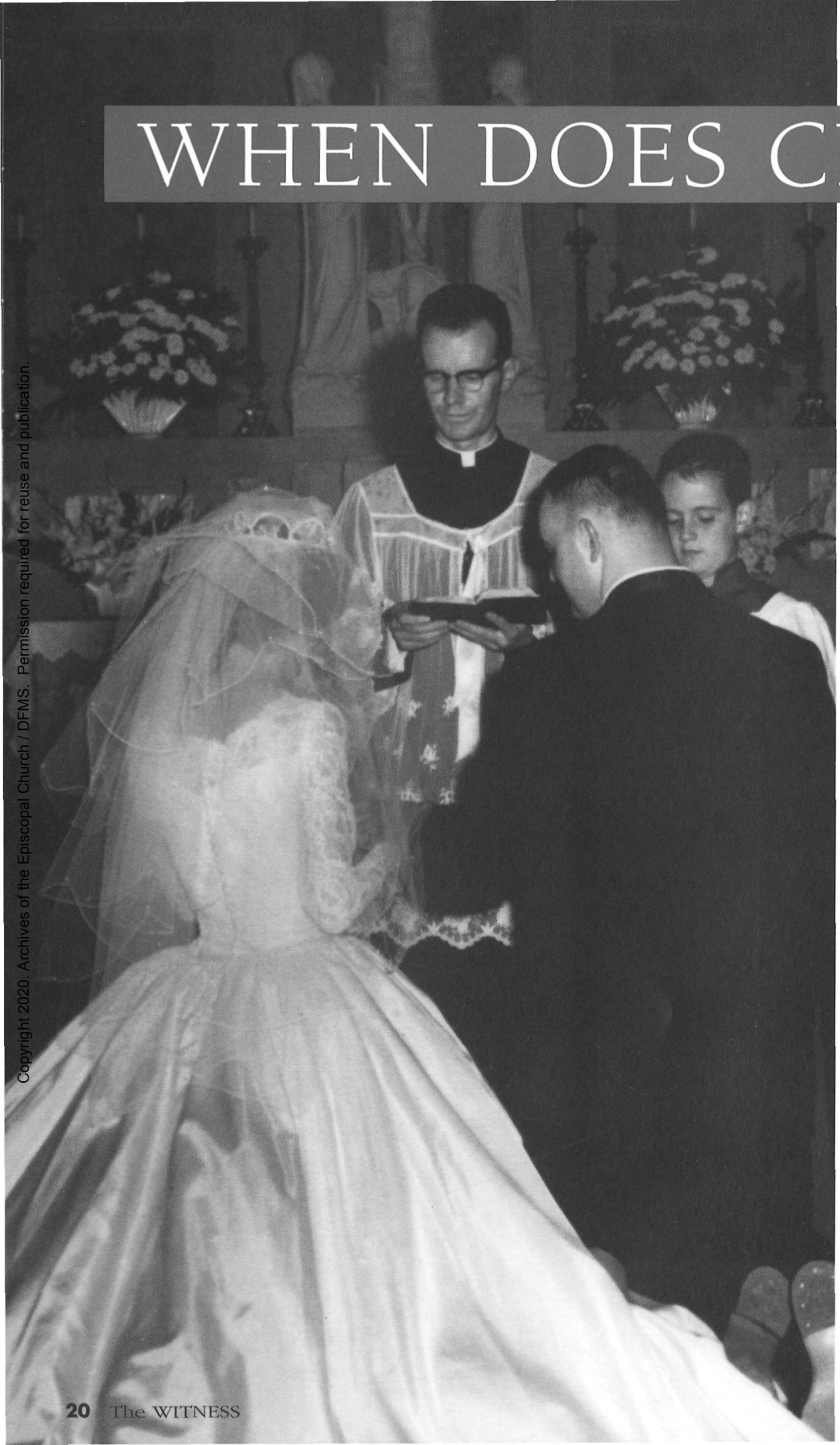
GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL:
People in these categories are considered transgenderist by many, in that they transgress the binary gender rule that says "real men" desire only women and vice versa. But most gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are comfortable with their gender of birth (gender identity), although they may manifest a wide diversity of gender presentation (degrees of "masculinity" or "femininity"). Some heterosexual people also present themselves in a transgender manner: not all "feminine" men or "masculine" women are either homosexual or cross-dressers.

INTERSEXUAL (formerly called HERMAPHRODITE)
People born with genitals that are ambiguous, neither completely male nor female (about one in every 2000 births), or with an atypical set of sex chromosomes (about one person in every five hundred has a karyotype other than XX or XY). Many intersexual newborns and children are subjected to cosmetic surgery to "correct" their genitals, procedures that often result in permanent loss of erotic genital sensation.

TRANSSEXUAL
Individuals who want to live in another gender and are willing to change their bodies through hormones and surgery to reflect that gender. Not all transsexuals can afford the expensive surgeries, which are often not covered by health insurance; and not all desire complete genital surgery. About 50 percent are male to female (M2F's) and about 50 percent are female to male (F2M's).

— Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

WHEN DOES CHRISTIAN



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THERE ARE TWO TRADITIONS regarding the beginning of marriage. The conventional Christian view is that a marriage begins with a wedding. An earlier Christian view is that marriage begins with betrothal, followed later by the marriage ceremony. Sexual experience regularly began after betrothal and before the wedding. There are historical and theological grounds for this earlier view, but there is also an explanation for its eclipse in the 18th and 19th centuries. Might this earlier alternative view of the entry into marriage have something to teach the churches in their struggle to accommodate cohabitation? Could conclusions be drawn from the earlier tradition for the churches' developing theology of marriage?

The possibility that this paper opens up is that alongside the near-universal assumption that marriage begins with a wedding is another — equally traditional — view that the entry into marriage is a process involving stages, with the wedding marking both the "solemnization" of life commitments already entered into, and the recognition and reception of the changed status of the couple by the community or communities to which each belongs. If this possibility is sound, one of the consequences that will undoubtedly follow is that at least some cases of "sex before marriage" which used to be frenetically discussed among Christians were misdescribed. The alterative view, that marriage is entered into in stages, renders superfluous those easy temporal distinctions between "before" and "after" provided by the identification between the beginning of a marriage with a wedding.

Two rival theories about marriage

It is necessary to begin as far back as the 12th century for an alternative view of marriage to emerge, although its roots are earlier. The

MARRIAGE BEGIN?

Before or after the wedding?

by Adrian Thatcher

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12th century Western church developed two rival theories of what made a marriage. Gratian and the Italians held to a two-stage theory of initiation and completion. The exchange of consent was the first phase; first intercourse was the consummation (J.A. Brundage, *Sex, Law and Marriage*). This view combined the emphasis in Roman law on marriage being defined by mutual consent, together with the biblical emphasis on marriage as a "one flesh" unity of partners. Lombard and the Parisians held that consent alone made the marriage. A principal reason was the strong belief, unquestioned at the time, that the marriage of Mary, the mother of Jesus — and *virgo perpetua* — to Joseph was never physically consummated and was therefore perfect. Consent could be made in either the present or the future tense, *de praesenti* or *de futuro*. Consent in the present tense was marriage. Consent in the future tense was not marriage, but betrothal (*sponsalia*). Betrothal "was dissoluble by mutual agreement or unilaterally for good cause" (Brundage).

The first known instance in the West of a blessing by a priest during a wedding ceremony is the 950 ritual of Durham, England (J.-B. Molin and P. Mutembe, *Le rituel du mariage en France du XIIme au XVIme siecle*). Although the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 required the blessing of a priest, it was unnecessary for the validity of the marriage. Only after the Council of Trent in 1563 was a ceremony compulsory for Roman Catholics. Not until 1754, after the Hardwicke Marriage Act had been passed, was a ceremony a legal requirement in England and Wales.

Sex, betrothal and marriage

The importance of the distinction between betrothal and marriage, and the transition from one to the other, cannot be overestimated. The distinction continued until well after the Reformation (A. Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England*). Up to the 16th century, the spousal or spousals "probably constituted the main part of the contract." Children born to couples conceived during betrothal would be regarded as legitimate, provided they married. According to Macfarlane, "it was really only in the middle of the 16th century that the betrothal, which constituted the 'real' marriage, was joined to the nuptials or celebration of that marriage. Consequently, during the Middle Ages and up to the 18th century it was widely held that sexual cohabitation was permitted after the betrothal." In France sexual relations regularly began with betrothal, at least until the 16th century when the post-Tridentine church moved against it (see J. Rémy, *The Family in Crisis or in Transition: A Sociological and Theological Perspective*). In Britain, "Until far down into the 18th century the engaged lovers before the nuptials were held to be legally husband and wife. It was common for them to begin living together immediately after the betrothal ceremony" (Macfarlane). According to the social historian John Gillis, "Although the church officially frowned on couples taking themselves as 'man and wife' before it had ratified their vows, it had to acknowledge that vows 'done rite' were the equivalent of a church wedding" (*For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present*).

'Processual marriage'

The term "processual marriage" is sometimes used to describe these arrangements, that is, "where the formation of marriage was regarded as a process rather than a clearly defined rite of passage" (S. Parker *Informal Marriage, Cohabitation and the Law, 1750-1989*).

It is no longer generally recognized that the Anglican marriage service was an attempt to combine elements of two separate occasions into a single liturgical event. Alan Macfarlane develops the point in detail: "In Anglo-Saxon England the 'wedding' was the occasion when the betrothal or pledging of the couple to each other in words of the present tense took place. This was in effect the legally binding act: It was, combined with consummation, the marriage. Later, a public celebration and announcement of the wedding might take place — the 'gift', the 'bridal', or 'nuptials', as it became known. This was the occasion when friends and relatives assembled to feast and to hear the financial details. These two stages remained separate in essence until they were united into one occasion after the Reformation. Thus the modern Anglican wedding service includes both spousals and nuptials (Macfarlane).

This pre-modern distinction between spousals and nuptials has been largely forgotten; indeed, its very recollection is likely to be resisted because it shows a cherished assumption about the entry into marriage — that it necessarily begins with a wedding — to be historically dubious. Betrothal, says Gillis, "constituted the recognized rite of transition from friends to lovers, conferring on the couple the right to sexual as well as social intimacy." Betrothal "granted them freedom to explore any personal faults or incompatibilities that had remained hidden during the earlier, more inhibited phases of courtship and could be disastrous if carried into the indissoluble status of marriage."

It has also been forgotten that about half of all brides in Britain and North America were pregnant at their weddings in the 18th century (L. Stone, "Passionate Attachments in the West in Historical Perspective," in K. Scott and Mr. Warren [eds.], *Perspectives on Marriage: A Reader*). According to Stone, "this tells us more about sexual customs than about passionate attachments: Sex began at the moment of engagement, and marriage in church came later, often triggered by the pregnancy." He concludes that "among the English and American plebs in the last half of the 18th century, almost all brides below the social élite had experienced sexual intercourse with their future husbands before marriage."

Registration by bureaucracy

The Hardwicke Marriage Act of 1753 required registration of all marriages in England and Wales, and set up a bureaucratic apparatus for doing so. Verbal contracts or pledges were no longer regarded as binding. Couples were offered the choice of having banns called in the parish of one of them, or of obtaining a licence to dispense with the banns. Marriages at first took place in parish churches; priests seeking to conduct informal marriages were liable to transportation to America (R.B. Outhwaite, *Clandestine Marriage in England, 1500-1800*). The creeping extension of the bureaucratic state to encompass the entry into marriage is characteristic of the apparatus of modernity. Uniformity was imposed and policed. Betrothal no longer had any legal force. While the working classes continued to practice alternatives to legal marriage, the stigma of illegitimacy now attached itself to children whose parents had not been through a wedding ceremony. Gone was the transitional phase from singleness to marriage.

The achievement of the widespread belief that a marriage begins with a wedding was not so much a *religious* or theological, but a *class* matter. The upper and middle classes had the political clout to enforce the social respectability of the new marriage laws, and they used it. As John Gillis writes, "From the mid-18th century onwards *sexual politics became increasingly bitter as the propertied classes attempted to impose their standards on the rest of society*."

Virginity for social reasons

In contrast to plebeian practice where betrothal continued long after it had any legal force, in the upper class new courtship procedures required pre-ceremonial virginity of brides, for social rather than moral reasons. Gillis writes, "For all women of this group virginity was obligatory. Their class had broken with the older tradition of betrothal that had offered the couple some measure of pre-marital conjugality and had substituted for it a highly ritualized courtship that for women began with the 'coming out' party and ended with the elaborate white wedding, symbolizing their purity and status."

I hope it is by now apparent that the widespread entry into marriage in the 1990s through cohabitation represents remarkable parallels with practice in pre-modern Britain. The rise in the age of first marriage in the last quarter of the 20th century, to 28 for men, and 26 for women, is a precise return to what it was (for both sexes) during the reign of Elizabeth I. The destigmatization of pregnancy prior to a wedding is a return to earlier, but still modern, ways.

Gillis' verdict, written in 1985, is: "Together law and society appear to have reinstated a situation very much like that which existed before 1753, when betrothal licensed pre-marital conjugality. It is also like the situation that existed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when so many people made their own private 'little weddings,' postponing the public, official event until such time as they could gather the resources necessary to a proper household."

Conclusions

There are some tentative conclusions that may be drawn from a consideration of the entry into marriage during earlier periods.

First, there is no longer any provision for the two-staged entry into marriage. In the absence of this, it is possible to read the practice of cohabiting but not-yet-married couples as a return to earlier informalities and as a rejection, not so much of Christian marriage, but of the bourgeois form of it that became established at the end of the 18th century and was then consolidated in the Victorian era.

Secondly, Christian marriage in the modern period has accommodated enormous changes (which have largely been forgotten) and must be expected to accommodate further changes in this new century. The Protestant denial of the sacramentality of marriage, the social permission accorded to marrying parties to choose their partners for themselves, the incorporation of romantic love into the meanings of marriage, the abolition of betrothal and informal marriage, the widespread acceptance by almost all churches of the use of contraception within marriage, the increasing acceptance by the churches of the ending of marriage (whether by divorce or annulment) — all indicate that Christian marriage is a remarkably flexible institution. There may be a deep irony here. Those conservative Christians who are generally opposed to changes to marriage on historical grounds do not always appear to be familiar with the history.

Thirdly, Christian morality should not equate pre-marital chastity with the expectation that marrying couples should not make love before their wedding. It would be dishonest to assert or assume that the tradition is unanimous about the matter or that no other way of entry into marriage had ever been tried, or that no theological grounds were available for thinking differently. Yet this is what much official Christian literature still does.

Fourthly, the possibility exists that the old medieval theories of marriage, which were responsible for the practice of betrothal, may be serviceable in the construction of the postmodern theology of entry into marriage which would have considerable practical value at the present time. ●

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Back from the brink

by Ira Schorr

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ON JANUARY 25, 1995, millions of people were minutes away from being incinerated by a mistaken nuclear weapons launch. Russian radar had detected a U.S.-Norwegian rocket that looked like a U.S. Trident nuclear missile. The routine notice that it was a weather rocket was lost in the bureaucracy. The black suitcase containing Russian nuclear launch codes was already with President Yeltsin when he was informed that it was a mistaken alert.

There have been many false alerts on the U.S. side as well, including one in which a nuclear warfare training tape being run on the command center computer was mistaken for the real thing.

The Cold War officially ended after the Soviet Union fell apart eight years ago. Yet today, the people of the U.S. and Russia still face the risk of being evaporated in an accidental nuclear war. That risk is increasing because of deteriorating infrastructure and the poor state of the Russian economy.

There is something that can be done to greatly reduce this risk: take nuclear weapons off of hair trigger alert. De-alerting nuclear weapons does not require a change in the size of the U.S. or Russian arsenals. Nor are lengthy arms reduction negotiations or legislative debates needed. De-alerting simply requires a determination by national leaders to increase nuclear safety and abandon confrontational nuclear postures.

On December 9, 1999, a major national effort to de-alert nuclear weapons, the "Back from the Brink Campaign," was launched. That morning, a new video made by the Center for Defense Information, discussing nuclear dangers and how de-alerting can reduce them, was released at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Speakers included Bruce Blair, one of the world's foremost authorities on the subject and a MacArthur Fellow; former Senator Dale Bumpers, now head of the Center for Defense Information; Beatrice Brailsford, Program Director of the Snake River Alliance, a statewide peace and environmental group in Idaho, and Arjun Makhijani, President of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research in Takoma Park, Maryland.



The heart of the campaign is outside Washington, D.C. That's from where the pressure to persuade President Clinton as well as the House and Senate to de-alert nuclear weapons must come.

You can participate in the launch of the Back from the Brink Campaign by showing the video at a house party or on your local cable access channel. Free copies of the Back from the Brink Campaign video are available. To get one, send an e-mail to <srabb@earthlink.net>; write the temporary campaign office at 310 E. Center, Suite 205, Pocatello, Idaho 83201; or call our toll free number at 1-877-55BESAFE.

You can also arrange a news briefing in your community around the showing of the video. The campaign can send you sample press materials and other information in a packet that you can use and distribute to local media. The website of the campaign is at <www.dealert.com>. ●

THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA STILL FACE THE RISK OF BEING EVAPORATED IN AN ACCIDENTAL NUCLEAR WAR.

A SEXUAL ETHIC

— built upon the foundation of celibacy

by Diana L. Hayes

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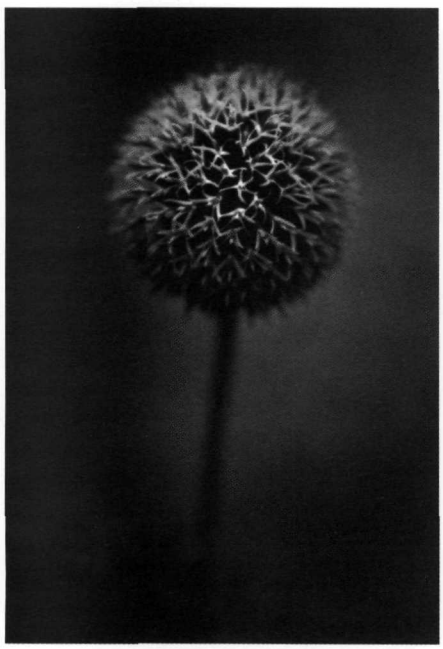

I WOULD LIKE TO AFFIRM THE VIRTUES OF CELIBACY WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, ACKNOWLEDGING THE GREATER FREEDOM THAT THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION HAS PROVIDED, ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN.

TO BE SINGLE AND CELIBATE without having taken religious vows, and sometimes even if you have, in today's world is to be seen as something of an anomaly, someone out of sync with the times. The sexual revolution is usually interpreted as giving persons the freedom to engage in sexual intimacy without guilt or the fear of disapproval from others. As a vowed celibate laywoman, I believe, however, that that freedom has too often not just been interpreted as providing a sexual license to engage in any and all forms of sexual intimacy but, in actuality, as setting forth a mandate or demand that one must engage in sexual relationships or be labeled a puritan or prude. This overemphasis on "having" sex has too often forced us to overlook some of the more negative side effects to the sexual revolution. The individual need and desire for a loving committed relationship and the responsibility to be aware of the needs and concerns of others (whether sexual partners or friends, relatives and children) have been negatively impacted.

The sexual revolution: greater freedom for women

I would like to affirm the virtues of celibacy while, at the same time, acknowledging the greater freedom that the sexual revolution has provided, especially for women. Traditionally, in most cultures, but especially in that of the Christian West, a person was expected to remain a virgin until either married or firmly and irrevocably engaged. There were legal sanctions for men who "toyed" with the affections of a woman and then left her "ruined" and unmarriageable. Yet most of the responsibility to remain virtuous was laid at the feet of women while men were usually allowed to sow their "wild oats."

The restrictions applied only to some women, usually privileged white women. Women of color and lower-working-class women were too often seen as women without virtue regardless of how they lived their lives. They were the victims of societal stereotyping. Women of African descent in the U.S. were especially believed to be naturally promiscuous and incapable of living moral lives. As the victims of rape and other forms of sexual assault, first as slaves and later as domestics and factory workers, they were blamed for what they could not defend themselves against without risking their lives or employment. This labeling persists to the present day for poor women of color who are believed to have children for the sake of a few dollars. Little recognition is given to the fact that these women don't usually have recourse to contraceptive methods available to more privileged women nor that they have often served as a sexual outlet for males of the dominant society to engage in acts unacceptable amongst their peers.

The limits of freedom

Today, access to contraceptives and even access to abortion, regardless of one's views on their morality, is still too often decided by one's economic status rather than one's needs. At the same time, many persons of color see a push for contraception as a push towards limiting their numbers. These concerns, plus the growing alarm over the rise of HIV/AIDS cases among women and chil-

Brooks Welch—Lion's Gardens

OF SINGLENESS

dren of color, also have an impact on the mores of black community. There, the numbers of women who have contracted HIV/AIDS is rising in alarming proportions, while the numbers of gay white men, traditionally seen as the victims of this disease, are on the decline. These shifts are scary because they reveal that a community already negatively impacted by racism, sexism, and classism is now being disproportionately targeted medically as well.

The numbers are rising partly due to what can be called a conspiracy of silence within these communities. Young people are constantly bombarded with media depictions of the "joys of sex"; they listen to music which is graphic in its depiction of sexuality and almost pornographic in its negative and derogatory depictions of women. Public service announcements, usually screened late at night and rarely during the programs that attract young people, cannot possibly lift the almost criminal silence about the harmful and life-threatening "gangsta" and "thug" life. Little information is provided in schools other than on how to use a condom, which most can't afford or be bothered with. Nothing is said about alternate styles of life which uphold and promote humanity while providing a positive outlet for feelings with which many young people are still grappling.

Obviously, there are many reasons why sex is attractive beyond the obvious: that it "feels good." The creation of a child, if we are honest, is usually far from the minds of those engaging in the sexual act, especially with new or even unknown partners. A sexual relationship, whether it lasts only one night or results in a more permanent relationship, answers many of the basic human needs. It conveys a sense of belonging, of being cared for, of being needed and desired. At the same time, it satisfies a longing for intimacy often lacking in today's rushed and over-organized life-styles. Young people, especially, want to be accepted by their peers so much so that having sex becomes an act of initiation into adulthood.

Responsible freedom

I take my status as a vowed celibate laywoman very seriously. Initially my calling to the celibate life was something that I strongly felt but did not fully understand. It was, somehow, right for me. It was only as a result of serious effort that I grew in my understanding of my self and my calling. Many saw my celibate state as masking a fear of sexual intimacy while others believed I was lying about my commitment. Now, in light of the rise in sexually transmitted diseases and abusive relationships, many others are beginning to acknowledge the wisdom of standing back and attempting to discern who one is as an individual and how one relates to others, not just for purely selfish reasons but in a very intimate world of give and take.

A celibate lifestyle cannot simply be an afterthought or something you fall into until something better comes along. It is a way of life that must be chosen because it affects all that you are at every level. For me, the celibate state provides, not a selfish freedom of self-indulgence and irresponsibility, but a responsible freedom to live a life of service to God. My commitment is for life, yet others may be just as committed for only a part of their life. The ethic which guides my life is the response to the question cynically raised by Cain to God after he slew his brother Abel. "Am I my brother's (and sister's) keeper?" My answer is an unequivocal yes.

My single state has freed me not only to assist family members when in need, it has allowed me the singular grace of the company of my mother's living and traveling with me for the last 10 years of her life, allowing us to forge a relationship which went far beyond that of mother and daughter. It has enabled me to provide opportunities, first for my nieces and nephews and now for their children, that their parents could not, an introduction to worlds and possibilities they may otherwise not have known. But it has also enabled me to change professions in mid-life, from law to theology, returning to graduate school for eight years without having to fear the impact of loss of income for anyone but myself.

Today, I am free to travel, to write, to work on behalf of others, to develop loving and close friendships with both men and women without the tensions that such relationships too often bring when the possibility of sexual intimacy is present. It has also required me to live with loneliness and to feel, at times, unloved and forgotten. But it has rewarded me in the end with experiences and relationships beyond compare. Thus, for me, and I believe many others, a sexual ethic of singleness built upon the foundation of celibacy is a viable way of being in today's world, open to God's call, and free to respond often with very short notice.

A sexual ethic of singleness is not easy to live in today's world of instant gratification. It requires hard and conscious work, that of getting to know yourself as an individual and as part of another's or others' lives in a deeply responsible and responsive way. It requires openness to periods of loneliness and self-doubt but its reward is great. One is given the grace to walk into a new phase of a life of celibacy shared within a community of loving friends and/or a committed partnership with someone that you truly know and love. Either path is equally valid but both begin alone. ●

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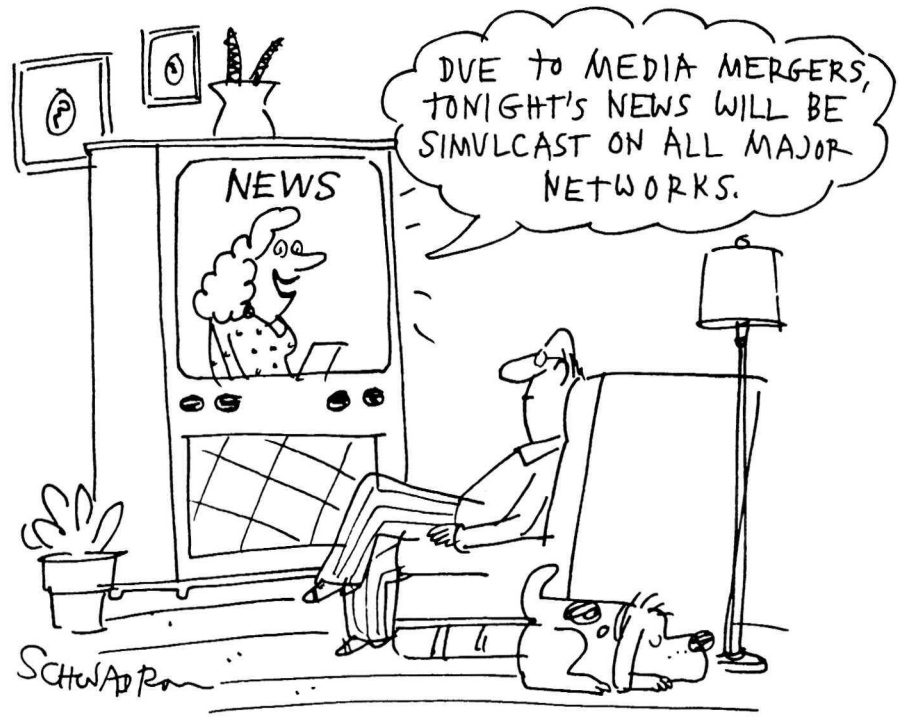

Listening to militia members

"If you go to a farm auction, time after time you'll see someone crying and putting his arm around the man who's losing his farm," says Joel Dyer, author of *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City is Only the Beginning*, in an interview with *The Sun*. "Chances are, that will be a local John Bircher or a local militia member. He's there because he's lost his farm, too, and he understands what that farmer is going through. He's saying, 'It's not your fault, man. It's the government's fault. It's the evil Jewish conspiracy's fault. I love you, and you can come with me now and fight this battle. Here's another reason to live.' What a message!

"If someone were there for that farmer with another message — and that person would have to know and care about what the farmer was going through; it couldn't be just another urban type trying to manipulate the farmer — then the farmer might go in another direction. ...

"When I first started cruising around talking to suicidal farmers, my friends would say, 'My God, you're not going to Watonga looking like that, are you? They won't even serve you in restaurants there.' In a sense, they were right to be concerned, because I had hair almost down to my butt and wore an earring. And there would be a sudden silence when I walked through the door of the local diner. But then I'd say, 'I'm here to talk to so-and-so about how the banks are screwing him out of his farm,' and instantly they'd say, 'Hey, you want to come to my house for dinner?' and 'If you need a truck while you're here ...' Once we had a common cause, our other differences didn't matter.

"During my book tour, I went on TV shows like *Good Morning America* and *Today*. On one show, they introduced me as 'Joel Dyer, who went undercover into the antigovernment movement.' As soon as I came on, I said, 'I never went undercover anywhere. I walked up and knocked on doors and said, "I want to know what you think, and why you're angry," and they told me.' The TV people couldn't believe that somebody in an armed compound had let me in just like that. I said, 'They're angry, and they want to tell someone why, but the only time a reporter ever shows up is to cover a shootout or ask stupid questions about how many guns they have. No one ever shows up to really talk to them, which involves listening.'"

Organic food health research

New research supports the claim that organically grown produce is healthier, according to The Soil Association, a British group that promotes organic farming.

The research, done in Denmark and Germany, has shown that organic crops contain more secondary metabolites than conventionally grown plants. Secondary metabolites are substances which form part of the immune system of plants, and help to fight cancer in humans. Organic crops were also shown to contain a measurably higher quantity of vitamins.

Moreover, organic farming reduces the risk of pesticide poisoning, which afflicts between 3.5 and 5 million people globally each year, according to World Health Organization estimates.

Execution feasts

State expenditures for meals served to guests at executions sometimes exceed the amount allocated for the defense of indigent persons, Leroy White, an Alabama death row inmate, writes in the *Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty* newsletter (11076 County Road 267, Lanett, AL 36863).

White reports that Michael Mears, director of the Georgia Indigent Defense Council, was able to obtain records from his state.

"For one execution luncheon, the state provided invited guests with an elaborate meal including 225 pounds of chicken, 20 pounds of turkey pastrami, and 10 pounds each of turkey ham and turkey salami at a cost of $821. That is certainly a small sum compared to the millions spent in legal fees to support the prosecution's charge, conviction and sentence. But it is definitely an enormous sum compared to the $212 that state and county governments combined allocated each year per case for defense of poor people accused of criminal offenses, according to a 1997 American Bar Association report. ...

"The true nature of these events is clear from another execution lunch menu Mears published. In addition to the basics of 20 pounds of roast beef, four cases of chicken, 30 pounds of lunch meats and cheeses, and

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cases of chicken, tuna and macaroni salad, the menu includes 'one pan of cheese straws, two trays of hors d'oeuvres, and three trays of party sandwiches.'

"In an effort not to seem insensitive to the pain of families and friends of murder victims, I will rule out saying it is ludicrous to go feasting at the site of someone being killed. But I do want to point out how states are persuading guests to overlook the bad that is really being done, by providing them with such elaborate meals. The focus is taken away from the actual killing and any possible forethought of whether it is wrong or right, or even necessary, to kill the prisoner."

Drug war targets women

The war on drugs has had a "very disproportionate impact" on women, according to Marc Mauer, assistant director of The Sentencing Project and co-author of a new report, "Gender and Justice: Women, Drugs and the Sentencing Policy."

According to the study, the number of women in state and federal prisons rose 573 percent in 17 years, largely due to drug convictions.

"They don't commit other, more violent offenses as often as men do, so, as you escalate the number of drug offenses and make the sentences harsher, more women are affected," Mauer said. "We need to direct more resources to treatment approaches as well as reconsider the mandatory sentencing policies that have aggravated the number of women going to prison."

Oil, cola and genocide

Although two million people have died and more than four million been displaced in a genocidal war waged by the government of Sudan against its own people in the south, the crisis has received far less international attention than it warrants, according to an *America* magazine interview with Roman Catholic Bishop Macram Max Gassis of south central Sudan. Gassis cites religious, racial and economic factors as reasons.

"The Christian world is afraid that if they say there is a persecution of Christians by the Muslims, it might create an outcry in the Islamic world. But we are not here to criticize Islam itself. We are speaking about a group of Islamic fundamentalists who are using religion as a lever to persecute the non-Muslim, non-Arab peoples of Sudan.

"Second, there is an interest in the oil discovered by Chevron in the area, and therefore they do not want to speak about the situation in Sudan. ... So they are not concerned about our fate or the ethnic elimination of the Africans or about the persecution of the Christians and Africans of traditional beliefs. ... The interest is in the resources of Sudan: the oil and the gum arabic which is mainly used in Coca Cola. ... So I'm making an appeal to my brothers and sisters in the U.S. ... to realize that there is a church that is facing total annihilation, if we do not come to the rescue of this church."

Norway calls U.S. prisons inhumane

Norway refused to extradite Harry Hendrickson, a man charged in a drug conspiracy in Vermont, after the Norwegian Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, questioned whether U.S. prisons meet the humanitarian standards required for extradition (*FAMM-gram*, 10-12/99). Hendrickson, currently in a Norwegian refugee center, will not face trial and will be granted asylum based on human rights considerations.

Ban lifted on Muslim student's prayer

A Muslim college student in Michigan who was forbidden to begin her class presentation with a reference to God was later told she was within her rights to do so and allowed to make up assignments to get credit for the course, according to The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based Islamic advocacy group.

Before the student at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Mich., could give her presentation, the instructor handed her a letter stating that she could not begin it with the traditional Islamic phrase, "in the name of God, most Merciful, most Gracious," as she had done on a previous occasion.

The instructor's letter stated that the phrase was "inappropriate and unacceptable in an American classroom" and that the student must adapt to the "cultural expectations of the U.S."

CAIR argued that the ACLU interprets separation of church and state as applying to government and not individual activity. According to an ACLU handbook, "students are thus free to read their Bibles, recite the rosary, or pray before meals or math tests. Public school officials are prohibited by the Constitution from interfering with these activities."

Washtenaw President Larry Whitworth apologized to the student, stating that "it appears that the instructor misunderstood the meaning of the separation of church and state." ●

CLASSIFIEDS

Women's Caucus

Christian feminists: Plan now to attend the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus biennial conference, "And Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," July 27-30, 2000, North Park University, Chicago, IL. Speakers include Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B. and author/EEWC foremother Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. For information, visit <http://www.eewc.com> or call 847-825-5651.

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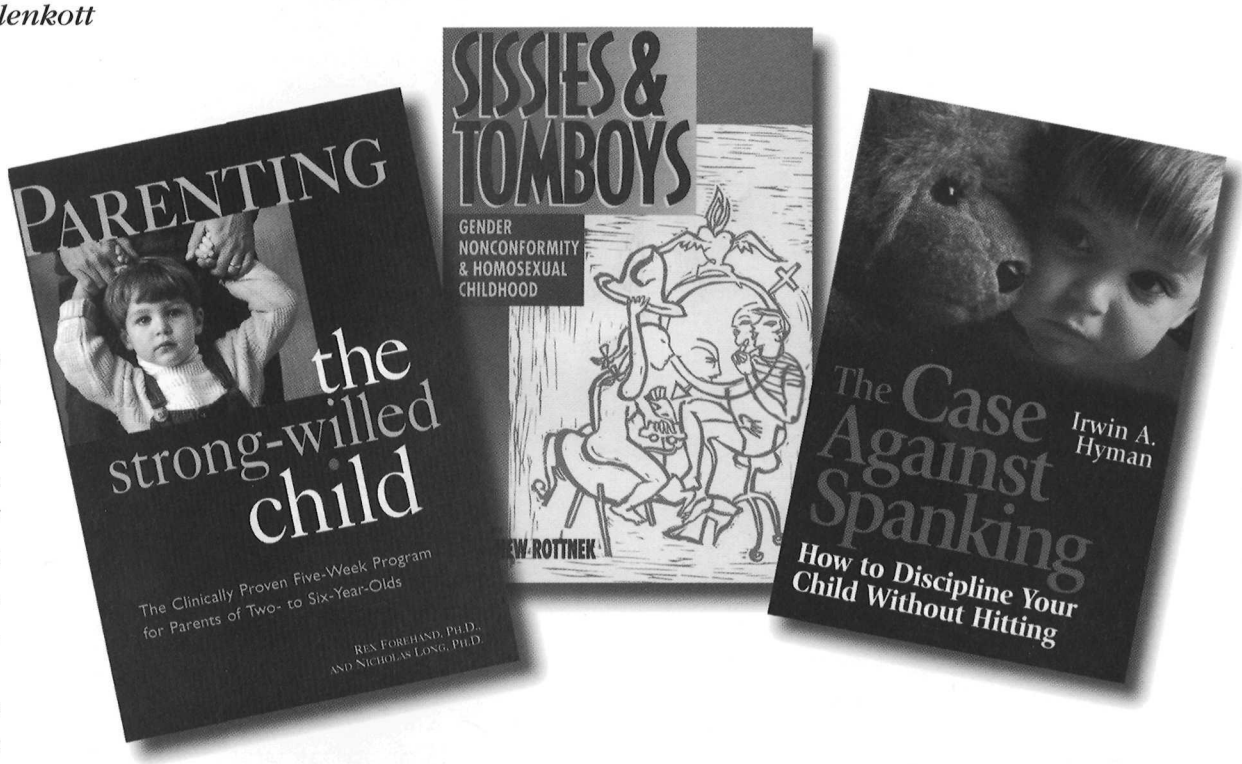
Gender, ethics and parenting

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott



Parenting the Strong-Willed Child
by Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long, NCT/Contemporary Publishing Company, Lincolnwood, Illinois, 1996.

Sissies and Tomboys: Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood
ed. Matthew Rottnick, New York University Press, 1999.

The Case Against Spanking: How to Discipline Your Child Without Hitting
by Irwin A. Hyman, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1997.

WHEN I BOUGHT the Irwin Hyman and Rex Forehand-Long books about parenting, I had no intention of reviewing them for this or any other publication. I read them simply as the grandmother of two dynamic little girls, seeking ways to support my son and daughter-in-law in their decision to raise their children without resort to corporal punishment. But while *Witness* co-editor Julie Wortman and I were brainstorming about gender and sex ethics, it struck me that these parenting books throw some important light on those topics.

Irwin Hyman, who teaches school psychology at Temple University, is nationally known for his campaign against spanking on such television shows as *Oprah, Today*, and *Good Morning America*. In 1996 when California legislators voted on reintroducing corporal punishment in their school systems, the motion was defeated in part by Hyman's photographs of bruised and welted children who had been legally paddled in one of the 23 states that still permit such abuses. Any adult who assaulted another adult and left welts and bruises would be prosecuted; why would it be legal to do to helpless children what adults are not permitted to do to one another?

Hyman provides a 27-question Parent Punitiveness Quiz so that readers can find out how their attitudes about discipline compare to others' in our society. He describes exactly how to use positive reinforcement and punishment techniques (praise, money, stars, privileges; verbal reprimands, unpleasant consequences, withdrawal of privileges) as well as negative reinforcement and punishment techniques (removing unpleasant conditions to reinforce good behavior; time-out from play, family activities, or television for unacceptable behavior).

Since over 90 percent of American parents admit that they have spanked their toddlers, Hyman's suggestions could spare little children a great deal of misery. And might even save lives: Of 201 documented cases of the murder of children by parents or caretakers, 31 percent occurred as a result of punishment procedures for such misbehaviors as "refusal to eat dinner" or "blocking my view of the TV."

Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long, both pedi-

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atric psychologists, provide a very specific five-week program for addressing strong-willed behavior through "attends" (descriptions or imitations of what the child is doing right), rewards for desirable behavior, ignoring (withholding physical, verbal or eye contact because of undesirable but not dangerous behaviors such as tantrums and extreme showing off), learning to give clear and effective directions, and precise procedures for administering time out.

What does all this have to do with the ethics of sex and gender? Of course there is the obvious recommendation of non-violent interaction between human beings no matter what their age. (As a compliant person who was nevertheless whipped on the principle of "spare the rod, spoil the child," I find it pathetic that toddlers are in danger of being hit more often than anyone else in our society.) But beyond non-violence, these parenting books emphasize attending to children, trying to grasp the reasoning behind children's misbehaviors. They demonstrate the ineffectiveness and the brutalizing results of yelling, inconsistency, and modelling inappropriate behavior such as lack of respect for the child. (If the medium is the message, how is a child whose parents hit and holler supposed to learn not to hit and holler? How are children whose parents showed no respect for them supposed to learn respect for themselves and others? I am convinced that the rage of many adolescents and adults stems from what they were subjected to during childhood.)

Which brings me to the third book, *Sissies and Tomboys*. It is those children who do not or cannot conform to our society's binary gender system of "masculine" males and "feminine" females who are in the greatest danger of being so punished and shamed that they run away. Some are turned out into the streets by their own families. Sexual predators await these children, many of whom lack any skills to support themselves and therefore become sex workers. HIV/AIDS is a common fate. Although neither Hyman nor Forehand and Long take up transgender issues, if their advice about parental listening and respect for their offspring were followed, many gender injustices could be avoided.

It's called "receiving the children" as Jesus received them: just as they are. And when those children who are well received have grown up, they stand a better chance of establishing relationships of mutual respect and supportiveness with other adults — and with any children they may in turn acquire by birth or adoption.

But for those parents whose children do not and/or cannot conform to our society's gender norms, *Sissies and Tomboys* could provide additional insights. Based on a conference sponsored by City University's Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (N.Y.), the book is a collection of essays by leaders in various aspects of the transgender movement. My advice to parents would be to start with the final section, "Sissies and Tomboys Speak," before circling back to the sections on "Gender Identity Disorder (GID) and the Normal" and "Theorizing Gender Nonconformity." It is easier to reject theory than it is to resist personal narratives such as Arnie Kantrowiz' "Such a Polite Little Boy." Arnie's mother gave him hormone shots and urged his friends to assault him in order to stop him from laughing at too high a pitch and swaying his hips when he walked. Now in his 50s and the 16th year of his partnership with Larry Mass, Arnie Kantrowiz is glad to be "the particular mix of male and female that I am ... I feel like a person in a human being's body." But Arnie was one of the more flexible ones, able to retrain himself to "act in an acceptably male manner" that satisfied his mother's — and society's — dictates.

A theological question here might be, suppose God wanted to manifest Herself/Himself/Itself within a Jewish boy who laughs with a high tone and sways when he walks? (Why else was Arnie created that way?) Who are we to risk a child's internal well-being by insisting on conformity to human-made standards that have nothing to do with health or decency? Although Kantrowiz has achieved self-approval in his middle age, there is a bitter tone in his "Thanks, Mom!" that betrays a great deal of alienation and struggle along the way.

The personal stories put human faces on the more theoretical essays, which perhaps could be summarized in this remark by Ken Corbett: "By not examining boyhood femininity [and girlhood masculinity] across a broader range of mental health, gender is sustained as a system of conformity as opposed to a system of variation. The emphasis on conformity sustains the shaming attribution of a nonconforming, damaged, or abjected gender to those boys [and girls] who step over the normative line." Although young tomboys are well tolerated in our society, the prisonhouse begins to close around girls at eleven or twelve, when they are urged to adopt restraints in order to be "more ladylike." By contrast, boys are warned away from femininity throughout their childhood through words that "scapegoat women, flowers, or fruit ... swish, nelly, fruit, fruitcake, pussy, pansy, fluff, sissy, Nancy, Molly, Mary, and Mary Ann." Why should we be surprised that many grow up with misogynistic attitudes?

As the introduction to *Sissies and Tomboys* makes clear, "Differently gendered lives — their individual variation, their differences from the majority — constitute a normal diversity of gendered experience." But acknowledging such diversity is difficult because by its very nature, diversity resists categorization. Democratic pluralism tolerates only social groups that have achieved recognition as coherently conforming to some dominant social principle or another.

My suggestion of a dominant social principle that would embrace differently gendered lives is a very old one: the Golden Rule. As Richard Rorty wrote in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1996), "human solidarity is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created. It is created by *increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people*" (emphasis mine). Such an increase of sensitivity can best be stimulated by listening and attending.

Even to tomboys. Even to sissies. Even to toddlers. ●

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott is a Witness *contributing editor and the guest editor of this issue, <jstvrm@warwick.net>.*

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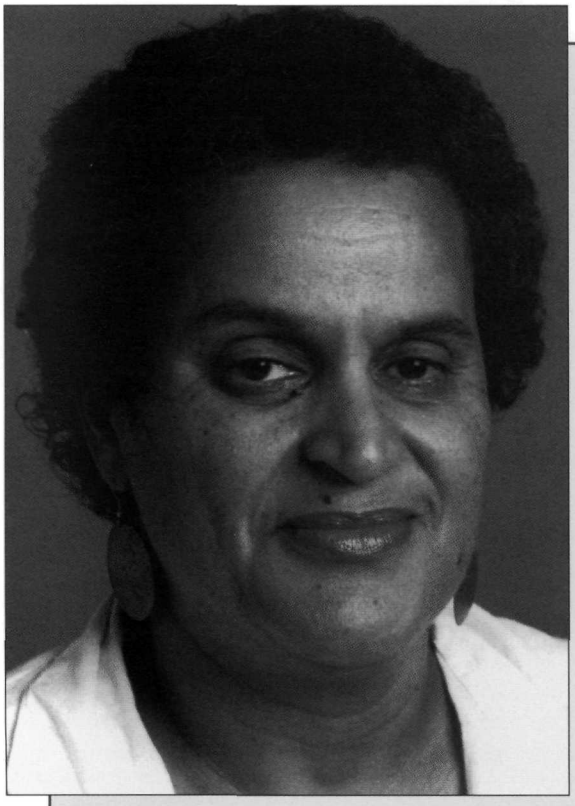
PROFILE

Seeking 'a way out of no way'

by Rachel Roberson



"WOMEN AT A CHURCH HERE IN NEW YORK WROTE: 'WE WON'T GIVE UNTIL WE HAVE A WOMAN PREACHER' AND PUT THE PIECES OF PAPER INTO THE COLLECTION PLATES. WELL, THEY HIRED A WOMAN PREACHER THE NEXT WEEK."

DELORES WILLIAMS' FIRST BOOK, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Orbis, 1993), starts off in the desert. There, Hagar, the slave of Sarah and Abraham, is struggling to find "a way out of no way."

She is a slave with a murderously jealous mistress, Sarah. She has been raped by her master, Abraham, and forced to carry his child. She is completely cut off from her homeland and her people. She is at the bottom of the social hierarchy of the time.

Yet God speaks to her. When she runs into the desert, preferring to die rather than submit to Sarah, God tells her to return for her child's sake.

Hagar's life of hardship and her intense and personal exchanges with the Divine occurred centuries ago. But her story resonates still. For womanist theologians like Williams, Hagar exemplifies the struggle of black women throughout history.

"Hagar's predicament involved slavery, poverty, ethnicity, sexual and economic exploitation, surrogacy, rape, domestic violence, homelessness, motherhood, single-parenting and radical encounters with God," Williams writes in *Sisters*. "Even today, Hagar's situation is congruent with many African-American women's predicament."

In the end, although Hagar is banished by Sarah, God protects her from dying in the desert. She and Ishmael survive and flourish, and Hagar lives to see Ishmael become a leader of his people. She found her way.

But Hagar is still such a powerful symbol today because so many women haven't, says Williams, who is Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

"So many of us are single parents, like Hagar," she says. "We may or may not be dealing with poverty or violence or personal grief."

Williams herself has had plenty of "Hagar moments." Her husband died suddenly in 1987 when Williams was in the middle of doctoral work in theology at Union. She was left to raise four children in their teens and twenties, finish her dissertation and find a way to survive economically.

Like Hagar, Williams, who is Presbyterian, says intense encounters with God and a deepening faith helped her slog through the grief and turmoil after her husband's death.

"We were between a rock and a hard place, and I didn't know for awhile what we would do," Williams remembers. "But I went back to the faith of my mother and grandmother, and it was a wonderful kind of inspiration."

Williams says her childhood in Louisville, Ky., was largely spent in church.

"My mother and grandmother were Seventh Day Adventists, my stepfather was Baptist, my father was Catholic, and my grandfather was a Presbyterian," she says.

"We would go to church on Saturday evenings, Sunday mornings — and often in the middle of the week, too."

There were church school and prayers and competitions to see which child could look up a Bible verse the fastest. But as a young Williams scrambled to learn the books of the Old Testament, she watched her mother and grandmother supplying the church suppers, staffing the outreach committees, and pouring their spare money into the offering plates.

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"I noticed, even as a child, that the women were never deacons or leaders," Williams said. "The woman were the backbone of the church, but they were never elevated into formal leadership positions."

Today, Williams has become a voice for women who, like her mother and grandmother, give their time, money, and spirit to churches that don't want to hear their voices.

"In my mother's and grandmother's time, it was the spiritual power of the women moving a male agenda," Williams said. "The women didn't exert authority, but without the women there would be no black churches."

Williams says her own womanist awakening was a long time coming. During college in Louisville, she threw herself into the Civil Rights Movement by organizing demonstrations for the NAACP youth council.

"At the time, I didn't question why women were doing a lot of the work and getting none of the credit," Williams says. "As for the church, I didn't think that it was at all relevant in any revolutionary way."

Today, Williams as a seminary professor continues to remember the wisdom of her mother and grandmother. Her habit of weaving childhood stories in with her graduate-level classes has earned her a reputation of being "down-home and brilliant," according to former students.

And Williams is still in the business of unraveling and naming the history of the oppression of black women — and helping them break the centuries-old patterns of sexism and exploitation. As she writes in *Sisters*, "Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical disability and caste." She faults African-American denominational churches for a multitude of sins against black women, including responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis with denial, sacralizing the male image, encouraging homophobia, and exploiting emotion rather than provoking thoughtful questions and responses.

Black women in particular, she notes, are in a double bind — bound both by notions of what is acceptably female and by a history of slavery.

"[In the antebellum period] black women were forced to take the place of men in work roles that, according to the larger society's understanding of male and female roles, belonged to men," Williams writes in *Sisters in the Wilderness*. So overcoming racism and sexism for black women, she says, means not only claiming full humanity, but the right to their own gender as well.

"There's still a lot of work to be done," Williams admits. "This is by no means ancient history."

Williams tells the story of a recent luncheon with Hillary Rodham Clinton at the traditionally black New York Theological Seminary. Although plenty of women clergy and students were in the audience, Williams noticed that not one joined the ranks of clergymen who asked Clinton campaign-related questions.

"This tells me that many women may still be bowing to male authority," Williams said. "I realized that drastic measures will have to be taken to challenge what is happening."

Williams wonders if picketing churches or, better yet, withholding pledges might not make clergymen sit up and take notice. Keeping back the money usually gets the job done, she says.

"Women at a church here in New York wrote: 'We won't give until we have a woman preacher' and put the pieces of paper into the collection plates," Williams said. "Well, they hired a woman preacher the next week."

Less public measures might include requiring all seminary students to take a feminist or womanist theology course.

"Many students look on these courses as the 'fluff' courses because they are electives and seen as not that important," Williams says. "But the only way we're going to get a wider audience to understand the issues is to educate them."

For many, the education may not come without a great deal of resistance.

During the now-infamous 1993 "Re-Imagining Conference" in Minneapolis, Minn., a comment Williams made about the violence inherent in the crucifixion was lifted out of context and broadcast in national news reports about the event. Williams points to the sexism of the conservative press, which viciously attacked many conference participants and caused some to lose their jobs.

Afterwards, Williams kept quiet, but did not take back a single word. In fact, she is now at work on a book on atonement theory that examines the sacred status our culture gives to violence.

Williams also works hard to address that violence on the streets, where as a young woman she performed as a poet. She chairs the board of Project Green Hope: Services for Women, an agency now headed by Williams' first Ph.D. student at Union, Anne Rebecca Elliott. Each year Project Green Hope helps about 200 women fight substance abuse and successfully adjust to life after prison.

As in the classroom or in the lecture hall or in her books, Williams' compelling conviction as she works with Project Green Hope's clients is that for each, as for Hagar, God will speak — and help them find their dearest wish: "a way out of no way." ●

Rachel Roberson is a freelance writer living in San Francisco, <rayrober1@aol.com>.

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Paul Caponigro—Apple Orchard, New Mexico 1976

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DISCIPLESHIP

What does it mean to be faithful?

WITNESS MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

8 **The unpredictable stuff of life**
by Anna Hernandez
Would you recognize discipleship in the unplanned, off-the-shelf ministrations that occur in a church bookstore? How about in the two-handed rhythms of worship?

12 **Disciple:** *Accomplice in a consecrated conspiracy*
by Ken Sehested
Baptist peace activist Ken Sehested reflects on the strange truth that, just when you think discipleship means getting free of your roots, you find the connections that go deep.

14 **Sisters of earth:** *Religious women and ecological spirituality*
by Rosemary Radford Ruether
With roots in monasticism and prophetic faith, communities of women religious are proving to be communities of ecofeminism and practical sustainability.

18 **What's love got to do with it?**
by Kelly Brown Douglas
In a feisty sermon at the Motown consecration of Michigan bishop Wendell Gibbs, womanist theologian Kelly Brown Douglas finds her title and subtext in a Tina Turner song.

22 **Inspired audacity** *An interview with James Carse*
by Richard Marranca and Dorothy Orme
The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple attempts to revive the genre of gospel-writing in the feminine voice of a Samaritan disciple. Author James Carse explains how and why he undertook this project.

on the cover

Jane Evershed
TAKING A LEAP

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editor's Note
6 Poetry
24 Short Takes
25 Classifieds
26 Keeping Watch
28 Book Review
30 Witness Profile

VOLUME 83
NUMBER 5
MAY 2000

Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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LETTERS

From an anarchist

I wanted to thank you for sending me the December issue of *The Witness* (Recovering from human evil). I have to admit, as much contempt as I have for religionists, your publication manages to isolate the positive in religion and stick to issues that are important now, here, today, in this world. As an "anarchist," I feel that religion is often used as an excuse not to think or act, even morally, or lose standing with your peers. But you have helped me to understand religionists a little better, and I use your magazine here to interest the others in today's challenges. I hope you will keep me on the mailing list.

Jon Shepherd #77134
PO Box 9200, Telford Unit
New Boston, TX 75570

Simon Chiwanga

Thanks for the interview with Bishop Simon E. Chiwanga in the March 2000 issue. I'd like permission to reprint it for use in an upcoming diocesan meeting. Great model of leadership and community!

Lynne Wilson
Ministries Development Coordinator
Diocese of Wyoming

A clarification

I enjoyed the March 2000 issue and am glad to have been included as part of it. However, I notice that in the editing process you made two errors. First, my reference to Steve Kelsey was incorrectly changed to Jim Kelsey [see correction below]. Second, you edited my text to read, "It is not uncommon to hear seminary-trained clergy, for example, question this new order's influence in diocesan decision-making ..." My suggestion would have been: "It is not uncommon to hear seminary-trained clergy, for example, question the influence of Canon 9 clergy in diocesan decision-making ..."

I was very careful not to treat this development as a "new order." I believe that Canon 9 priests are every bit as much priests as those who are seminary-trained. There is a danger in thinking the priesthood of these individuals is somehow different, and perhaps deficient. The real change, I believe, is the change in the ownership of the priesthood by the congregation and the revaluing of all other ministries. This happens through the training, on the local level, of several people together for various ministries — including priesthood and diaconate. This latter point is well made in the final sentence of the article. I suspect you understand this. I am just concerned how people will read "new order."

The Witness is a fine magazine and a very important voice in the church. Thanks for your leadership.

William Kondrath
Cambridge, MA

[Ed. note: We made an editing error in William Kondrath's sidebar, "Creating a ministering community," in the March 2000 issue when we "corrected" Kondrath's reference to Steve Kelsey by changing it to Jim Kelsey. We didn't realize that Jim Kelsey, the Bishop of Northern Michigan, has a twin brother named Steve who also is an advocate for mutual ministry. Steve Kelsey is missioner with the Middlesex Area Cluster Ministry and convener of Leaveners (a cooperative of ministry developers from the Northeastern U.S.). We apologize to Steve, Jim and William.]

Entangled authority

I wanted to compliment you and Bill Countryman for his excellent article, "Anglicanism's Entangled Sense of Authority" (March 2000). I plan to use this article for a Bible study class that will be starting soon at my parish.

Janet Fischer
<jlfisch@pacbell.net>

Nuclearism and gene-spliced foods

We have long appreciated your fine magazine. I was particularly grateful for the

October 1999 (Nuclearism Today) and the November 1999 (Harvest feast?) issues, educating us about the very real nuclear threat and genetically engineered or modified foods.

It is no accident that Europeans are rejecting genetically modified foods. Popular magazines alerted their readers about the subject over a dozen years ago. Here, however, giant corporations, be they defense contractors or agro-giants, can operate mostly behind the scenes since our corporate-owned media makes sure the public remains uninformed. Is it any wonder then that the public — as Monsanto says — "has accepted gene-spliced foods" and it has accepted the myth that the nuclear threat ended with the end of the Cold War?

Thank you, *Witness*, for throwing some much needed light on these two vitally important subjects.

Sigrid Dale
Warren, MI

P.S. Representatives David Bonior and Dennis Cucinich of Michigan have introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that calls for genetically engineered foods to be labeled.

Time and freedom

Thanks for a first-rate issue of *The Witness* on Time and freedom. I was delighted by the combination of articles and moved by Bishop DeWitt's insights into his wife's medical situation. Great going!

Mary E. Hunt
Silver Spring, MD

A fair share of the wealth

I'm impressed with the depth and breadth of social concern in the January/February 2000 issue on Time and freedom. If I had time to read any more magazines than already come to our house, I would subscribe! I was very moved, also, by the more personal article, "Three Hands Bridge an Abyss," by Robert DeWitt. My sister and I helped care for our mother, who also had Alzheimer's. I will send a copy of the article to her and will share it with a friend here who is presently caring for his wife who has the disease.

The idea that every person has a right to a fair share of income from our common heritage of wealth is a profound idea. We try to envision ways in which this idea might be embodied, but we are humble about such efforts. What we feel is most needed at this time is to introduce the idea to those who yearn for economic justice, knowing that it will need the efforts of many knowledgeable thinkers and doers to bring about its eventual realization.

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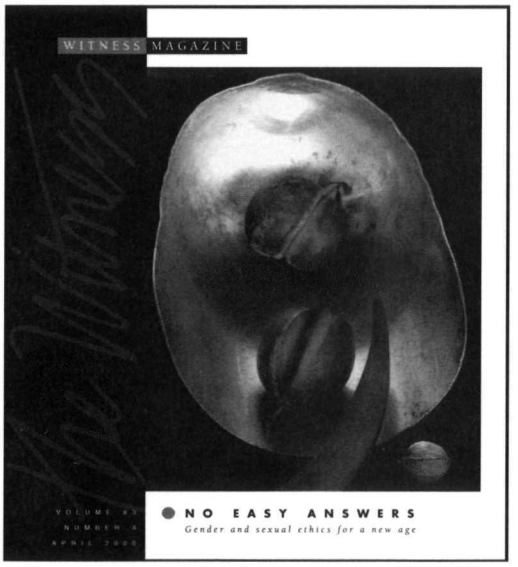

APRIL 2000

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Sorting out discipleship

By Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

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I WAS EDGY IN MY PEW, filled with Kellermanns, all of us except for Gary Kellermann, my partner Bill's Dad — who had died nine months earlier. This was the annual Methodist memorial service and the preacher was a white-haired woman in her sixties, whom Bill whispered was a great family favorite. The homily was essentially about how our ministerial families understood discipleship, largely in terms of suffering. Beyond that, it seemed to me lacking any real substance about what discipleship might mean.

Lying on my desk now — a couple years later — are several items: a letter to Rosemary Radford Ruether accepting her article; a fax from Anne Cox saying she'd be happy to hunt for poems for this issue; an e-mail from Herb Gunn about a consecration sermon; and a press release from the *National Catholic Reporter*. There are other things in the pile: five pages of online movie listings (remember, we here in Detroit are five years into a newspaper labor dispute); a letter to Bill from his friend, Jeanne, part of a group with whom he once lived in community (it came apart painfully, but now they are attempting a reunion); a short e-letter for Bill regarding his current urban work; a couple of our recent updates about my health and *Witness* work. It goes on. I stare at it all and wonder what the connections are to discipleship. Bill looks over my shoulder and wonders, too.

Perhaps the press statement from the *NCR*, the independent newsweekly based in Kansas City, helps make it clearest. It's about a competition they recently initiated for an artistic image of Jesus suited to the new millennium. According to editor Mike Farrell, there "was an extraordinary response" — 1,678 entries from 1,004 artists in 19 countries on six continents. The submissions were in oil, acrylic, mixed media, cloth, sculpture, drawings, computer creations and such esoteric variations as burnt toast. The prize-winner, "Jesus of the People" by Janet McKenzie, is remarkably feminine. This Jesus was, in fact, modeled on a dark, gypsy-like woman. (I notice a trend in the U.S. toward people, even men, dying their hair blond. When we were in Hungary last fall for medical treatment, our doctor who was careful to be respectful of the Jews, spoke contemptuously of the dark, numerous, and untrustworthy gypsies!) The *NCR* release commented on the many tensions (particularly in the Roman Church) that such an image of Jesus, truly embraced, might help resolve — even, perhaps, ordination.

"I STARE AT IT ALL AND WONDER WHAT THE CONNECTIONS ARE TO DISCIPLESHIP. BILL LOOKS OVER MY SHOULDER AND WONDERS, TOO."

What exactly does it mean to walk and risk with such a Jesus? What does it mean that's more than suffering?

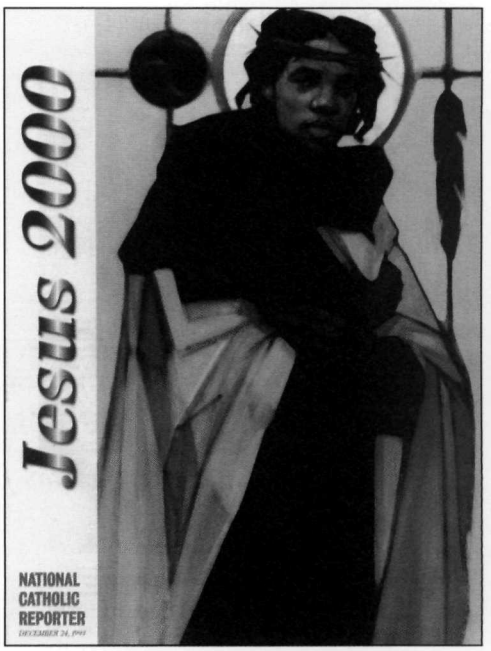
In this issue we share a sermon by Kelly Brown Douglas (see her conversation with Carter Heyward in *TW* 3/2000) which takes its title from a Tina Turner Motown song. What it's got to do with is radical discipleship and a "manger kind of love." She preached it last February in Detroit at the consecration of Wendell Gibbs as bishop coadjutor.

We review Carter Heyward's recent book on Jesus which argues for a relational Christology where discipleship is not a matter of following a Lord, but walking with a brother.

Anna Hernandez meets up with discipleship in the pastoral side of "customer service" at the Episcopal Church Center's bookstore in Manhattan and at a piano in Hell's Kitchen. Ken Sehested bumps into it on a football field in college and notices how it makes him odd. Rosemary Ruether finds it in a collection of women caring for the earth. And author James Carse gets at it from the inside, by attempting to write a new gospel — in the voice of a Samaritan woman.

So what is the connection between these wonderful and diverse experiences of discipleship? I've got to think that sometimes it hurts, but it's more about life than about death. ●

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann, co-editor of The Witness, *has been living with brain cancer since September 1998, <jeanie@thewitness.org>. Her husband Bill worked with her on this editorial.*



Mechtild of Magdeburg

I cannot dance, O Lord,
Unless You lead me.
If You wish me to leap joyfully,
Let me see You dance and sing

Then I will leap into Love
And from Love into Knowledge,
And from Knowledge into the Harvest,
That sweetest Fruit beyond human sense.

There I will stay with You, whirling.

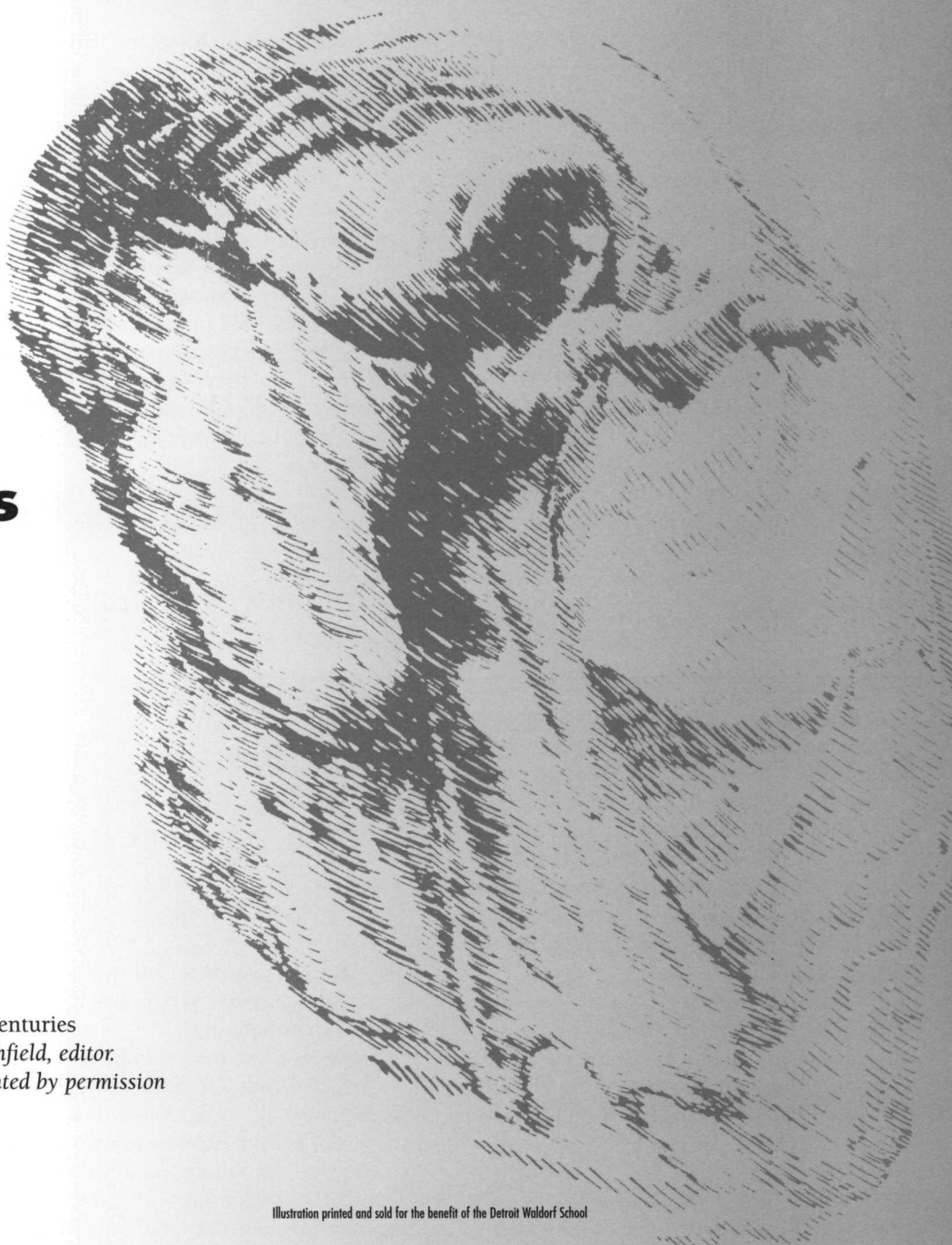


Illustration printed and sold for the benefit of the Detroit Waldorf School

The madness of love

by Hadewijch of Antwerp
(trans. by Oliver Davies)

The madness of love
Is a blessed fate;
and if we understood this
We would seek no other:
It brings into unity
What was divided,
And this is the truth:
Bitterness it makes sweet,
It makes the stranger a neighbor,
And what was lowly it raises on high.

From Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women *by Jane Hirshfield, editor. Copyright © 1994 by Jane Hirshfield. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.*

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BASHRA DIARY

One definition of evil is that which harms children. If so, I have seen evil today.

By Jeff Nelson

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IN DECEMBER OF LAST YEAR I travelled with 12 other activists from Michigan to Iraq to challenge the economic sanctions and to witness their devastating effects on the people, particularly the children of Iraq. Following are excerpts from my journal of one day in Bashra.

8:30 a.m.: The sun came out and the clouds cleared up for the first time since we arrived in Iraq. I said to Hussein, our Iraqi Red Crescent guide, that it looks to be a beautiful day. He replies, "When the clouds clear up we prepare for the bombs." Not even the simple joy of a sunny day is untouched by this war.

9:10 a.m.: Everywhere in Bashra you see the effects of war. Bombed-out buildings still line the streets of a once beautiful city. Called the "city of smiles," its people have little to smile about. It's now sacked with 80 percent unemployment. The smell of raw sewage hangs in the air. Piles of garbage and rusted cars fill the vacant lots. Over 30 percent of the water is undrinkable. Sanctions leave Bashra with no resources to put life back together.

10:20 a.m.: Flies swarm the face of little Alia. Sanctions prohibit pesticides — so a single fly strip is all that protects her from the Black Fever these insects carry. What would a humanitarian 'no-fly' zone look like? Alia's nine month-old body weighs only eight pounds — half of what it should. Her mother rushes to brush away flies as the doctor explains there are only antibiotics for three of the 20 children who need it. He asks if we would like to choose who will get the medicine today.

10:45 a.m.: Seven-year-old Ali, lips blue and eyes glazed. His chest heaves as he gasps for air, hanging on to what remains of his life. His mother, eyes bloodshot with tears, holds the oxygen tubes to his nose. Sanctions make it impossible to get even the most basic medical supplies — no oxygen masks or tents here. Tubing is held to the tank with surgical tape. I want to pick Ali up and breathe for him. The mother cries out to us, "Why does America want to kill our children?"

11:25 a.m.: Six-year-old Muslin's family lived in an area heavily bombed during the war. Now, like so many others, he is dying from leukemia. Doctor Al-Karem explains that the depleted uranium weapons used by the U.S. during the Gulf War have left Iraqi children with radioactive air to breathe and poisoned water to drink. I look at Muslin, losing his hair and gone blind in his left eye. I can barely hold the tears as I give him a balloon. He is too sick to smile, another casualty of a war supposedly over before he was born.

2:45 p.m.: Seven-year-old Hassan holds the jagged, twisted piece of metal removed from his leg. Rolling up his pant leg he shows a scar from his knee nearly to his ankle. With a dozen other children he was injured in the January 25 U.S. bombing of the Jumariya neighborhood. Four children were crushed and killed. Where was the military target, Mr. President? Was this young boy a national security threat, Secretary Cohen? Is this the price you were willing to pay, Madame Albright? One definition of evil is that which harms children. If so, I have seen evil today.

5:00 p.m.: At Mass with the Archbishop of Bashra. The Gospel will be read in Aramaic, the language of Jesus. Modern-day Iraq is the birthplace of Abraham, the land of Jonah, and starting point for the Magi who followed the star. Like the Magi, it was a call to follow the star of Christ that has brought me to this Holy Land and face to face with this slaughter of the innocents.

10:30 p.m.: Reflecting back, the streets of Bashra remind me of neighborhoods in Detroit. The abandonment, the destruction, the degradation that forced poverty brings is so similar. Detroit, too, has suffered from decades of economic warfare. My heart sinks to think of all the time, money, and resources spent destroying Iraq. Resources not being used to better the lives of children in our own communities. Sanctioning Iraq, we sanction ourselves.

8:30 a.m.: The next morning: Hussein's prediction is confirmed. Yesterday U.S. warplanes bombed a neighborhood in Northern Iraq. Two children were killed and dozens injured. Will this reign of terror ever end? ●

Jeff Nelson is a seminarian who works in Detroit with Groundwork for a Just World.



Robert Shetterly (Borealis Press, Ellsworth, ME)

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DISCIPLESHIP

The unpredictable stuff of life

By Anna Hernandez

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I'M ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE who seem to have two vocations, for which I often curse God. There are days when everything looks like discipleship, and days when nothing at all will do. Mostly, though, it looks a lot like customer service. I work in an Episcopal bookstore, and 35 hours a week I show up, and deal with whomever God sends through the door — no receptionist or office door to hide behind. You walk in, you get me and, like it or not, I get you. At best, it's a really challenging pastoral ministry. At its worst, it's a day filled with too many phone calls and e-mails, and careless, thoughtless people. Like the man who asked me, "If you were a woman, what color Bible would you like?"

I try to hold my tongue, but am not always successful. I try not to be mean to people (it makes them feel bad), but neither will I let myself be stepped on (it makes me feel bad). I helped that man to the best of my ability, and moved on to the next person. He's still a customer, and we like each other. Discipleship?

There's an old man, who comes in about four times a year, monopolizes my time, totally disrupts the store and all who are therein, and never buys a thing. He yells, "Where's the girl? Is the girl still here? I need help, I want a Bible. I can't see, I need large print. The girl can help me." He's going deaf, too, so he yells, and people stare at him (and at me, I guess to make sure that I'm aware of the situation). He doesn't smell great, and he looks like he could really use a new pair of shoes. He asks a question, but talks over the answer, and then he asks it again, louder, and talks over the answer. After he leaves, people tell me how amazed they are that I am so patient with him. My boss says, "That one, he will get you your wings."

This man's been coming into the store for about five years or so, and I've never been able to help him before. When he comes in, I tend to leap headfirst into the pit. We go through the usual drill: I show him all of the large print and giant print Bibles we've got, and he rejects them all. Only, the last time, he didn't reject them all. He took one from me, and opened it up about 3 inches from his face, and said, "I like this one. I'll take it." Well, I guided him over to the cash register, rang it up, found someone to help him out to the street, and moved on to the next person.

I wonder how he gets along, and if I'll ever see him again. I wonder why I don't mind helping some folks, but others I don't want to help at all. I mean, Jesus didn't wander around asking people, "Whatchya gonna look at after I heal your blindness?" Or, "If you are going to listen to that hip-hop crap, I am not going to heal your deafness, young man!"

Almost every day, there's a close encounter. Sometimes they haunt me. A woman I'd never seen before walked up to the cash register, and handed me two books to ring up. She said, "I lost my baby. I was at 8 months. This is my first day back at work." In that kind of moment, what can you do? God's calling, and you're having an attack of low self-esteem, which is manifesting itself as a huge urge to fly away, because you are not prepared for this. I took a deep breath, looked up and said, "I'm so sorry, that's an

"WHERE'S THE GIRL?

IS THE GIRL STILL HERE?

I NEED HELP,

I WANT A BIBLE.

I CAN'T SEE,

I NEED LARGE PRINT.

THE GIRL CAN HELP ME."

impossible situation." Then I remembered a book of meditations written for that very thing, and she looked at me, and we both tried not to cry. I asked if she'd like to see it, and she said yes, so I went and got it and handed it to her. She sighed, and said in an undertone, "I didn't see this." After a quick glance, she bought the one I'd fetched, walked out, and I've never seen her again. I wonder how she's doing. She seemed pretty strong. There was something about her that made me feel like she was going to be alright no matter what I did, or didn't, do.

Some days, discipleship looks like that woman; devastated beyond belief, yet reaching out for my hand. It hasn't always occurred to me that people might want to reach out for my hand, that my hand might be a lifeline: It's not actually my hand they're reaching out for. I don't even always recognize it. When you show up, miracles occasionally happen; I'm just the one lucky enough to be there. It's no small miracle I was able to remember where the book for that woman was. I think, though, that if I were a real disciple, I'd just be able to give her the damn book because she needed it, thus avoiding the mammon portion of our show. However, that's not the way of the world, so I took her money, and moved on to the next person. I often wish I could give people the books they need.

My other vocation is as a musician. It's an awful lot like customer service. As a musician, though, I actually feel discipleship more of the time. Most of my gigs are for worship services. Every third Sunday at my church (St. Clement's in Hell's Kitchen, NYC), I'm the music leader. The Clementines are a great singing congregation, and I like it there. I try to be mindful in planning the hymns, try to avoid the more annoying texts and tunes that used to fascinate Christians, and sometimes (sigh) still do. I hear the people singing and am often moved, and when it works like it's supposed to, I can see that they are also moved. We try to stay open to the urgings of the Spirit. Sometimes, I'll start stomping out a beat, or playing a drum pattern to a hymn that's never been previously associated with any percussion, and other people join in; some just singing, some just stamping their feet, some doing both, and by the last verse, we are all having a pretty good time. Discipleship?

Don't get me wrong, being a musician isn't always a picnic. I've been hired to play at conferences to provide music for worship, and gathering music in order to build community, and then the worship service I've planned (at their request) is a two-hour meeting instead, people talk over the gathering music and ignore it, and I think to myself, "Why am I here?" Leo Tolstoy once said: "I had intended to go to God and I found my way into a stinking bog, which evokes in me only those feelings of which I am most afraid: disgust, malice, and indignation."

"WHY AM I HERE?"

LEO TOLSTOY ONCE SAID:

"I HAD INTENDED TO GO

TO GOD AND I FOUND MY

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MALICE, AND INDIGNATION."

When I feel useless, ignored, and like I do not matter at all, I tend to get impatient and frustrated. Headfirst into the stinking bog. Glub, glub. But you know what? There's always someone else in the bog, too. Last time, I met another musician. So, we stuck together, and the experience became less irritating because I made a new friend!

Oftentimes my worlds collide: Once I sold a priest some books in the afternoon, and saw him later on in a church where I had a gig. Afterwards, he came up to me to tell me that he liked what I'd done. I said, "Thanks. You got some great books today." He looked at me like he'd never seen me before, and I must be crazy, and said, "How do you know I bought books today?" I said, "I sold them to you," and he gave me a dismissive look, and said "Oh, I never look at the help." Then he walked away.

Definitely a blow to discipleship. I'm sure he did like what I'd done musically, and I've found that people are mostly clueless as to how I've been affected by what they say, and they usually don't mean harm. But discipleship is nigh unto impossible if one person denies the other one's existence, especially if I'm the other one. You need at least two people in order to have discipleship, and maybe that's why those disciples went out in pairs. There are times when my ego is too little to help me. There are other times that I'm sure my ego will interfere in a situation, but somehow, it's not a problem. Even the old man bought a Bible, and that was surely the grace of God.

Discipleship seems to be a slippery little devil: You can't predict it, and you really can't expect it to happen; you can't live without it, and you can be fairly certain that it will not be the way you would want it, but it does happen, and it's almost always a surprise. ●

Anna Hernandez manages the bookstore at the Episcopal Church Center in New York City. Formerly a member of the popular singing group, The Miserable Offenders, she now makes music on her own.

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DISCIPLE

Accomplice in a consecrated conspiracy

by Ken Sehested

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I WAS A SENIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL when it happened. It was our first football game of the season, and we were playing New Iberia, not far from Avery Island where Tabasco hot sauce is made, 90 miles or so from home in Houma, Louisiana, southwest of New Orleans. The year 1968 is now, 30-plus year's hence, a metaphor for a whole new reality for my reading of history: assassinations, civil unrest and troops in the streets both here and abroad.

"IF ANY WANT TO BECOME

MY FOLLOWERS, LET THEM

DENY THEMSELVES AND

TAKE UP THEIR CROSS, AND

FOLLOW ME."

— Mark 8:34

Back then, though, I was a star athlete and a traveling youth evangelist.

Headline news failed to factor into my world view, not so much because of my age as because of my piety.

I regained consciousness at half-time, sitting on the bench at my locker, head in hands, my thumb curled around the face-mask of my helmet. A blow to the head



©Betty LaDuke Africa: Osun Rainbow

had knocked me silly sometime during the first half of the game, but I was still upright. As my teammates loitered about the locker room — sipping the sticky sweet beverage designed to maximize energy and rehydration, some retaping ankles or hands, complaining in small huddles about busted plays and brutal humidity — my rattled brain began to regain its composure.

"You gonna be okay?" said a voice from behind. I mumbled something-or-other, just enough to dispense with the distraction. My mind was intensely occupied, on something distant and obscure, but strangely compelling. When the fog finally lifted, I found myself quoting, over and over again, very much like a mantra, the words from John 3:16 — the *sine qua non* of evangelical Christian preaching texts, which begins: "For God so loved the world ..."

Although I did not know her work, novelist Flannery O'Connor's paraphrase of another text from John's Gospel would later become my all-time favorite and would describe my spiritual journey, my intense desire to be a disciple of Jesus, beginning with my preadolescent baptism, through the momentous and genuinely mystical experience which overtook me in my early teens, all the way through the years of theological dissonance, deconstruction and reconstruction of young adulthood. "You shall know the truth," O'Connor wrote, "and the truth will make you odd."

There was a time when my spiritual journey was characterized by a profound sense of schizophrenia. Who was that person, sharing my name, pictured in that hometown newspaper article headlined "FUTURE EVANGELIST"? By then I was caught up in a barely-secret cynicism, my inherited faith quickly dissipating and emerging new faith still *en utero*. My own personal "sacred canopy" was coming apart — foundations shaking, as Bro. Tillich would say — and instinctively I read through the book of Job, slowly and deliberately, during breaks between classes, at lunchtime and during study hall.

I felt destined to be numbered among the damned; but regardless the cost I stubbornly refused to grovel before a gangster god or prostrate myself on an altar festering with pompous religious posturing.

My new-born faith would come with much labor, after an emotionally-panicked transition — something akin to the fear felt by all childbearers as the birth canal's trauma threatens to halt the beat of one, if not both, monitored hearts.

Like Job, however, I was caught up in a whirlwind of sorts. Part of the joyful surprise on the other side of that rebirth was sight of the bridge which connected my present to my past journey of faith. However crudely conceived ("We don't smoke and we don't chew, and we don't go with the girls that do"), at the core of my earlier faith was the credo that belief could get you in trouble (or at least make you "odd"). And that core remained, intact, sharper than ever.

THE DISCIPLE IS ONE WHO REFUSES "THE LUXURY OF THE ONLOOKER," BUT CHOOSES, INSTEAD, THE ROLE OF ACCOMPLICE IN THE CONSPIRACY OF LIFE AGAINST THE REIGN OF DEATH.

A favorite hymn from my earlier years was an old Gospel tune, "This World Is Not My Home," a song I had come to revile for its escapist piety. Now, suddenly, the lyrics made sense, when "the world" is understood (as used in the New Testament) not as creation but as the complex web of social, cultural, economic and political arrangements which govern the earth.

Indeed, this present world is an inhospitable home to a vast array of creatures, human and nonhuman alike; and they are, in fact, the ones signified by biblical references to the "lost coin" and "lost sheep" and "the children" and "the poor," all those on whom God's attention is riveted: all those for whom "the world" has no use, is abandoning, will "write off" as an acceptable loss.

"To choose the road to discipleship is to dispose oneself for a share in the cross," wrote the U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops in their 1984 "Challenge of Peace" statement. "It is not enough to believe with one's mind; a Christian must also be a doer of the word, a wayfarer with and a witness to Jesus."

Or, as Bonhoeffer would write from prison to his grandnephew on the occasion of the latter's baptism: "With us thought was often the luxury of the onlooker; with you it will be entirely subordinated to action." (The original German title of Bonhoeffer's classic *The Cost of Discipleship* was *Nachfolge Christi*, literally "Following Christ.") Faith, as Clarence Jordan would say, is not belief in spite of the evidence, but life lived in scorn of the consequences.

The disciple is one who refuses "the luxury of the onlooker," but chooses, instead, the role of accomplice in the consecrated conspiracy of life against the reign of death. Those so immersed (sometimes literally by both water and by blood) discover their buoyancy, not by the will to power or the weight of moral urgency, but by the wonder of grace. As Matthew Fox has written, "The paranoid and the pious share one thing in common: The former believe the deepest forces of the universe are allied against them; the latter, on their behalf."

So rejoice, you "odd ones," even though you are reviled; for yours is the future vowed in creation and vouchsafed in the new creation. ●

Ken Sehested is executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. His football career finally ended, at Baylor University, after a fifth concussion. But he can still quote a host of Bible verses by memory.

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Spirit of Justice Awards Reception

General Convention

Sunday, July 9, 2000

4:00- 6:00 PM

The St. Francis Center

2323 Curtis Street

Denver, Colorado

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The Witness awards reception will be held Sunday, July 9, 2000 at the St. Francis Center, a mission providing mental health and substance abuse counseling, medical services, job training and placement, telephones, showers, storage space and clothing to Denver's homeless population during daytime hours. The reception will be catered by the Women's Bean Project, a non-profit business marketing soup mixes, gift crates, baskets and catering services as a means to help women overcome barriers they have encountered in their lives. Through the business they learn new life skills: budgeting, conflict management, assertiveness training, interviewing for jobs, developing their own support systems, increased self-sufficiency and a sense of personal responsibility.

THE FEATURED SPEAKER:

Rt. Rev. Peter Selby, Bishop of Worcester, England

THE AWARDS:

◆ The William Scarlett Award (labor activist and Episcopal Church bishop)
◆ The Vida Scudder Award (feminist and socialist) ◆ The William Stringfellow Award (theologian and lawyer)
◆ The William Spofford Award (longtime *Witness* editor and outspoken labor advocate)

TICKET INFORMATION

call (313) 841-1967 or email: office@thewitness.org

Religious women and ecological spirituality

Rosemary Radford Ruether

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THE MONASTIC WAY OF LIFE WAS NOT SIMPLY "OTHER-WORLDLY," IT ALSO HELD FORTH A VISION OF THE RESTORATION OF CREATION. IT PROMISED A RESTORATION OF THE ORIGINAL HARMONY OF ALL CREATURES WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH GOD.

SISTERS OF EARTH is a network of Roman Catholic religious women and affiliated laity, mostly in the U.S., who are converting their land and institutions into centers of ecological literacy and environmental sustainability. This work reflects a new awareness among women religious of ecological crisis, and yet such ventures have deep roots in older monastic tradition.

Monastic communities historically were rural, land-based and supported themselves by agriculture. They cultivated a communal way of life committed to voluntary poverty and simplicity. They practiced withdrawal from the luxury and corruption of the "world," or what we today might call "consumer society." Monasticism spread in Western Christianity at a time of the collapse of Roman imperial civilization, a collapse that was political, economic and ecological. It was a time when the things of "this world" were seen to have failed. Monasticism was an effort to construct an alternative way of life suitable to salvation.

The monastic way of life was not simply "other-worldly," it also held forth a vision of the restoration of creation. It promised a restoration of the original harmony of all creatures with one another and with God. The natural world corrupted by human sin would be restored. One sign of this was a restored peace between humans and animals that was corrupted at the time of the flood (see Genesis 9:2). Stories of friendship between animals and monks, a return to simple subsistence agriculture, the holding of all things in common, were all marks of this intended return to an original state of creation as intended by God.

Many early Church Fathers believed that God created the riches of the earth to be held in common. The rise of private property in the hands of the rich, impoverishing the majority of humans, was an expression of fallenness. For example, in the fourth century Ambrose, bishop of Milan, wrote:

Why do the injuries of nature delight you? The world has been created for all, while you rich are trying to keep it for yourselves. Not merely the possession of the earth, but the very sky, air and the sea are claimed for the use of the rich few. ... Not from your own do you bestow on the poor man, but you make return from what is his. For what has been given as common for the use of all, you appropriate for yourself alone. The earth belongs to all, not to the rich. (De Nabuthe Jezraelita 3, 11)

For Ambrose, simple living, land held in common with equal benefits for all, restored God's order and intention for creation.

Monastic tradition has also stressed service to society and help for the poor. Monastic communities in the West have been centers of literacy and education. Thus for women religious to reshape their land and buildings to make them centers for ecojustice and learning about an ecologically sustainable lifestyle is a modern renewal of some very traditional impulses of Christian monastic life.

The Sisters of Earth movement has a more recent history in the U.S. In the 1940s the Catholic Rural Life Conference (CRLC) promoted a back-to-the-land movement for U.S. Catholics. Part of this was a perception of city life as corrupt. Catholics, then largely urban immigrants,

T H



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would recover a "purer" life by moving to the country and taking up family farming and traditional home production skills, such as bread-baking. But the CRLC was also concerned about justice for farmers being driven off their land by corporate enterprise. Catholic communitarian social justice movements, such as the Catholic Worker and the Grail, were influenced by the CRLC and created farming communities, even while retaining urban service work.

In the 1960s, the Grail and other groups of religious women reemphasized urban ministry, under the influence of organizers such as Saul Alinsky, and abandoned communal farming. But the 1970s saw a discovery of the issue of ecology as a crisis of industrial civilization. The Club of Rome report and the celebration of Earth Day in the late 1960s heralded a new awareness that consumer society was using the resources of the earth unsustainably.

The guru of the Catholic ecological movement, however, has been Passionist priest Thomas Berry. Berry was a professor of the history of religions at Fordham University who turned to a focus on ecology and cosmology in the late sixties. He founded the Riverdale Center of Religious Research in 1970, focusing on a sustainable relation of the human community to the earth and the universe. His collection of essays, *Dream of the Earth* (1988) has become a classic of the ecological spirituality movement. Together with physicist Brian Swimme, he authored *The Universe Story* (1991), which redefined modern scientific cosmology as a new creation story.

Berry's most recent book, *The Great Work* (1999), defines the creation of an ecologically sustainable culture as the primary historic challenge of the present human generation. Berry's seminars at the Riverdale Center and the distribution of his papers and tapes, became musts for the continuing education of Catholic women religious. Other Catholic centers of spirituality, such as the Sophia Center at Holy Names College in Oakland, Calif., have claimed Berry's work as the central pillar of their educational vision.

Berry is not the only influence on the Sisters of Earth Movement. Another important shaper of this movement on the practical level is Jesuit Al Fritsch, director of Appalachia — Science in the Public Interest. Fritsch's Center does ecological sustainability inventories for institutions, including religious orders. Women's religious orders, particularly, have asked for his assessments of the sustainability of their properties. From the mid-1980s Fritsch's center carried out such inventories on over 60 motherhouses of women's religious orders.

ECOFEMINISM BRINGS TOGETHER SPIRITUALITY AND SCIENTIFIC RATIONALITY, PRAYER AND PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT, OUTREACH TO SOCIETY AND SERVICE TO THE POOR WITH CULTIVATION OF THE INNER SELF; CRITICAL REASON WITH THE POETIC, ARTISTIC AND INTUITIVE.

Fritsch's resource audits are comprehensive and include the areas of energy use, food use, land use, the physical plant, transportation, waste management, water use and wildlife. In the area of energy, Fritsch's audit includes both avenues of conservation and partial self-sufficiency in energy needs. He recommends such possibilities as solar, wind, biomass and hydro energy; solar food drying and cooking, the use of greenhouses, passive space and water heating, and photo electric potential. The audit points out ways to increase self-reliance in food and to reduce costs of food from production to preparation. He examines land use to promote self-sufficiency, edible landscaping, aquaculture, multiple use of land, wildlife refuges and the aesthetic and spiritual aspects of land use.

In assessing the physical plant, Fritsch examines the physical condition of the building and its use patterns and suggests more efficient use of the present building. He examines the transportation uses of the community, both public and private, to recommend greater efficiency and environmental quality. Waste disposal is assessed to discern present practices and recommend recycling, composting and use of compost toilets. Water use is examined as well as management of wetlands, with recommendations for conservation and alternative sources.

Finally the relation to wildlife is examined, both flora and fauna, to suggest improved protection of habitat. (See Resource Auditing Service, PO Box 298, Livingston, KY 40445.)

Why have religious women been the primary agents of this kind of ecological conversion? Men's monastic orders have similar roots that would seem to dispose them equally to such concerns. The answer seems to lie in the greater prophetic consciousness of religious women as they have taken hold of the renewal of their communities in the last 35 years since the Second Vatican Council. An important factor in this greater prophetic consciousness has been the influence of feminism on American women religious. American nuns have become aware of the injustice of the clerical establishment to women in general and to themselves as religious women. This critical view of the church institution has fostered greater independence and initiative among religious women to undertake their own work for justice, rather than depending on the leadership of the male clergy.

An ecofeminist approach that blends fem-

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inism, ecology and justice seems to have a particular appeal to Catholic religious women. Ecofeminism brings together spirituality and scientific rationality, prayer and practical management, outreach to society and service to the poor with cultivation of the inner self; critical reason with the poetic, artistic and intuitive. Berry's vision and Fritsch's practicality make for a wholistic reshaping of religious community life. It allows religious women to reclaim the best of the past tradition of monastic life with the call to renewal. Ecofeminist leader Miriam MacGillis uses the metaphor of "reinhabiting" for this process of conversion which both reclaims and transforms the places that one already lives. Religious women are "reinhabiting" the land, the tradition, the calling for community life that they already have.

Women's religious orders and movements began to apply ecological sustainability to their lands and buildings in the early 1980s. The Grail, for example transformed their property in Loveland, Ohio to develop a permaculture garden and solar heated greenhouse. They added "how to" courses on permaculture and solar heating to their regular course offerings, with their own work as demonstration training sites. Other women's orders also underwent their own conversions of their properties and the founding of training centers for others to learn from their experience.

The Sisters of Earth built on this accumulation of centers over the past decade, bringing them together as an organized network in 1994. At the present time there are about 300 members of this network, mostly across the U.S. The network has a larger global reach than these numbers suggest, since many members represent centers that influence local regions, and their religious orders have ties to their sisters in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The network allows for mutual support and a sharing of experiences through a newsletter, a national conference every two years and an Internet connection (contact through Mary Lou Dolan, <elm@woods.smwc.edu>).

Although the transformation of motherhouses as ecological sustainability and teaching centers suggests a rural focus, much of the work of members of Sisters of Earth ranges across urban institutions as well. Most notable is the application of energy, food and waste recycling to hospitals, a major ministry of religious women. Other ecologically-minded religious women have focused on their work in parishes and schools. A considerable number of the leaders in the Sisters of Earth movement have been teachers of science, and ecological sustainability has given them a new outlet for their training and teaching.

Among the projects undertaken by Sisters of Earth members have been solar heated houses and greenhouses, strawbale houses (to demonstrate the cheap and energy efficient nature of this kind of building material), wind energy systems, solar ovens, composting toilets and community gardens. Typically all these projects are undertaken not just for internal improvement, but are made into demonstration projects for teaching programs that combine a new vision and spirituality with practical skills. These skills have also been shared in the mission work of religious women. Learning how to build composting toilets and solar ovens has enhanced the work of religious women in the poorest communities, in areas such as Central America and Africa.

Sisters of Earth members have also been active with international agencies. One member, Jean Blewett, the founder of Earth-community Center in Laurel, Md., offers workshops and retreats on ecological spirituality and practice, and monitors the debate on sustainable development at the United Nations. Others are active with such organizations as Worldwatch, Environmental Defense Fund and Greenpeace. Another, Aurea Cormier, a university professor of domestic science, has developed a textbook entitled *World Food Problems*, and organizes an annual forum on food and nutrition issues.

While many of these women have created centers that do ecological literacy training, the most important such center, where many Sisters of Earth have gone for their own training, is Genesis Farm in Blairstown, New Jersey. Genesis Farm was founded by Miriam MacGillis. MacGillis has written extensively on the new universe story and ecological spirituality and is a frequent lecturer on these topics around the world. Genesis Farm offers major training courses in such areas as "The Universe Story and Bioregionalism" (a two-week program), a six-week and a twelve-week earth literacy program, and such focused seminars as "simplifying our life-styles" and "re-visioning the vowed life."

Ecological spirituality and practice is also reshaping prayer and literacy for these religious women. Several have developed ecologically-focused labyrinth walks. Genesis Farm has shaped a sacred space on their land as an earth meditation walk. The stations of this walk bring together the stages of the universe story with the stages of each person's life cycle story. An ecojustice center in the Philippines, organized by religious women there, has created a meditation walk on their land modeled on the stations of the cross. Each station focuses on an area of the sufferings of the earth and its creatures, inflicted by sinful humankind: pollution of water, fouling of the air, the poisoning of the soil, extinction of species, social violence and poverty.

The prayers of the church year also allow for a recovery of the relation of liturgy to the seasons, the winter and summer solstices, the fall and spring equinoxes. Prayer is also integrated into rhythms of daily life: rising and sleeping, food preparation, eating and cleaning up, fasting and feasting. Sisters of Earth is an inspiring example of how a traditional Christian form of community of life, the monastic order, is being redeveloped, or "reinhabited," to make them vehicles of ecological living and learning. ●

Rosemary Ruether is the Georgia Harkness Professor of Systematic Theology at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. She is author of many books, including Gaia and God *(1992).*

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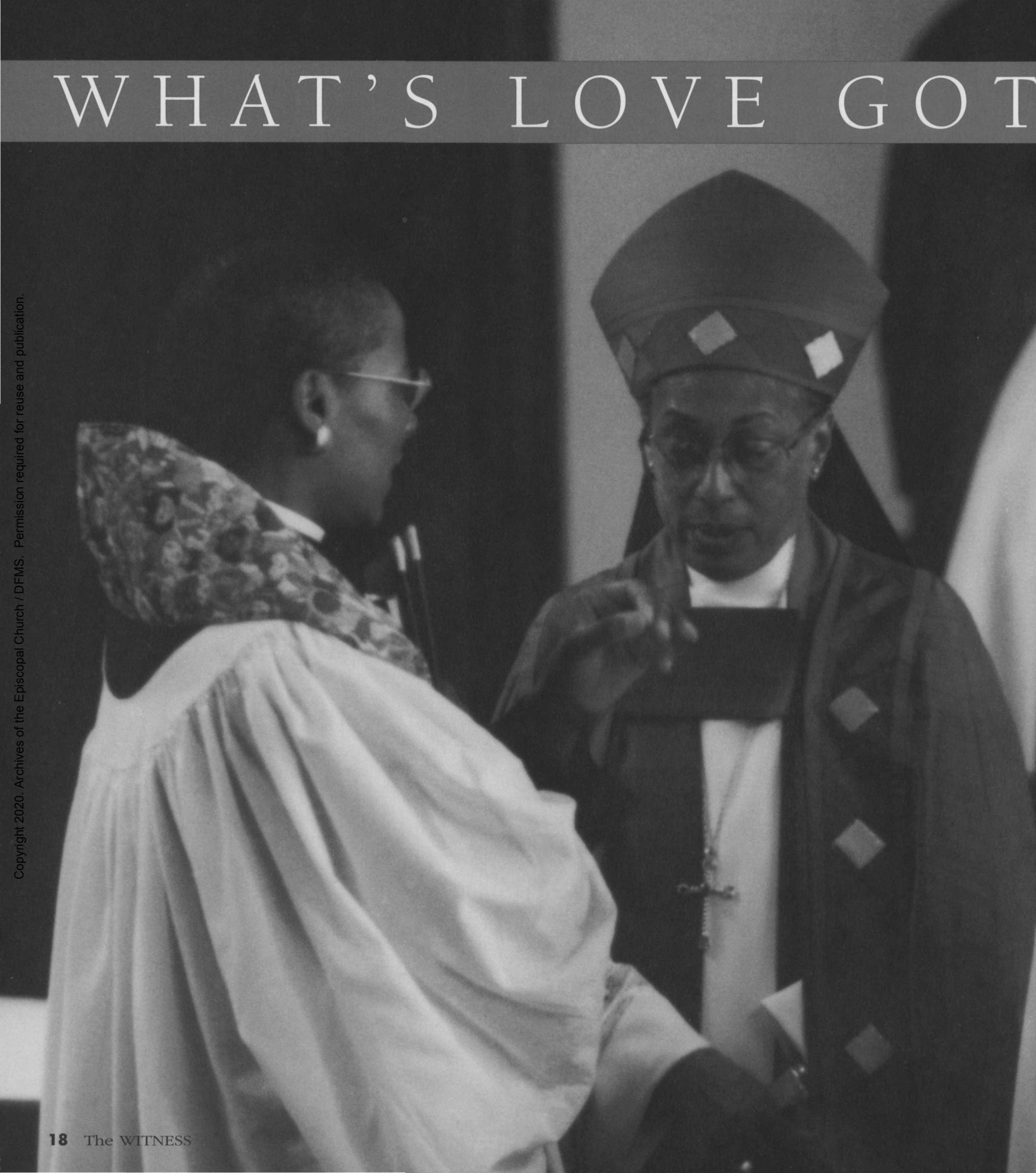
WHAT'S LOVE GOT



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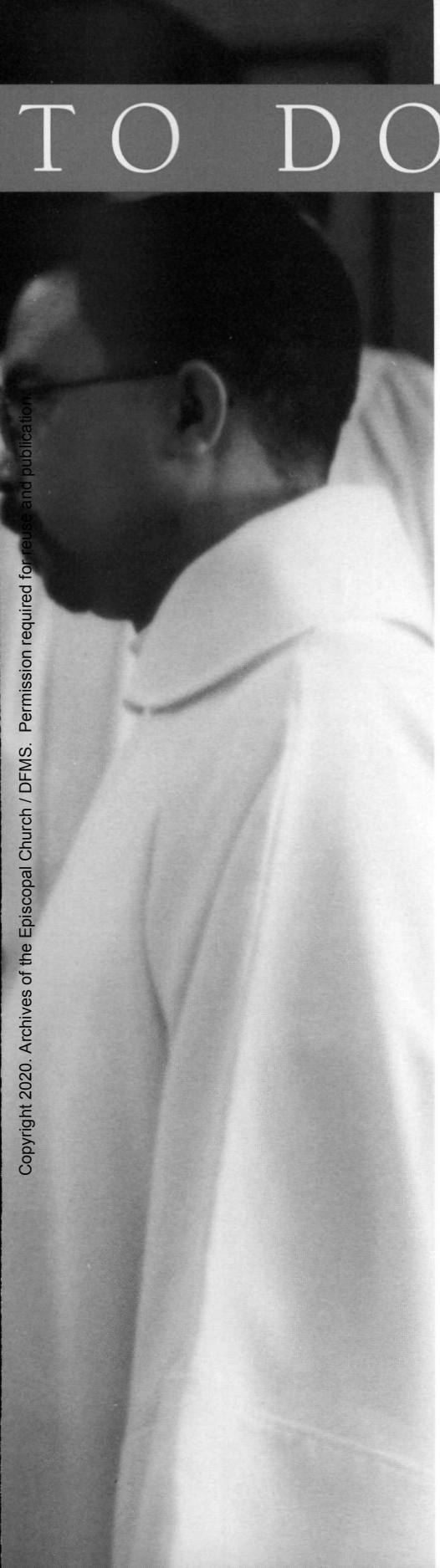
TO DO WITH IT?



Herb Gunn

A sermon by Kelly Brown Douglas

TEXT: John 15: 12-15

ON FEBRUARY 5, 2000, nearly 3,000 people visited a despairing, manger kind of neighborhood in Detroit's Cass Corridor for an Episcopal service of ordination and consecration of Wendell Gibbs as bishop coadjutor of the Diocese of Michigan. Kelly Brown Douglas, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Howard University in Washington, D.C., rocked the neighborhood with a sermon that challenged the church and its newest bishop to exercise a radical discipleship and "a manger kind of love."

My dear church friends, what's love got to do with it? What's love got to do with this gathering of young and not so young, lay and ordained, black and white, female and male, gay and non-gay, lesbian and non-lesbian, coming together not in dissension, but coming together with one voice to affirm the call of this man Wendell to be bishop?

What's love got to do with it?

What's love got to do with this man becoming bishop, this one who carries the legacy of Absalom Jones, Alexander Crummell, Peter Williams and all the nameless others who suffered the patronizing indignities and dehumanizing rejections for daring to accept their call as black priest in an unashamedly white colonial church of slaveholders?

What's love got to do with it?

What's love got to do with this man, blessed with ebony grace, being called as coadjutor in a church that not less than a century ago would, if it tolerated him at all, tolerate him as only a suffragan?

What's love got to do with it?

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Oh my friends, the ironies and paradoxes of this moment are many, from a black man being consecrated bishop to a black woman preaching, and all that I'm left to ask at such a time as this is, "What's love got to do with it?"

In this morning's Gospel, we encounter a part of what John presents as Jesus' last discourse. In this last discourse, we find Jesus speaking not to a hostile or non-believing crowd; instead we find Jesus speaking with care and concern to "his own," to his disciples to those who supposedly believe in him.

In this last discourse, while the Jesus who speaks is present, he speaks really as one who transcends space and time, as one who is already on his way to his Father. Yet, he speaks as one who is concerned not to abandon those he will leave behind, those who will remain in the world. In a sense, although Jesus speaks on earth, the words he speaks are to be heard as words being spoken from heaven. And, although Jesus speaks directly to his disciples, his words are to be heard as words directed to those in all times who are followers of him. For this last discourse represents, if you will, Jesus' last will and testament, meant to be heard and read after he is gone.

And so what is it that we find Jesus telling his disciples this morning in his last discourse?

Jesus says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

But precisely what kind of love is it that Jesus commands of his disciples? It is, my friends, not a one-time love. It is not an "I did" kind of love, not a "I should" kind of love, rather it is a "present" love. That is to say, in every present moment, those who are Jesus' disciples are to love one another. In every present moment, Jesus commands us to love.

"This is my commandment," he said: "Love one another." He does not say, I command that you have loved one another, or I command that you will love one another. No, Jesus uses the present tense to command a present love. He thus calls us to love not here and there, not every once in a while or even most of the time. No, Jesus commands that we love continuously. In every present that is graciously given to us to live, we who are disciples of Jesus are to love one another.

It is an incomprehensible kind of love. Jesus makes it quite clear when he says, "No one can have greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends," or better translated: "No one can have greater love than this: to lay down one's life for those one loves."

Although this passage is no doubt predicting Jesus' death on the cross, and while this text has been, for some, the foundation of Christian martyrdom, Jesus is not really commanding of us a love that kills. He is not calling his disciples into death. Rather, Jesus is calling those who would follow him into a certain way of life, a certain way of living. He is commanding that we give our total lives, all of who we are, our very beings, over to one another in love.

This, then, is a love that has no limits. It is not conditioned upon what others do or whether or not they love us back. This love is boundless — so intense is the love that it obliges our very life. Such a love is utterly incomprehensible, except to the one that has been loved in such a way as we have been loved by Jesus. And this brings us to another aspect of this love, which Jesus commands.

What kind of love is it? It is a present, incomprehensible kind of love and also a productive kind of love. It is a kind of love that subsists only as it produces itself. Jesus makes it clear when he says, "You are my friends if you do what I command." Or the translation I prefer "And you are the ones I love if you do what I command."

Now we should not hear these words as Jesus offering the rules for special membership into his inner circle. Jesus is not saying to us that if we obey his command to love then he will love us. This is not an if-then statement. This is not a test of who's loved and who's not loved; who's in and who's out; who's saved and who's not saved. Rather, Jesus is telling us that those who know, who really know the love of Jesus, those who know, really know that Jesus loves them are those who love one another. Essentially, Jesus loves us into loving.

But my dear church friends, as important as it is to understand the present, incomprehensible, and productive quality of the love that Jesus commands of us, there is to me something even more significant about this love which he calls us into. And it is this something more that best captures Jesus' final call to us.

What kind of love is it? It is a manger kind of love. Jesus said to his disciples, "Love one another as I have loved you." And how is it that Jesus loved?

Jesus loved as one who was born in a manger and not ashamed of it. Jesus loved as one who never forgot his manger roots, his manger beginnings in this world. Jesus' love was a manger kind of love.

Now what in the world do I mean by a manger kind of love? It is the kind of love that the enslaved Africans testified to when they sang, "poor little Jesus boy, born in a manger; world treat him so mean, treat me mean, too."

A manger kind of love is a love that constrains us, downright obligates us, to love those who the world treats mean. A manger kind of love loves those who the world cast out. It loves those to whom the world says, "you are not good enough." It loves those to

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whom the world and, yes, even the church, tells, "There is no room for you in the inn."

A manger kind of love loves those the world, and, yes, even the church, says are the wrong color, the wrong gender, express their sexuality in the wrong way, talk funny and come from the wrong country. A manger kind of love is a love defined by being directed to manger kind of people.

You see, my friends, it is really quite simple. What kind of love is it that loves only those whom the world claims to love? This is an exclusive, actually hateful kind of love. But Jesus calls us to something different. Jesus calls us to love as he did, to love those whom the world doesn't love and maybe doesn't even like. Jesus calls us into loving those who feel unloved. He calls us to love them into loving themselves and one another even as he loves them. Now, that is a manger kind of love.

My friends, a manger kind of love is a love not meted out from a distance, a love not decreed from the sterile places where kings rule; no, a manger kind of love is a love that is up close and personal. It is a love that takes us, as it did Jesus, to the messy, ordinary places where people strive to make a life. It takes us into the places where people live, where people hurt, where people struggle, where people are in pain, where people die. It takes us where people are, so that we can touch them, know them even as they touch and know us.

You see, again, it is really quite simple, for it would be hard to hand down decrees which shut people out, which take food from person's tables, jobs from their communities, education from their children, health care from their bodies. It would be hard to do those things if we knew them.

It would not be so easy to be so unjust and discompassionate and unloving to those whose eyes we have looked into, whose faces we know, whose hands we have touched, whose tears we have shed. A manger love is a love that loves manger people in the very mangers in which they live.

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." And how did Jesus love? Jesus loved as one born in a manger: walking the highways and byways, touching the lives of manger people. Oh yes, my dear friends, Jesus calls us to a present, incomprehensible, productive, manger kind of love.

Oh yes. Be clear it was a manger kind of love that allowed Richard Allen and Absalom Jones to know that they were full-fledged children of God, worthy to worship God despite church leaders yanking them from their knees of prayer.

Oh yes, they knew a manger kind of love and to know it is to pass it on — that is why we are here.

Oh yes, be clear it was a manger kind of love that allowed eleven women to know that they were called from the womb to be priests in God's church, even when doors of churches were being barred to keep them out. Oh they knew a manger kind of love and to know it is to pass it on and that is why we are here.

Why are we here today consecrating this man Wendell as bishop? Because there has been a present, incomprehensible, productive river of manger love that has flowed through this Episcopal tradition saving it from its sterilized, institutionalized self so that it could be a church, a church of the one born in a manger.

And so my dear, dear brother Wendell, what does all of this mean for you as you are about to begin a new part of your journey as a child of God? It means that you are to remember that God through Jesus has not called you to a big hat. God through Jesus has not called you to a pretty robe, a purple shirt or a shiny new ring. No, God through Jesus has not even called you to a big chair, a cluttered desk or an office with a view. Oh no, God through Jesus has not called you to decree-making from bishop's houses or convention floors. No, to none of these things has God called you.

Instead, God through Jesus has commanded that you, Wendell, love as Jesus loved. You are commanded to love in all of your present moments, incomprehensibly, productively, as one unashamed of his manger heritage. You are not to let yourself be hidden by the clothes, sheltered by the buildings or protected by the decrees. You are commanded to love as Jesus did and to walk the highways and byways of manger lives, loving manger people.

What's love got to do with it? That, my friends, is the question for all of us to ask in all that we are and in all that we do as followers of Jesus. We, too, are called to nothing less than a present, incomprehensible, productive, manger kind of love. And we have no excuse, for to know the love of Jesus is to pass it on.

What's love got to do with it? Oh Wendell, oh church, as I stand here, as we gather here we are here on the shoulders of countless, unnamed people to whom the world and church has said no. I can feel their love right here with us. It is the love of an Absalom Jones. It is the love of an Anna Julia Cooper. It is the love of a Pauli Murray. It is the love of the names of those blessed with ebony grace that never made it to be bishop. It is the love of Jesus, and, my friends, to know that love is to, in the time we have been given to us, to pass it on.

Jesus commanded his disciples, "Love one another as I have loved you." And that's what love's got to do with it. ●

Kelly Brown Douglas is an associate professor of systematic theology at Howard University in Washington D.C. Her latest book is Sexuality and the Black Church *(Orbis, 1999).*

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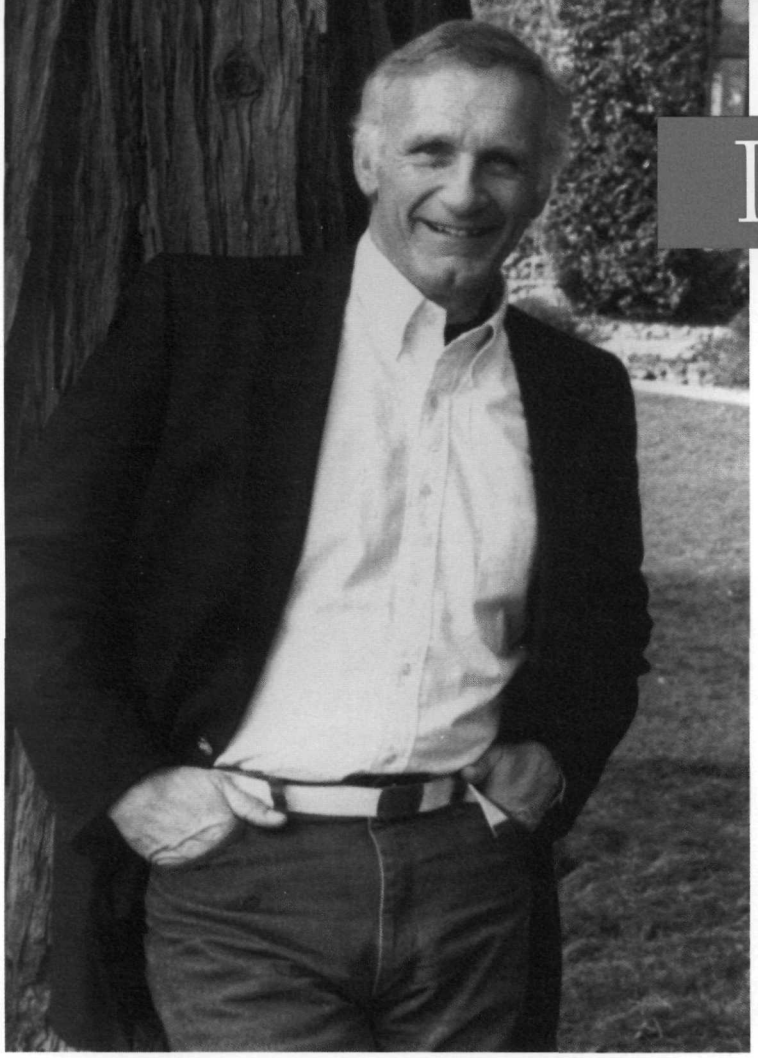

INSPIRED

Reviving the gospel genre

An interview with James Carse
by Richard Marranca and Dorothy Orme

JAMES CARSE IS PROFESSOR EMERITUS of Religious History and Literature at New York University. His recent book, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple* (Harper San Francisco, 1999), is an attempt to revive the genre of gospel writing. Neither a novel about Jesus, such as those by Kazantzakis and Norman Mailer, nor a harmonization of the traditional gospels, like those of Leo Tolstoy and Reynolds Price, the work aspires to be a somewhat piecemeal narrative of the life and teachings of Jesus, by one of his disciples — in this case a Samaritan woman.

Could you give us a little background on your latest book The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple?

I started years ago retelling classic stories and myths from the Gospels, actually even making up stories in the tradition of the midrash, the Jewish method of interpreting one story by telling another, making a rather free interpretation of classical religious texts. Then all of a sudden I realized I had quite a collection of material from the Gospels, or rather, a kind of alternative version of the Gospels. I realized, too, that for a long time I've had questions on the role of the canon in Christianity. In 325 (C.E.)Constantine established at the Council of Nicaea a canon which put a stop to the writing of gospels. Up to that time, there had been a lot of gospels. I thought that gave a kind of imperial quality to Christianity. It let Christians think that there is an absolute truth. It encouraged the kind of extremism with Christians that we have seen too often in history. Gospel-writing was an early Christian tradition; there may have been as many as 200 gospels written in the first several Christian centuries. So I thought, good, I'll resume the tradition, the old practice of writing gospels. So all of that came together, the tradition of writing gospels, my uneasiness with the canon, and my interest in midrashic interpretation of the Gospel. It evolved in a rather nice way.

Did this happen by chance?

Yes. I'm always happiest when things appear, when I discover something in the process of writing. I like to be involved in writing projects that are in a way beyond me. I like to start something I'm not really sure about or I'm not sure I can finish, so that in the process of writing, the book takes a form I never could have imagined, and this book is definitely of that character. You could say, in other terminology, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit! (laughter) But anyway, that's the process I like to follow. It means that books come slowly, but I'm much happier with it.

At the time that your book depicts, were there hundreds of gospels?

We have fragments of about 35 gospels, only one of which is complete, the Gospel of Thomas. After the Second World War a collection of these gospels was uncovered in the sands of Egypt. How many others lie undiscovered is anyone's guess. It may overstate it to say there were hundreds but certainly there were scores. It is important to note here that gospel is a literary form unique to Christianity. It makes sense for many reasons to resume writing them.

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AUDACITY?

In your Gospel, Christ comes into being as a teacher much more accidentally than in the official gospels.

There's even strong evidence in the New Testament that he might have developed that way himself. Scholars largely agree that Jesus had no consciousness of himself as the Messiah. Only once or twice, in very odd ways, does he say he is, in the canonical gospels. If he really had thought he was the Messiah, he would have said it a lot more often and the gospels would have reported his having said it more often. So I'm following the tradition that Jesus really didn't understand what was happening in his own life. And I take it a step further. That is, he understands that he doesn't understand what's happening. He knows that things are more mysterious than any single mind can grasp, so that becomes part of this teaching.

In your Gospel, and in the tradition, Christ starts out questioning the other rabbis, and soon other people start to follow him, not by his design, but by pure chance. People came to him, not because he performed miracles, but because they can see the suffering all around, and also because he needed to heal himself.

They all saw a vulnerability in him, an insight into things that was astonishing to them, so they followed him spontaneously, without knowing exactly what he was teaching. They were drawn by his person, as much as by his teaching, which is also the picture found in the canonical gospels.

So one of the things you point out is the struggle. That's not really in the gospels that much, the struggles.

There's some of it. In the Gospel of Mark, there's constant conflict between Jesus and his disciples. They not only don't get it, but they positively annoy him. But the canonical gospels don't have much in the way of the development of Jesus' own character and self-understanding. They present it after he's arrived at it. I wanted to have a more developmental, evolutionary view of the way Jesus comes to his ministry. After all, it's a very brief ministry. From the canonical gospels, it could have been either one year or three years. They don't agree on the amount of time. So I made it one year, which seems to me to be reasonable. Just one year of public life — quite a year! There had to be something about him that attracted attention. It must have been really quite dramatic to be remembered that way after simply one year of ministry.

Who was responsible for Jesus' execution?

You know, there is one thing I want to stress in this gospel. A disturbing element of the New Testament and of the Christian tradition has to do with the culpability of the Jews in crucifying Jesus. In the New Testament, there's a lot of vagueness here. Who actually executed Jesus? The Jews or the Romans? The New Testament account is incomplete, though as we know, Christians over history have held the Jews responsible. It's extremely unlikely the Jews would have executed Jesus — he broke no law requiring such action.

All of Rome's subject peoples were prohibited from using capital punishment. Rome reserved that punishment for itself alone. So now the question arises, if the Jews could not have done it, if the Romans had not permitted them to do it, then what Roman laws could Jesus have violated to lead to something as extreme as capital punishment?

From the canonical gospels we can't see any Roman laws that would have caused that kind of punishment. In writing this, I wanted to show two things. One, that his ministry was not in contrast or conflict with the Jews; it was itself a Jewish ministry. He was a Jew through and through. Also, there must have been something he had done that struck them as really dangerous to the Romans. That's why, in this book, it seemed to me to be necessary to show Pilate as someone who understood what Jesus was up to, and that he was dangerous. He was dangerous because he was a teacher of peace. He was not teaching insurrection against Rome, which only justifies its harsh role. He was teaching a kind of indifference to Rome. Let Rome die in your hearts, he taught. And Pilate was smart enough to know that this was the kind of thing that would eventually bring Rome down. So that was the reason he not only had him executed, but had him executed, as it were, illegally, innocently, so that his followers would be tempted to rise up and oppose Rome and therefore justify Rome for putting them down.

One of the things you get across in this book is that you wanted to open up the tradition of gospel-writing again, because the story's not finished. And the woman, the Samaritan, in whose voice the gospel is set, recognizes that the story is incomplete.

Right. It's an unfinished story. Not only is the Gospel an unfinished story, which is one of the assumptions of this book, but a lot of the stories in my book have the quality of open possibilities, rather than defining, narrowing, limiting things. ●

Richard Marranca is a fiction writer and college professor living in Nevada. Dorothy Orme is a language teacher in college and industry.

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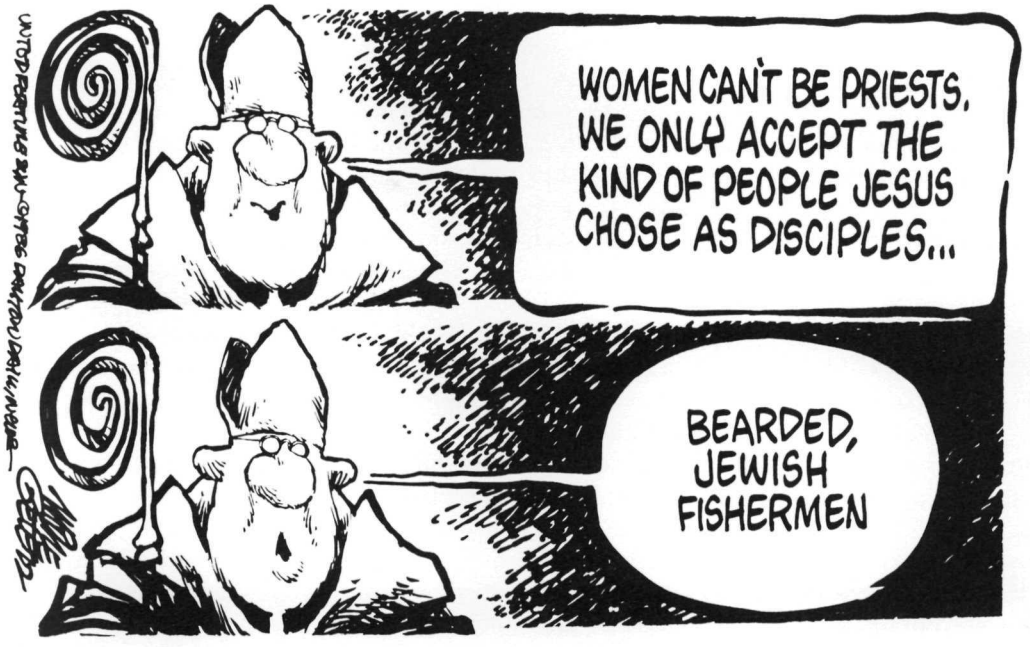

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"SPIRITUAL GROWTH MAY BE DIFFICULT FOR MISS FONDA BECAUSE OF HER HOLLYWOOD BACKGROUND."

Jane Fonda born-again

Jane Fonda has become a born-again Christian and is attending services and Bible studies at a black Baptist church in Atlanta. According to a story in *The Washington Times* [1/14/00], friends of Fonda have said that her conversion contributed to her separation from her husband, Ted Turner, but that the couple hope to work out a reconciliation. According to the story, Turner "has been an outspoken critic of Christianity, calling it a 'religion for losers.' ... Mr. Turner has told friends that he had accepted Christ as a young man at a Billy Graham crusade, but lost his faith after the death of his sister." The *Times* quoted Gerald Durley, pastor of Providence Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, as saying that he was "extremely impressed with the genuineness and sincerity in [Fonda's] search for spirituality and wholeness." The story cites a number of people as instrumental in Fonda's conversion, including Ginny Millner, wife of Georgia Republican leader Guy Millner, and Nancy McGuirk, whose husband is an executive in Turner Broadcasting Co. Fonda's chauffeur also played a role, according toTed Baehr, chairman of the Christian Film and Television Commission in Los Angeles. The *Times* story reports: "The key figure in Miss Fonda's search ... may have been her chauffeur, who shared his faith with her, Mr. Baehr said. When her husband became upset when she began attending Atlanta's fashionable Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Miss Fonda 'asked her chauffeur where she should go.' The chauffeur invited her to attend his church, the predominantly black Providence Missionary Church.

"She accepted the invitation, and became a regular parishioner there, though she apparently has not joined the church. Miss Fonda, who founded the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, helped Providence Church establish its Fathers Resource Center, which educates young men about the emotional and social responsibilities of fatherhood.

"She has not publicly talked about her political views, or whether she has changed any of them, but she is said to have declined to participate in a meditation ceremony at an environmental conference not long ago with an admonition that 'it would be better to pray to Jesus Christ.'" The *Washington Times* writer states that "spiritual growth may be difficult for Miss Fonda because of her Hollywood background. The Academy Award-winning actress, who was called 'Hanoi Jane' after her 1971 trip to North Vietnam, where she was photographed posing on an anti-aircraft battery, 'has been in a cultural universe that is utterly hostile to Christianity,'" according to Robert Knight of the Family Research Council, a conservative advocacy organization.

Car-sharing

"For the past nine years, Bremen, Germany, has been encouraging its 550,000 inhabitants

to abandon car ownership through a car-sharing scheme that allows them to rent a vehicle quickly and at low cost," *Timeline* reports (11-12/99). "The cars can be rented at 37 locations around the city for a short shopping trip or a weekend excursion. For about $40, a Bremen resident buys a smart card that allows a driver to make reservations and to gain access to the vehicles, with a choice of 10 models from subcompacts to vans. The cars recognize the smart card through a transponder field on the windshield that opens the doors; upon return, a swipe of the card across the windshield locks the doors and transmits trip information for billing. Rates are cheaper than rental agencies' because the city picks up costs such as wear and tear, taxes, insurance, gasoline and cleaning."

Staying put, moving on

Every place needs both people who are committed to it as their home and people who move in and out, Scott Russell Sanders, author of *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World*, said in an interview with *The Sun* (2/00). "I think it's essential that there be many people who are deeply committed to their places," Sanders said. "If every community, watershed, and bioregion had a core of people who'd made that commitment, then other people could move around. In fact, places also need people who are moving around, people who bring in new ideas from outside and break the ethnic or religious or economic pattern. The problem is that our entire culture encourages us to move rather than to stay. All the voices we hear are saying, 'Change, move, seek novelty.' If I lived in a culture where everybody stayed put, I would probably have written a book called *Moving On*, because for wholeness, you need both: people with a commitment to a place, and people who bring new ideas from elsewhere."

Resistance to change

"All attempts at change mobilize resistance," Walter Wink writes in *Fellowship* (1-2/200). "The power of What-Is attempts to squelch That-Which-Attempts-To-Be. Perhaps What-Is succeeds, but in the very act of repression, draws attention to and gives credibility to the emergent new. Psychotherapists are trained to recognize massive resistance as a hopeful sign; it means that the resistance may be on the verge of capitulating altogether. Institutions function the same way.

"'When the Church is about to accept a mutation in doctrinal explanation or disciplinary direction, the whole edifice of tradition refuses to acknowledge the possibility of change.' Precisely at that point, argues Francis X. Murphy, the turnabout has begun. Resistance to Jesus led to the cross; it did not succeed in stopping the New Reality that he brought."

Democractic capitalism?

"There is something particularly evil about U.S. elites' use of the term 'democratic' in connection with an increasingly universalized and worldwide capitalism," Paul Street writes in *Z*. "Few if any aspects of contemporary capitalism are less democratic than precisely its tendency towards globalization. ... Capital seeks through globalization to evade, subvert, and preclude popular and governmental regulation and to roll back labor power.

"According to a recent study by the New Economy Information Service (NEIS) — a labor-connected think tank that gauges the impact of globalization — American corporate capital particularly likes to float into global territories controlled by dictatorships. By cross-checking U.S. government and World Bank statistics on world trade and investments with Freedom House's comparative ranking of world nation states as 'free,' 'partly free' and 'not free,' the NEIS recently discovered that 72 percent of U.S. manufacturing investment in 'developing' (Third World) countries goes to 'unfree' nations. At the same time, U.S. imports from 'unfree' states have risen from less than half to nearly two-thirds of U.S. imports from the 'developing' world since the end of the Cold War, even while the number of Third World nations meriting Freedom House's criteria for 'free' status has also grown. It should be remembered, of course, that much of what passes for import trade with the 'developing' world is in fact the shifting of product assets from Third World to U.S. branches of American-based multinational corporations." ●

CLASSIFIEDS

Women's Caucus

Christian feminists: Plan now to attend the Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus biennial conference, "And Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," July 27-30, 2000, North Park University, Chicago, IL. Speakers include Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B. and author/EEWC foremother Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. For information, visit http://www.eewc.com or call 847-825-5651.

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Successful U.K. strategies for getting GE foods off supermarket shelves

by Beverly Thorpe

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These are all things that can be undertaken by real people, in the places where they live and shop for dinner. Remember, safe food issues cut across all the usual political dividing lines. We're all human, we all eat, we all want to live long and healthy lives. You will most likely find that your neighbors are somewhat informed and at least moderately concerned about genetically engineered foods already. By organizing, you give them the opportunity to take a stand about the substances they put into their bodies.

Target popular products you know contain GEs

Beanfeast is a vegetarian version of Sloppy Joe and is made by Unilever, the largest food distributor in Europe. Beanfeast was one of the first foods to be labelled in the U.K. with the information that it "contains genetically modified soya." Although Unilever's name was not on the packaging, it was our intention that Unilever feel the impact of the Beanfeast campaign. What did appear on the packet was a well-known brand name, Batchelor's. This company also makes other well-loved English food products.

The campaign was conducted by Greenpeace U.K., Friends of the Earth, and Genetic Concern. Using the following tactics, U.K. consumers caused a 50 percent decline in Beanfeast's sales in one year's time. This stunning impact led Unilever to adopt a policy to source non-genetically engineered products in Europe. Here's how we did it:

We handed out postcards addressed to Batchelor's, which consumers then mailed to the company. These cards made it easy for shoppers to address their concerns to the company responsible.

We distributed store "disloyalty" cards. These resembled the discount or shopper reward cards supermarkets give to customers. Ours said, "Batchelor's Beanfeast contains genetically altered ingredients — what's next?!" Here we displayed pictures of other Batchelor products, ones known NOT to have GE ingredients — yet. We distributed postcards and fact sheets with the Unilever 1-800 number and other company contact information and urged consumers to contact the company to make their opinions known. We asked consumers not to buy Beanfeast.

Conduct supermarket tours

These tours were an extremely effective element of Greenpeace's efforts in the U.K. They are something you can do wherever you live, to raise the consciousness of markets and consumers alike. Your group will be most effective if you dress nicely and are courteous, but firm.

For your target market, choose one that's part of a big chain, opposes product labeling and has so far refused to phase out genetically engineered ingredients. Contact the supermarket manager roughly four days before you plan to conduct the tours. Explain what you intend to do, and why. Ask for their cooperation. If they refuse, proceed anyway.

Advertise the supermarket tour widely and well in advance. Extend personal invitations to local church and civic leaders, politicians, chefs and restaurant owners, educators, bankers. Also invite organic food producers and food coop organizers.

Plan your route through the store and prepare your script. On tour day set up a command post outside the market. Have a portable table stocked with printed handouts and a tablet for collecting names and addresses of participants. Have friendly, courteous volunteers ready to talk about GE foods to anyone who happens by.

At tour time, assemble your participants. Introduce yourself. Thank them for coming and brief them on what to expect inside the store. Make sure everyone has a copy of your print information. Tour leaders should carry additional leaflets to give people who join the tour inside the store.

Inside the supermarket, you need two people to conduct each tour—a guide and a traffic manager. The guide leads the tour and speaks at each station. The traffic manager follows the group, keeping it together, and invites other shoppers to join the tour.

At each station of the tour route, be ready to talk specifically about the foods in that market section. Talk equally about the dangers of genetically engineered products and the virtues of organic food.

At each stop, encourage tour members to take action. You want them to ask lots and lots of questions of the supermarket manager at the checkout stand. How can I be sure these foods contain no genetically engineered ingredients? Do you stock organic products? How about organic butter? Organic pizza? Are all your products clearly labeled? Let them know it's perfectly okay, in fact, intended, that their questions should slow up the flow of commerce.

Point out the 1-800 numbers on product packaging. Urge tour members to call these numbers frequently, asking questions and expressing opinions about genetically engineered ingredients.

Don't fall into the trap of praising or blaming specific products. Send tough questions to the supermarket manager or to that 1-800 number at the food company.

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Where to go, what to say

By the fresh fruits and vegetables, talk about organic farming. Raise the following points: At the end of the World War II, chemical weapons companies like Monsanto transformed themselves into pesticide companies. The average daily diet now includes a cocktail of different pesticides. GE food continues this massive use of pesticides in two main ways:

Weed resistant plants — Monsanto's soya bean plants do not die when sprayed with Monsanto's own weed killer, but all the wildlife in the field does. Up to 50 percent of the U.S. soya crop is this GE soya.

Insect-resistant plants — a GE corn plant produces its own pesticide. In the U.S. this corn is regulated as a pesticide, not a food. All insects, whether harmful or beneficial, die when they feed on the crop. This also means no food for the birds.

By the organic food, present organic farming as the solution. Points to raise: Organic farming promotes health of the entire farming system — soil, crops, animals, people. It involves systems designed without regular use of antibiotics, growth promoters, genetic engineering or artificial pesticides. Organic farming is guaranteed by a certification label (show one). The organic market in Europe is growing at 25 percent per year – faster than computers and telecommunications.

Someone will no doubt complain about the higher cost of organic food. Raise these points: Organic farmers don't receive the subsidy intensive farmers get. We pay the true cost of industrial food through our taxes. To change this, buy organic, bug your store manager and the public relations folks at those 1-800 numbers for organic foods, and lobby your congressional representatives to support organic agriculture and reject subsidies to genetically engineered crops.

By the sandwiches, readymeals and pizzas, address labeling. In the U.K., tour guides carry a magnifying glass to show how small the print is and how little it says. In the U.S., where labeling is not required, up to 60 percent of food products contain GE ingredients.

By the chocolate, talk about GE ingredients. Urge tour members to call the 1-800 number on the package and ask the company to use non-GE soy lecithin. Have them ask both the candy company and the store manager for organic chocolate.

By the baby food, make it clear we don't know the long-term health effects of GE foods. Raise these points: There has been no long-term testing on humans. Health concerns include both unexpected allergies and unexpected toxins. Many responsible scientists recommend that GE foods should be tested as rigorously as GE medicines, that is, with 20-year human trials. Right now, we are the guinea pigs.

Consumer pressure has led Gerber and some other manufacturers to declare they will not use GE ingredients in baby food.

By the meats, talk about problems of antibiotic resistance. Raise these points: Soya and corn are used in animal feed. Novartis GE corn is of particular concern because it contains a gene that confers resistance to antibiotics. Rising antibiotic resistance is already a problem for veterinary and human medicine because of antibiotics mixed with animal feed. Antibiotic resistance means bacterial diseases become unresponsive to treatment by known drugs. Organic meat is free of antibiotics and organic animals are well cared for.

By the Tampons, diapers and cotton balls, point out that GE ingredients affect more than our food. Cotton — 50 percent of the U.S. cotton crop is Monsanto GE cotton. Corn is used for toothpaste, make-up, cigarette butts, tablets and glues. Non-food uses of GE crops affect the environment and are likely to increase if more food manufacturers stop using GE soya and corn.

At tour's end, tell people what to do next:

Use your wallet — boycott GE food and buy organic — and use your voice — phone up 1-800 numbers; ask the supermarket owners and store managers to stop stocking GE brands and to increase the organic food available; contact Clinton and Gore and your Congressional representatives. ●

Copyright © Beverly Thorpe, 2000 All Rights Reserved. *Beverly Thorpe, of Clean Production Action, was at the heart of the grassroots campaign that made clear to British food retailers their customers would not tolerate products containing genetically engineered or modified ingredients on their shelves or in their food supply, <bthorpe@web.net>; <www.most.org.pl/cpa>.*

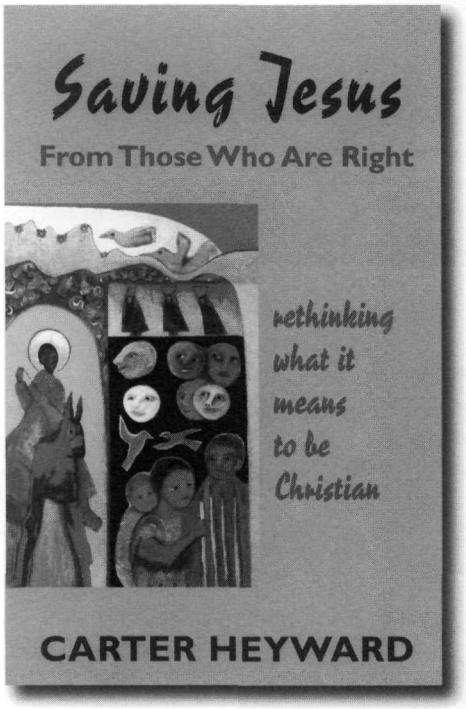
A third tactic Thorpe recommends is "guerilla check-out actions." A campaign in the U.K. focused on Marks and Spencers, a prestigious, high-end food retailer that was initially a strong defender of the benefits of GE food. In July 1999, after about 10 check-out actions in different locations, Marks and Spencers told Greenpeace that "all the food products sold in our stores are now being made without GM ingredients or derivatives. This has been a major achievement by our food technology team, who have been travelling the world to source 'identity preserved' non GM ingredients." All food retailers in the U.K. now have the same policy.

Contact Greenpeace USA for a True Food Action Kit or to join the True Food network,<Charles.Margulis@dialb.greenpeace.org>.

BOOK REVIEW

'Messin' with my Jesus'

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann



Saving Jesus from Those Who are Right
by Carter Heyward
Minneapolis:
Fortress Press, 1999

I'VE JUST FINISHED teaching a class on Urban Principalities. The students, with one exception, were entirely African American, some quite streetwise. An account of Jesus, howsoever biblical, as provocateur engaging economic, political, and structural powers, prompts one student to warn me, "Now you're messin' with my Jesus." Out comes an urgent anxiety about gatekeeping a certain black church orthodoxy. Out come passionately held versions of the atonement, which I do not share and into which I lean. He bolts the room to catch his breath and regather thoughts. Since I know my brother was indeed saved from the grip of genuinely demonic powers in a bottomed-out instant of accepting Christ, I tread carefully when he returns. To mess with his Jesus is to shake foundations on which he stands, to stretch boundaries that hold back the waters of chaos. In the end, however, he grants that Jesus may be more than he knows.

Carter Heyward has written a Christology calculated to mess with any number of peoples' "Jesuses." And yet she treads an unexpectedly gentle and careful path, indeed an open and dialogical one. I am grateful, when she names the readership for whom she writes, to find myself roundly included. Her specific intent to offer the book in the mutuality of relation and conversation sets my approach to this review. Moreover, I know her as a longtime friend of *The Witness*.

There is, admittedly, a temptation to negative Christology in this project. Jesus Christ as authoritarian lord or moralist or obedient Son of an angry Father has been made to function in ways deadly to women, or slaves, or gays, among others. Christology "matters" to them. And this book is an act of resistance and no-saying, as the polemics of its title might suggest. But it is more than that. It is an act of constructive, even biblical, theology which sets out to rethink our relation to Jesus.

The biblical sections are surprising in a way. They are unencumbered with self-conscious hermeneutical footwork. This is not the suspicious, deconstructive phase of study. These are more meditations, set in motion by selective texts, which rework the narrative around a theological language of "mutual relation," both personal and social (in which God, as a verb, is the sacred connective energy of "justice-love"). In this framework, even the Trinity (so subject to hierarchical modeling) may be noticed intimating the Sacred as relational. "Right thinking" (orthodoxy) is supplanted by "right relation" in importance. And discipleship (a term I can't recall her even using), as opposed to "following the Lord," becomes walking with Jesus as brother in the struggle.

Make no mistake: The cross remains an important reality here. It is not, however, for Heyward a place of reconciliation, or liberation, or transformation (which I do take it to be), but it is the inevitable consequence of a ministry threatening to the authorities (which I firstly take it to be as well). She sees the cross not as an extraordinary turning-point, but as the ordinary commonplace, that normal fate of those who confront power.

As have others in feminist and womanist circles, she exposes that doctrine of atonement which posits a Father so angry at the lawbreaking sin of humanity that he can only be satisfied by the submissive blood sacrifice of his Son. It is functionally pernicious. Thomas Merton once called it "the moral theology of the devil" (*New Seeds of Contemplation*, 1961). Heyward says, "Atonement, making right relation with God, occurs in the context of wrong relation — relation steeped in authoritarian, moralistic, violent dynamic." I would add further that in the process the principalities and powers, the "gods of this world" who crucified Jesus, are

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let off the hook, are nowhere to be found, are read out of the doctrine's narrative formula. Unless they be "god." At one point Heyward writes that "because he was living in relation to a very different Spirit, Jesus was killed by the god of patriarchy." How doctrinally ironic, perverse and odd that the god of patriarchy, rather than the God whom Jesus loved, should be elevated and honored in this formula, a certain theological triumph for the powers.

The principalities are on the map in *Saving Jesus*. It may actually be a danger of a thoroughgoing relational theology to omit them. And indeed, in thinking about evil, she seems to suggest that blaming systems and structures (like slavery or capitalism or sexism or homophobia), let alone the Devil or Satan, lets us off the hook of examining our own lives for responsibility. Yet, in the end, they are named and identified in her book and theology. I may be a little fuzzy on how she sees them — elaborate and alienated social configurations of wrong relation? But they are, at any rate, prominent and on the scene. It is one thing, she suggests, to cite certain leaders of the Christian Right as evil, and another to understand the larger forces — social, economic, political — behind their fear-based politics. "Far more evil, seductive, and dangerous is the massive, elusive structure of the global political economy." In a related connection she may speak of the self-absorbed individualism of "capitalist spirituality," which is the matrix of our complicity. Liberation from the powers means, essentially, living in right (mutual) relation nevertheless. Resisting and refusing structural "power over." It means imagination as a form of freedom. (And these would presumably be the marks of "discipleship" as well).

Biblically, however, Heyward doesn't find in Christian scripture any substantive "power analysis." We learn social analysis, as it were, from Marx and friends, not from Mark and friends. In her view it takes the tools of sociology to read between the textual lines Jesus' critique not only of individual sin, but of the structures of oppression. I disagree. The scriptures seem to me substantially an unfolding conversation about power, from Genesis 1, to nations and empires, Israel's own monarchy and the consolidation of wealth, or the table fellowship of the house churches. Patriarchy is a player involved. The New Testament epistles struggle explicitly to comprehend the principalities, and Jesus' acts of ministry are, virtually in every instance, portrayed as simultaneously personal and social. When an act of "pastoral care" raises an eyebrow, he invariably pushes it further in public provocation of the powers as he has discerned them. In the context of debt and purity code, for example, the healing encounters are far more like Rosa Parks' movement-sparking than exercises in bedside manner.

Heyward makes an interesting christological concession in connection with the powers. "Many African Americans point out the significance, in the context of white racism, of Black people's affirmation that JESUS is Lord! — Jesus, not the slave owner, is Lord!" She goes on to cite this as sanction for her continuing participation, even with serious misgivings, in public worship that employs authoritarian images — and by extension, I presume, her ongoing ordered relationship with Anglicanism (see also, "There is a River" *TW*, 3/2000). My location in the same context is admittedly different, but the same could be said of Jesus, not American nuclear empire — Jesus, not the WTO or global corporations — Jesus, not white supremacy — how about: Jesus, not patriarchy? She opens the door on a question: Can a structurally problematic and ambiguous biblical "orthodoxy" function in a truly radical way? Or again, can the judgement of God, being the judgement of God alone (another problematic), function to underscore the ambiguity in which we live — radically marking the moral "recognition and acceptance of the limits of our capacities to discern, judge, and condemn"? Heyward's approach to exposing idolatry and "rightness," even close to home, is, of course, different.

I like very much how this book moves toward nonviolence (albeit with one persistent equivocation) and forgiveness. It is somehow unexpected and courageous, though completely in accord with a relational Christology. The section is a well-developed, creative, and spiritually thoughtful contribution to kindom movement. I confess I entered on the reading wondering if the Right, as most persistent "enemy" on the present scene, would come back in as anything but a counter example. They do not. By its own accounting, the book is not written for them (they would rail and rage and spit it out, their Jesus thoroughly messed with). And yet I wonder on.

Apart from cynical leaders, these are generally folks who shape their lives on a relationship with Jesus (albeit not "mutual" right relation, as friend and brother). They are in the grip of deadly anxieties and fears (legitimate and manufactured, inflated and manipulated). Where might dialogical grace and forgiveness lead?

Perhaps Jesus would mess with us. ●

Bill Wylie-Kellermann is Witness *book review editor. He directs graduate theological studies at the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) in Chicago.*

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Go to other villages and live the Gospel

by Marianne Arbogast

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GINNY DOCTOR considers herself "first and foremost, a missionary." Yet her understanding of her role might surprise people who are accustomed to a more narrow definition of the vocation.

Doctor, a Mohawk Indian from New York who has lived in Alaska since 1993, sees her fundamental mission as "restoring the spirituality of the people."

"If people want to return to their traditional ways, which were the ways that God gave them years and years before the missionaries came, then that's what they should do, and that's what I tell people," says Doctor, who now serves as Special Assistant to the Bishop of Alaska, Mark MacDonald. "I'm not here to convert people to be Episcopalian, but to give people direction in their spiritual lives."

Doctor's own spiritual journey took her through a time of questioning the Christian faith in which she was raised, and to which she is now personally committed. Growing up on a reservation, Doctor was brought up in the Anglican tradition of her grandmother.

"I can trace my Anglican roots way back to the 1700s on my mom's side," she says. "My grandmother was a stalwart, steadfast Episcopalian, and because we're a matriarchal society, everybody did what Grandma said."

But when the birth of a new Indian consciousness called Christianity into question, Doctor was affected by the critique.

"Some harsh kinds of words were coming, like, you cannot be a Christian and an Indian at the same time. We were being called 'apples' — red on the outside, white on the inside, because we were Christian. I was young at the time, and those words really struck me and really hurt me. And because I was very proud of my Indian heritage, I turned away from the church for a number of years because I wanted to find out what it meant to live the traditional way."

The effort was unfulfilling, Doctor reports, largely because she did not understand the language. Ultimately, it was her grandfather, who was not a Christian, who convinced her to return to the church.

"My grandfather was a traditional kind of holy person," she says. "He was a healer, and he knew all the songs and dances of the tradition. He never pushed any of his traditional beliefs on us, out of respect for my grandmother, because he knew that that was her role and that was her power, to make us what she wanted to make us."

IF PEOPLE WANT TO RETURN TO THEIR TRADITIONAL WAYS, WHICH WERE THE WAYS THAT GOD GAVE THEM ... THEN THAT'S WHAT THEY SHOULD DO, AND THAT'S WHAT I TELL PEOPLE.

Doctor should return to the church, her grandfather told her, because that was what she knew best. He explained that as long as she believed in God, it didn't really matter where she worshiped.

Doctor soon found herself on her parish vestry, and was asked to attend a national church conference.

"That became a life-changing experience," she says. "I thought we were the only Indian Episcopalians in the whole wide world. But at this convocation I met all kinds of Indian Episcopalians and became connected with them almost immediately. I could see that we carried some of the same things."

Doctor soon found herself deeply involved in the life of the national church. She has served on the National Committee on Indian Work, the Committee on the Status of Women and the Council for Women's Ministries.

In 1976, Doctor became executive director of the Urban Indian Center in Syracuse, a post she held for 17 years. It was her experience there that led her to missionary work.

"I began to see that we were operating a revolving door, that we were seeing the children of some of the children we had worked with," she says. "We saw them coming to the door again and again, because they had never healed the things in that family's life to help them move on. We filled lots of social and economic needs, but I came to the conclusion that the only way that we could really restore people was to restore the spirituality of the people that had been broken years and years ago. But it was difficult in that setting, because our funding would not allow us to work on those kinds of things."

Since childhood, Doctor had dreamed of going to Alaska. Her impasse at work, combined with the election of Steve Charleston, with whom she had worked on past projects, as Bishop of Alaska provided the impetus for her to make the move.

Doctor moved to Tanana, a remote, "fly-in" community on the north bank of the Yukon River, with a population of about 350 people, about 90 percent Athabascan Indian. Most are at least nominally Episcopalian.

"It's a river culture — our lives are centered around the river and what the river brings, and where we can go on the river. It's a big fishing community and a place where people live off the land as much as they can. But like any Indian community — or any non-Indian community, as far as that goes — there are social problems. There is a constant

battle with alcohol and drugs."

Though her work is based in the church, Doctor says that her main concern is not church attendance, but "whole and happy and healthy families. It doesn't make one bit of difference to me whether or not they come to church every Sunday. If they're off in the woods, doing something family-oriented, if they're up at fish camp putting up fish and the whole family is there and there isn't any alcohol, that's more important than coming to church."

Doctor was initially charged with helping to implement Charleston's vision of raising up ordained leaders in the villages. Her work in Tanana has resulted in the ordination of a local elder in February of this year. Doctor herself is also preparing for ordination.

With the election of Mark MacDonald as bishop, the focus shifted to discipleship, Doctor says. She explains that MacDonald believes "it's important to create circles of discipleship first, and then see what comes of that."

When Doctor is at the diocesan center in Fairbanks — about 130 miles from Tanana — she joins the diocesan staff in prayer and scripture study.

"We engage the Gospel on a daily basis. We reflect on it and see what the Gospel is calling us to do on that particular day, that particular time, whatever it is that we're involved in. In doing that we have noticed the Holy Spirit moving and have felt all kinds of changes in people."

In September, the diocese is planning to enlarge the circle at Vigil 2000, a major "gathering of disciples" at Fort Yukon. Doctor is the staff liaison to coordinate the event.

"We want to call people together to come and engage the Gospel in love and prayer — people from the outside and people from Alaska," she says. "We'll come together and live our lives for three days in discipleship and see what God is calling us to do about many of the things that impact us as being Christian, and also as stewards of the planet."

Invitations have been sent far and wide — to Alaskan Christians of all denominations, to people who have expressed interest in partnership with Alaska, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen of England.

In addition to providing an opportunity for communal discernment, the vigil is intended to address "the need for healing and reconciliation," Doctor says.



"The native people lost something by the church's presence in Alaska," she says. "While the missionaries brought the Gospel to the native people, the people made a sacrifice. The sacrifice is now catching up to people, because of the loss of language and the loss of land. People began to lose their way of life, and that created all kinds of problems because the people were not whole, they were missing that spiritual element."

Doctor defines discipleship as a commitment "to not only engage the Gospel but live the Gospel. Whatever God is calling me to do after reflecting and engaging the Gospel, that is my charge, and I have to carry that out as far as I can. It's called me to go to other villages where I'm out of my comfort zone, where I have to live differently than I live here. Actually, it was hard to come here, too. I left my family, I left friends in New York. Last spring I went to Africa to help do some training of trainers [Women of Vision leadership training] and that was hard."

But her life is "very happy," Doctor says. "I think I've found a good balance in my life — a spiritual, mental and physical balance. Tanana's not a place where you can just turn on the faucet and get water, where you can just turn up the thermostat and get heat. I chop wood and haul my water. But the physical work keeps me in balance. In doing what God has given you to do, even though it's hard, there's joy there."

Individual calls vary, Doctor believes.

"I think we can only do as much as God gives us to do. But God knows this, so for God it's okay. But God, I think, expects us to at least do something. I don't see it as being arduous. I think that the more people are equipped with the Gospel, the easier it gets. If you're sitting in the circle where there may be discussion about something difficult, and if Jesus is in the center — if you've reflected on the Gospel — then it's amazing what that Gospel can do to bring you to a good place with everything that's going on." ●

Marianne Arbogast *is associate editor of* The Witness, *<marianne@thewitness.org>.*

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Michael Bergt—The Night Watch

The Witness

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WITNESS MAGAZINE

The Witness



GLOBALIZATION:
for the common good or ill?

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WITNESS MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

8 **Jubilee 2000 and the globalized world of debt:**
An interview with Ann Pettifor by Julie A. Wortman
As co-founder of the campaign to celebrate this Year of Jubilee by providing debt relief to the world's poorest countries, Ann Pettifor is one of today's leading advocates for an international financial system that is accountable and fair to every stakeholder. *In a sidebar*, Bread for the World's Mike Barwick reports on the way conservative Republican Congressman Spencer Bachus was won over to the debt-relief cause.

14 **Understanding globalization:** *A key first step in working for the common good by Camille Colatosti*
Globalization is a fact of life, often a very negative one for the health and well-being of creation.

18 ***Maquilas* and the search for cheap labor in a globalized economy** *by Lou Schoen*
Members of the Episcopal Peace and Justice Network for Global Concerns have been visiting *maquilas* in Central America, gathering facts and insights that will aid fellow Episcopalians in working for improvements.

22 **When a global giant comes knocking:** *A small city debates a Wal-Mart supercenter by Murray Carpenter*
The citizens of Rockland, Me., are debating the merits of Wal-Mart's proposal to build a supercenter twice as large as its current store. On the surface, the debate revolves around the likely impact on traffic, drainage and neighboring properties. But the deeper question is what the long-term impact on community life will be.

28 **Jubilee:** *Wrapped in a mantle of freedom and responsibility by Susan S. Keller*
In this Jubilee year, many Christians are frankly unclear as to what embracing the biblical Jubilee implies for their lives. Susan Keller points out that Jubilee spirituality is nothing new to African Americans.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editorial Notes
7 Poetry
13 Book Review
21 On the Theme
26 Short Takes
27 Classifieds
30 Witness Profile

on the cover

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Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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Remembering Anglican roots

This letter should have been written weeks ago to tell you how much my wife, Nancy, and I appreciated the new format for *The Witness* — and additionally how much we both want to express our gratitude for the articles in the March 2000 issue by Ian Douglas and Bill Countryman. Both help us to remember our roots in Anglicanism. Ian's article about Mark Dyer's ideas has been long overdue in some media — and we are grateful *The Witness* carried it.

Walter C. Righter
(VII Bishop of Iowa, ret.)
Ashland, MA

By whose authority?

Congratulations!!! A superb issue. It's great to have you all talking about authority from so many perspectives. Our baptism invites us to identify, explore and claim what this means for all of us, individually and in community. You helped flesh this out. You offered readers examples of ministering communities instead of communities gathered around ministers. These are enriching and empowering alternatives (and faithful reflections of the earliest Christian communities) to the centralized, top-down model the church has been espousing for too long. Every one of the articles was really important and my thanks goes to all the contributors. Particular thanks also to Ian Douglas for his article on power, privilege and primacy in the Anglican Communion. It helped to have this look at recent worldwide Anglicanism.

I have to confess a bias born of serving in dioceses that understand and encourage total ministry/baptismal ministry!!! How the community grows when everyone understands that our primary ordination is our baptism! That we ALL are ministers ... not only those of us who are clergy.

I've ordered copies of this issue for a group I'm mentoring as a way of fleshing out their glimpses of what the church *can* be. Thanks for your gift of wisdom to us all.

Pat Colenback
Hebron, CT

The Papacy: a problem for Christendom

I was impressed by your issue on "Authority." However, I was struck dumb by the discussion of the Virginia Report [by Ian T. Douglas] with its suggestion of an "Anglican Pope" in the form of the Archbishop of Canterbury; and, of a concomitant "College of Primates."

That is the most inane thing I have heard since I left Rome!

One of the least discussed difficulties that Christianity faces is the continuing (indeed, increasing) lack of credibility of the Roman Church due to the intransigence of the Papacy. Notice that I say "Christianity." The Papacy is not just a problem for the Roman Church itself. Rather, the Papacy is the one institution within Christendom that is actually capable of sinking the entire ship.

"Upon this rock ..." may not mean a whole lot to most Protestants. But it does mean something. Orthodoxy speaks of the Pope as "First among Equals." And, the Archbishop of Canterbury has referred to the Pope as the "Prime Spokesperson."

The problem: The Pope can only be "so wrong" until he can make all Christians look like fools!

Whether or not Roman Catholic bishops will ever find the courage to correct the Papacy is their problem. They are the only ones with the power to do it, whether or not they have the will to exercise their power.

What should be obvious is that it would be a mistake for the Anglican Communion to head in the same direction. For all the bumbling along that Episcopal bishops do, they at least try to be charitable; and, for that matter, even just.

Rather, we might do well to pray that Roman bishops emulate us!

One thing is certain. I would hate to see

the day when Anglicans were waiting to see a Canterbury die the way some Romans do some of their Popes.

John Kavanaugh
Detroit, MI

Guard against easy stories

Awhile ago I did not renew because your "new" format of topic issues did not deal with current concerns and it seemed to me that *The Witness* had lost its cutting edge. There seemed to be no controversy needing discussion. Now after a year or so of not having *The Witness* I am renewing because of my need for some in-depth material to read.

The Witness, however, like the *New York Times*, needs to guard against the temptation to easy stories that are too often centered in Detroit.

I invite you to Northport, Mich., which has a very cooperative association among the Christian churches in the area. The Episcopal parish, St. Christopher's, uses the physical plant of the Roman Catholic church, St. Gertrude's. There is also a protestant Native American congregation close by.

And the Native American poverty issue — has it been solved?

Janet Dickerson
Omena, MI

Orlando Barr, Jr.

My husband, Orlando Sydney Barr, Jr., 80, a retired Episcopal priest, biblical scholar, educator and author, died Sunday, March 19, 2000 in Glen Arden Life Care Center in Goshen, N.Y. He was a contributing editor for *The Witness* many years ago, and was always a great enthusiast for the magazine.

Born in Haverhill, Mass., he attended Phillips Andover Academy and Yale University, from which he graduated in 1942 and subsequently obtained his doctorate. In 1952 he joined the faculty of The General Theological Seminary, where he taught New Testament and Greek for 26 years. He was the Glorvina Rossell Hoffman Professor of the Literature and Interpretation of the New Testament at the time of his retirement.

A veteran of World War II, he served in the Army Air Corps with the Intelligence Division and then as an assistant to the historical officer of the 14th Air Force in China. Immediately upon discharge, he entered Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven, Conn., from which in 1948 he graduated *magna cum laude*. He was ordained priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut.

As a New Testament specialist, my husband was especially interested in the relevance of the Bible for contemporary thought and action. This led to his first book, *From the Apostles' Faith to the Apostles' Creed* (Oxford University Press), in which he examined the history in New Testament times of each affirmation of the Apostles' Creed. The same concern for relevance led to a later book, *The Christian New Morality: A Biblical Study of Situation Ethics*.

Although always stressing the importance of past history and tradition, my husband insisted that history is an open-ended, ongoing process, constantly subject to the overriding prompting of God's Spirit. The Bible, he maintained, is not an officious, divine rule book to be slavishly idolized, but an invitation to share the life-giving experience of Jews and Christians down through the centuries. A firm believer in human rights, he was strongly condemnatory of every kind of religious, racial, gender and sexual discrimination as totally contrary to biblical principles, and an early supporter of the ordination of women to all three orders of the ministry.

We were married 57 years and are the parents of three children, Margaret Barr Hoover of Lanse, Penn., Joyce Manley Barr of North Brooklin, Me., and Mark Sydney Barr of New York City. To contribute to an understanding of creation, life, death and the training of a new generation of doctors, my husband donated his physical body to the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, The Bronx, N.Y.

We request that gifts in memory of the life and work of Orlando Sydney Barr be given to The Building Fund of The Daniel Pierce Library (PO Box 268, Grahamsville, N.Y. 12740) or to The Orlando Sydney Barr Scholarship Fund of The General Theological Seminary (175 Ninth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011).

Marylin Barr
Grahamsville, NY

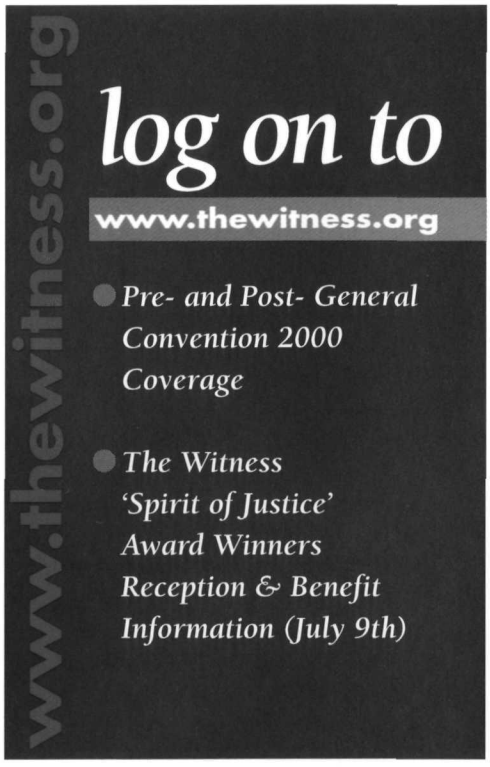
Mumia abu-Jamal

I wish to ask *Witness* readers to join the religious community across the nation in calling for a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal and opposing his execution.

A long-time critic of police brutality and abuse of governmental power in Philadelphia against the poor and African Americans, radio journalist and writer Mumia Abu-Jamal became a target for prosecution by the police and the Philadelphia authorities. In 1982, in court procedures replete with suppression of evidence, distortion of facts, intimidation and bribery of witnesses by government officials, in a blatant miscarriage of justice, Abu-Jamal was convicted of killing a police officer and has been on death row since.

Seiichi Michael Yasutake
Chicago, IL

[Yasutake is an Episcopal priest and executive director of the Interfaith Prisoners of Conscience Project of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S. Along with 185 others, he was arrested in a civil disobedience action protesting the death penalty and in support of Abu-Jamal's request for a new trial in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. on February 29, 2000.]



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Donning the face of liberty

by Peter Selby

The Episcopal Church in 1994 went on record as supporting the biblical imperative of debt relief for the world's poorest countries and in 1998 the Anglican Communion's bishops also wholeheartedly committed themselves to this cause. Still, church members remain largely mystified by the implications of embracing Jubilee as a way of life which brings liberation, but also requires responsibility, as Susan Keller reminds us (p. 28)

As Ann Pettifor of the Jubilee 2000 campaign urges (p.8), we will find clues about what is involved the more we openly engage our most taboo subject — money — and the dominating role it plays in our lives. We will also benefit from schooling ourselves to see the often disturbing connections between personal or community decisions and the health and welfare of environments and people we may never visit, but whose well-being depends on our placing human values above money.

We may find ourselves taking to the streets in the process — reclaiming a Gospel imperative to place our bodies on the line. Such a body politics may well be the only way to ensure a down-to-earth common good in a globalized world of disembodied greed.

— Julie A. Wortman, publisher and co-editor

IT IS MORE THAN A YEAR and a half since 70,000 people gathered from all over the world to surround the G7 Summit meeting in Birmingham, England in mid-1998. But I haven't forgotten the faces. Thousands of people, almost transfigured. The G7 summiteers thought they had got away by making their escape to an out-of-town hotel. But they didn't escape the force of people who'd had enough of debt.

People with banners came from all over — people who had never been to any kind of demonstration before, people from countries with huge burdens of debt repayments, children with their grandparents. A priest from our diocese paddled her coracle up the Worcester-Birmingham canal to be there (a coracle is a round boat made of skin that you can carry on your back — Cuthbert and other ancient missionaries used them).

The faces were the faces of liberty. I walked along the miles of people holding hands, a human chain to confront the death-dealing chains of unjust debt that, in the way we run the world, bring slavery. Afterward, people went home and wrote letters to governments, to the International Monetary Fund and to the World Bank, asking that this crisis be brought to an end.

A year later in Cologne, Germany the faces were there again, wearing the gentle smile of liberty on the way to triumph. By Christmas the talk was of real gold sales to clear some of the worst cases of indebtedness — and of the domino effect that had begun as governments had to listen to the united and determined voice of their people. Oh yes, there are many dominoes yet to fall, and much understanding yet to be shared. But a process is underway, and you can see it in people's faces.

Yet, the problem goes ever so much deeper than we dare face. For the global economy lives on debt and believes that debt is



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beyond controlling. In fact, all our money now is promissory notes, IOUs that we cheerfully pass round and round. And we are passing it around at ever increasing speed, no longer in notes but in pulses on computer monitors. And nearly 19 dollars in every 20 that pulse their way round the world's banking system don't find their way into new equipment or resources; they're just going in search of higher or quicker returns.

The debt crisis with which Jubilee 2000 set out to deal is a system of an economic order gone out of control. If the faces on coins and notes are to be exchanged for the faces of freedom — the face of Jesus Christ — a decision has to be made. "Globalization," we say, "is the way ahead." But which form of globalization do we want, the one that is created by ever faster-moving quantities of money or the globalization that comes from the gentle and committed love of Christ?

Getting governments to take the debts of the poorest countries seriously was a hard struggle for the Jubilee 2000 campaign, and we are not home and dry yet even with that. Getting the economy to be human, to wear the face of liberty, is going to be the hardest test of all. People of goodwill are beginning to ask the questions that need to be asked about a global economy that exists as an end in itself and not for the benefit of people. As that questioning gets louder so we shall have to discover ways of banding together, not just, as in Birmingham and Cologne, to confront the debts of the poorest, but also to question the priorities of the richest.

We shall have to bear the cost in standards of living which will not steadily grow all the time; but our faces will be the faces of liberty. As we stood by the canal to send Jeni off in her coracle one thing that was said stays in my mind: "This is about the lightness of a feather and the might of the nations." So it is. And it is about the freedom of Christ for all. ●

Peter Selby, the keynote speaker at The Witness' *General Convention reception on July 9, is the Bishop of Worcester, England, and author of* Grace and Mortgage: The Language of Faith and the Debt of the World *(1997), <bishop.peter@cofe-worcester.org.uk>.*

Planting seeds of transformation on the streets of Seattle

Jim Friedrich

[Jim Friedrich, a priest who lives on Whitbey Island, near Seattle, was one of the protestors on the streets of Seattle last year when the World Trade Organization met — or attempted to meet — in that city.]

At 12:30 pm, we took to the streets, marching up Fourth Avenue, to join the thousands more who were already downtown. It was a wonderfully diverse procession: there were people dressed as Santa Claus, sea turtles, trees and even death. But it was not some crazy fringe out there. As one writer put it, "These were the kids at UW, the ladies from church, the guys at Boeing. It was Seattle that was marching this week."

As in all street rituals, there was a playful, carnival atmosphere. Richard Shechner, in his book, *The Future of Ritual*, observes: "When people go into the streets en masse, they are celebrating life's fertile possibilities. ... They put on masks and costumes, erect and wave banners, and construct effigies not only to disguise or embellish their ordinary selves, or to flaunt the outrageous, but also to act out the multiplicity each human life is. ... They protest, often by means of farce and parody, against what is oppressive, ridiculous and outrageous. ... Such playing challenges official culture's claims to authority, stability, sobriety, immutability and immortality."

In other words, we were exhibiting the same spirit — dare I say "holy spirit"? — of playfulness, cameraderie, irony and subversion that was seen 10 years ago at Tiananmen Square and the Berlin Wall and, during biblical times, at the Red Sea and the Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday. And as faith tells us, the world doesn't stand a chance against the foolishness of God.

There were people on stilts, people carrying giant puppets, babies in carriages and grandparents with canes and walkers. I stuck close to the Anti-Fascist Marching Band, which played soulful New Orleans versions of "America the Beautiful," "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and Bob Dylan's "Masters of War." We all just danced up Fourth Avenue.

We made quite a sight. In the Advent section of his Christmas oratorio, W.H. Auden writes:

The Real is what will strike you as really absurd.
Unless you exclaim, 'I must be dreaming,'
it must surely be a dream of your own.

Official culture is always uneasy at the chaotic upwelling of life in such happenings, and it tries to dismiss their significance, calling them silly or kooky. But they are powerful rituals of liberation, for they mock the pretensions of the old order even as they lift up the possibility of a new way of being. For a few hours on that Tuesday, no one was a stranger. Everything was a You and nothing was an It, to quote Auden again.

If you looked someone in the eye, they didn't look away. Smiles and conversation came easily, and the barriers of money and education and race and age and lifestyle, all the things that segregate us one from another in daily life, these were nowhere in sight. We were one in the Spirit, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah on the streets of Seattle: "A highway shall be there and it shall be called the Holy Way. ... It shall be for God's people ... and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their faces; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:8-10).

Like a liturgy, it was a ritual experience — and though ritual experiences are very real, they cannot be indefinitely extended without returning to the less sublime transactions of ordinary existence. But they can plant the seeds of transformation, out of which God's future may grow. ●

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The War Continues

by Cherríe Moraga

Flesh is full
of holes.

It is made
to breathe
secrete
receive.

It is nothing
against
bombs
and
bullets.

It is not meant
to be a barrier
against
anything.

But this dark flesh
will resist you flee
you who believe
you are not made
of the same
skin
and
bones.

The following is reprinted from The Last Generation: Prose and Poetry by Cherríe Moraga *with permission from the publisher, South End Press, 7 Brookline St. #1, Cambridge, MA 02139.*



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JUBILEE 2000 AND THE GLO



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An interview with Ann Pettifor

by Julie A. Wortman

ANN PETTIFOR is co-founder and director of Jubilee 2000. Raised in South Africa, she has been working on issues related to the debt crisis for many years and is the author of several publications on the subject.

Julie A. Wortman: People have been stunned by the progress the Jubilee 2000 campaign has made since 1998. How close are you to achieving the goal of the campaign — "the one-off cancellation of the unpayable debts of the world's poorest countries by the year 2000 under a fair and transparent process," to quote from Jubilee 2000 Coalition literature?

Ann Pettifor: We are still some way from that goal. At the beginning of this year I spoke with someone from the U.S. Treasury who assured me that we'd already achieved our goal, because we'd persuaded the U.S. to write off 100 percent of the debts owed to the U.S. by 25 or so of the poorest countries. Unfortunately, while that is true, that cancellation is only a part of the debt owed by those poor countries. It's only the debt owed to the U.S.; it's only the bilateral debt, the government debt. It doesn't include the debt owed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. We haven't got 100 percent cancellation of that yet.

BALIZED WORLD OF DEBT

Also, the creditors are insisting on focusing on only a narrow group of countries. We're calling for more countries to be included. The poorest countries do not yet feel their lives transformed by the decisions that have been taken.

JW: Where are you focusing efforts?

AP: At the beginning of this year the creditor nations, the governments of the West, said they expected 11 countries would have some debt cancellation by May or June. So because we realized that the creditors were not offering enough and were holding back, we began intensifying the pressure on, in particular, Japan, France and Italy, which had been dragging their feet and making very little contribution to this debate. This spring we've been campaigning in France and Italy, working with celebrities, churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). And in Japan we are now lobbying very heavily and preparing for an event or an action around the July G7 summit at Okinawa.

JW: What about people who worry that forgiving the debt is unrealistic?

AP: In Jubilee 2000 we don't talk about forgiving the debt, because the word forgiveness in this context implies that the debtor is entirely at fault and needs to be forgiven.We make a very strong point that debt is both the responsibility of the lender and also of the debtor — both sides are responsible. Every day on Wall Street banks have to write off debts. It's a matter of economic reality and is absolutely vital to the economic health of the nation that banks accept that some debts will never get paid and that some businesses and some individuals just simply have to be given a chance to start again.

But although in everyday life this is something we take for granted, in the international financial system there is no law governing regulations between debtors and creditors. So creditors can keep debts on the books ad infinitum. And just as in Dickensian times it was possible to put people in jail and starve them to death if they didn't pay their debts, so today, instead of having debtors' prisons for people, we have debtors' prisons for countries. When we did it in the 19th century we found that it was economically counter-productive to starve people because the effect was that we were unable to collect the debts. Furthermore, they did not play a productive part in the economy. In exactly the same way it is unproductive to drain the poorest countries of all their resources, because we will still never collect the debts and they will never be able to play a productive part in the global economy.

JW: Is the debt crisis one of the negative results of our current form of globalization or a by-product?

AP: Debt is a necessary by-product of globalization. Despite all the hype, globalization boils down to one thing: the opening up of markets — capital markets in particular. Globalization is driven by bankers and creditors and other financiers who want to open up capital markets around the world so they can lend money and thus make money from money. They've been opening up capital markets in Southeast Asia, in Africa, in Latin America. The result has been disastrous because when the companies and governments in these countries have borrowed foreign currency for their projects and have then been hit by, for example, the devaluation of their own currency, they have then found it impossible to repay those foreign debts.

The reason for this is that you've always got to repay foreign debts in dollars, or yen, or sterling and you cannot use a Thai baht or Mozambiquan meticals to repay your debt. To find those dollars, you've got to be able to have sturdy exchange rates or else you've got to be able to export goods that earn foreign dollars. But all of these debtor countries are

Advocacy works

by Mark Barwick

LAST YEAR, strategists at Bread for the World, the Episcopal Office on Government Relations and other partners in the national Jubilee 2000 movement agreed on the importance of reaching Spencer Bachus for his support on international debt relief. A conservative Republican by anyone's yardstick, Bachus had just been appointed to chair the key House subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy. To garner Bachus' support early on in the campaign would be a significant step toward achieving the goal of debt relief for the world's poorest countries. So a group of four Bread for the World members from Birmingham, Ala., which is in Bachus' district, was enlisted to visit the congressman at his office in Washington, D.C.

The two women and two men were guided into Bachus' office. They had been briefed on the issue and the legislation that was being considered. They sat down, surrounded by advisors and legislative aides. "It was very intimidating," delegation member Elaine Van Cleave recalls, noting that Bachus gave them a noncommittal look and said, "Pretend that I know nothing about this issue. Convince me. Why should I do something about this debt situation?"

Van Cleve paused, then spoke up. "Mr. Bachus, I am aware that tens of thousands of children in developing nations die every day for hunger-related reasons, reasons that are entirely preventable. I am a mother, and that upsets me. I often feel so helpless and don't know what I can do to

continued on page 11

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"Debt relief is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. It is not a total solution to poverty, hunger and disease, but it is a necessary first step. ... We in America have been blessed with a period of almost unparalleled economic prosperity. Never in our history has one country had so much progress, wealth and luxury. Now at the start of the new millennium we can do so much more for the 700 million of the poorest at such a small cost to each of us. ... We have the responsibility, we have the obligation, and we have the direction as to what is the right thing to do. For whether you are a Muslim, whether you are a Christian, whether you are Jewish, all the religions give us a moral imperative in such a case, and that is to act. And to me there is really only one decision."

— Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL-06), speaking on June 15, 1999, before a House Banking Committee hearing on H.R. 1095, the "Debt Relief for Poverty Reduction Act of 1999."

engaged in primary commodities like coffee, cocoa, sugar and copper. And the prices of these are now at historic lows. So their income for repaying foreign debts has collapsed. But nevertheless they've been encouraged to borrow through these open capital markets.

JW: At the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle last year there was a huge outpouring of popular concern about the effects of globalized economics, so it seems a lot of people understand at least some basic aspects of what is going on.

AP: Yes. It is as simple as balancing your own household budget. But so much of the time — in the churches, especially — economics is still a taboo subject. It's as if this is something that gentlemen in pin-striped suits can discuss, but no one else can. We have to lift the taboos about economics because there are elites in our country and in other countries who are using their understanding of economics to hurt our interests, and unless we understand what they're doing, we're not going to be able to determine our own futures and act as responsible democratic citizens should.

JW: You make the connection with household economics. If someone is going to take the Jubilee 2000 call seriously, what are some of the things they can do individually?

AP: Well, in our personal lives we have allowed money values to be superimposed on human values and we elevate money values above human values almost in everything that we do. We value everything in terms of money and we devalue that which is not worth money and which cannot be valued in money terms. So I think the first thing we have to do is to turn that around at the personal level and begin to say it is not important that I have money. It is not important that I have more money than the person next to me. It's not important that I wear this designer label and not that designer label. It's not important that I have this car and not that car. But what IS important is how I feel and how I act towards other people and how I value human life and animal life and ecological life — above money.

The second thing we have to do is to realize that we are the victims of a credit culture. Not a week goes by in my house but a credit card application doesn't come through the door. I have two young sons who are just out of university and who are struggling to make a living and they are literally swamped with credit cards. But we have to start resisting this. We have to question the way in which the banks throw money at people. Of course, we know why they do! Making money from money is much easier than, for example, making money from tomatoes. To grow tomatoes I have to rely on the sun; I need rain; I need water; I need soil; and I have to wait over a period of time. With money, I just lend money, charge a decent price, which is called interest, and I make more money. We are becoming a society where making money from money is becoming one of the major sources of income. But it's also the major source of exploitation. So I think we need to question the easy credit that is a function of our society.

JW: I'm always noticing in the Episcopal Church's national newspaper a prominence of headlines about people in other countries suffering because of natural disaster or civil strife. What connections do you make between such headlines and the debt crisis?

AP: We tend to take a fatalistic view of the world and believe that when a hurricane strikes that, A, nature wants it to happen and B, there's very little that we can do about it. Well, for a start, we know that there's an increase in the rate of these kinds of natural calamities and it has very much to do with what we're doing to the environment. And what we're doing with the environment has very much to do with economics. And what our economics are has very much to do with our values. Our values revolve around the belief that making money is the most important things we can possibly do. And when that's the most important thing that we can do, then destroying the environment is subordinated to the most important thing that we can do (i.e., making money) and we end up with more hurricanes.

Also, when there's a hurricane in Florida people's lives are not destroyed. They are very severely damaged and many people

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might lose their lives, but the impact on a state like Florida is very different from the impact on a poor state like Honduras or Venezuela, where a whole economy can be undermined by a natural disaster because there aren't the resources to recover. So it's a way of not facing reality when we blame these kinds of disasters on nature or on forces beyond our control. They are very often very much within our control, we simply choose not to do anything about it.

JW: And with respect to civil strife?

AP: It's my strong view that both in the case of Rwanda and Yugoslavia, the civil and social disintegration rested on what happened first — economic degradation. Rwanda was an economy wholly dependent on coffee exports. In 1979 President Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher encouraged coffee producers to end the coffee agreement which had guaranteed prices of coffee to some of the poorest countries producing coffee. It had meant that in the richest countries we might have had to pay a little bit more for our coffee, but what we were paying for was stability — economic stability in those poor countries. In 1979 we voted for cheaper prices of coffee for ourselves, for the consumer, and we voted at the same time for, in my view, social disintegration and economic disintegration in those countries wholly dependent on that single commodity.

Rwanda, for example, was dependent on coffee. When the price of coffee collapsed, the first thing that happened was that the IMF moved into Rwanda and she recommended economic policies which she has since acknowledged did not take into account the impact on that society. Privatizing industries meant sacking people from their jobs, which meant that Hutu employers had to decide whether to save a fellow Hutu's job or the job of a Tutsi. This, then, exacerbated existing tensions. It also led to higher prices for electricity. It led to farmers' pulling up their coffee plantations in despair. It led to a collapse in tax revenues for Rwanda. So the government then could not provide health services and other kinds of services. This led to very rapid economic degradation. What followed was civil degradation and social degradation and disintegration.

In Britain, for example, we are very smug about this and you often hear people say, "Well, of course, those Rwandans, those Ugandans, those Yugoslavs — you know they are natural fighters. They have this kind of civil war and murderous behavior in their blood, not like us decent, upright folk." Well if Britain's GDP had collapsed at the rate that Rwanda's had done, or Yugoslavia's had done, I'm pretty sure that the Welsh would have been at the throats of the English and the English at the throats of the Scots!

JW: Many people who remember the founding of the World Bank after World War II find it difficult to hear that the World Bank and the IMF are part of the problem.

AP: The World Bank and the IMF are two institutions made up of very well-qualified, assured and in many cases really well-intentioned civil servants. Many of them are absolutely superb at their job. However, these institutions are also used by governments to implement foreign policy objectives. Of this there is no question. President Clinton and Mrs. Albright recently admitted complicity with warlords and tyrants in Africa during the Cold War. They admitted to it and I think that was extremely gracious of them and honorable. But the fact is that we know that the corrupt elite of Zaire was given $12 billion by the IMF, the World Bank and the American government and the British government to purchase Cold War aid. Now that corrupt elite has gone and the poor have been left to pay the debts of that Cold War battle, which we won.

JW: Are the decisions about debt relief also political? The current example is Uganda, Mauritania and Bolivia getting relief ahead of other countries such as Guyana and Nigeria.

AP: Well, the system works very, very unfairly. The American and British governments have argued that as part of the debt cancellation, countries should produce a poverty reduction program. But they have also said that these countries have to fulfill macro- economic criteria — set by the IMF! Now the case of Guyana is a classic example. Guyana is a very, very poor country. Several months ago she was caught in the grip of a

Advocacy works

continued from page 9

help. But I have come today, because I know that you have the power to do something about it."

The conversation then flowed, with group members explaining how debt relief would free resources poor countries urgently need for basic human services. They also presented Bachus with hundreds of signatures on Jubilee 2000 petitions that had been collected the previous Sunday in Birmingham churches.

Then, says Van Cleve, the Alabama congressman did a remarkable thing. He stood and said, "I want to do this. It's the right thing to do." He then made a commitment, as chair of the House Banking subcommittee, to introduce the legislation along with a wide spectrum of other House members, both Republicans and Democrats.

Since that day, Spencer Bachus has distinguished himself on Capitol Hill as a passionate and articulate defender of debt relief for poor countries. The national press has taken notice of his conversion. Some of his conservative House colleagues regard him as a curiosity at best — or perhaps someone who is simply out of touch with the realities of global economics. In any case, Bachus is not easily dissuaded. A practicing Baptist, he has frequently made reference to his Christian faith as the reason why he is devoting so much energy to this issue.

Sharing a similar sense of deep commitment, there are now four Bread for the World members from Birmingham, Ala., who have a new sense of the power of face-to-face advocacy. ●

Mark Barwick is the Southeast Regional Organizer for Bread for the World, a Christian citizens' movement that lobbies our nation's decision makers on matters of importance to hungry people. You can get more information about BFW by calling 1-800-82-BREAD or by visiting their web site at <www.bread.org>.

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general strike. It was, if you like, an internal shock to her economy. The government wanted to settle the strike at 12 percent, but an independent arbitration panel recommended 31 percent for civil servants who are already very, very low paid. The IMF assured the president of Guyana that this would be acceptable. So on the basis of this agreement from the IMF, he reluctantly settled on a pay settlement of 31 percent a year. That meant that his macro-economic targets of fixing his budget moved into deficit. And he was clear that the IMF would understand that was a very likely thing to happen if they settled on the 31 percent figure on the advice of the IMF. Instead, the IMF said, "Yes, you may have reduced poverty by increasing the living standards of a huge portion of your population, but you've failed on your macro-economic target and your budget deficit is rising; therefore you will have no more debt cancellation."

What we see here are the contradictions between the macro-economic strategy and the poverty-reduction strategy. They're built into the system, and that is unfair. What is also deeply unfair is that all of this was negotiated between the President of a country — the elected President of a country — and a civil servant who threatened that President and told him that he was not going to get debt cancellation. And that President cannot go to the board of the IMF and argue his case! He has to rely on the civil servant putting that case for him. That gives that civil servant immense power over the poorest countries.

JW: I understand you are working on alternative processes for debt cancellation?

AP: Yes. We say that the international financial system is profoundly unfair because it is dominated entirely by creditors. In our domestic system, when Macy's goes bust, she is able to go to the law to seek protection from her creditors. When Mozambique goes bust, she doesn't get protection from her creditors. Instead, her creditors move in and take over the shop. We say this is unjust. Creditors act as the interested party, the witness, the plaintiff, the judge and the jury in their own court case for debt cancellation and that undermines all of the rule of law. It's against the very fundamentals of the rule of law that you can't be judge in your own court. So we want a more independent process.

We want an independent body to decide whether or not Mozambique can pay her debts, whether or not the lenders that lent her money made wise decisions and whether they should lose their money or whether they should have some repayments. It need consist of no more than three people: one a person nominated by the debtor, one a person nominated by the creditors and the third person would be one that would be agreed by them both. And those three would act as arbitrators and would decide on how much debt should be canceled and who should make losses and on whom should liabilities be landed.



Lynn Ross/Anglican World

James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, defends the international institution's policies to Anglican bishops at the 1998 Lambeth Conference.

But the other thing is that the whole process of deciding on debt cancellation through arbitration should be done publicly and transparently with the involvement of local citizens who should be invited to monitor and set conditions to insure that the money released from debt cancellation goes to the poor. Now this already happens in the U.S. It's called Chapter IX of the bankruptcy law code and it's what happened to Orange County. When Orange County went bust, of course she wasn't liquidated, her debts were worked out in a proper and orderly way, so that citizens in Orange County don't suffer for those mistakes. Creditors get some of their money back and the debtor also has to hand over some assets, but it's done in an orderly way. In the international financial system there is no order. The whole thing is governed by creditors. Creditors don't want to cancel debts, which is why they never have and when they do cancel them, they do so in their own favor.

JW: How would you win acceptance of a proposal like that?

AP: Well, we're going around the world trying to persuade everybody that a form of arbitration, a form of insolvency would be a very good thing, because it would introduce discipline into relations between debtors and creditors. Right now if I lend money to a wicked dictator, I need never have fear of losing that money. International financier George Saros has said that lending to sovereign governments is the most profitable business you can do. You never lose! The corrupt dictator might go to pot and might disappear like President Suharto or President Marcos, but in the end the taxpayers in his country will repay the debt. And the same with dictators; they know they never have to repay those debts because those contracts are signed in secret.

JW: Do you think you really will close up shop December 31, 2000?

AP: Well, the campaign comes to an end at the end of December 31, and we either will have succeeded or we will have failed. If we've failed, then we will need to do something different. Next year is not the year of Jubilee. And if we fail, and I hope very much that we won't fail, then we may have to think about a post-Jubilee campaign. Right now, I want to succeed and I want Jubilee 2000 to succeed so we can close up shop at the end of the year knowing that we've canceled the debts of the poorest countries. ●

For more information about the Jubilee 2000 campaign, including news about activities in the U.S., check <www.jubilee2000uk.org>.

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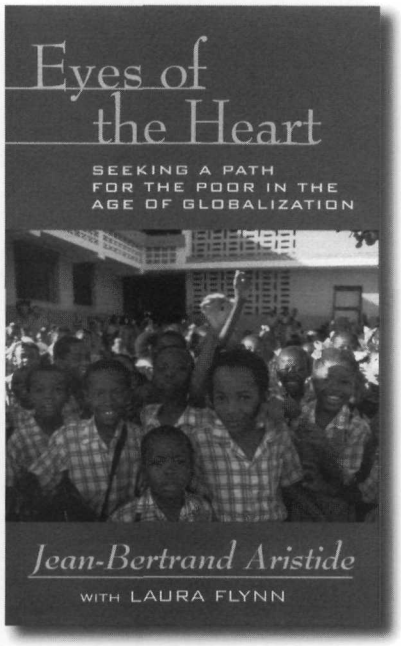
Eyes of the Heart

by Kazi Joshua



Eyes of the Heart: Seeking a Path for the Poor in the Age of Globalization
by Jean-Betrand Aristide
ed. Laura Flynn
Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000.

The one-time president of Haiti and former priest, Jean-Betrand Aristide, begins this small 80-page book by declaring, "Behind this crisis of dollars, there is a human crisis. ... We have not reached the consensus that to eat is a basic human right. This is an ethical crisis. This is a crisis of faith." Don't be misled by the book's length. This is a focused, intense and carefully written narrative analyzing the condition of the poor in developing nations. It does not celebrate the globalization of markets, nor the liberalization of trade between countries who exercise hegemony and monopoly over the conditions of trade and the scale of production. Instead, Aristide frames the book as a series of testimonials or letters from the heart of the poor in Haiti to the heart of global capitalism, to its imperial center in the north. Woven through the critical analyses are stories of real people and historical events that have affected Haiti's people in the advent of globalization. The stories become a prophetic denunciation of global inequities and an annunciation of what the poor are doing in spite of the forces lined up against them.

Aristide describes global capitalism as "a machine devouring our planet," documenting carefully its effects on the ecology, community life and the politics of Haiti. In a situation where 20 percent of the population now owns 86 percent of total wealth, the logic of global capitalism is inadequate for the majority of the world's population. Accounts of the systematic displacement of locally grown rice and pigs by imported products which become scarce and unsustainable raise critical questions about the role of international aid agencies and lending institutions. With such concrete examples, Aristide demystifies globalization and paints a real face of the victims of the economics of accumulation that does not have human and ecological well-being at the center of their practices.

The power of the book, however, goes well beyond analysis of the poor as victims of globalization. Aristide points to the power of the poor when they come together and put humanity at the center of all relations of exchange. This is what Aristide refers to as "the third way," that intermediate position between global capitalism and state-run socialist economies. He describes a collective kind of economics where, by pooling their resources, the poor develop credit unions, establish a university, open a people's store selling goods at a fraction of market price, create a children's radio station giving them voice in a society that marginalizes them. These heroic acts, born out of economic necessity, give rise to political and cultural organization which refuses to be bought off by the seduction of global capital. Aristide demonstrates not only what is wrong, but also what is possible, if only we will listen. Will we?

This book ought to be required reading for all students of economics and business and elected officials in the Congress and Senate. It shifts and concretizes the debate about "aid" and "free trade" in a way almost impossible to imagine in the affluence of the North. *Eyes of the Heart* is also a challenge to all those who struggle for justice and ecological sustainability, to support alternatives that are actually working and initiated by the poor. Aristide sums up his argument in the words of the UN Human Development Report of 1997 "... Poverty is no longer inevitable. The world has the material and natural resources ... to make a poverty-free world a reality in less than a generation."

He adds, "The time has come to create a world that is more human, more stable, more just. Eradicating poverty everywhere is more than a moral imperative and a commitment to human solidarity. It is a practical possibility."

This little book is a big act of faith, a response to the "human and ethical crisis" we all now face. ●

Kazi Joshua, originally from Malawi, is a doctoral student at the University of Chicago and an associate pastor at Progressive Community Church on Chicago's south side. He directs Nurturing the Call at the Seminary Consortium on Urban Pastoral Education.

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UNDERSTANDING



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A key first step in working for the common good

by Camille Colatosti

"WE'RE IN the global economy — whether we like it or not," says Charles Kernaghan, director of the New York-based National Labor Committee, an independent human rights organization that has spent nearly 20 years investigating sweatshop conditions both in the U.S. and around the world. "Sixty percent of the apparel we buy is imported; 80 percent of toys and sporting goods are imported; 90 percent of shoes and sneakers are imported. This is the reality."

The Liz Claiborne suits we wear, the Reebok sneakers we put on our feet, the Barbie dolls we buy for our children — all of these items and more are made in factories located in El Salvador, China, Burma and Bangladesh, where workers earn 9 to 80 cents an hour.

"I've been to these factories," says Kernaghan. "They are hidden, surrounded by cinder block walls and rolls of razor wire. The entrances have thick metal gates. When you pass through the gates, you are greeted by armed thugs. And in the factories, by and large, the workers are young women. They are 17 to 25 years old, and when they reach 25, they're used up. Then they're fired."

In El Salvador alone there are 225 apparel factories that employ about 70,000 women. They send 587,000 garments a year to the U.S. "Despite everything," says Kernaghan, "there is not one single union in a garment factory in El Salvador, and the wages of 60 cents an hour do not meet the cost of living."

The situation is the same in factory after factory and in country after country. The factories are subcontracted by multinational corporations. The people who work there do not know the names of the companies they work for. The women in El Salvador, who earn 20 cents for each shirt they sew for Nike, do not know that the garment retails for $75 in the U.S. Adds Kernaghan, "The workers haven't the slightest idea of the role they play in the global economy."

A global shift in power from nations to investors

In that respect, El Salvadoran workers are similar to American workers: We do not understand our role in the global economy, either. Yet, understanding this is key, says Terry Provance, director of the World Economy Project at the Washington, D.C.-based

GLOBALIZATION

Preamble Center, a research and organizing institution. Globalization has everything to do with our jobs, our wages and our lives. Globalization concerns not only the products we buy, but also the values we hold. Do we want to live in a world that values profit above all else? Or do we want to be part of a world that promotes equality, fairness and hope for everyone?

Globalization means that national governments no longer are in charge of their economies. The U.S. government, just like the El Salvadoran government, no longer controls the way business is conducted within the country's borders.

As John Hooper, of the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice, explains, "We've turned our national economy into a global economy by opening up all the channels by which money, resources and business decisions flow." This is not bad in and of itself, Hooper says, but "the thrust seems to be to avoid or override the decisions that individual nations make related to their economies."

Because it dismantles national barriers to trade and investment, globalization allows investors to drive the process and to move money around the globe without pause. This means that corporations make products where wages and costs are lowest.

This also means that transnational corporations, rather than governments and countries, are making the rules for national economies. Investors can make or break a country by pouring money into it, or refusing to do so.

The World Economy Project's Provance acknowledges some positive aspects of "the internationalization of life today: the facility and ability with which we can communicate and travel." But, unfortunately, these positive elements are "driven by a corporate process which deregulates trade and investment and concentrates power in the hands of corporations." In fact, power is concentrated in the hands of just 100 transnational corporations, who control 75 percent of world trade.

This process did not happen overnight. As Provance explains, "Globalization is the result of a trajectory of several hundred years. Through war in the Philippines and interventions in Latin America and Southeast Asia, the U.S. has gained advantage around the world. Now, instead of using armies to gain advantage, we use another weapon — the market. This market, just like an army, can interfere with and change life."

In an educational video recently developed by NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby, Amata Miller, IHM, notes that globalization has the potential for "creating interdependent and cooperative initiatives across geographic distances and national, ethnic, cultural, gender and racial diversities." Close links among nations, she says, could lead to prospects for peace, for sharing resources, and for fostering human dignity. But the potential is not being fulfilled.

A race to the bottom

During the past 20 years, Miller explains, as globalization has expanded, we've seen a "widening inequality and the exploitation of workers." We've seen "cultural traditions undermined, local communities destroyed, hostility to refugees and immigrants increased, the environment degraded, and secret government negotiations to advance finance capital."

"The problem," says the National Labor Committee's Kernaghan, "is that there are no standards or rules to govern this in terms of human rights, women's rights and on. We've unleashed a race to the bottom over who will accept the lowest wages and the least benefits and the worst conditions."

In fact, globalization has increased the burdens placed on the developing world. In the Philippines, deforestation by the lumber industry has caused a food crisis. Per capita income in Latin America is lower today than it was in 1970. And life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to reach an all-time low in 2010 of only 33 years of age.

Some of these inequalities result from the controversial structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, powerful international financial institutions largely controlled by the U.S. government. Structural adjustment programs are forced on developing nations as preconditions for financial help. These programs generally require devaluing national currency, raising interest rates, reducing government spending, increasing taxes, privatizing public services and shifting agricultural and industrial production from food staples and basic goods for domestic use to commodities for export. Sometimes these measures improve the government balance sheet, but more often structural adjustment programs increase income inequality, poverty and debt.

Jubilee 2000 — a worldwide movement led by religious organizations "to cancel the crushing international debt of impoverished countries" — argues that these programs "hit people living in poverty the hardest." Programs increase unemployment, decrease wages, and increase taxes.

According to the Boston-based United for a Fair Economy, developing countries are worse off today than ever before. From 1982 to 1990, developing countries in the South received approximately $927 billion in aid, grants, tax credits, direct investment and loans. But they paid $1.3 trillion in interest and principal, not including royalties, dividends, repatriated capital and underpriced raw materials. In 1990, the South was 60 percent deeper in debt than it was in 1982.

Worldwide poverty is on the rise. In 1974, one-quarter of the world's population lived in poverty. Today, more than half of the world is poor. More than half of the world's six billion people, states Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations, "eke out a living on $3 a day or less."

The WTO: fighting 'discrimination' in trade

The decreasing ability of the developing

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world to protect the lives of its citizens becomes clear when we consider this fact: According to the Institute for Policy Studies, of the world's 100 largest economies, 49 are nations and 51 are corporations. Wal-Mart, with its annual sales of $137.6 billion, has a larger economy than over 100 countries, including Portugal, whose gross national product is $104 billion; Israel, with a gross national product of $88 billion; and Ireland, with a gross national product of $66 billion. How can small or even medium-sized countries influence these corporations?

With the advent of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the international organization that governs trade, the developing countries' situation has become even worse. As Mike Prokosch, coordinator of the Globalization Program at United for a Fair Economy, explains, for 50 years or so, since WWII, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade or GATT treaty negotiated lower tariffs and barriers on goods crossing boarders. GATT also eliminated other regulations that slowed down global trade. "But," says Prokosch, "GATT had no teeth. It was nicknamed 'Gentlemen Agree to Talk and Talk.' The WTO replaced GATT, and it has teeth. It also has a much broader charge than GATT."

The WTO administers treaties and expands trade into new services; it also makes binding decisions. Representatives to the WTO, usually a nation's trade minister, are not elected but are appointed by each of the 135 member nations. While the founding statements of the WTO expressed its goal of "sustainable growth and development for the common good," in reality, explains Dave Dyson, of the People of Faith Network based at the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, the WTO seeks to end what it calls "discrimination" in trade by overriding any trade rules that might favor "human rights, community interests, or environmental safety."

Business over the environment and labor

For instance, in 1996, the WTO found a U.S. Congressional requirement for cleaner gasoline to be "discriminatory to Venezuelan and other refiners" who produced gasoline that did not meet U.S. environmental standards. When the European Union banned hormone-treated beef due to health concerns, the WTO said the ban violated corporate free trade. When the U.S. attempted to block imports of shrimp caught in nets that also capture and drown endangered sea turtles, the WTO called the block "arbitrary and unjustified." In 1997, the WTO ruled that Europe's trade preferences for Caribbean bananas grown by small farmers with little pesticide was unfair to large corporate plantations. The WTO has, in every environmental and labor dispute, sided with business.

Decisions to evaluate "discriminatory" trade practices are decided by a WTO panel of judges, whose identities are secret and who meet in secret. Their proceedings are not disclosed to the public. In fact, as Lucinda Keils of Groundwork for a Just World — a Detroit-based social justice organization — explains, "There is no requirement that meetings be open to the public in any way, or that the public or press have access to any documents, meetings, or decisions." Representatives from environmental, religious, community and labor groups do not have access to the WTO. The protests outside the WTO meetings in Seattle in December 1999 tell an important story. More than 1,500 non-governmental organizations registered with the WTO to express their concerns about trade and globalization. None were allowed access to the meeting.

According to Paul Hawken, a participant in the Seattle protests and author of "What Really Happened at the 'Battle of Seattle'" (*BioDemocracy News*, Jan. 2000), "WTO rules run roughshod over local laws and regulations. It relentlessly pursues the elimination of any restriction on the free flow of trade, including how a product is made, by whom it is made, or what happens when it is made. By doing so, the WTO is eliminating the ability of countries and regions to set standards, to express values, or to determine what they do or don't support. Child labor, prison labor, forced labor, substandard wages and working conditions cannot be used as a basis to discriminate against goods. Nor can environmental destruction, habitat loss, toxic waste production and the presence of ... synthetic hormones be used as the basis to screen or stop goods from entering a country. Under WTO rules, the boycott of South Africa would not have existed."

Under the rules of the WTO, adds Prokosch, "only countries can sue. Environmentalists, labor unions, human rights organizations do not have access to the WTO court."

A first step in changing the rules: demanding disclosure of factory locations

Ultimately, solutions to the problems that globalization generates will come from changing the rules of international trade. As the National Labor Committee's Kernaghan explains, "We have to put a human face on the economy. We need internationally recognized human rights. We work with people and workers all over the world. They tell us that they need jobs; they are willing to work hard, but they should have rights — the right not to be hit, the right not to be paid starvation wages."

In the U.S., says Kernaghan, "we purchase 36 percent of all of China's exports. We purchase most of the garments made in El Salvador. This should give us a say over what and how goods are produced. We're the market for these goods. As the marketplace, we can be the voice for people locked in these factories, people who aren't given bathroom breaks and have taken to wearing adult diapers. Our work is all about this."

Kernaghan adds, "The American people are enormously decent and wouldn't buy products made by children or people earning starvation wages if they knew." The trouble is that the multinational corporations refuse to disclose the locations of the factories with which they subcontract. This information is secret. In China alone, Wal-Mart is estimated to use 1,000 factories, but their location is kept hidden.

Kernaghan continues, "We have said to companies, 'Will you give us the name and address of the factories that make the goods we purchase? We have the right to know in which specific factory goods were made.' But companies say they won't give up this information. They claim this would be a violation of trade secrets, but that's a lie. In any given factory, multiple labels are produced next to each other. Nike is being produced next to Reebok; the same worker at the same factory sews Liz Claiborne and Kathy Lee Gifford labels into garments. The companies know where their competitors' products are made. They just don't want the American public to know."

One of the first steps, then, to end sweatshop labor, to put a human face on globalization, is to demand that corporations

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reveal where their factories are located. "We need full disclosure," says Kernaghan. The National Labor Committee distributes "I Care" shopper cards. These index cards, which can be given to cashiers at Wal-Mart, read, "I like shopping here, but I am worried about where your products are made. Will you disclose this information?"

"Individuals have more power than you think," says Kernaghan. "Companies have told us when they receive a phone call from a consumer, they assume that 250 other people feel that way. When they receive a letter from a consumer, since a letter takes more time than a phone call, they assume 500 others feel that way."

Kernaghan continues, "People who are part of religious congregations have enormous power because companies are afraid of religious people. A company can look at a union and say, 'Well, the union is paid to attack us.' But the company can't dismiss a parish. What people of faith do is one of the most important forces needed to make this a better world. Imagine the impact of a letter to Wal-Mart, signed by all of the members of a congregation!"

'WTO: Fix It or Nix It'

Along with consumer response to globalization, other reform strategies focus on changing the rules of the WTO. A recent campaign, called "WTO: Fix It or Nix It," seeks overhaul of WTO decision-making. The Preamble Center's Provance describes efforts to implement minimum wages for people throughout the world. In addition, he hopes to implement minimum environmental standards. Most important, says Provance, is to empower civic governments, nations, to have a say over the way trade affects their country.

Along with the "Fix It or Nix It" campaign comes a national and international effort to build a broad coalition. "Challenging globalization and the WTO is a huge task," says Prokosch of United for a Fair Economy, "but Seattle was a really good beginning. We saw what we can do when we are united." (An estimated 40,000 to 60,000 people took part in protests at the December 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle to oppose the loss of human, labor and environmental rights around the world. Despite some news reports to the contrary, activists who participated in the protests all seem to agree with Hawken, who states, "This is what I remember about the violence. There was almost none until police attacked demonstrators ... There was no police restraint, despite what Mayor Paul Schell kept proudly assuring television viewers all day. Instead, there were rubber bullets, which Schell kept denying all day.")

"Seattle," continues Prokosch, "created an enormous confidence. We saw our strength and our numbers." An April 9 demonstration to "proclaim Jubilee" and "cancel the debt now" was expected to be an equally inspiring event. "This demonstration against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank is crucial," says Prokosch. "Those organizations are pushing countries into the global economy because of their debt. Until we can help other countries break out, they will keep getting pushed down and we will get pulled down with them."

Around the country, says Prokosch, "there is extraordinary seriousness about building broad coalitions. I've been at this 30 years and I've never seen a moment like this. This kind of confidence, maturity and optimism is inspiring and is going to fuel me for another 20 or 30 years." ●

Camille Colatosti is The Witness' *staff writer, <colakwik@ix.netcom.com>. For more information: contact Jubilee 2000, <www.j2000usa.org>; National Labor Committee, <www.nlcnet.org>; NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, <www.networklobby.org>; People of Faith Network, <www.cloud9.net/~pofn>; United for a Fair Economy, <www.stw.org>; World Economy Project, Preamble Center, <www.preamble.org>; WTO: Fix It or Nix It Campaign, <www.tradewatch.org>.*

MORE INFORMATION

Globalizing civil society
(Open Media Pamphlet Series,
Seven Stories Press, 1998) 80pp. $5.95

THIS POLEMICAL LITTLE TRACT by David Korten, prominent voice in the "Battle of Seattle" WTO events and author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, is both broadside and primer. It is eminently suited for study in community group or congregation. Korten writes in plain language, using memorable and quotable facts: Of the world's 100 largest economies, 51 are now corporations; the combined net worth of 447 billionaires equals the annual income of the poorest half of humanity. Such like. But above all he makes sophisticated analysis accessible, like building on a distinction between the "money world" and the "living world." In the former, capital moves electronically in a virtual reality, stock markets function like gigantic casino games, and "growth" is the only logic and imperative, all in complete ignorance and indifference to the latter, the "living world," where human beings make their lives socially in relation to the ecosystem. In the living world, endless growth is a malignancy and health manifests itself in balance, diversity, sufficiency, and sustainability.

Most remarkable is the spirit of hopefulness which infuses the book. Korten genuinely believes it is possible to reclaim the power we have yielded to global institutions and to reconstruct local cultures and economies. He suggests ways to think about "social capital" and how to generate it. (In the study group of which I was part we lingered long over this question.) For example, how do we move from jobs to livelihoods?

On behalf of the living world, he outlines basic principles for the new millennium, beginning with sustainability, equity and civic engagement. He provides concrete clues for thinking these through in terms of our own lives and lays out foundations (economic, political, material, spiritual) for a just society. Korten is not a theologian, but the section on the spirituality of money is really about idolatry, all but named.

Church folk need this book. With a mustard seed or kindom text, it will even preach. — *Bill Wylie-Kellermann*

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CHEAP

Maquilas and the search

by Lou Schoen

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, The Episcopal Peace and Justice Network for Global Concerns (EPJN) has been studying the social and economic impact of the *maquiladora* industry in Mexico and Central America with the aim of educating ourselves and the church about the issues involved. *Maquilas* are factories where workers make products for huge foreign-owned firms. They use parts or materials made elsewhere — often in the U.S.

As our work progressed — in addition to visiting *maquilas*, their workers, labor organizers and church and community leaders in Mexico, Honduras and El Salvador, EPJN members toured chicken farms in Delaware and Maryland and met with living-wage activists in Los Angeles (see *TW* 1/2 2000) — we soon became aware that the subject was broader than the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the relationship of the U.S. to its southern neighbors. Today's interconnected, interactive, mutually reinforcing global economic reality encompasses *maquiladoras*, minimum-wage policies, legal and illegal immigration, racism and xenophobia. Our site visits to Mexico and Honduras convey something of the range of issues and challenges we encountered.

Matamoros

Matamoros, Tamaulipas, lies across the Mexican border from Brownsville, Tex. Here our delegation witnessed young children scavenging the smoking solid waste dump for recyclable trash to sell and for building materials to strengthen the shacks in which their family lives. We were shocked by the scene, repelled by the toxic stench.

This family at the dump had been attracted to Matamoros — as have hundreds of thousands more to other communities lying northwestward along the 1,951-mile U.S./Mexico border — by the mushrooming *maquilas*. Jobs near the border comprise a powerful magnet for families whose traditional livelihood, dependent on farming or fishing, has been undermined or destroyed. Hog, cattle, poultry, fruit, vegetable, fishing, textile and

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LABOR

for cheap labor in a globalized economy

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timber industries in this globalized economy increasingly seek vertical integration to control and minimize costs of supply, processing and packaging. Producers favor mechanizing production and keeping the various components in close proximity — unless they can find labor that is cheap enough to offset the costs of equipment and/or transportation. *Maquilas* provide such a labor force. Here workers often earn less for an entire day's work than a U.S. minimum-wage employee makes in an hour, an amount far less than a sustainable income. The widespread fear is that if they try to force an increase in these wages, or if the *maquilas* are required to improve working conditions or limit pollution, the companies owning the plants or using their products will take their business to Asia.

The mass migration from rural areas to the border has overwhelmed public services in 14 pairs of cities across the U.S./Mexico border. On the Mexican side, the newly arrived migrants' hope for a productive new life is quickly replaced by despair as they take up life in squatter settlements and compete for jobs that are restricted mostly to women between 18 and 30, whom managers regard as more compliant and as having greater finger dexterity. Many soon see brighter prospects across the border in *El Norte*. High proportions of workers in food-related and other industries throughout the U.S., in fact, are recent immigrants, many of dubious status under U.S. immigration laws. Some, from points as distant as the Balkans, South America or East Asia, as well as from Latin America, have paid huge fees or deposits to labor brokers to help them get green cards certifying legal residence. This process takes years, however, for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has an enormous backlog of requests. Many are readily sold on the alleged ease of bypassing this tedious system by hiring smugglers to deliver them to a workplace.



Richard Kerner

Settlement where maquila workers live outside of Matamoros, Mex.

Smugglers have been known, however, to abandon illegal migrants in remote places after taking their money — often with fatal results. Bodies are regularly found in the mountains and deserts of the southwest, as well as in the Caribbean and in holds of ships bound from China. One smuggler was convicted in Texas of taking the cash and killing his client.

The INS has an aggressive catch-and-deport program, increasingly well-funded by the current Congress. Its detention centers are usually filled to capacity and, like one which EPJN visited near Harlingen, Tex., expanding rapidly. Children are separated from their families during detention, and placed in nearby foster homes where their language may or may not be spoken.

San Pedro Sula

We sat in a circle of chairs at the edge of the nave in the Episcopal Cathedral at San Pedro Sula in Honduras. A nervous reserve characterized the five young Hondurans assembled by their pastor from a nearby suburb to describe to us their *maquila* work experiences. Their anxiety was transparent as the tales unfolded. Although conditions were variable, they complained of high pressure, verbal abuse from supervisors, physically harmful job environment, sexual harassment, highly variable supervisory behavior, intense performance pressures including mandatory overtime (with overtime pay a constant source of dispute), lack of support for education or career growth, inadequate medical care, dismissals during pregnancy, and lack of public enforcement of legal labor

Developing a theology of work

Let Justice Roll Down: American Workers at the New Millenium is a report issued by the Task Force on the Theology of Work of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles in December, 1999. "As we move into the Third Millennium of the reign of Christ," the report asks, "what are we to make of the widespread use of working people as implements to make the economic machine run more efficiently? And how do we begin to think theologically about work and the economy?"

Focused primarily on the situation of low-wage workers in Los Angeles, the report shows why "a living wage" with adequate health care is called for if church members are "to respect the dignity of every human being."

Copies are available for $4.50 (includes postage) from the Diocese of Los Angeles (make checks out to Treasurer of the Diocese), PO Box 512164, Los Angeles, CA 90051.

standards. When one of the workers complained to a supervisor, he was told, "There are lots of others outside the gate who want your job."

Another summarized: "They want you to give up your life while you're young."

Our pastor-host admitted that she feared speaking out about such injustices lest she impair her son's work opportunities. "We could have the whole country here, giving witness," another of the workers said, "but they're afraid of losing their jobs."

But labor leaders continue to work for change. Our delegation was able to meet with more than 30 plant organizers, eager to present a similar list of complaints.

"This is the first time a group of North Americans has come to listen to us," they exclaimed, pleading for international support.

Collective bargaining, however, while making progress, is doing so slowly. Labor federations are in place (sometimes competing for members, as unions often did in their early development in the U.S.). With few exceptions, mainly in Mexico, most bargaining agendas are limited to working conditions and have not yet gained wage contracts. An official union, sanctioned by the Mexican government, is widely seen as a tool of management, not truly representing workers — although they have to pay it dues. Strikes have had mixed success. Local union and activist leaders and workers acknowledge the need for the jobs *maquiladoras* provide.

Promising signs: the Gap and the churches

In an attempt to answer charges of poor working conditions, former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich initiated a code of conduct in collaboration with the apparel industry, which dominates *maquilas* in Central America. It calls for an independent monitoring process, but this is most often controlled by manufacturers, using public relations and accounting firms. Recently, however, the Gap, a major customer of apparel-making *maquilas*, has stepped outside the industry norm. It is working with independent monitoring groups in Honduras and El Salvador, the majority of whose members are representatives from local non-governmental organizations including churches and human rights groups. The Episcopal Diocese of Honduras employs the monitor there. Initial results in both countries are limited, but look promising.

Numerous churches continue to engage the power structure in Central America. Leo Frade, the Bishop of Honduras, is facing down regional officials to build a housing development for victims of Hurricane Mitch. Medardo Gomez, the bishop of the Salvadoran Lutheran Synod, supports a human rights ministry and was a leader organizing an international pilgrimage to mark the 20th anniversary of Archbishop Romero's assassination on March 24.

The bitter byproducts of economic globalization tend to be hidden from the investors who profit handsomely and from consumers who save money at the expense of millions of families living on the edge or dropping over. Global trade policies will support this process until international institutions advancing labor and environmental agendas are empowered to balance the business trading agenda.

Leading activist groups for justice in this new environment include the American Friends Service Committee, the National Labor Campaign, Global Exchange, the Fair Trade Certified Coffee Campaign, and others. Many groups collaborate in the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, which focuses on the Mexican context, and Sweatshop Watch, which also follows experience in Central America and elsewhere. The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility is a point group for faith communities seeking leverage against corporations and public policy. Each group is accessible on the world wide web. ●

Lou Schoen is a Minneapolis consultant and writer who represents Province VI in the Episcopal Peace and Justice Network for Global Concerns, one of the networks associated with the Episcopal Church's Peace and Justice Ministries office, <LOUSCHOEN@aol.com>. Photographer Dick Kerner, the convener of EPJN, lives in Dallas, Tex. EPJN is preparing to a detailed report on its maquiladora *study and multi-media resources for church-based study groups that will be available from the national church.*

Is it time for Christians to think locally?

by Michael Schut



I WORK FOR EARTH MINISTRY, a Christian environmental non-profit. Part of our work focuses on helping individuals and congregations understand the impacts daily lifestyle and consumer choices have on ourselves and the earth.

The main tool we use in that work is a book and study-guide called *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective* (SLCL). In a world dominated by the global economy and seduced by the idol of economic growth, one section of SLCL, "How much is enough?: Lifestyles, Global Economics, and Justice," is particularly helpful in framing Christian economic thinking.

The links between over-consumption, poverty, and ecological degradation are simple and direct. The reason they do not necessarily appear so is also simple: Our economic system does not see itself as embedded in the larger world of nature. We futilely hope that the waste — referred to as "externalities" by economists — created in economic processes will be assimilated by the earth. However, we have obviously already exceeded earth's assimilative capacities. The pollution our consumptive habits creates today show up tomorrow as increased cancer rates, birth defects and oil-soaked birds. As Philip Sherrard says, "We are treating our planet in an inhuman and God-forsaken manner because we see things in an inhuman, God-forsaken way. And we see things in this way because that is basically how we see ourselves."

Christians, however, believe that the earth is God's and that to degrade it is wrong. We also believe that we are all created in God's image, that we are all sacred and that human beings live most fully when they understand themselves to be part of a community, not as individuals-in-a-market — which, as theologian John Cobb points out, is the perspective by which our globalized world is operating.

The validity of Christian understanding seems to be supported by the findings of researchers such as Alan Durning, executive director of Northwest Environment Watch. Durning's work, which reveals the inordinate impact Americans' consumptive habits have on the earth, also gently uncovers the emptiness many of us feel. Despite the phenomenal growth in consumption and economic output, he says, "Repeated opinion polls of people's sense of well-being show that no more Americans are satisfied with their lot now than they were in 1957."

In light of global economic relationships, many believe Wendell Berry points in the direction we must move — from abstract global concerns to concrete local actions — to create a more compassionate and just economy. Berry suggests it is "preposterous" to think that any of us can do "anything to heal the planet." Instead, the scale of our competence is to work to preserve each of our "humble households and neighborhoods." Were all such neighborhoods preserved, he says, it is possible that most planetary problems would disappear.

Let's consider our food choices as one small example. The average morsel travels 1,200 miles to reach our plate. The agri-business industry consumes at least nine calories of fossil fuel energy to produce one calorie of food energy. Following Berry's suggestion, we would take care of our neighborhood by buying locally grown produce. We would care for our soil and water by purchasing organics. Notice that through focusing on local, everyday choices, we also concurrently address a significant global concern. In this case, buying locally shortens supply lines, thereby decreasing carbon dioxide emissions and a portion of our own contribution to greenhouse gases.

But although individual choice, rooted in caring for local people and places, is crucial, there is more. Individuals must also join together to create political will for societal change. For example, organic food is often more expensive than non-organic. But that is because the price is wrong! The price of non-organics, in other words, does not include the externalities associated with growing them. If the costs of water and soil contamination (from pesticides and fertilizers) were internalized, non-organic costs would increase while organics would decrease. Getting prices right will require communities working together to both educate the public and create the appropriate policies.

Increasing economic growth is perhaps our most powerful cultural idol. If growth were the answer, however, the disparity between rich and poor would not be growing. While many in the world today certainly require more material wealth, others of us need to ask the difficult question of how much is enough? ●

Michael Schut coordinates Earth Ministry's Simpler Living Project, <www.earthministry.org>; 206-632-2426. To order SLCL call 1-800-824-1813 or a local independent bookstore.

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WHEN A GLOBAL GIANT



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A small city debates a supercenter

by Murray Carpenter

YOU COULD BE ANYWHERE in the U.S. here, listening to the specials over the loudspeakers, walking through the miles of aisles of inexpensive merchandise. This is but one of 2,500 Wal-Mart stores scattered around the country. But step out into the expansive parking lot, walk around back and slip past a few red oaks, and you'll smell the salt air and see a large bay full of lobster boats. It's the coast of Maine, Rockland to be precise, where Wal-Mart has turned into a flashpoint for a rapidly changing community. In dispute is the corporate giant's plan to abandon this 90,000-square-foot facility and build a new "supercenter," twice as big, across the street.

Here, as elsewhere, the question being asked is: Do local citizens really want an expanded presence in their still distinctive community of a global retailer with a cookie-cutter, cheapest-knows-no-limits mentality?

At this Wal-Mart on a sunny Wednesday in February, the answer is, apparently, yes. By noon there are well over 100 cars in the parking lot, ranging from sport utility vehicles with cell phones and vanity plates to little old Japanese beaters. A few cars even sport lefty stickers, including one advertising the local grassroots radio station that frequently runs shows criticizing corporate America and rampant globalization.

Why the mad rush to Wal-Mart? Cost,

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COMES KNOCKING:

shoppers say, and convenience. Indeed, things are cheap as heck inside. Fashionable earth-tone t-shirts made in Peru cost $7.94; button-down, 100 percent cotton, pinstriped shirts made in Gatar fetch $15.94; and a fleece "Ozark Trail" vest made in Taiwan goes for $11.94. Leather children's shoes made in China cost less than $10, and steel-toed rubber boots with a U.S. label bring $14.97.

A large sign in the rear of the store reads, "Bring it home to the U.S.A." And just inside the front door on a little table covered by a tablecloth reading "I (heart) Wal-Mart" and covered in smiley faces, a sign asks, "Do you support a Wal-Mart Supercenter? Sign here." Next to the loose-leaf binder is a bouquet of roses, wrapped in plastic. A few of the comments:

"Just what we need."

"I think it's a good idea."

"I'm all for it."

"We need a bigger and better Wal-Mart."

And, "Need it bad."

This type of enthusiasm has propelled Wal-Mart to its position as the largest retailer in the world — and the largest private employer in the U.S. Wal-Mart spokesperson Keith Morris reports that Wal-Mart had $137 billion in sales and $4.4 billion in net revenue for the year ending in January 1999. And the retail giant keeps getting bigger, adding more services. Recently, in fact, Wal-Mart issued its own private label credit card.

A contentious local debate over the Rockland Wal-Mart has focused on taxes, traffic, aesthetics and the zoning change the city would have to approve for the new supercenter. But there are broader concerns about the effects of globalization simmering just below the surface. These local and global issues often come up for discussion at the Good Tern Co-op, a health food market in a white clapboard building near the heart of Rockland's downtown. It's just a five-minute pedal south of Wal-Mart.

"This is kind of the potbelly stove, cracker-barrel center of a lot of this debate," says Good Tern employee Lizzie Dickerson. She is among many locals who say, "The Wal-Mart we have is Wal-Mart enough," and has led a petition drive opposing the zoning change. In a nutshell, Dickerson says, "For a lot of people it's like the antithesis of their life, why they live here."

The Good Tern is certainly the antithesis of Wal-Mart. The contrasts are dramatic. Wal-Mart is designed to accommodate shoppers who arrive by car, not foot. Its traffic-clogged Route 1 location is unwelcoming to pedestrians at any season, but especially in the winter when the sidewalks remain unplowed. Downtown Rockland, by contrast, is a walker's dream, being a compact set of retail blocks with good sidewalks and easy-to-negotiate crosswalks. Wal-Mart is an enormous windowless box, but morning sunlight streams in through large storefront windows at the tiny Co-op, the whole of which could fit in the small cafeteria just inside Wal-Mart's entrance. Most strikingly, the line between customer, employee and owner is blurred at the co-op. As Dickerson says, "We pay 20 bucks and we're [instantly] co-owners."

OF THE WORLD'S 100 LARGEST ECONOMIES, 49 ARE NATIONS AND 51 ARE CORPORATIONS. WAL-MART, WITH ITS ANNUAL SALES OF $137.6 BILLION, HAS A LARGER ECONOMY THAN OVER 100 COUNTRIES.

But it's not just the increased traffic and required zoning changes that make her oppose the new store, Dickerson says, it's what Wal-Mart represents as a global power.

"Wal-Mart is the symbol of schlock: Buy cheap, build it cheap at any cost, including labor practices that are questionable," she says. "These sorts of businesses are causing the erosion of the standard of living of the people of this country, while at the same time saying they are trying to improve it."

Dickerson isn't the only Wal-Mart foe downtown. A block north, on Rockland's narrow Main Street, sits Goodnow's Pharmacy. This morning Arthur Johnson is sitting at the soda fountain counter, as he does most mornings. What does he think of the planned supercenter? "I hate it," says the retired cabinet maker, who used to visit Goodnow's for ice cream sodas in his youth. "You can see the damage they've already done up there, the asphalt jungle I call it. I've been here 71 years, what do I know? But if they pass it, something's wrong somewhere."

But even in Goodnow's, the quintessential Main Street business to which Wal-Mart is supposed to be the death knell, Johnson's feeling's are not universal. Patty Young, tending the till, said, "I like Wal-Mart — one-stop shopping." Another woman agrees, "I think it would be excellent for the area. I go to Augusta, Portland or Boston to shop because there's nothing here." But when Johnson suggests perhaps Young would like to get a job at Wal-Mart, she responds that they'd never pay her what she makes at Goodnow's. He nods, "See?"

Two doors down from Goodnow's, Skip Thompson is holding a sale to liquidate the inventory from Coffin's, a longtime downtown Rockland outlet for clothing, footwear and cosmetics. Thompson ran the store for 20 years, and says his closing down is related to Wal-Mart's showing up.

"In a general sense," he says, "Wal-Mart drains local economies — it costs every-

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Bangor takes on sweatshops

From a small brick building on a quiet street in downtown Bangor Me., the Clean Clothes Campaign is quietly but effectively challenging the inequities of the global economy. Last fall the group persuaded the Bangor City Council to adopt anti-sweatshop purchasing resolution.

The resolution states that Bangor will, whenever possible, purchase apparel and other items from ethical manufacturers. Bjorn Claeson of the Campaign feels it's a simple, effective tactic for using tax dollars to end the problems associated with the sweatshops where millions of workers, worldwide, toil daily in brutal conditions.

Claeson said working at the local level attains two goals at the same time: helping workers around the world, and helping local democracy. "Until we have a more responsive democracy on the federal level it's what municipalities will have to do," said Claeson. Bangor is not alone, he said. Over 30 cities and towns nationwide, including New York City, now have anti-sweatshop procurement policies in place.

As the World Trade Organization becomes increasingly powerful, Claeson is concerned about procurement agreements prohibiting governments from using anything other than economic factors when awarding contracts. But any such WTO policies will be facing increased pressure from the grass roots, and all the communities that are adopting selective purchase agreements. This is an international effort, and Claeson has fielded calls from all over the world.

As the WTO exerts pressure from the top down, it will be meeting more and more resistance from the Clean Clothes Campaign, and other such efforts working locally, from the bottom up.

The Campaign, which grew out of a group doing sister city work with Carasque, El Salvador, has also drafted a *Clean Clothes Shopping Guide*. The guide features information about various clothing manufacturers, and lists local clean clothes retailers. The guide names Wal-Mart — along with Disney, the Gap and Nike — among its seven corporate campaigns.

Claeson said Wal-Mart is "emblematic of the polarization of economies." He said the store is often targeted, like Nike, because "if you can persuade Nike or Wal-Mart to change, then maybe the others will change as well." The Clean Clothes Campaign has also drafted an organizing guide, complete with a model resolution, to help other cities and towns go clean.

For a copy of the organizing guide or shopping guide contact: Clean Clothes Campaign, at PICA, 170 Park Street, Bangor, Maine 04401, 207-947-4203.



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body."

When Wal-Mart shows up with cheap goods at cheap prices, Thompson says it is understandable that people will shop there, but small businesses suffer.

"The little guy's going to take the heat," he says. "That $20 million or so has to come out of someone's hide."

Globalization is evident in Coffin's too. On a table along one wall are Hathaway dress shirts, union-made in Maine. But on a rack just inside the door are sweatshirts made in Russia, emblazoned, in California, with a "Maine" logo. But Thompson feels the global economy can "definitely improve conditions worldwide. It's a question of advocating for people in third world countries so they're not at starvation levels. It means the wealth is going to spread."

After the liquidation sale, Thompson and his wife are looking at a "major life change," but don't know exactly what it will be. They have applied for the Peace Corps.

What will become of downtown Rockland when Coffin's, and Thompson, leave?

"I think what we'll end up with is shops like we have here, " says Thompson pointing across the street at the Wine Seller, one of many upscale businesses that have moved in near the expanding Farnsworth Museum and its new Wyeth Center. "I think the downtown will be fun, and the outskirts will be necessary."

But Thompson doesn't speak for everyone downtown. A few blocks further north, in the insurance office where he works, Mayor James Raye is nothing but boosterish about Wal-Mart. When businesses are looking to move to Rockland, Raye says, there's that window of opportunity, and he wants to make sure that window is open.

"Wal-Mart is very successful. They buy by the truckload when other businesses around here buy by the boxload," says Raye. "Do I subsidize the downtown merchants? This is still free enterprise, isn't it?"

Wal-Mart, Raye says, is bringing a payroll of $5.5 million, 350 jobs, and a 401K plan, "along with an opportunity." Wal-Mart is also chipping in for municipal erosion and drainage studies.

"We are not in a position to throw away tax dollars," Raye says, citing recent expenses in cash-strapped Rockland. Grabbing a calculator he quickly tallies $16 million or so, for roads, schools, sewers, that Rockland's 7,900 residents are having to shoulder with one of the highest tax rates in the state.

With respect to the proposed supercenter, Raye says that, for him, only four items are of concern: traffic, the appearance of the building, the buffer, and runoff. If Wal-Mart can meet the city's conditions, he'll vote for the zoning change. If two of the four city councilors agree, the deal is a go.

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"I would say 75-85 percent of Rockland wants Wal-Mart out there," he says, adding that he has seen 800 signatures of Wal-Mart shoppers who want the store. As for the old building, Wal-Mart has assured Raye "it won't see a dark day," and he hopes another "big box" retailer, perhaps Home Depot, will move in.

Raye, whose wife has a downtown store selling Hallmark Cards, believes Wal-Mart won't have any effect on downtown business.

"We spent a lot of money to get the Hallmark franchise. Now Wal-Mart sells Hallmark cards and I'm fighting for it. Each and every year since they've been here, we've grown," Raye says. The businesses cannot only co-exist, but can also help each other, he claims. Downtown business owners will "just have to sharpen their pencils.

"To each his own. There are people that shop the Wal-Marts and people that shop downtown," says the mayor. "We need to have some balance. A lot of people would like to have it be a tourist town. What we need is more stores like Wal-Mart that draw people here. They'll take a stroll downtown and say 'Hey, this is nice.'"

Keith Morris, the Wal-Mart spokesperson, agrees.

"The downtown has not died since Wal-Mart opened." Morris says the main difference with the supercenter is a new 40-45,000 square foot grocery store. Since there is no longer a large grocery store in downtown Rockland, this new grocery store will be competing with Rockland's two other supermarkets, both located in shopping centers with large parking lots on the fringes of the city. Shop 'n Save, Wal-Mart's direct competition, says it will expand to meet the supercenter challenge. The Shop 'n Save chain, until recently owned by Maine's Hannaford Brothers, was bought out by Delhaize America last year. So Wal-Mart is competing most directly with another global power retailer.

While he claims the supercenter won't hurt downtown, Morris is pretty clear on another point: If Wal-Mart does not get approval to build at the Rockland site, they will likely take their business elsewhere, and "that's going to have a detrimental effect on business locally." Already some residents of the neighboring town of Thomaston have started a petition drive inviting Wal-Mart to build there.

Morris takes criticism of the corporate giant in stride. How about the claims of censorship, Wal-Mart refusing to sell some CD's and dictating sexual morality by refusing to sell the so-called morning-after pill? Morris responds in broad terms: "We do have a responsibility to adhere to our company standards and customer standards. There's just certain things (such as magazines that come in plain brown wrappers) that are not in line with our company philosophy, and our customers have told us, overwhelmingly, that they feel the same way."

How about matters of global equity, and the conditions in the sweatshops manufacturing for the Wal-Marts? "We have what we call a statement of vendor standards," Morris says. "Every company we work with has to sign that agreement and adhere to it." The agreement encompasses fair compensation, reasonable work hours, and forbids child or forced labor. Morris claims Wal-Mart performed nearly 1,000 surprise factory inspections last year, and has stopped doing business with hundreds of manufacturers due to poor working conditions.

But Bob Ortega, author of *In Sam We Trust, the Untold Story of Sam Walton and How Wal-Mart is Devouring America*, found children working in Guatemalan factories manufacturing clothes for Wal-Mart and other retailers. Most recently Wal-Mart and 16 other retailers, have been subjects of a class action lawsuit over sweatshop conditions on Saipan, a Pacific island in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

While the global issues get tossed around occasionally, the discussion in Rockland is usually about the intensely local aspects of the supercenter: traffic, zoning and taxes. Over at the Good Tern, Dickerson says, "People are naturally concerned about what's around them. Globalization is a difficult issue, it's too big." As Dickerson stands next to the organic produce, one co-op member is stocking five-pound bags of fairly traded Equal Exchange coffee. Across the aisle a small hand-lettered card next to some colorful placemats reads, "Place mats are made by a woman's cooperative in Nepal." Dickerson looks around and says she believes it's possible to improve the global economy, "a little bit at a time."

It's the same approach Dickerson is taking with Wal-Mart. "People come in here and say we'll never be able to stop this, and I say, 'Yes we will.' We do have the power to do something. We're doing what we feel is right." ●

Murray Carpenter is a freelance writer who lives in Belfast, Me., <romy@acadia.net>.

Send a Letter to Wal-Mart

(A campaign of the People of Faith Network and the National Labor Committee)

Wal-Mart reaches annual sales of $137.6 billion a year and $7.6 billion in operating profits, yet pays workers 9 cent an hour in Bangladesh, 43 cents an hour in Honduras, and 12 cents an hour in China.

In the U.S. territory of Saipan, Wal-Mart forces young women migrant workers to work 70 hours a week, firing and deporting any worker who becomes pregnant or complains about forced overtime.

Wal-Mart refuses to provide the American people with the names and addresses of its factories, while hiding 1,000 sweatshops in China alone.

Wal-Mart needs to know that you are concerned. Please take the time to write. Letters on the letterhead of your organization will command attention. Personal letters are also effective. Please send copies of your letter to the People of Faith Network.

Address your letters to:
Mr. David Glass, CEO
Wal-Mart, Inc.
702 SW 8th Street
Bentonville, AR 72716
Fax: 501/273-4329

Send copies of your letters to:
People of Faith Network
C/o Lafayette Avenue
Presbyterian Church
85 So. Oxford Street
Brooklyn, NY 11217
Phone: 718/625-2819
Fax: 718/625-3491

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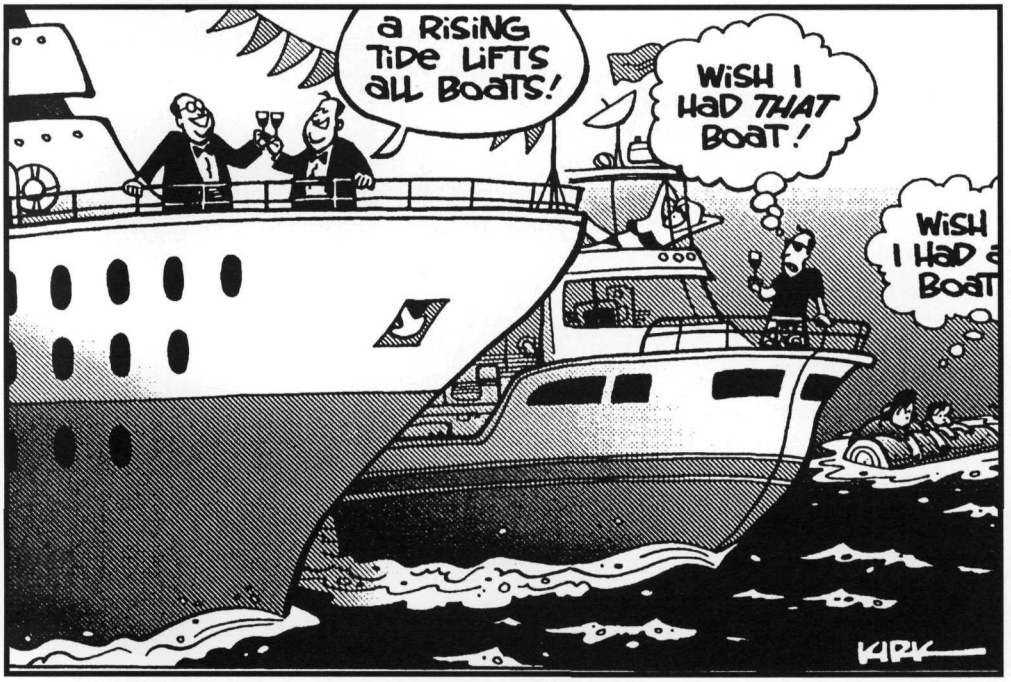

Center for American & Jewish Studies

Baylor University recently announced the opening of the Center for American and Jewish Studies, with Mark H. Ellis as director. The mission of the Center is to create a forum for the discussion of religion and public life and to create the leading center for the study of Judaism and Jewish life among Christian-identified institutions of higher learning. According to Rosemary Ruether, the Center "is the first Jewish center that takes Jewish relations to Palestinians as a central ethical challenge."

The Center's Inaugural Conference will take place Nov. 1-3, 2000 at Baylor University. Speakers include Richard Rubenstein, president of the University of Bridgeport; Mahmoud Ayoub, of Temple University; Rosemary Radford Ruether of Garret Evangelical Theological Seminary; Lawrence Carter, Dean of Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel, Morehouse College; and Ram Cnaan, University of Pennsylvania.

People's campaign for nonviolence

From July1 through Aug. 9, 2000, hundreds of peace and justice groups will gather in Washington, D.C. to call for disarmament and justice. The People's Campaign for Nonviolence, sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, will include 40 days and 40 nights of public vigil and protest, nonviolence training, peace education workshops and gatherings for prayer and reflection. Special events include a July 1 panel discussion featuring Daniel Berrigan, Helen Caldicott, Jim Lawson, John Dear, Marian Wright Edelman, Arun Gandhi, Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Jonathan Schell; a July 29-30 weekend of workshops and worship sponsored by The Episcopal Peace Fellowship; and a protest with Martin Sheen at the White House on Aug. 6, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and the 10th anniversary of the economic sanctions on Iraq.

San Romero de las Americas

We gathered in the Plaza El Salvador del Mundo on Friday the 24th, for the 20th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, commonly called *Monseñor Romero*. Little by little the crowd gathered to celebrate the Eucharist outdoors beneath the monument of Christ, the Savior of the World, the patron of the Republic of El Salvador.

By the time of the beginning of the Mass it was dark, and about 5,000 people had gathered for what was to be the beginning of a long night of celebration and story-telling.

The Mass was well organized. Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the city with the most Salvadorans outside El Salvador, was the celebrant and homilist. Archbishop Fernando Sáenz Lacalle, Archbishop of El Salvador was there too, along with many Salvadoran clergy. Lacalle is a Spaniard, with little previous experience in El Salvador. He was appointed by Rome over a couple of strong Salvadoran candidates, to keep the lid on the progressive, "people movements" in the church.

The celebration lacked the energy and passion that one can find among the Salvadoran people when they are encouraged to celebrate their deepest truths. The official church in El Salvador is ambivalent about *Monseñor Romero*. He represents the church of the people, of the struggle against poverty, oppression and inhumanity experienced still by the poor of the country, those who represent the vast majority of Salvadorans.

Romero is in the process of canonization, of becoming a saint, officially. But the saint that was celebrated that afternoon in the Plaza El Salvador del Mundo was the saint of miracles and conservative, individualistic piety. This saint had little to do with the saint that was to be remembered and celebrated later on that evening, *San Romero de las Americas*, St. Romero of the Americas, saint of the people, already canonized in the hearts of the poor.

After the Mass, about 8:30pm, we (my wife, Stephanie and Christina from the L'Arche community in Honduras) began the pilgrimage march from the plaza to the Cathedral, a distance of about four miles. By this time the crowd had grown. Estimates were that at the height of the celebration about ten thousand people were gathered.

We all had candles in the procession. Small trucks playing the music of the "popular" church were interspersed among the pilgrims, traveling along the wide and beautiful Alameda Roosevelt, the main boulevard of

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San Salvador. We could see far down the boulevard, thousands of candles moving slowly toward the Plaza Civica and the great Cathedral. The energy and passion of the people, important for the celebration that was to continue in front of the old cathedral, began to emerge along the procession. People were singing. Shouts of *Que viva Monseñor Romero! Viva!* Long live Monsignor Romero! May he live! The saint of the Plaza El Salvador del Mundo was becoming the saint of the people again, the beloved of the poor, the prophet who was assassinated for his boldness and his truth: *San Romero de las Americas.*

We arrived at the Plaza Civica about 10pm. I was brought to the platform built on the front steps of the Cathedral, to represent the Episcopal Church in the U.S. and the Anglican Church of El Salvador. Originally our bishop, Martín Barahona, was to play a major role in that night's Vigil in the plaza. But he was taken to the hospital in the morning for tests and rest. He was exhausted by the high physical and emotion cost of his work in El Salvador.

On the platform with me, before the great multitudes in the plaza, were Monseñor Ricardo Urioste, well known and loved by the Salvadoran people, and the person in charge of the celebration; Bishop Medardo Gómez, Lutheran Bishop of El Salvador, somewhat of a folk hero in El Salvador for his courage and accompaniment of the people during the war; a couple of other Ecumenical leaders; Bishop Pedro Casaldáliga (Dom Pedro) of the Diocese of Sao Felix, Brazil, famous for his fight to preserve the Amazon Basin and the indigenous people who live there; Bishop Samuél Ruíz, Bishop of the deeply conflicted area of Chiapas, Southern Mexico — prophets, all of them. It was an honor beyond imagining to sit with these people who for years have been spiritual heroes of mine.

On March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass in the small chapel on the grounds of a hospital for people with terminal cancer, the place where Romero lived in a small three room house, Romero was killed. His murderers have never been caught or judged. There is a mountain of evidence, enough for a trial, that Roberto D'Aubuson, founder of the ARENA party, the party now in power, was the organizer, in collusion with the military, of the assassination. D'Aubuson has never been put on trial. Ironically he died in the mid-1980s of cancer.

The evening in the plaza continued throughout the night with music, a video of the life of *Monseñor Romero*, with cultural events, dancing and much celebration. For me, and I'm sure for others, it was hard to imagine a celebration, in peace, in the Plaza Civica, of the life and witness of Oscar Romero. It was in this plaza during the war that people gathered to hear Romero, to voice their challenges, protests and hope before the government and military, and to bury their beloved padrecito Romero. It was in this plaza during almost all these gatherings that the El Salvadoran military threatened and killed countless *Salvadoreños*. And here we were in peace, together, honoring Romero, *San Romero de las Americas.*

Mostly unspoken were the thoughts many harbored, that the present reality in El Salvador has changed little since the war. In some sense things are worse. The voice and witness of Romero is still much needed. The few on the top of society are wealthier, the poor at the bottom are poorer. Human rights abuses continue with little redress. Violence in the country is worse than during the time of war. Most young people see little future for them in the country. Corruption and disregard of the rule of law abound.

In El Salvador, just as in many parts of the world, as in Guatemala, Haiti, and East Timor, there are millions of human beings who are slowly dying because of the injustice of poverty, and who die violently because of political and military repression. In a strict sense they are not dying because of their Christian faith, nor for announcing the Reign of God, as did Romero. They die innocently, indefensibly, without the freedom to escape death.

If they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people. (Msgr. Romero, 1980) ●

Richard A. Bower (Bower is Dean, St. Paul's Cathedral in Syracuse, N.Y. and a member of the board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, publisher of The Witness.)

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CLASSIFIEDS

Walker Center programs

The Walker Center, a Boston area retreat and resource center for mission and ministry. 2000 Program highlights: June 1, Dinner and Dialogue with Ched Myers and Barry Shelly; Sept. 23, International Fair; Oct. 6-7, Getting Dirty for Jesus: Leading Workcamps at Home & Abroad, with Peter Johnson; Oct. 27-28, Breaking the Spiral of Violence with Walter Wink; Nov. 3-4, Join Jesus in Prison: Beginning an Effective Prison Ministry, with Bill Webber. Other resources: Mission Resource Center, Conference Center, B&B facilities ($38-$50/double), international gift shop. For information: Walker Center, 144 Hancock St., Newton, MA 02466; (617) 969-3919; www.walkerctr.org.

Women's Caucus

Christian feminists: Plan now to attend the Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus biennial conference, "And Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," July 27-30, 2000, North Park University, Chicago, IL. Speakers include Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B. and author/EEWC foremother Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. For information, visit http://www.eewc.com or call 847-825-5651.

Episcopal Urban Interns

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 2000-2001 year. Contact: EUIP, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301; 310-674-7700; email euip@pacbell.net.

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Betty LaDuke

JUBILEE

Wrapped in a mantle of freedom and responsibility

by Susan S. Keller

IN THE LAST YEAR, Jubilee has become a familiar word for millions of Christians around the world. As an African American, I recognize Jubilee as a central thread woven into the fabric of African-American spirituality. Jubilee is a biblical reality grounded in the will of God for justice and liberation.

The thread was spun (two strands) and dyed during the time of slavery. This was the time of the "invisible church," when slaves met in secret to worship God, praise Jesus and rejoice in the power of the Spirit. The Spirituals of this period are Jubilee songs. As Gwendolyn Sims Warren relates in *Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit* (Henry Holt, 1997), these songs of the enslaved are Jubilee songs because in the midst of despair they found faith in God, fortitude and hope. Many spirituals had double meanings (such as "Steal Away to Jesus") for use in escape to freedom. Not only music, but stories and craft work as well. Quilts were created with different designs used in an intricate system of the underground railroad. The wagon wheel pattern was used to indicate the start of a journey. I can imagine women, working late in slave cabins, stitching a wagon wheel pattern while singing, "Ezekiel saw the wheel, way up in the middle of the air ..." For me the wheel affirms the presence and providence of God and the wheels of justice rolling to freedom.

African-American Jubilee spirituality understands liberation as a communal event. Salvation is the gift to individuals, for the life and health of community, that the community may live as a witness to power of God. Therefore individuals have the moral obligation to live in harmony, that the community may survive and thrive as a Jubilee people.

During slavery times Jubilee offered the affirmation of blacks as a people of worth. After Emancipation and during Jim Crow, the Jubilee emphasis was for social uplift, education and striving for excellence in all enterprises. Despite segregation and violence, Jubilee spirituality strengthened the people for survival and progress. And during the Civil Rights era, Jubilee spirituality empowered the people to awaken a nation to unjust practices while empowering the poor and oppressed to be agents of change.

Enduring aspects of Jubilee spirituality

Individualism is a strong current in American culture. Jubilee spirituality, however, understands the individual person primarily in relation to kinfolk and the wider community. A good person is one who contributes to the life of the community. Community life, in turn, provides individuals with encouragement, a sense of identity and boundaries of right and wrong. Community practices of celebration, physical health, economic health, political participation and education give individuals a sense of participation, honor and destiny. Measures of community health, according to Joyce A. Ladner in *The Ties That Bind: Timeless Values for African*

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American Families (John Wiley, 1998), are the way the community treats its children, its elderly and its outlaws.

Flowing from this emphasis on kinship and community, Jubilee spirituality's moral virtues are beneficence, forbearance, practical wisdom, improvisation and forgiveness. Beneficence is the art of hospitality, love and service. It is the quality of living for the well-being of others.

Forbearance is the art of patience — of biding until the proper time for action. Forbearance includes reflection and waiting. Forbearance strengthens the art of non-violent resistance and is not to be confused with submission or capitulation. It is the art of standing in place at the crossroads in order not to act impulsively or unjustly.

Practical wisdom is the art of creative, proverbial thinking that guides good actions. It is the advice, given from the experience of elders and the wise. Practical wisdom should be nurtured in children through mentoring and teaching in intergenerational settings.

Improvisation is the art of creative expression. It is invention in the face of poverty. It is art in the face of despair. It is the unpredictable variation on a theme that widens our perception to embrace a wider unity. Improvisation is multi-rhythmic expression that enhances our senses to experience beauty.

Forgiveness is essential for the ongoing life of community because hatred takes a greater toll. Accepting and giving forgiveness in appropriate channels opens the mind and heart and gives life to our spirit. Our moral responsibility is to build relationships, so forgiveness is an important spiritual tool to bring healing, restoration and balance within the community.

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Celebrating liberation, remembering history

Jubilee celebrates liberation, liberation understood in the context of community. As persons, our destinies are intertwined. The Leviticus scriptures also state that Jubilee is a time for return; each to their own property and to their own family. Jubilee spirituality thus calls us to "know where we come from; to reach back to our ancestors and roots." To explore the Jubilee traditions, culture and values is in itself a time of return and restoration. In returning we can honor and improve our relationships with extended family, we can lift up the values that helped us to survive and excel. We can celebrate the lives of women and men. In returning we can reflect upon what was meant by justice and emancipation then, in order to inform our acts of justice and hope for freedom now.

I am reminded of an experience with Christian college students a few years ago. In a discussion between African-American and Anglo students, the question was asked why it seemed blacks focused on slavery. One student remarked, "We tell the story not to enrage, but that we might never forget and that it not ever occur again." The Anglo students viewed the discussion from an individualistic viewpoint, with the remembering seen as an accusation of current individual racist practices. The African-American students viewed the discussion from a communal viewpoint — for them the healing included the remembering in order to guard against continuing systematic practices.

Jubilee spirituality remembers that we were once enslaved. It keeps in our hearts that our lives today are due to people who were poor and oppressed. In times of economic prosperity, to ignore injustice and oppression would be to cut us loose from our past and heritage.

Affirming connections between communities

One of our greatest contemporary challenges is the issue of diversity and multiculturalism. Jubilee spirituality affirms God as the creator of all life and all peoples. Jubilee affirms each person's dignity and worth and each community's value and responsibility. Relations between different communities start from the affirmation of the creative impulse of God that produces a variety of languages, cultures and skin tones. Jubilee spirituality affirms the earth and the multiplicity of peoples as good, because God has so proclaimed. In a Jubilee context, justice between communities begins first with God and continues through our understanding of responsibilities, forgiveness, mutuality, common points and reconciliation. As injustice occurs between groups, communities need agreement on common points to be able to act with justice and healing restoration. Jubilee spirituality wraps us in a mantle of both freedom and responsibility.

One of my favorite spirituals says, "Over my head, Over my head, I hear music in the air, Over my head I hear music in the air, Over my head I hear music in the air, there must be a God somewhere." Jubilee spirituality's most basic affirmation is the presence and providence of God. That is the essence of the motto for the urban youth program I work with on Sunday evenings: "A Godless Life is a Hopeless Life." And so, in a spirit of Jubilee, we are attempting to give these young people what every person needs to survive and thrive: a community that affirms their worth, that provides a safe place, that anchors them in a Jubilee heritage, that teaches them values and life skills and celebrates Jesus' liberating word. ●

Susan S. Keller is an Episcopal priest and director of Program and Education Ministries for the Diocese of Southern Virginia, <sskeller@southernvirginia.anglican.org>.

Probing global richness and diversity

by Marianne Arbogast

TRAVELING IN THE SOUTH in the summer of 1951, Betty LaDuke discovered that she could "pass" for black. Suntanned after working in a cotton field, the 18-year-old daughter of Russian and Polish immigrants to the Bronx had walked into a Memphis café where white people didn't eat, and was taken for a light-complexioned African-American. For the rest of the summer, she maintained that identity, riding in the back of buses and using public facilities designated as "black-only." The experience "opened up a new world" to her, LaDuke says.

It was the first of many worlds that LaDuke was to enter and then open to others through her artwork. LaDuke's vision transcends borders of culture, nationality and religion. But the images, colors and symbols in her artwork are grounded in her experiences of the very particular people and places she has visited in a lifetime of travel. Through her journeys, she has contemplated "an amazing unfolding of our world, how complex and rich and diverse it is," LaDuke says.

"That's why I hate globalization in the sense of trying to make McDonald's everywhere or make us all look alike in jeans."

From her childhood, LaDuke's life has been characterized by diversity. Growing up in a multi-ethnic neighborhood, she spent summers at an inter-racial Workers' Children's Camp. Her first art mentors were Charles White and Elizabeth Catlett, African-American art counselors at the camp. They communicated to LaDuke their sense of art as connected to community — different from the "art for art's sake" perspective she would later encounter in school. Since they had both spent time in Mexico, LaDuke set her sights there as well, winning a scholarship her third year in college to study at the Instituto Allende in San Miguel.

LaDuke stayed in Mexico for three-and-a-half years, moving from formal studies to independent work. She spent one year painting murals on one-room schoolhouses with the Otomi Indian people. In government-sponsored exhibitions, LaDuke was counted among the "new generation of Mexican artists." In Mexico, she also observed the close relationship of people to the earth, which would become a continuing theme in her own work.

When LaDuke returned to New York, she met her first husband, Sun Bear or Vincent LaDuke, a Native American political activist. They moved to Los Angeles, where LaDuke continued her education, gave birth to her daughter, Winona LaDuke, and separated from her husband. After earning her Master's degree, she joined the faculty at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Ore. There she met and married Peter Westigard, an agricultural scientist, and had a second child, Jason Westigard.

With her first sabbatical in 1972, LaDuke traveled to India — the first of a series of journeys which would deeply impact her work.

"I'm a woman, I'm an artist, I'm a teacher," LaDuke says, "and when I traveled I would try to meet my peer group and see what their lives were like, their social situation, their issues that they dealt with in various art forms in various media. There was a tremendous focus in the 1970s on western women's art — which was necessary and important, but I realized there was a big gap between western white women's art as opposed to the art of people in third-world cultures."

LaDuke developed two new courses — Women and Art, and Art in the Third World. She also published six books.

"The writing became an outgrowth of the travel and a way of honoring these women, making them visible to my students and to the larger community," she says.

"I'M A WOMAN,

I'M AN ARTIST,

I'M A TEACHER."

Her most recent book, *Women Against Hunger: A Sketchbook Journey*, came into being after Freedom from Hunger — a nonprofit working with women's credit associations and health education — sent LaDuke to the regions where they sponsored projects.

"I saw the different ways their programs functioned on four continents, and that was pretty amazing," LaDuke says. "Allowing the women to develop their own projects and pay back the money at very low interest, and also receive health education, was a wonderful way to build community, to strengthen women's position in the villages and to strengthen their economic bases."

LaDuke has seen first-hand the devastating effects of the global food market.

"The thing that's saddest is that, so often, people aren't producing the food that they themselves need for survival," she says. "A lot of the products get exported, and the stuff that does sustain families is done by women on a more difficult basis."

In recent years, LaDuke has traveled extensively in Africa.

"I have a tremendous appreciation for the local cultures and the tremendous diversity," LaDuke says. "Africa is so rich in that sense, and much of the culture is still intact, through language, through village life, through traditions that are centuries-old. I find a great deal of beauty in these day-to-day traditions that people share and I want to catch that, rather than to emphasize the negative that is so much a part of the media.

"The popularization of American culture all over is pretty strong, but there are a lot of choices, too. Folks in Africa love the Jamaican music and Bob Marley and a lot of the political lyrics — plus, they

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have their own stars who are really touching upon issues. And some countries have a tremendous amount of pride and limit imports — of fabric, for example — to maintain their own identity."

LaDuke has been elated to find that her work has had some tangible effects in the lives of some of the women she has visited. In Mali this past summer, she learned that her book, *Africa Through the Eyes of Women Artists*, had helped one of the women she wrote about to expand her mud cloth production.

"The book brought people from around the world to her doorstep, visiting and buying her work. It enabled her daughter to stay in high school, rather than be married at a young age, and her sons are working for her, doing the technical aspects of mud cloth painting. Her house now has electricity, and her husband who sells fishing nets now has a little motorbike."'

She is also proud that a women's weaving collective in Zimbabwe is using her artwork as patterns for their weavings. "I had left them notecards, then I sent them some posters, and they felt my work was very African. I felt very honored."

LaDuke's deepest connections have been in Eritrea, where she has spent time yearly since 1994.

"I taught there and I did a workshop there, and I got to know the artists very well," she says.

"Eritrea has been one of the most ambitious countries to make improvements for the people and there is a tremendous sense of self-determination."

Working with the Asmara School of Art, LaDuke produced a video called *Eritrean Artists in War and Peace*. The royalties — along with half of her poster royalties — go to the art school.

"I came at a time of peace, and then war renewed between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998. I'd never been to refugee camps before, I'd never been to a war zone, I'd never seen displaced people. But what caught me about these two countries was their Coptic Christian religion. People on both sides of the border have this close link, especially in the war area, and I visited churches on both sides of the border. Here these mothers are sharing the equal misery of families broken up because of the war."

LaDuke's most recent series of paintings, "Eritrea-Ethiopia, Prayers for Peace," reveals the deep impression these mothers made on her.

"Angels were a dominant theme in some of the ancient churches in Ethiopia," she explains. "I loved the angel forms and the fact that they had different personalities. They weren't all serene and politely smiling. Some of them were passive, but some of them seemed to be downcast, angry with people for their follies and almost judgmental. So I did a parody on it. I connected them with people, and mothers, especially, who are making this effort to bring the war to an end and bring their families home again."



LaDuke sees the spiritual themes in her work as "an honoring of many different religions and religious experiences." She describes her own spirituality as "an awareness of a tremendous energy that keeps us all connected and going, a timeless kind of energy, and the importance of just honoring life."

Her own family embodies the diversity that she celebrates.

"My daughter is very much steeped in Native American tradition; my son is married to a woman whose parents were born in Ireland, and their kids are getting baptized in the Catholic tradition; my present husband came from a tradition that was probably Episcopalian. Then my parents are Jewish — I grew up speaking Yiddish and learning a great deal about Jewish culture, but not with a religious focus. So we've got this great multi-cultural mix, and I feel happy with it and see the common threads that link human beings together." ●

Betty LaDuke will be receiving the Vida Scudder Award at The Witness' *July 9 reception at the St. Francis Center during the Episcopal Church's General Convention in Denver, Colo. LaDuke's artwork and schedule of exhibitions can be found at <www.bettyladuke.com>. Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of* The Witness, *<marianne@thewitness.org>.*

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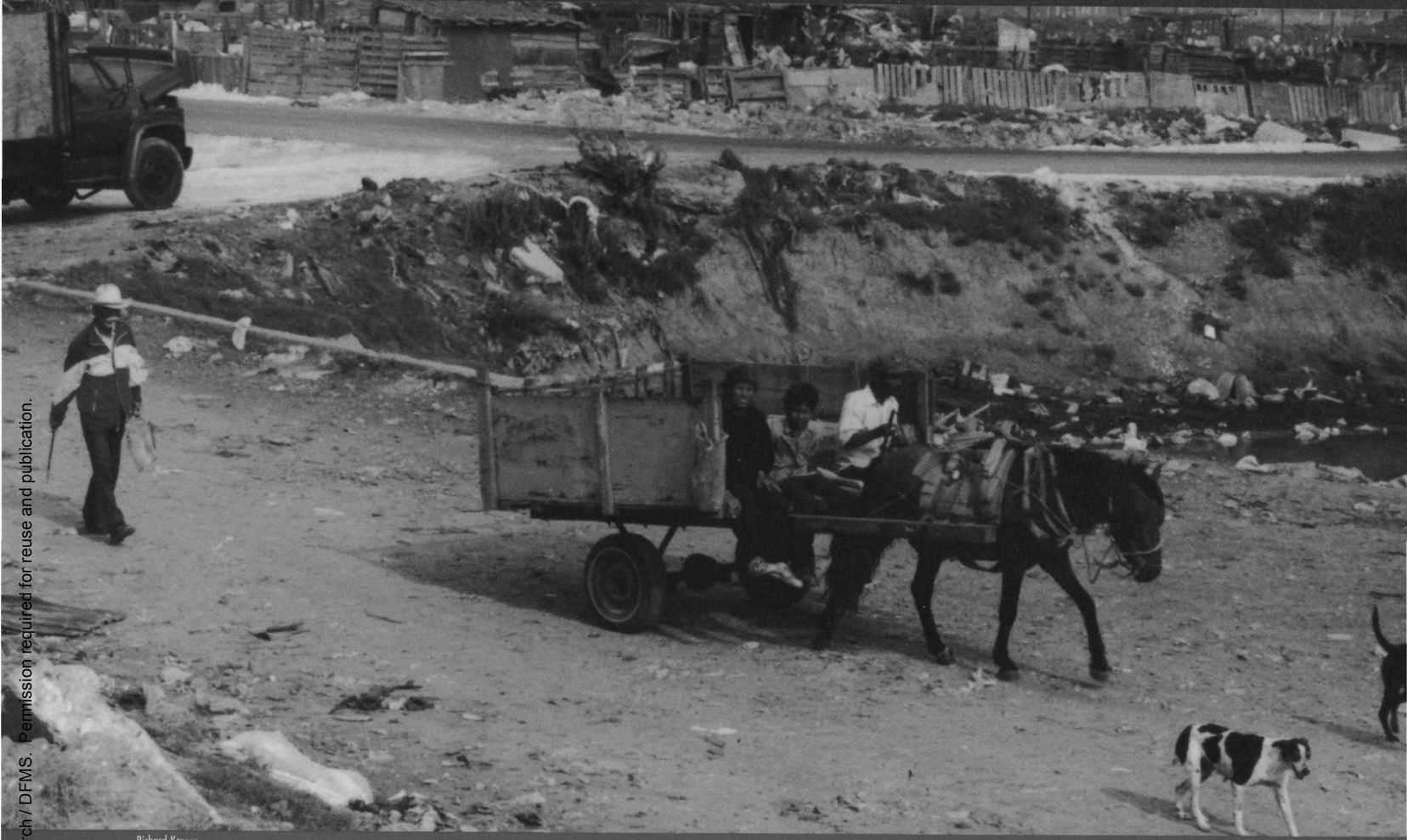

Richard Kerner

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Signs of Justice and Hope

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WITNESS MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

on the cover
HOMELESS PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT

Thirteen homeless people worked with Denver photographer Tory Read last winter, learning to take photos and improve their creative writing. In eight sessions over four weeks, participants used disposable cameras to take portraits of each other and document their lives and the neighborhood around the St. Francis Center. They also wrote autobiographies and poems. The project is part of The Curtis Park Photo/Story Project, a multi-year photo and writing project that documents life in Curtis Park and Five Points. Participants have presented their artwork in temporary exhibits at schools, community centers and clinics in the neighborhood as well as in three permanent exhibits. The project is supported by the Colorado Council on the Arts, Community Development Agency, Enterprise Foundation, Denver Housing Authority, Colorado State Motor Vehicles Division, Hope Communities, Weed & Seed and Eastside Health Center.

For more information contact Tory Read at 313-433-7500.

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8 **'Tis a privilege to live in Colorado'** — *but for whom?* *by Nancy Kinney*
Residents of Denver and the rest of Colorado are discovering that living in the freedom and grandeur of the West, once considered a privilege, has its price. In a sidebar, Phil Goodstein, Denver's "people's" historian, offers a brisk overview of Denver's history.

14 **A 'toxic tour' of Denver: working for environmental justice at the grassroots** *by Camille Colatosti*
In Denver, four entire neighborhoods are Superfund sites, while two former nuclear weapons plants are located less than an hour's drive of the city. Residents are pushing for more aggressive clean-up efforts — and some justice.

18 **Earth-linking:** *'You cannot know who you are if you do not know where you are'* *by Cathy Mueller*
An experiential Earth education organization in Denver reaches out to persons on the margins of society, reconnecting them with the Earth — and their dignity.

23 **The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado: standing up to be counted** *by Michael H. Carrier*
In early May 1998, five people of faith with a progressive perspective decided it was time to counter the powerful force of the Religious Right in Colorado politics — and to witness publicly that a religious perspective is not always conservative.

26 **Contemplating the lives of 'real' children living in apartheid America:** *an interview with Jonathan Kozol* *by Julie A. Wortman*
On April 20, 1999, two students killed 12 of their peers and a teacher at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo. Jonathan Kozol's new book, *Ordinary Resurrections*, is the latest contribution to the wide-ranging public discussion about the hidden lives of American youth sparked by that tragedy.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editor's Note
6 Keeping Watch
7 Poetry
22 Review
24 Short Takes
25 Classifieds
30 Witness Profile

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Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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Of lions and justice

The institutional church has few LIONS left! What I see out there are parishes and missions celebrating personal birthdays and trying to entertain — all noise that blocks and muffles the cries for Justice and Mercy. You all continue to be a LION!!!

Dennis Serdahl
Mountain Home AR

Misery pornography

I found the article "Bashra Diary" (May 2000) an example of misery pornography. Evocative images are presented to us without context, without relationships, and without any way for the reader to interact. It is a kind of voyeurism, and it is wearing in the end. We hear so much about despair and pain in the world that without some indication of why we are presented with it, or how we might get involved, we just begin to tune it out. I need to know what the writer wants to do about this, why he wants me to know about this, what is the purpose of his sharing this horror with me. Otherwise it is just titillation.

Sydney Hall
Hope, ME

Not a perfect world

I like your magazine very much and want to send the April 2000 issue (No easy answers: Gender and sexual ethics for a new age) to a friend, Jim Forest, who is mentioned in Marianne Arbogast's piece on "The pro-life, pro-choice debate: Confronting real differences with respect — and hope."

I've been a friend of Jim's for a long time, but this issue has really, I guess, put a dent in our correspondence. Hopefully it will not go out altogether. I remember very well the incident when Jim resigned from the Fellowship of Reconciliation. I, of course, stayed in, but with a very sad heart that he felt he and the FOR could not remain together.

What he says is true, I guess, and in a perfect world all babies would be born; but it is not a perfect world. I have never had an abortion, but I do know others who have. It is a hard thing. But sometimes it must be done.

Anyway, thank you, and keep up the good work!

Roberta M. Stewart
Washington, D.C.

Shaken trust

I will try to say this as gently but firmly as possible. I was saddened and angered that you included Marianne Arbogast's essay supporting the anti-abortion movement in your uniquely beautiful magazine. No one, not Marianne Arbogast, nor *The Witness*, nor the government, nor anyone else has the right to tell me that I cannot terminate an unwanted pregnancy within my own body.

Marianne's position is one of judgment, not compassion. She says she wants to communicate — that she wants a voice — but she wants to use that voice to control my entire life. She distances herself from the target of Marge Piercy's righteous, affirmative poem, yet in this respect is no different than those targets. Seeing such lack of compassion and disregard for human rights within the pages of *The Witness* was a slap in the face from a dear friend. My trust has been deeply shaken.

You may respond that you wished to discuss "both sides." But I don't remember *The Witness* ever publishing an article supporting nuclear weapons, or denouncing the rights of women on welfare, or calling for more prisons. No doubt someone in the nuclear weapons or prison industries has been kind, good, or committed to their idea of justice, as Arbogast would like us to understand about her fellow anti-abortionists.

Despite "quiet, prayerful vigils" and other unmentioned, not-so-quiet actions, the anti-abortionists' battle is one they can never win. Abortion will always be with us. No matter how bloody it gets, women always have and always will assert their

rights over their own bodies by aborting unwanted pregnancies.

Susan Daniels
Pembroke, VA

Hilltop renewal

Thanks for sending reminders that my subscription is about to expire. I certainly don't want that to happen!!

I need your thoughtful, courageous, challenging reflections as well as all the information that keeps me in touch with the larger world beyond our secluded hilltop.

Please renew my subscription immediately and keep your wonderful journal coming.

Rita Rouner
Center Sandwich, NH

Speaking the truth of incest

I am writing to publicly thank Mary Eldridge of Milford, Mich., for her letter in the April 2000 *Witness*, with reference to your December 1999 issue on recovering from human evil.

I am a fellow incest survivor. I spent much of my seminary career learning how to speak this truth and preparing to preach it. I have mentioned child sexual abuse in sermons before as one of the many crimes against persons. I used Eldridge's letter as the basis for a sermon on April 9, preached at the Cathedral Church of Saint John in Wilmington. This is my first sermon since seminary which has dealt soley with child sexual abuse and incest.

I want Mary to know that usually when I speak up on this subject I experience some measure of "feeling" flashbacks — an uncontrollable return to feelings from the time of the abuse. Over the years these have gotten less and less. This time, the only remnants of flashback came between the services, when I was waiting to preach the same sermon a second time. I had to gently remind myself that I am no longer 10 years old and I can talk about incest and still stand without shame. There is a great deal of hope for abundant life in breaking silence and learning how to do it safely.

Thank you, Mary, for your courage and thank you, *Witness*, for publishing her full letter.

Lois B. T. Keen
Wilmington, DE

Valuable recent issues

The last three issues of *The Witness* have been OUTSTANDING! Bill Countryman's article in the March issue on authority in Anglicanism and the whole April issue on gender and sexual ethics have been particularly valuable to me as I try to develop some helpful theological reflections on Vermont's new Civil Union Law and the opportunities it offers the Episcopal Church.

Thank you!

Anne Clarke Brown
Plymouth, VT

Jubilee = Justice

And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you..."
Leviticus 25:10

Our Presiding Bishop has proclaimed Jubilee as the theme for General Convention 2000. Some have emphasized the "fallow" aspect of Jubilee, suggesting that the Episcopal Church take a rest in Denver from wrestling with full equality for its gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members. But the biblical vision of Jubilee includes setting free those who are oppressed. Jubilee without justice is an illusion.

As it has for the past 25 years, Integrity will be at General Convention—calling the church to "respect the dignity of every human being." Whatever your sexual orientation, we urge you to support this vital witness by becoming a member ($60 household, $35 individual, $10 low income / student / senior) or making a generous contribution.

Integrity
www.integrityusa.org

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Paying attention to the specifics of lives and places

by Julie A. Wortman

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THIS MONTH, bishops and deputations from each jurisdiction in the Episcopal Church will gather in Denver, Colo. for 10 intensive days of decision-making (check <www.thewitness.org> for pre- and post-convention commentary). It has long been a *Witness* tradition to offer our friends and supporters some hospitality and encouragement during this triennial legislative marathon. But in recent years we have felt drawn to also making sure our General Convention *Witness* event provides people with a chance to experience something of the "real" metropolis outside the polished confines of the could-be-anywhere convention centers where these large gatherings typically take place. To this end, July 9th we'll be hosting a benefit reception at the St. Francis Center, a day shelter that serves the city's ever-increasing homeless population at the edge of Denver's high-rise downtown.

Our festive event will be catered by the Women's Bean Project, a non-profit business aimed at equipping disadvantaged women with needed job and life skills. Peter Selby, an English bishop-activist for the Jubilee 2000 debt-relief campaign [see *TW* 6/00], will be our keynote speaker. And, mindful of this year's Jubilee 2000 appeal for restoration of right economic relationships, we'll be presenting four "Spirit of Justice" awards to people whose commitments we admire: farmworker organizer Baldemar Velasquez [*TW* 11/99]; New Hampshire's bishop, Douglas Theuner, who continually pushes for socially responsible church investing [*TW* 5/94]; war-tax resisters and bioregional activists Wally and Juanita Nelson [*TW* 12/96]; and Betty LaDuke, who uses her art to promote global women's economic sustainability [*TW* 6/00].

With this issue of *The Witness* we attempt to scratch beneath Denver's surface in other ways, too — in search of justice and hope in a city and region which projects an image of prosperous and fun-loving frontier spirit, but where discrimination against gay, lesbian and transgendered people has been publicly advocated in statewide debates, where Superfund sites abound, and where unbridled development has forced independent-spirited poor people literally underground. We also add an interview with children's advocate Jonathan Kozol in sad memory of the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton.

This is the second time over the past year that we have probed into the spirit and politics of a particular place [see also *TW* 6/99]. Our conviction in taking up such subjects has been that in today's globalized culture, it is very easy to lose the "grounding" in the specifics of real lives in a real place that we need if, as Kozol observes, we are to "find the courage to confront directly the local inequalities which are reflections of national inequalities."

There is something uncomfortably disembodied about the church gathering in a city to celebrate the Jubilee year and then spending long hours in windowless seclusion from that community's everyday realities. To their credit, our church leaders have tried to be mindful of Denver's justice struggles as they organized this synod. A dramatic illustration is last January's Executive Council decision to cancel arrangements to headquarter General Convention at Denver's 1,000-room Adam's Mark hotel upon discovering the chain's alleged pattern of racial discrimination (in March the hotel's management agreed to pay $8 million in damages to a variety of plaintiffs, though without admitting any wrongdoing).

And we commend the special efforts of the Episcopal Environmental Network in brokering the purchase of the electrical energy to be used by the convention from producers who generate it using the renewable resource of the wind.



Photo courtesy of EarthLinks

Guests from Denver's St. Francis Center help with the beginnings of the Peace Garden (p. 18).

But we also believe that spending time taking a "toxic tour" of the Denver region (p. 14), for example, or working the earth alongside homeless gardeners bent on restoring life to more than an empty city lot (p. 18), would be well worth missing a General Convention session or two. Even essential, perhaps, if the church's Jubilee commitment extends to making its presence in this place — and in so many others where social and economic inequities flourish — a blessing to more than itself. ●

Julie A. Wortman is publisher and co-editor of *The Witness*, <julie@thewitness.org>.

Overcoming the hazards of media monoculture

By Norman Solomon

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AFTER THE "LOVE BUG" virus struck millions of computer hard drives, many news outlets attributed the magnitude of the damage to overwhelming reliance on the same type of software. Suddenly, in the digital world, steep downsides of technical conformity were obvious. But such concerns should also extend to the shortage of variety in media content.

Reporting on the worst virus attack in PC history, *Time* blamed "the perils of living in a monoculture." The newsmagazine explained: "Security experts have long warned that Microsoft software is so widely used and so genetically interconnected that it qualifies as a monoculture — that is, the sort of homogeneous ecosystem that makes as little sense in the business world as it does in the biological."

The practical benefits of diversity suggest a question that's long overdue: What's the sense of monoculture in mass media?

On land where clear-cutting has occurred, the rows of trees that stand are apt to resemble toothpicks — especially when compared to the intricate and diverse vegetation of natural forests. And if we take a close look at the country's main news sources, the undermining of media ecology is all too evident.

Right now, cash crops dominate the media terrain. Little diversity takes root. Erosion of public discourse is chronic, with monotonous and stultifying results. The harvest of news and public affairs is akin to waxed vegetables: shiny and dependable, yet lacking in flavor or nutrients.

What's in short supply? The actual experiences, perspectives and voices of some people. They may not have the income to qualify as middle class. They may be immigrants facing obstacles because of their race, religion or accent. They might be homeless, malnourished, unschooled or stuck in low-wage jobs. Across the media expanses, where do they fit in? Who advocates for them, or addresses their concerns, with consistent focus and fervor?

Cable TV was supposed to rescue us from the limits of broadcast television. But if you click through basic cable and beyond, you may feel like a hiker wandering around vast acreage of an artificial timber farm.

> IN THE ABSENCE OF A HEALTHY MEDIA ENVIRONMENT, OUR SOCIETY IS PRONE TO VITRIOL THAT ELUDES DIRECT CHALLENGE.

Take "Larry King Live." (Please.) Most nights, insipid would be too kind an adjective. Along with featuring countless celebs who are mostly famous for being famous, the nightly CNN show has pioneered bringing in big-name journalists from other news outlets to share their purported wisdom. They know how to perform in a TV studio. But their roots in down-to-earth America are usually so shallow that it seems a major rainstorm would just about wash them away.

In the absence of a healthy media environment, our society is prone to vitriol that eludes direct challenge. For example, Don Imus — ranked by *Time* as one of "the 25 most influential Americans" — delights in spewing out a fetid brew of ersatz cleverness on his national radio program, whether at the expense of blacks, gays, women or people with amputated limbs. Simulcast on MSNBC television, "Imus in the Morning" is an audio horror show that often denigrates because of skin color, sexual orientation or gender. (See the online journal www.tompaine.com for extensive documentation.)

Rather than recoiling at the invective from Imus and his crew, dozens of prominent journalists continue to embrace it. Program regulars include CNN's Jeff Greenfield and Judy Woodruff, CBS's Dan Rather and Bob Schieffer, NBC's Tom Brokaw and Tim Russert, and Cokie Roberts of ABC and National Public Radio. High-status print reporters don't hang back, either, as exemplified by such avid participants in the Imus show as *Newsweek*'s Howard Fineman and Jonathan Alter, and syndicated *New York Times* columnists Frank Rich and Thomas Friedman.

Typically, when critics denounce the wise-guy racism and other assorted viciousness that accompanies "Imus in the Morning," they're tagged as rigid ideologues. In Greenfield's words — spoken during a softball CNN interview he conducted with his longtime pal Imus three months ago — "political correctness is the enemy."

The antidote to such poisonous drivel would be a healthy media environment that promotes the ethics of anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-homophobia on an ongoing basis. Demagogue quipsters like Imus and his colleagues have it easy because their corporate bosses refuse to give much airtime to those who are ready, willing and able to support the kind of human solidarity that Imus works to undermine. For now, bigotry breeds in media monoculture. ●

Norman Solomon is a syndicated columnist. His latest book is The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media.

Dreams Before Waking

by Adrienne Rich

Despair is the question.
— Elie Wiesel

Hasta tu país cambió. Lo has cambiado tú mismo.
— Nancy Morejón

Despair falls:
the shadow of a building
they are raising in the direct path
of your slender ray of sunlight
Slowly the steel girders grow
the skeletal framework rises
yet the western light still filters
through it all
still glances off the plastic sheeting
they wrap around it
for dead of winter

At the end of winter something changes
a faint subtraction
from consolations you expected
an innocent brilliance that does not come
though the flower shops set out
once again on the pavement
their pots of tight-budded sprays
the bunches of jonquils stiff with cold
and at such a price
though someone must buy them
you study those hues as if with hunger

Despair falls
like the day you come home
from work, a summer evening
transparent with rose-blue light
and see they are filling in
the framework
the girders are rising
beyond your window
that seriously you live
in a different place
though you have never moved

and will not move, not yet
but will give away
your potted plants to a friend
on the other side of town
along with the cut crystal flashing
in the window-frame
will forget the evenings
of watching the street, the sky
the planes in the feathered afterglow:
will learn to feel grateful simply for this foothold

where still you can manage
to go on paying rent
where still you can believe
it's the old neighborhood:
even the woman who sleeps at night
in the barred doorway — wasn't she always there?
and the man glancing, darting
for food in the supermarket trash —
when did his hunger come to this?
what made the difference?
what will make it for you?

What will make it for you?
You don't want to know the stages
and those who go through them don't want to tell
You have four locks on the door
your savings, your respectable past
your strangely querulous body, suffering
sicknesses of the city no one can name
You have your pride, your bitterness
your memories of sunset
you think you can make it straight through
if you don't speak of despair.

What would it mean to live
in a city whose people were changing
each other's despair into hope? —
You yourself must change it. —
what would it feel like to know
your country was changing? —
You yourself must change it. —
Though your life felt arduous
new and unmapped and strange
what would it means to stand on the first
page of the end of despair?

1983

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'TIS A PRIVILEGE?'

'Tis a privilege to live in Colorado' — but for whom?

by Nancy Kinney

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THREE YEARS AGO, moving day for Danny began with a mental health worker rousting him from his makeshift shelter along the river's edge. A half hour later, Danny's "home" — and that of 200 others camped along the 10-mile stretch of the South Platte River that cuts through Denver — was demolished by a city work detail assigned to enforce a no-camping ordinance passed when the Denver city council decided homelessness and redevelopment were incompatible .

For decades the banks of the South Platte have provided refuge for many who have traveled West. Its meandering course penetrates the high plains and over time has served as an important regional waterway, first for native inhabitants and, later, for European trappers and white settlers. In the arid grasslands of this vast plateau at the base of the Rockies, the Platte (French for "flat" or "shallow") helped open a pathway to the frontier.

Those seeking adventure or a new start still follow the river's route west. The state that was christened "Colorado" for its red earth continues to attract the restless, the adventuresome and those who flee the duress of urban living elsewhere. But the banks of the Platte provide less shelter for weary travelers these days as a growing affluent population claims them as its playground. A host of entertainment and recreation venues today straddle the river valley: a Six Flags amusement park, a 20,000-seat arena for professional basketball and hockey, a stately home for National League baseball at Coors Field. The massive columns of a $364 million football stadium, financed in large measure by a voter-approved sales tax, has begun to emerge on the river's western bank. A museum for children and a world-class aquarium draw families to the shores of the Platte, many pedaling or skating the miles of paved trails that have replaced long-outmoded river travel.

As this sort of urban development moved in during the 1990s, however, public pressure mounted for the city to "clean up" the homeless problem along the river. People who, like Danny, spurned the constraints of Denver's overnight shelters and preferred the freedom of sleeping outdoors — even in winter — have, somewhat ironically, been displaced. Today, at the confluence of the Platte with the Cherry Creek, where pioneer settlers once staked out their claims to a new life, a new $20-million 94,000-square-foot flagship REI "megastore" has just opened — to serve the outdoor-loving public.

The city's efforts to remove Danny and his homeless peers from their riverside encampments in 1997 were — not surprisingly — only partially successful. About 50 of the people who populated these settlements were placed in housing with the city's assistance. But within a year as many as 150 had returned to new sites along the water's edge, some burrowing into dugouts hidden from open view. Setting up camp on state and highway property outside the city's jurisdiction has helped others avoid the routine sweeps along city trails and parkways that now prevent Denver's most independent poor from setting up more permanent campsites.

A premium on space in the eighth largest state

"Tis a privilege to live in Colorado," wrote Frederick G. Bonfils, early Denver entrepreneur and promoter. Residents are discovering, however, that the privilege of living in the freedom and grandeur of the West has its price. Unparalled growth has driven up the cost of housing and made affordable shelter scarce. Furthermore, Denver is not the only locality in the state where flourishing real estate development has brought the pursuit of individual freedom into direct conflict with the common welfare.

In one sense, the premium on space seems ludicrous; Colorado is a big place. With more than 104,000 square miles, it is the eighth largest state in the union. Visitors from more densely populated cities in other parts of the world like Tokyo or Mexico City marvel at the land area that enables such sprawling growth. But Colorado's mile-high residents place a particular premium on the aesthetics of their surroundings and on preserving their personal stake in mountain views, "treed" property and open space.

In Colorado's mountain resort communities, the astronomical value of real estate prohibits all but the most privileged from staking a claim to home ownership. Multi-million-dollar vacation villas line the winding roads ascending to ski areas and overlooking golf courses. Supporting such lavish lifestyles requires a vast labor-intensive service industry. The demand for construction help alone — not to mention the grounds- and housekeepers, maintenance crews, and hotel staff — has drawn waves of job seekers to places like Aspen and the Vail Valley. Affordable housing for service workers, many of whom are immigrants, rarely exists in these exclusive neighborhoods; the maids, busboys, framers, lift operators and

Brown Palace Hotel, Denver, by John Fielder, Colorado 1870-2000

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W.H. Jackson, courtesy The Colorado Historical Society (WHJ 072152)

Brown Palace Hotel, Denver, 1911

greenskeepers usually live "down valley," often commuting two to four hours each day under potentially treacherous conditions.

Aware of the dramatic inequities perpetuated in these resort areas, the state legislature has contemplated steps to address the situations that strain local resources, from public utilities to schools to roads. Adequate housing for resort-area workers remains a fundamental issue, and local authorities struggle to develop feasible solutions. One ski community in Colorado, Winter Park, is considering a $3 per square foot assessment on new construction to guarantee that affordable housing is available into the future. The individualistic character of Colorado politics, however, usually tends to discourage such intervention. Gun-control measures — not initiatives for decent housing — have recently been more likely to preoccupy state lawmakers. At times, the West seems remarkably unchanged.

Boulder: controlled growth, even for churches

Closer to the Denver metropolitan area, however, the struggle over space becomes more nuanced. For instance, the city of Boulder, which nestles against the foothills about 45 minutes northwest of Denver, has instituted stringent growth-limitation policies in an effort to preserve the aesthetics of open space for its residents. Admirably, the city hasn't neglected to provide public housing and progressive services to its homeless. At times, though, public debate over values becomes perplexing. For example, the relocation of a colony of prairie dogs enflamed local attention when the Boulder headquarters of the Celestial Seasonings herbal tea company was rocked by a rodent eradication scandal.

Some less-fortunate victims of Boulder's controlled-growth efforts, however, have been religious organizations. St. Ambrose Episcopal Church in suburban Boulder learned first-hand about growth restrictions and the premium placed on open space when the congregation sought to expand its 20-year-old facility. Boulder land use officials required the church to provide a conservation easement consisting of all of its undeveloped property in exchange for the privilege of building a much scaled-back improvement to their facility. St. Ambrose's encounter with the Boulder land use department gave them a much-smaller-than-hoped-for building and cost them the right to future development of the property. St. Walburga's, a convent and retreat house established in the 1930s by Roman Catholic nuns who fled Nazi Germany, had to sell its property and rebuild elsewhere when the city turned down a request to expand. The sisters have happily founded a new facility on donated land in a remote spot in northern Colorado, hopefully distanced by several decades from future urban encroachment.

New urban dilemmas: homelessness on the rise

The poor who reside in the urban centers, however, face perhaps the harshest toll from the onslaught of development. Many U.S. cities are experiencing revitalization with new jobs and a resurgence in urban population. While the rate of home ownership in city centers has reached 50 percent for the first time, a HUD report showed that buying a home in the inner city is more difficult today for individuals at all levels of income (*The State of the Cities*, 1999). Furthermore, the shortage of affordable rental housing is getting worse. HUD estimates suggest that 5.3 million American households spend more than 50 percent of their income on rent. A report from the Center for Affordable Housing in Denver confirmed a comparable "worst case" housing shortage for the mile-high city, citing that apartment vacancies dipped below 4 percent in 1999.

Urban revitalization often involves more displacement than improvement of conditions for both the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. Sweeping the Platte

A short history of Denver

by Phil Goodstein

AFTER THE PIKES PEAK GOLD RUSH of 1858-59, Denver rapidly surged from a town of 4,759 in 1870 to a manufacturing metropolis of more than 105,000 in 1890. Among those contributing to the community were the "lungers," people suffering from tuberculosis. By the time of World War I, anywhere from 20 percent to half of all the area's residents had been drawn to Colorado by health considerations.

Beginning in the 1920s, the city's business and political leaders courted federal agencies as the area's foremost industry. At one point, Denver proclaimed itself "the little capital" and "Little Washington," noting it was second only to Washington in the per capita number of federal employees. Pentagon facilities and weapons contractors and manufacturers became a dominant economic force.

Civil rights struggles

Despite being part and parcel of building Colorado — numerous blacks also sought gold and some were also cowboys — African Americans generally lived apart from ruling white Denver, building institutions of their own. But after World War II, middle-class blacks were no longer content with the *status quo*. They demanded their children have the right to share the good schools which the city provided for the white middle class. When the board of education instituted a rather mild, almost token, busing plan for racial integration in 1969, mass opposition arose against it and an anti-busing ticket swept the May 1969 school board election. But in 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Denver had an illegal segregated system. It ordered court oversight of the school system to assure desegregation.

The legal intervention did not, however, produce the promised results. Within a few years, school enrollments plummeted while complaints about education soared. Many white families fled Denver for the suburbs. Numbers illustrate the impact on the growing region: In 1970, Denver's total population was 514,678 in a metropolis of 1,239,545. Ten years later, it had declined to 492,365 in a community of 1,620,902. By 1990, Denver was down to 467,610 in a sprawling area of 1,980,140. Today, it is estimated Denver has about 500,000 residents, overwhelmed by nearly two million suburbanites.

The 'Crusade for Justice'

The Chicano movement came to the fore in the mid-1960s. Individuals of Mexican-Indian heritage compose nearly a quarter of Denver's population, having been part and parcel of the area since the formation of the Colorado Territory in 1861. A former prize fighter and Democratic Party ward-heeler, Rodolpho "Corky" Gonzales, took the lead in 1966 in forming the Crusade for Justice, which demanded an end to police brutality, discriminatory court sentences on Mexican Americans, and school policies imposing English-only on students in need of bilingual education. The more Chicanos protested, the more the establishment had to respond. Soon numerous affirmative action programs were in place, recruiting African Americans and Hispanics to positions of power and influence in the corporate community. Black and latino activists also targeted the local Democratic Party. Before long, advocates of civil rights were on city council and in the legislature.

Political upheavals

In the post-war years, Denver sought revitalization through urban renewal. The Skyline Urban Renewal Project, authorized in 1967, eliminated the old working-class neighborhood along Larimer Street, an area city hall dismissed as skid row. And, despite mass

continued in side bar on page 13

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River and Cherry Creek free of settlements of vagrants may force a few into shelters or permanent housing or simply to leave town. But clearing away the evidence of a homeless population does not eliminate either the need for low-cost accommodations or the poor's desire to live independently.

As the modern city of Denver has reinvented itself in the last few decades, the living situations of those who exist at the margins have been made increasingly precarious. An early wave of urban development in the 1960s flattened blocks of depressed buildings into parking lots, permanently eliminating hundreds of single room occupancy (SRO) units from the city's core. In the 1970s, the creation of a multi-institutional college campus bordering downtown was made possible by the demolition of the Auraria neighborhood, an enclave of mostly working-class and Latino residents. During the 1980s and 1990s, revitalization of the former warehouse district in lower downtown followed the construction of a stadium for Denver's new professional baseball team. Upscale commercial interests — shops, restaurants, clubs and high-priced lofts and condominiums — edged out shelters for the homeless.

Despite the impressive economic comeback from the oil industry "bust" that battered the city during the 1980s, the number of homeless persons in Denver continues to rise. A 1995 study showed that homelessness increased at a much higher rate in the early 1990s than in the late 1980s (*Patterns of Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area*, University of Colorado at Denver). An average of 3,300 persons were homeless (living on the streets or in emergency or transitional housing) in Denver on any given night in August, 1995. The research also showed that children are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population in Denver, their number almost doubling during the first half of the 1990s.

Although the homeless tend to be concentrated in central Denver, there is evidence that many people become homeless while living in the suburbs, but move to Denver because services are available there. Urban gentrification has largely consolidated the location of Denver's homeless service providers within the shadow of central downtown's skyscrapers. Overnight shelters for singles and families, health clinics, as well as distribution points for meals and clothing are clustered within a few short blocks. The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) reports that about 1,000 emergency shelter beds are available each night in the city for individual adults; about half that number of spaces are available for families.

Private solutions to a public dilemma: the St. Francis Center

While the number of homeless persons is on the rise, the 1995 study also showed that the capacity of groups to provide services has also increased. Furthermore, Denver's network of privately initiated services is markedly preferable to the municipally run facilities in other major cities, according to Franklin James, lead investigator for the UCD study.

The St. Francis Center day shelter, a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado, has provided a refuge from the streets for homeless people in Denver since 1983. In addition to offering homeless men, women and children a safe haven from the elements and the stress of street life, the Center provides shower facilities, telephone access, and limited health services. Guests can earn a clean set of clothes by working around the Center. They can also use the Center's street address to receive mail, a basic but critical service for preserving contact with family, the Veteran's Administration or other government agencies and employers. For a period of time limited only by the demand for available space, guests can also place their belongings in storage at the Center. A single black plastic garbage bag contains the extent of the worldly possessions for many who take advantage of this service.

Unlike many other faith-based programs for the homeless in Denver, the St. Francis Center does not subject its visitors to proselytizing or other demands for personal change. Basing its approach on the centrality of the Incarnation, the Center, its staff and numerous volunteers try to uphold the dignity of those who enter, trusting that respect will have a greater long-term impact than any sermon or lecture. The homeless make about 125,000 visits to the St. Francis Center annually, about 400 each day.

The number of guests increased dramatically in late 1999 when the unexplained murders of six homeless men briefly focused the attention of the entire metro area on the dangers of living on the street. The crimes committed were vicious: Two of the victims were decapitated. Although all but one of the murders remain unsolved, territorial conflict between younger homeless people and older transients is suspected as a contributing factor. The names of the victims, along with the other homeless who have died on the streets of Denver, are engraved in a set of modest memorial plaques at the St. Francis Center.

Attention to the plight of the homeless is ordinarily a seasonal (i.e., Thanksgiving and Christmas) concern, but service providers are increasingly subject to scrutiny from locals displeased with their presence. The St. Francis Center recently began to feel the pressure of gentrification as complaints from a nearby property owner last year threatened to shut the facility down. Evidence of neighborhood redevelopment is beginning to encircle the facility. A number of buildings in the vicinity — some dating to the 19th century — are undergoing costly restoration and rehabilitation. Fears about the Center's impact on surrounding property values probably prompted a surge in community interest in the activities at St. Francis. The Center was able to persuade local authorities that providing a safe place for the homeless was beneficial for the neighborhood, and efforts were made to reduce the number of guests loitering near the entrance to the Center.

The Center has continued unabated in its efforts to provide a sanctuary for the homeless for the past 17 years, whether such concern has been in the public's favor or not. While the needs of the chronically homeless remain constant, the varying ability of service providers to "stay afloat" often has a ripple effect on other providers. This year, in collaboration with the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, the St. Francis Center helped avoid the closure of one of the few facilities in Denver where the most vulnerable homeless — the aged, the infirm, those with multiple disabilities — can be provided

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with stable and secure shelter. The Social Security Income for an individual with mental illness is $435 per month, an inadequate amount to provide housing, food and competent supervision. Grant funding from the city, as well as contributions from foundations and other private sources, will help keep the doors of the Valdez House open.

The measure of 'progress': the closing of the frontier?

What lies ahead for service providers like the St. Francis Center, particularly as a robust economy and subsequent development pressures continue? The options for the chronically homeless, who experience higher rates of mental illness and drug and alcohol addiction, are dwindling as cities undergo revitalization. Solutions for the problems of the homeless will inevitably challenge our own economic values. The invisible hand of the market makes no provision for those who, particularly because of illness, debilitation, or age, cannot fully participate in a capitalist system. It is imperative that the communities where we live — in addition to our faith-based initiatives — begin to think and strategize systemically, not just to respond with palliative measures. The metro Denver voters who approved the 1-cent tax on every $10 to pay for a new football stadium will hardly feel the pinch of their largesse. Would that decent housing for Denver's poor deserved a fraction of the same consideration given to a home for its football team.

A few years ago, the author Kathleen Norris rekindled an appreciation for the spirituality of place in her book, *Dakota*. Her insight expressed the depth of our longing for stability and for a sense of connectedness to the land, to a particular place. For some in our inner cities, however, stability can only be measured by the 2.4 cubic feet of a single plastic garbage bag in storage at a day shelter for the homeless. When human progress prevents one's ability to find a place to stand and to belong, the western frontier will indeed be closed. ●

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Courtesy Colorado Historical Society (50025057.tif)

From the late 1800s to the 1950s, so-called "down-and-outers" congregated in shanties along the South Platte near the scrap iron mills. The buildings shown here in Denver's Petertown in 1938 were demolished in the 1950s.

protests and social upheavals, Denver rode high in the 1970s. This was the time of the international oil crisis. In response, Colorado touted its shale oil reserves, promising they were the solution to the alleged Arab control of petroleum resources. From 1973 until 1983, countless skyscrapers arose in central Denver, monoliths celebrating the dominance of oil buccaneers.

Many middle-class homeowners, in turn, found themselves deeply troubled by the city's direction. They liked old Denver, a town filled with numerous quaint, distinctive residential enclaves with affordable single-family houses. Seeing that a pro-business city hall did not care about such values, they banded together in neighborhood improvement associations to protect their interests.

In 1983, an aspiring young Latino legislator, Federico Peña, who had been staff attorney of the Chicano Education Project in the 1970s, built a coalition among black, Hispanic and neighborhood associations and won the mayoral election. Peña took power right about the time the oil boom went bust. While he named many blacks and Hispanics to high city posts, he also backed subsidies for new airports, convention centers, and development that further reshaped the central business district. When Peña became mayor, numerous low-income hotels and apartment houses sprinkled the fringes of downtown, but most have now been leveled. And the city destroyed another enclave of the poor, an area filled with shelters, to build a new baseball park in the early 1990s, Coors Field. The adjacent lower downtown area, long a section filled with warehouses and light industry, blossomed about the same time as the center of city night life.

Peña's successor, Wellington Webb, won the mayor's seat in 1991. Webb has repeatedly endorsed the city's numerous neighborhood improvement organizations. In the historic sections of the city, overwhelmingly populated by Hispanic and black renters, the improvement organizations primarily consist of white, recently settled homeowners. Ethnic/racial tensions, rooted in economic disparity, continue.

— Phil Goodstein is author of *Denver in Our Time: A People's History of the Modern Mile High City, Volume One: Big Money in the Big City*, Denver: New Social Publications, 1999.

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A 'TOXIC TOUR'

Working for environmental justice at the grassroots

by Camille Colatosti

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W.H. Jackson, courtesy The Colorado Historical Society (WHJ 3346)

Red Mountian Pass, Yankee Girl Mine, 1886

In addition [to the pollution caused by the state's mining industry], U.S. government agencies such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy also manufactured chemical and nuclear weapons in Colorado and in the process generated toxic, hazardous and radioactive wastes. Colorado has been left with an unimaginable toxic burden that may take generations to remedy."
— Susan LeFever, Sierra Club Rocky Mountain Chapter

"WHEN YOU VISIT DENVER, be sure to take a tour," says Laurel Mattrey, assistant program director of the Colorado People's Environmental and Economic Network (COPEEN). But the tour Mattrey describes differs from the ones that most vacationers would immediately consider. "We call it the 'toxic tour,'" explains Mattrey. "We want everyone to see what it is like to live in a neighborhood where the air, soil and water are polluted, and the noise and smell of industry dominate."

Since 1990, COPEEN has been not only giving "toxic tours," but also working for environmental justice in Colorado.

"Environmental justice" was most clearly defined in the 1987 groundbreaking study of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice. This study, "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States," found that "race served as the determining factor regard-

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ing the siting of polluting industries and dumps." This study also revealed that "three of every five African and Hispanic Americans live near uncontrolled toxic waste sites, and that facilities were more likely to be in poor and minority communities because they were seen as paths of least resistance."

A 1994 study of the National Wildlife Federation Corporate Conservation Council drew the same conclusion: "People of color and low-income communities are disproportionately exposed to health and environmental risks in their neighborhoods and in their jobs."

COPEEN, says Mattrey, "assists communities in Denver and throughout Colorado who are dealing with environmental issues. We work with mining issues outside of metro-Denver; we work with people who have a Superfund site in their neighborhood and want to be sure that the Environmental Protection Agency monitors and cleans that site effectively."

A beautiful state — with an 'unimaginable toxic burden'

When you first picture Denver, you probably don't picture pollution, says Mattrey. Colorado has a national reputation for its beautiful mountains and vistas, but the state suffers from a wide span of toxic, hazardous and radioactive pollution. As Susan LeFever, the director of the Sierra Club Rocky Mountain Chapter explains, the mining that began in 1859 — mining for gold, lead, silver, coal, tungsten, vanadium and uranium — "left much of the state polluted by human, animal and industrial wastes." While only one mine remains active in Colorado's San Luis Valley, a valley once dominated by mines, many have left their mark. Mining companies used cyanide to leach silver and gold out of the rock. Then they took the mine trailings — the waste products — and left them in a heap. Trailings from a number of Colorado's old mining sites have polluted groundwater, riverbeds and streams.

"In addition," says LeFever, "U.S. government agencies such as the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy also manufactured chemical and nuclear weapons in Colorado, and in the process generated toxic, hazardous and radioactive wastes. Colorado has been left with an unimaginable toxic burden that may take generations to remedy."

COPEEN's "toxic tours" show people this burden. The tour includes the four Denver neighborhoods that the Environmental Protection Agency has declared Superfund sites. "These are four *entire* neighborhoods — not just factories or buildings — but four neighborhoods that received this status," says Mattrey, because substantial concentrations of cadmium, arsenic and lead have been found in the soil.

Grassroots victories

Despite this bleak news, COPEEN has a number of successes to show off during its "toxic tour." One of the earliest victories concerns RAMP Industries. COPEEN board member Beth Blissman notes that when she first became involved with COPEEN in 1994, "RAMP had just abandoned over 6,000 barrels of undocumented toxic waste in a North Denver neighborhood called Sunnyside. RAMP posed as a recycler and they were going to act as a middle-man to take low-level radioactive waste from colleges and universities, treat it properly and then dispose of it. Instead, they just abandoned it."

There was a quick response. "The EPA declared RAMP a Superfund site and it has since been cleaned up. Rarely do we see such fast action by the EPA," adds Blissman.

Asarco

Another great victory was Asarco. COPEEN supported the efforts of a group of environmentalists — Neighbors for a Toxic Free Community — in the Denver neighborhood of Globeville, which in 1994 sued Asarco and won a jury verdict of $24 million in damages. "This was the largest citizen lawsuit ever won against a major corporation," says Blissman.

When a 1989 State of Colorado public health evaluation revealed that Globeville was sitting on contaminated land, community leaders asked the state to clean up the land. But, says Margaret Escamilla, a plaintiff in the case, "the state told us that the lead, cadmium and arsenic released by Asarco created only a small risk. We didn't believe them."

Asarco, Inc., a multinational producer of cadmium oxide and powder, high-purity and nonferrous metals, was found to have spewed arsenic and cadmium into the air and soil. The court required Asarco to remediate the soil around 567 homes, and replace soil to a depth of 18 inches on 285 properties.

Escamilla, a 45-year-old mother of two, describes her neighborhood, whose population includes Polish-American, Mexican-American, and African-American residents, as "a small community, a pretty poor community. Most everybody knows everybody." Escamilla has lived in Globeville for 23 years; her husband, Robert, is a third-generation Globeville resident. The Asarco plant had been in Globeville since 1886. Although Asarco has since stopped operating this plant, it still operates mines in other parts of the U.S., as well as in Australia, Mexico and Peru.

Ludlow

After Asarco, the "toxic tour" could take visitors past Park Hill, a mainly African-American section of Denver. There, tourists would have to notice what is missing — the toxic waste transfer station that had once been proposed. In fact, a Denver zoning administrator had granted the station the right to locate at Park Hill before Park Hill for Safe Neighbor-

hoods, working with COPEEN and the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, convinced the Denver Board of Adjustment for Zoning Appeals to reverse the decision. Ludlow Environmental Services, Inc., had planned to transport hazardous waste from a four-state region into Denver, where it would be housed for up to 10 days before it was transported for treatment, storage or disposal.

"But Park Hill was already saturated with toxic stuff," says COPEEN's Blissman. "So we raised hell around the zoning permit and we told Ludlow to take a hike."

Shattuck Chemical

Some victories come more quickly than others. The ongoing case against Shattuck Chemical, a processor of radioactive radium and other heavy metals in another Denver neighborhood—Overland—has been a long and hard battle.

People in Overland were pleased with a 1991 recommendation of the Colorado Health Department to clean up the site by shipping radioactive waste from there to Utah. "Everything seemed to be on track," says Helen Orr, who lives just across the street from Shattuck. "Most people thought that was the end of it."

But in 1992 the Colorado Health Department and the EPA changed their minds. Instead of cleaning the site and removing the hazardous waste, the company was allowed to bury the waste and cap the land. EPA documents unsealed in 1999 revealed that this decision was made after Shattuck had private meetings with the EPA.

The remedy that the EPA approved allowed Shattuck to mix radioactive soil with fly ash, then bury this on its six-acre site. A clay cap, covered with rocks, is said to protect and contain the material. The result? A one-story mound referred to in the neighborhood as "Shattuck Mountain" and "the hot rocks." A chain-link fence and barbed wire surround this hill.

Residents continue to pressure the EPA to reverse its decision. Neighbors believe that state officials did not take the time to hear their concerns. At the request of U.S. Senator Wayne Allured and other Colorado officials, EPA ombudsman Robert Martin is investigating the decision to allow the burial and capping of waste.

The Platte River, says Blissman, "is only seven feet below the surface of the soil. This runs right under the capped land, and the river is already showing contamination."

Rocky Flats: 'Would you let your children hike there?'

After Shattuck Mountain, the "toxic tour" could next take tourists outside of Denver, with hikes to two unusual "environmental" sites: the recently renamed Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site (formerly the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant), and the Rocky Mountain Wildlife Refuge (formerly the Rocky Mountain Arsenal). How did two nuclear weapons plants—no longer manufacturing and now declared Superfund sites — become environmental centers? That's a question that Denver environmental activists are asking. "Would you hike there? Would you let your children hike there?" asks Sandy Horrocks, a member of the Conservation Club's Rocky Mountain Arsenal Subcommittee, charged with monitoring the clean-up. "I sure wouldn't."

For nearly 40 years, from 1952 until December 1989, Rocky Flats produced plutonium triggers, using various radioactive and hazardous materials, including plutonium, uranium and beryllium. Located just 15 miles northwest of Denver, more than 3.5 million people live within a 50-mile radius of the site. Over 300,000 people live in what is known as the Rocky Flats watershed. Rocky Flats also has the distinction, among all nuclear sites in the U.S., of housing the largest inventory of plutonium that is not in final weapons form, with more than 3.2 tons of plutonium spread through more than 8,000 containers.

A Department of Energy promotional brochure describes Rocky Flats as "a small city. It comprises more than 700 structures on a 385-acre industrial area surrounded by nearly 6,000 acres of controlled open space. This open space serves as a buffer between Rocky Flats and the encroaching communities and is home to many species of animals and plants."

Designated by the EPA as a Superfund site, Rocky Flats has been undergoing a massive clean-up since 1995. But there are a number of problems. "It is hard to clean up a federal facility, especially a weapons manufacturing facility, when information has not been declassified," says Sue Maret, who has been working with the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club for several years. "Regulators cannot make decisions without adequate information."

In addition, explains Maret's colleague, Susan LeFever, "the plant has a long history of sloppy management practices, and when dealing with radioactive material, there is no room for sloppy."

In fact, management practices in the past were so sloppy that on June 6, 1989, the FBI and the EPA raided the plant to investigate. They found evidence that hazardous wastes and radioactive mixed wastes had been illegally sorted, treated and disposed of at the plant. According to the Sierra Club Rocky Mountain Chapter, the agents also "discovered violations of the Clean Water Act and other environmental statutes through a variety of continuing acts, including the illegal discharge of pollutants, hazardous materials, and radioactive matter into" a number of area waterways — the Platte River, Woman Creek, Walnut Creek, and the drinking water supplies for nearby cities.

Acting 'above the law'

In 1992, a federal grand jury attempted to indict officials responsible for alleged criminal activities at the site, but indictments were blocked. The grand jury report was sealed from public view until January 1993, when Federal Judge Sherman Finesilver approved release of a redacted version of the Grand Jury report. However, an unofficial copy of the uncensored report made its way to the Net and can be found at <www.downwinders.org/rocky_fl.htm>.

The Colorado Federal District Court Report of the Federal District Special Grand Jury 89-2, January 24, 1992, concludes that, "for 40 years, federal, Colorado, and local regulators and elected officials have been unable to make DOE and the corporate operators of the plant obey the law. Indeed, the plant has been and continues to be operated by government and corporate employees who have placed themselves above the law and who have hidden their illegal conduct behind the public's trust by engaging in a continuing campaign of distraction, deception and dishonesty."

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At Rocky Flats, one of the worst releases of radioactive waste took place in the 1950s and 1960s. Officials stored oil laced with plutonium and chemicals in steel drums. Beginning in 1958, the drums were placed outdoors on a concrete pad. Within a year, the drums began leaking, but officials did nothing to address the problem. Winds from the Rocky Mountains, blowing sometimes as high as 90 miles per hour, picked up soil contaminated from leaking barrels and blew it towards Denver.

In the end, the U.S. Justice Department settled with the DOE and its contractor, Rockwell. Rockwell pleaded guilty to five felonies and five misdemeanors and paid $18.5 million in fines, an amount smaller than the bonuses the company received during the time the crimes were committed.

The Sierra Club's LeFever believes that the clean-up is facing many of the same problems that plagued the production at Rocky Flats. "Our concern," she says, "is that the DOE is not looking seriously at the problems and the need for research and testing before clean-up decisions are made. They are so focused on public image that they cast aside safety."

LeFever, a part of the community board that oversees the clean-up process at Rocky Flats, describes some of the latest struggles. "The DOE," she explains, "wants to do a controlled burn at the plant. This means burning a huge number of acres of land." Prairie ecosystems typically have natural fires that help them stabilize and bring nutrients back into the soil. These controlled burns can rejuvenate the national ecosystem and help prevent accidental fires.

But, says LeFever, "the DOE doesn't have much information about what kinds of radioactive issues we're looking at. They are in a rush to get this done and they are not being careful. If there are radioactive hot spots out there and they start burning, those radioactive isotopes will become airborne and people will breathe it. They have done a very limited amount of testing — 10 or 12 soil samples — so this is not adequate to say that the whole area is safe."

In addition, Rocky Flats is shipping nuclear waste to a Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico. In fact, about 2,000 shipments of waste from Rocky Flats will travel down Interstate 25 through Denver to New Mexico, where it will be buried 2,150 feet deep in a salt bed.

The concerns about shipping, says the Sierra Club's Maret, include "risks to folks in traffic, accident concerns and not being able to characterize the waste. A couple of the shipments leaked and some of them have been misanalyzed."

There are also environmental justice issues, she adds. "The shipments travel through many poor communities."

Rocky Mountain Wildlife Refuge?

Traveling from Rocky Flats to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal brings home Maret's concerns. The Arsenal, located just north of Denver's Stapleton Airport, has been called the most contaminated square mile in the world. In 1942, the army began production there, manufacturing mustard gas, lewisite, phosgene, button bombs, gb sarin, and napalm bombs. Beginning in 1951, the army leased space at the Arsenal to Shell Oil, who manufactured pesticides such as dieldrin, aldrin, vapona (also known as DDVP, Shell's No-Pest Strip), DDT, blade and chlorine. Until 1956, hazardous waste effluent was regularly discharged into unlined evaporation ponds; then it was buried, then incinerated. Then solar evaporation was used, then well injection and chemical neutralization. Currently, the Sierra Club, which works to monitor the Superfund clean-up of the site, estimates that there are between 179 and 181 contaminated sites at the Arsenal.

Sandy Horrocks, of the conservation group's Rocky Mountain Arsenal Subcommittee, has serious doubts about the clean-up. "The site is being remediated, not cleaned up," she says. "A lot of it will be landfilled, and some will be capped. I would hesitate to say that there is a perfectly clean area.

"Turning the Arsenal into a so-called 'wildlife refuge' was a brilliant idea," says Horrocks sarcastically. "It reduced clean-up standards, therefore saving dollars, from a residential level of remediation to a less stringent level for wildlife. I view it as a way to do less clean-up. The clean-up is based on cost effectiveness rather than on doing what is best for public health."

It was Shell's idea to transform the Arsenal into a refuge, says Horrocks. "Shell influenced Colorado Congresswoman Pat Schroeder to campaign for the a National Wildlife Refuge designation based on an endangered species — the bald eagle. Eagles started coming to the site in late fall and early winter. This became a real big deal."

Some say that the eagles were baited and encouraged to nest at the Arsenal just to win the refuge status. Many also note that the other wildlife in the refuge is there unnaturally. It was pushed there as urban and suburban sprawl eliminated more and more open spaces. According to the Sierra Club Rocky Mountain Chapter, the wildlife was then trapped there with a "million-dollar fence."

"The health of the animals is a real concern," says Horrocks. "There is a problem with animals who don't leave the arsenal for their food. For the eagles, they eat elsewhere and are only at the Arsenal for two to three months. Other birds, who are there year round, are being hurt and many are dying."

Despite the problems with the clean-up, Shell has been funding a visitors center and the Audubon Society has been conducting tours. In fact, groups of school children take nature trips to the refuge. "Parents sign permission forms thinking that the clean-up is complete," says Horrocks.

The Sierra Club sent letters to schools informing principals of the health risks and asking them to stop taking field trips there. The Sierra Club has also asked that refuge tours be suspended and trail building and volunteer activities cease until dioxin levels get under control.

"But it's been very confusing," says Horrocks. "There's an awful lot of publicity given to the eagles and the wildlife center."

Horrocks adds, "One of the most dangerous things we have to deal with is the hazardous waste that we produce and most people don't understand this — the complications that come with trying to clean it up. The military has more than 10,000 sites to clean up. Unless we start coming up with better ways to clean up sites, unless we put real money into clean up, unless we really clean sites and stop just burying waste and covering it up — unless we do this, we won't have much earth left." ●

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EARTH-LINKING



'Spirit returns to the land when people work together,' proclaims the Spirit Eagle on the Peace Garden Mural across the street from the St. Francis Center, a day shelter for Denver's homeless.

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'You cannot know who you are if you do not know where you are'

by Cathy Mueller

To become dwellers in the land, to come to know the Earth fully and honestly, the crucial and perhaps only and all-encompassing task is to understand place, the immediate specific place where we live. — *Kirkpatrick Sale*

FOR PEOPLE who live on the margins of society, life is not always hospitable. Yet, amazingly, when people step into nature, everyone is equal. Almost five years ago, Bette Ann Jaster (a Dominican Sister of Hope) and I (a Sister of Loretto), wanted to find a way to share the Earth's invitation to belong to the land in this part of Colorado with people in Denver who often are pushed aside and isolated. Through the support of our religious communities, each of which has a deep commitment to work for justice for the poor and marginalized as well as for the Earth, we found a way: We founded EarthLinks, an experiential Earth education organization that links persons on the margins of society with the Earth and other people.

Early on, when hearing of the vision of EarthLinks, a man who was homeless said to us, "You want to link us with the Earth? We sleep on it every night!" But after joining us on some nature trips he invited us to network with another group that provides housing for the homeless. Through such invitations, EarthLinks has grown and evolved.

EarthLinks is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to enable persons of all ages to learn to see, appreciate, celebrate and integrate the great diversity inherent in the Earth, her inhabitants, her elements, her mystery. We begin very close to home, exploring the places where people live — their local parks, favorite gardens, even the parades marching through their streets. EarthLinks gathers people who are homeless, living in transitional housing or living with physical or psychological challenges and then ventures out to a park with a creek, to the mountains, or to a wildlife refuge.

We walk, sometimes with a naturalist who will talk about the geological formations, or the edible plants, or the migrating and local wildlife. In cold weather, we go to museums to learn about earthquakes, atmospheric research, the dinosaur trail in our backyard, or about the lives of early pioneers. "We may be homeless," one group member said, "but we still want to learn." On these outings we share a meal and enjoy conversation. In the process, we create community.

"These trips help my mental health," one participant told us. Another said that upon returning from a one-day adventure with EarthLinks, he felt like he "just returned from a vacation." Time in nature can renew and revive us, better enabling us to face some of the chaos and difficult challenges of life.

Photos courtesy EarthLinks

From barren lots to blooming beauty

This last year, we began several garden projects. We used elements of horticulture therapy along with people's desire to vision healthy, beautiful gardens and work to create them. In the process, EarthLinks' participants and Kinfolk (volunteers) are transforming several litter-strewn lots into places of beauty and abundance.

In downtown Denver, across the street from the St. Francis Center, a day shelter for the homeless, EarthLinks worked with the Center's guests to dream the garden. Then, through many small steps of testing soil (which turned out to be highly contaminated), building raised beds from scraps found in dumpsters, bringing in soil shovel by shovel, planting donated seeds and plants, watering throughout the hot summer, the garden became a reality. The sunflowers, cosmos and roses grew and bloomed into vibrant colors. "Last summer was the only time a rose bloomed over there — probably in all time!" one of the homeless guests remarked. Another said he liked bringing broccoli, tomatoes, chilis and squash that we grew ourselves on EarthLinks' trips.

From the wall bordering the garden grew a mural, reflecting the diversity of the people in the neighborhood and affirming that each has something to offer. The Spirit Eagle waters all of us, proclaiming that "Spirit returns to the land when people work together." The project involved homeless guests at St. Francis Center and many other volunteers, through the direction of local artist Emmanuel Martinez.

This year we are continuing the garden at St. Francis Center as well as working at several new sites: a boarding house directed by the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, a residential setting for women living with mental health and addiction issues, and another housing situation for women at risk. Our goal is not simply to create gardens. But a garden speaks of our inner landscapes. What we plan for and nurture outside ourselves can profoundly affect what is happening inside us. As one homeless man who worked in the St. Francis Center garden commented, a person can find dignity working in the soil.

'Organic' programming

The programming at EarthLinks can be called "organic." We network with other nonprofit agencies to connect with people who are not in the mainstream. We listen to them, plan activities that reflect their deep desires, and then together enjoy these adventures. We also find ways to link people — homeless participants helped with a Thanksgiving food drive for families; women in one residential program helped to clean up the yard and garden for a new program for women coming out of prison; folks who are economically secure work side-by-side in a garden with people who are poor and possibly homeless. In the ways of the Earth, we are all equal and very precious.

Alleluia! Renewing spirits through experiencing a mountain creek.



Our hope is to assist people of all ages in becoming grounded where they are. As Wendell Berry says: "You cannot know who you are if you do not know where you are." So we take steps together to develop a sense of place.

BioBox Project

Another EarthLinks' program is the BioBox Project. It is an experiential, Earth-education adventure for students and teachers alike as they explore their school grounds, neighborhood, bioregion, and local habitat. Fifth- and sixth-grade students from Denver are partnered with peers from other parts of Colorado. This partnership enables students to learn about their own area and then to teach their peers in Denver or in the mountains, plains or foothills of Colorado.

We promote using the school surroundings as "grounds for learning," creating gardens on site or pacing the block, measuring distances, watching for erosion, noticing plants and pets and trees, looking at everything with attention. Students fill their BioBoxes with artifacts, reports, experiment results — whatever will enable their partners to come to know the diversity in their area. In this process, students often learn new facets of their own neighborhood, such as the efforts that have been made to reclaim a lake in a neighborhood park.

The partners exchange their BioBoxes twice during the year. The highlight is traveling to meet one another and explore each other's area first-hand. The city kids experience farms and farm animals, feed lots, mountain streams, life in a smaller community. The rural kids see urban wildlife and parts of Denver they usually don't get to visit — inner-city neighborhoods, the 16th Street Mall, or a soup kitchen. One discovery is that it is the same South Platte River that flows through the city, where it is managed and controlled by the Water Department, that becomes free flowing on its way out to the eastern plains, where the banks are filled with trees, grasses and wildlife.

We are motivated by the reality that all life is connected and, as Shakespeare said, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Through her seasons, elements, species and mystery, the Earth teaches us the importance of diversity, the depth of the inner life, the value of reciprocity and cooperation, the wonder of communion. We explore these realities as we walk a dirt path in the mountains, sit by a calm lake inhabited by geese and cormorants, marvel at the deer that cross our way, or plant a seed that is full of potential. What we do is very simple and very profound. Together, we are learning where we live, and in that process, we are coming home. ●

Cathy Mueller lives, works and learns in her native South Platte Bioregion. Contact EarthLinks at: 623 Fox St. Denver, CO 80204-4541; 303-389-0085; <www.earthlinks-colorado.org>.

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We're grateful for your support!

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— Julie A. Wortman, publisher

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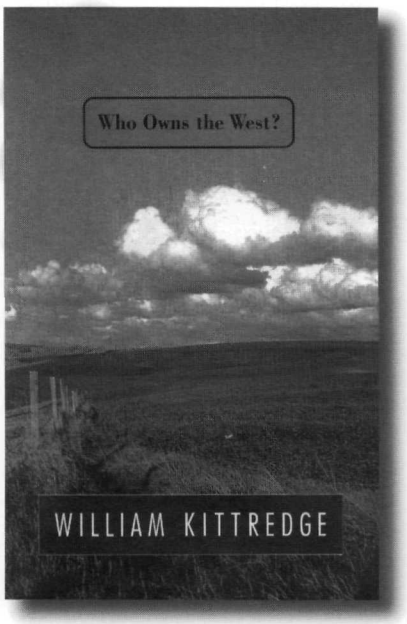
Who owns the West?

by John Bach



Who Owns The West?
by William Kittredge
(Mercury House, 1996) 168pp.

IF YOU WERE REAL LUCKY as a kid, you'd have a guy like William Kittredge for a grandfather, which is to say, someone to tell you stories. What's more, he'd tell you stories about stories; about how you live by and learn from them, and how when stories go bad, people and their societies suffer and become lifeless.

Kittredge's *Who Owns the West?* also reveals him to be historian, commentator, prophet, raconteur, and elder. The book is wonderful grandfather material gleaned from a well-traveled past, great intersections with people and nature, and an ability to keep eyes open to the miracles and tragedies of humankind and its scars upon the earth.

Kittredge grew up on, and later managed, tens of thousands of acres in southeastern Oregon, spanning the period of transition from literal to figurative horsepower. His family raised livestock and crops on a mega scale. He altered the landscape with huge machinery, mutated the soil with chemicals, poisoned the water with runoff. Then, after something of a conversion, he turned away from it all, saying that the land should be given back to the birds and turned into a wildlife refuge. Lifelong friends considered him a "turncoat," and never forgave the betrayal.

He became a writer, professor and storyteller, writing in the tradition of Wallace Stegner, Terry Tempest Williams and Wendell Berry (all of whom take human involvement with Nature personally), hearkening back to John Muir and Thoreau. Their common theme: 1) Nature is beautiful and dignified, maybe even sacred. 2) We have really messed it up. 3) We ought to get better and clean up our mess.

Nowhere is this more pressing than in the West, an area rich in open resource potential and thus subject to rapacious plundering. In this, the West is not unique, just newer, larger and more immediately vulnerable to the transition from ambition to conquest. Western politics, environment, and landscape have all changed. Jobs are no longer secure; human impact has turned back on its perpetrators; heritage and assumed rights are no longer sacrosanct. Emotional, spiritual, and physical dislocations abound and violence becomes more prevalent.

Problems facing the West are legion: unchecked development, dammed and polluted water, clearcut logging, toxic deposits, transport of nuclear waste, despoiling of Yucca Mountain, and continued genocidal treatment of Native Americans. "We know the story of civilization," Kittredge says. "It can be understood as a history of conquest, law-bringing and violence. We need a new story, in which we learn to value intimacy."

For Kittredge, stories are a necessary part of reimagining the West. There's been a plethora of bad stories about "a world in which moral problems were clearly defined, and strong men stepped forward to solve them." This no longer works. Bad stories reek of Manifest Destiny, of owning not cherishing, of running roughshod over impediments to wealth, of equating power with wisdom. "Can we learn," he wonders, "to care about stories centered on gifts rather than getting, on giving away and learning to practice the arts of empathy?"

Kittredge's prose is folksy though eloquent, didactic yet accessible, at times peppery but never vulgar. His descriptions of nature come off the page like music, his prose matching the landscape. You hear his voice and can discern his spirit.

What does Kittredge want? "A process," he writes, "everybody involved — ranchers, townspeople, conservationists — all taking part in that reimagining. ... What we need in our West is another kind of story, in which we see ourselves for what we mostly are, decent people striving to form and continually reform a just society in which we find some continuity, taking care in the midst of useful and significant lives."

Is it possible to create this new vision while nuclear transports haul radioactivity to leaky graves, while the affluent invade working communities to build 10,000-square-foot houses, while ancient forests are clearcut, while toxic deposits infiltrate nature, while hundreds of ICBMs lie in silos?

The challenge is there, waiting for just the sort of reimagining Kittredge inspires.

So, "Who Owns the West?" Precisely those who could never fathom the idea of ownership. Those who would understand themselves to be stewards for all forms of life. And those who would create and tell the most life-affirming stories for the future. ●

***John Bach** lives in the West and spends most of his waking hours outdoors.*

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Standing up to be counted

by Michael H. Carrier

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IN EARLY MAY, 1998, five of us sat around a table at a Denver coffee shop to talk about a challenge issued by Steven Foster, Senior Rabbi of Denver's Temple Emmanuel at the first annual banquet of the Denver Area Interfaith Clergy Conference. Foster had called the audience to take a stand against the narrow, exclusive and divisive politics of the Religious Right that had become so powerful here. Now a dominant force in the state's Republican Party, Foster believed this well-funded and well-organized group was only going to become more influential and powerful unless the state's liberal/progressive religious community could dispute its claim to speak for all people of faith. The upcoming election, when the state would be electing a new governor and many state legislators would be forced by term-limits to give up their seats, seemed an opportune time to begin a counter-movement.

Our coffee-shop group was convinced that liberal people of faith were ready to be counted. Desiring a statewide coalition of clergy and laity representing a broad, interfaith spectrum of religious traditions, we took as our organizing model that developed by The Interfaith Alliance in Washington, D.C., itself a relatively new group, having been founded in 1994. We decided to call ourselves The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado (TIA-CO). And for our first initiative, we opted to engage the state political campaigns, already well underway. Our hope was to ensure that religion was not used as a weapon against or to demonize candidates.

Making use of resources developed by The Interfaith Alliance, we began by contacting every person running for office and asking them to sign a "Code of Civility," which asked them to conduct their campaigns with integrity — to speak to the issues and not attack persons, and to refrain from using religion as a weapon against their opponents. Approximately 70 percent of the candidates signed the Code. The media coverage we received helped to begin making us known to people who identified with and supported our efforts. Many legislators, too, expressed appreciation for this first step in creating a new political climate.

After the election, TIA-CO began organizing a series of educational forums. In March 1999, we heard from four legislators, a senator and representative from each party, on the "State of the State." Highlighted were a number of "pro-gun" bills. One was a "preemption" bill that would have gutted Denver's strict gun control laws, including a ban on assault weapons. The second was a "conceal and carry" bill mandating that sheriffs give permits to anyone who qualified, thereby losing their discretionary control.

TIA-CO joined with the mayor's office, state legislators and other groups to hold a rally opposing these pieces of legislation. Soon after, on the morning of April 20, 1999, reports came out of Columbine High School of the worst school shooting in U.S. history. Within days, the state legislature pulled all gun-related legislation from consideration.

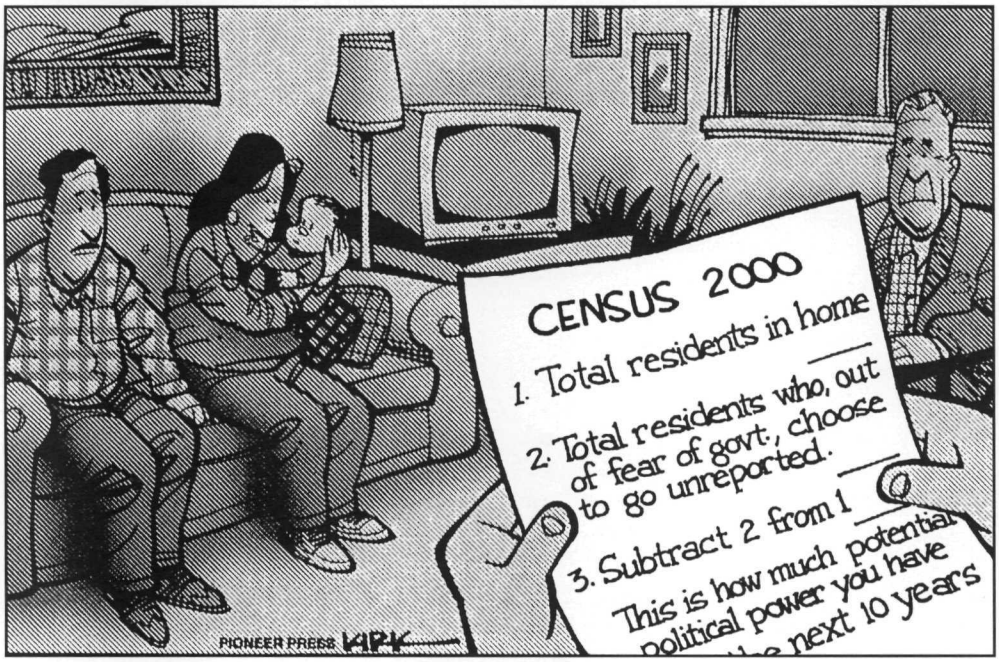
For many people in Colorado, Columbine galvanized a growing sentiment that ordinary citizens needed to take the lead if effective legislation around firearms safety and responsibility was ever to be passed into law. With that in mind, a bipartisan organization called SAFE Colorado was born. In the fall of 1999 SAFE brought together a number of organizations, including TIA-CO, the Police Chiefs Association, the PTA and The Colorado Children's Campaign, to work together in promoting reasonable gun control legislation.

As the new legislature convened this year, the governor and the state's attorney general, a Republican and a Democrat, proposed a five-point legislative package that was endorsed by SAFE, TIA-CO and others around the table. But although poll after poll shows that 80 to 90 percent of Coloradans favor more restrictive gun laws, our legislature remains unresponsive. As a result, SAFE Colorado, TIA-CO and others will be working together to place an initiative on the November ballot that will require background checks on individuals purchasing handguns at gun shows.

This year's legislative session also saw the introduction of a bill requiring both the posting of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms and the observance of a moment of silence at the beginning of each school day. Since TIA-CO opposed this measure on constitutional and religious grounds, I was invited by the Anti-Defamation League to a luncheon debate with the bill's sponsor, a Republican Senator and Presbyterian Elder. In addition, I gave testimony against the bill when it came before the Senate Education Committee. But despite the overwhelming public testimony against the legislation, the bill passed out of committee to be debated and voted on by the Senate. In response, TIA-CO called a press conference to publicly state our opposition, which not only created a lively debate in the media, but also heated debate on the Senate floor, leading the sponsor to eventually withdraw the bill.

Reflecting on that coffee-shop gathering two years ago, I remember the trepidation with which the five of us, some of us meeting for the first time, considered Steven Foster's challenge to begin speaking up for a progressive religious perspective on the issues facing our state. We worried that we might not be able to make an impact. These past two years have shown us that we were wrong. Pray for us as we continue developing the organizational support so critical in sustaining our work for the long haul. ●

***Michael Carrier** is a Presbyterian minister at Denver's Calvary Presbyterian Church and the chair of The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, <tiacolorado@tialliance.org>.*



Christian kosher laws?

Christians might consider adopting contemporary forms of kosher laws, Garret Keizer suggests in *The Christian Century* (4/19-26/00).

"We live in a time when Christians of the industrialized world sense that they are implicated in any number of crimes against nature and neighbor but feel powerless to extricate themselves from their own culpability," Keizer writes. "We live in a time when many Christians feel a crisis of identity within an alien culture that not so long ago described itself (albeit incredibly) as 'Christian.'

"This is not unlike the historical situation in which a group of Israelites found themselves in the sixth century before the Common Era. They were exiles in Babylon, a conquered people without country or shrine. They needed ways in which to preserve their identity and counteract their powerlessness. They also needed a way in which households could effectively replace the temple they had last seen in flames.

"Their answer to these needs was profoundly simple. They codified the way they ate. They took the preparation and eating of food that is to say, they took the basic stuff of biological, domestic and economic life and put it at the center of their religious life.

"They were, of course, a fragile minority. In contrast, there are at present more than 250 million Christians in North America. What if even half of them refused to purchase factory-produced chicken because that kind of food production is unjust to family farmers, unhealthy for poultry workers and certainly unpleasant for chickens? In other words, because it was 'against their religion.'"

Macabre vegetables

A Boston demonstration against biotechnology in March drew some 2,500 protesters, *The Boston Globe* reported (3/27/00).

"Protesters dressed as mutant creatures and macabre vegetables marched along five blocks of Boylston Street. The demonstration capped three days of a counter-conference staged in the shadow of Bio2000, a biotechnology convention at the Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center.

"Organizers of 'Biodevastation 2000' yesterday said the march, and the three-hour rally in Copley Square that preceded it, offered proof that the fledgling movement is catching up with those in Europe, where protesters have forced governments to rethink the sale of genetically modified foods."

Looking back on Seattle

The media's "obsessive focus on property destruction" by some WTO protesters in Seattle led to under-reporting of significant exchanges made possible by the nonviolent blockade, writes Chris Nye in *Fellowship* (3-4/00). "Many reporters unfairly depicted protesters as ignorant or vague on the issues," Nye says. "Not one reported the exchange I heard between a young man and a delegate from the European Union, one of hundreds that took place that day.

"The protester asked the delegate about a controversial WTO ruling striking down local laws that required shrimp trawlers to use equipment to protect dolphins from their nets.

"'Perhaps it's a burden to industry,' hazarded the delegate.

"'Do you know how much those devices cost?' the protester inquired.

"'No I don't,' the delegate replied.

"'Fifty dollars,' came the answer from the protester. 'What shrimp trawler can't afford 50 dollars for a low-end dolphin protector? And if they can't afford it, why shouldn't governments help them acquire it?'

"During a 30-minute conversation, the protester offered well-reasoned arguments supported by statistics and analysis. Similar scenes were repeated throughout the day as delegates, prevented from entering the convention hall by the protesters' blockades or the police, were deluged with questions and comments. The kind of access that corporations pay thousands of dollars for was afforded free by the protesters' nonviolent blockade."

Guerrilla curriculum

Convinced that TV-dependence was depriving his students of critical life experience, New York teacher John Taylor Gatto sent them on solitary pilgrimages through the streets of the city.

"Always acting in conspiracy with the kids' parents (who were as desperate as I was), I sent my 13-year-old students out to journey alone on foot through the five boroughs of New York City," Gatto writes in *The Sun* (4/00). "Some walked the circumference of Manhattan, a distance of about 28 miles.

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People acting out of religious convictions were among the protesters who blocked intersections around the World Bank/IMF meetings in Washington, D.C. this past April 16.

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Others walked through different neighborhoods, comparing and contrasting them and constructing profiles of the people who lived in each from clues of dress, speech and architecture, coupled with interviews and library research. Some mapped Central Park, great university campuses, churches, businesses or museums. A few invaded such government departments as the board of education or the courts, describing and analyzing what they saw there.

"I didn't force my students to do this, but I made a standing offer that any of them could get a day or two or 10 away from school to explore part of the city — as long as she or he was willing to walk alone."

Commenting on the recognition he received from school authorities, Gatto says, "The irony is that my guerrilla curriculum was designed to sabotage exactly the kind of passive attitudes that government schooling, like television, depends on."

Gardening for bio-diversity

"Some scientists suggest that the preservation of bio-diversity in many places may depend on gardeners," Lucinda Keils writes in *Groundwork for a Just World* (3/13/00). "If you garden or live in a place that has gardens, you can do something. Even planting a small number of native wildflowers and grasses will help preserve species. Learn which native trees, shrubs and plants feed native birds, animals and insects. Plant and preserve these natives. Ask nurseries to stock native plants and to stop stocking invasive exotic species. ... Because they are already genetically adapted to local conditions, native species require less or no fertilizer, and no pesticides. Once established they generally require no additional watering. They belong here."

Police license to kill

"The construction of a vast prison-industrial complex and the enlargement of private security forces throughout the U.S. have created the preconditions for a politically active, ideologically motivated national police apparatus," Columbia University's Manning Marable writes in *Along the Color Line* (3/00). "Thousands of cops no longer believe they can leave 'justice' to the courts. Many thousands more doubt the capacity or will of most elected officials to curb street crimes.

"It is instructive, and disturbing, that widespread examples of police deadly force and the disregard for citizens' Constitutional rights is not opposed by a significant number of white Americans. For example, in the wake of Patrick Dorismund's killing, New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani made callous remarks about the dead black man. Giuliani illegally disclosed Dorismond's sealed juvenile records, and refused to extend condolences to the deceased's family. All blacks, Latinos and even most whites living in New York City were appalled by Giuliani's racist behavior. Yet according to polls, only 28 percent of upstate New Yorkers and 34 percent of suburban voters disagreed with Giuliani's handling of this situation. Two-thirds of upstate New Yorkers even said that Giuliani should not have to express remorse to Dorismond's family.

"In effect, millions of white middle- and upper-class people have made the cold calculation that a certain level of unjustified killings of blacks, Latinos and poor people is necessary to maintain public order. Yet inevitably they will discover, much to their regret, that when the police and security forces are given a license to kill, that they will not stop at the boundaries of the black community." ●

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REAL CHILDREN LIVING



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An interview with Jonathan Kozol

by Julie A. Wortman

ON APRIL 20, 1999, students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 of their peers and a teacher at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., a community to the southwest of Denver. In the aftermath of this tragedy, there has been a wide-ranging public discussion about the hidden lives of this nation's young people (see *TW* 4/99). Educator Jonathan Kozol's new book, *Ordinary Resurrections: Children in the Years of Hope* (Crown Publishers) is one of the latest contributions to this conversation. Like Kozol's best-selling *Amazing Grace*, this book describes the children of New York's South Bronx and the roles St. Ann's Episcopal Church and the public schools play in their lives, but this time from the vantage point of the children. In these pages, too, Kozol offers a more personal and reflective assessment of these children and their prospects for the future.

Julie A. Wortman: *Ordinary Resurrections* focuses very specifically on the lives of particular children that you've come to know in Mott Haven in the South Bronx. Why should people in Denver, for example, read the book?

Jonathan Kozol: Well, there are neighborhoods almost exactly like this in every major city in the U.S. In fact, I'm always fascinated at the number of people in places like Denver or Seattle or Los Angeles who will write me letters and tell me they want to go immediately to the South Bronx to meet the children and the priest that I've described. I always politely suggest to them that they don't need to come 3,000 miles to New York to see racism inequality and the physical illness in a poor community. Sometimes the longest journey they'll ever take is the one across town in their own city.

JW: So what you're saying is: As the South Bronx goes, so goes the rest of the nation?

JK: No, I wouldn't say that, because every city has its unique dilemmas. Only New York has Mayor Guiliani, for example. I have always written about specifics. But although my first book about children, *Death at an Early Age*,

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was about black children in the segregated public schools of Boston, it is read in education schools in all 50 states and I don't think at this point anybody thinks the issues it raises are unique to Boston.

JW: You make a point in the book that these days when we talk about inner-city children we really put a false emphasis on how different they are from other children.

JK: The conditions of their lives are dramatically different from those of suburban children. About a quarter of the children in this section of the South Bronx have asthma. I don't know any other neighborhood in the developed world in which so many children suffer chronic asthma. Approximately 75 percent of the men in the neighborhood are unemployed. Nearly 95 percent of the families live on incomes of about $10,000 a year. Also, an awful lot of the children I know see their fathers only when they visit them in jail or in prison. But in the details of their lives and in the things they long for and the things that they find funny and the things that they find sad, they are very much like children everywhere.

Take Elio, one of the children in the book. The number one subject on Elio's mind last year was the New York Yankees. He's a baseball player. Like children anywhere he and the other kids in Mott Haven start telling you what they want for Christmas way before Thanksgiving, you know? Elio started last September. He wanted a Ken Griffey, Jr. baseball mitt, which he got thanks to Santa Claus. Another child in the book, Pineapple, goes to the store — tugs her little sister to the store to buy candy, which she's not supposed to have because she's plump, but she does it anyway. Just like kids everywhere. And she gets the same kind of red licorice sticks that kids everywhere buy. They're called Twizzlers. They all watch Sesame Street when they're little. When Mr. Rogers came to visit them with me, it seemed like all the kids knew who he was. Elio wasn't sure at first, but as soon as somebody told him who he was, Elio went running up to him and kissed him. I went back with Mr. Rogers just three weeks ago and Elio went right up to him and said, "I missed you."

IF THERE'S ONE WAY THAT THESE CHILDREN DIFFER FROM WEALTHY CHILDREN, IT'S THAT THEY'RE CERTAINLY MORE RELIGIOUS THAN MOST AFFLUENT KIDS I KNOW — AND THEIR RELIGION IS NOT PERFUNCTORY. AND IT'S NOT SIMPLY LITURGICAL. IT'S RELIGION OF THE HEART, PROFOUND RELIGIOUS FAITH.

That's one reason that I put the focus in this book on what I call the details of life. There are too many big labels that we plaster on inner-city children. The experts tell us that they are really premature adults — precocious criminals, we're told by experts at conservative think tanks who probably don't know many children of the inner city, but who read each other's statistics.

Baloney! These are real children and, by and large, remarkably innocent. And in many cases their innocence persists well into their teenage years. Ariel, who's one of the little girls in the book — a very generous little girl who's very tender towards Elio — is now a young teenager and she's still as innocent and graceful and pure of spirit as she was at the time I met her. In fact, if there's one way that these children differ from wealthy children, it's that they're certainly more religious than most affluent kids I know — and their religion is not perfunctory. And it's not simply liturgical. It's religion of the heart, profound religious faith.

JW: Yes. I enjoyed reading the scene in the book where the children ask the priest to bless them with holy water — "Bless me Mother," they all cry, and she does.

JK: To me, watching the priest sprinkling holy water on the children was one of the most beautiful experiences I've ever had — a very poignant experience to see the faces of the children when Mother Martha [Overall] did that and to see her face, too, because she glowed with joy when she did it. She said at one point, "Of all the things I have to do here at the church, this is the part I love the best!"

JW: From what you wrote, it sounded like she sprinkles them with holy water a lot?

JK: Yes, she does. If the children ask her to bless them, she delivers the goods. One reason it's so moving to me is that these children don't get too many blessings from our society these days. Congress hasn't blessed them in a good long while. President Clinton in signing the welfare "reform" bill certainly didn't bless them. The mayor of New York City doesn't seem to try too hard to bless children of color in the poorer sections of New York. The newspapers don't really bless them, except in the convenient month preceding Christmas and then, suddenly, poor children become the object of sympathetic news stories.

Mother Martha, however, doesn't simply limit herself to rituals and symbols, she blesses the children in thousands of other

ways. She runs one of the best after-school programs in the U.S. And she started this long before it became fashionable, before the White House was talking about after-school programs. It's a very intense program with very strong academic content. She goes to court when they're going to be evicted from their home. She goes to court to get a juvenile released from prison. She uses every bit of skill she has — and, fortunately for the children, she has tremendous resources because of her prior experience as an attorney. It's very unusual to walk into a church in the poorest neighborhood and find a priest who went to Radcliffe and studied with John Kenneth Galbraith and took the same courses that I took at Harvard.

Most of all, she blesses them by her own playful personality. She engages them at their own level. And that, I am sure, is why the children love her so much. She doesn't come to this as a missionary. There's no missionary condescension; there's nothing saccharine about her ministry.

She's far more in the tradition of Dorothy Day than she is in the tradition of Mother Teresa.

JW: As I read your book I thought to myself, Kozol's revealing a scandal — he's revealing the existence of an apartheid system within our country, and not only within New York, but within every city, within every community, at some level.

JK: As I point out in the book, 99.8 percent of the children in Mott Haven's public schools are black or Hispanic, so it's a virtually absolute apartheid. It's a scandal which the northern press no longer talks about. Even *The Boston Globe*, which is one of the best newspapers in the U.S., very seldom condemns racial segregation in Boston any longer. And I never see *The New York Times* refer to the South Bronx as a ghetto, a segregated neighborhood. The press, in fact, is beginning to advance the notion of the perfectible ghetto.

JW: Now what is THAT?

JK: The happy ghetto which has nice townhouses and pretty parks and slightly improved schools. But the press in the major northern cities no longer directly challenges the banks and real estate firms and the other powers and principalities for creating and reinforcing an indomitable system of apartheid. They condemned every element of apartheid when the issue was Mississippi, but never today. Not in New York. Instead, almost any week you can find a story in the newspaper about how happy people are in the South Bronx now that we gave them a pretty new park or something like that.

JW: Despite the political perspective of your book, it comes across as kind of a contemplative journal.

AT THE POINT WHERE DECENT PEOPLE OF FAITH IN LARGELY WHITE, AFFLUENT COMMUNITIES ARE WILLING TO FACE THESE ISSUES AND JOIN US, NOT JUST IN THE STATE CAPITALS, BUT ALSO IN WASHINGTON, IN FIGHTING THESE ISSUES, IT'S AT THAT POINT THAT THEY CROSS OVER FROM CHARITY TO JUSTICE.

JK: Well, it *is* a journal. And in fact I was reading Thomas Merton's journals as I was writing the book. It was reading those religious journals that enabled me to feel that it was okay to wander and not to give any chapter a tight discipline. If the chapter was mostly about asthma, but a child told me a funny story about her dog, then I wrote about her dog.

JW: The book has a bioregional flavor, too, in the way you immerse the reader in the specifics of this community.

JK: Yes. I think that emphasis tends to make people more political. Mother Martha, for example, doesn't say in her sermons that affluent, white people in the suburbs have advantages. She says they TAKE advantages. She's very specific, because she knows that the school funding in New York state is contrived — is rigged! — to give the advantage to suburban children who get two to three times as much spent on their public schools as the children in the South Bronx. She sees a direct connection and when she's invited to preach in a wealthy parish she doesn't let them off easy! She doesn't sugarcoat it. Mother Martha never settles for a box of used clothes from a wealthy suburban church; she asks them to join the struggle for justice. And that means to find the courage to confront directly the local inequalities which are reflections of national inequalities, because these are endemic patterns. Every state, as you know, has unequal public schools because of the archaic property tax.

JW: What is the best advice for someone of means in terms of developing a political consciousness — to go to their own inner city and spend time, or to pay attention in a very detailed way to what's around them with respect to the children?

JK: I would say both at once. The problem with purely localized decency is that for those who live in an entirely affluent community, it never involves them in any high risk of confrontation with the social order. It makes it too easy to be good Judeo-Christians. It seems to me we have to try to do both at once. For example, for those in relatively affluent parishes of New York state who read this book it seems important that they do more than simply advance enlightened attitudes about children and gender and race in their own immediate community, though that's a starting point.

When I'm asked by affluent congregations in New York state or nearby areas, "What should we do?" I often will say, it starts at home, in your own town, but, ultimately, I would hope that you would join us when we go to Albany to demand an end to the savage inequalities of school financing in New York state. And that means sacrificing something, because if I were talking to somebody in Scarsdale, I'd have to point out that they are sending their children to schools in which teachers are paid $25,000 to $30,000 more than the teachers in the South Bronx.

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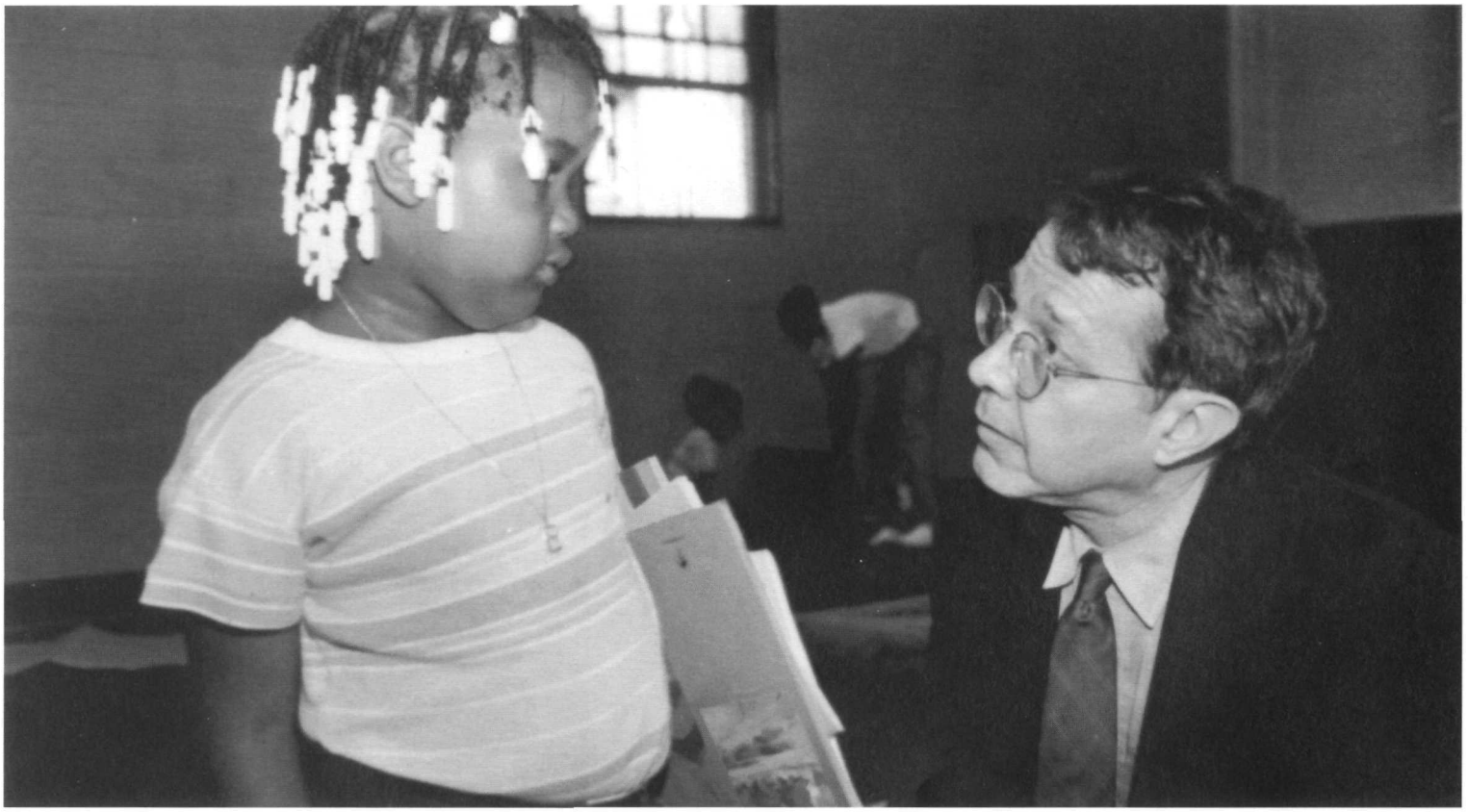

Jonathan Kozol and one of the children who come to the after-school program at St. Ann's in the South Bronx.

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As long as they do that, all their children's victories and lives will be contaminated because they will be victors in a game that they rigged to their advantage. I say that constantly and I find that most serious Christians do NOT mind when I talk candidly. I tell them, don't simply deplore the fact that the South Bronx is one of the most segregated ghettos in North America. Ask how the housing patterns in your hometown guarantee that! Because there couldn't be a South Bronx without a segregated Great Neck.

At the point where decent people of faith in largely white, affluent communities are willing to face these issues and join us, not just in the state capitals, but also in Washington, in fighting these issues, it's at that point that they cross over from charity to justice. And that is the transition that I always ask of devout people, who write me very moving letters about my books.

JW: I'm interested in your commentary about the commodification of children as economic units — and how even those who are the advocates for children get seduced into justifying the dollars spent on their behalf with talking about them as "future workers," or saying, "If you spend money on this child now, you won't be spending money later to house them in prison."

JK: Well, this business about commodifying children and seeing the value of a child only in her future earning power simply devalues the lives the children are living now. What if they don't live to be 25-year-old wage earners? And what if a child dies when she's 15? Does that mean that her childhood was useless? I don't like the idea of valuing children only as economic units in our society. This way of looking at children has become so fashionable that even liberal advocates are forced to buy into it in order to lobby effectively. And I've done it, too. I cannot tell you how many times I've gone up to Capitol Hill and pleaded with members of the Senate and House to put more money into Head Start because it will save money later on. As I look back, I feel a sense of great distaste for that argument. If we are truly acting on Judeo-Christian principles, we should be doing it because they're children and deserve to have some blessings in their lives while they're still children and it should have no connection with how they might possibly benefit America's economic interests later on.

And, in fact, the most wonderful kids, if they're really well-educated and grow up to think independently for themselves and to find their way into unusual careers such as poetry or art or ministry, will never be of any use to the economic system — Thank God! God help us if Toni Morrison had been looked at when she was 12 years old, you know, and valued solely for her possible future payoff to IBM. Thoreau certainly was of no use to American industry. Nor was Gwendolyn Brooks. ●

Julie A. Wortman is publisher and co-editor of The Witness, <julie@thewitness.org>.

Bridging the gap between community and conscience

by Marianne Arbogast

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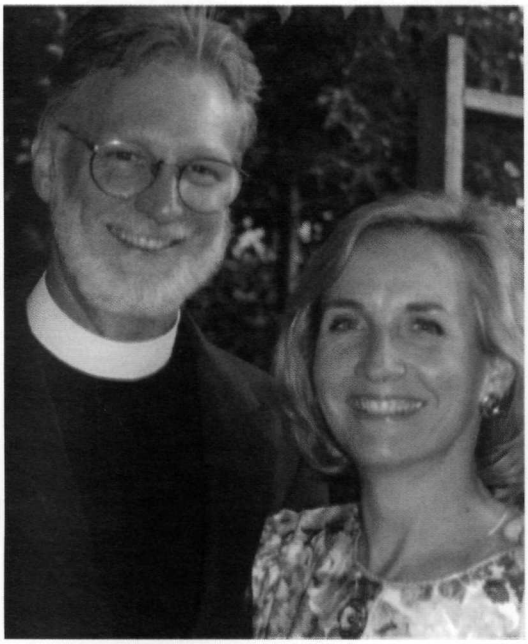

"I inherited a parish that was probably between 25 and 30 percent gay and lesbian — out, safe, embraced by the straight community of the parish — completely open and inclusive. The next question became, how do we act out our values in ways that address the agenda, and at the same time are productive within the diocese — not just go off and do our own thing as if no one else was there."

— Al Halverstadt

AL HALVERSTADT likes to tell the story of a couple at St. Barnabas Church in Denver, whose 12-year-old son came to dinner one evening and asked if he could share something with them.

"Mom, Dad — I've discovered I'm heterosexual," he announced.

To Halverstadt, recently retired as rector of St. Barnabas, the incident illustrates one of the fruits of the parish's long history of inclusiveness.

"Part of the grace of where we are is that it was a legitimate discovery, and there was not value placed on it," he says. "The family had been in the midst of diversity at St. Barnabas. The whole church, gay and straight, see themselves as one community. Everyone is included socially and structurally."

This spirit is part of what attracted Halverstadt and his wife, Susan Weeks, to St. Barnabas nine years ago.

"There was a meeting of values between me and the parish," Halverstadt says. "I inherited a parish that was probably between 25 and 30 percent gay and lesbian — out, safe, embraced by the straight community of the parish — completely open and inclusive. The next question became, how do we act out our values in ways that address the agenda, and at the same time are productive within the diocese — not just go off and do our own thing as if no one else was there."

The willingness to acknowledge and listen to others who disagree with them has earned Halverstadt and Weeks a reputation as bridge-builders in the Diocese of Colorado. At a reconvening of their diocesan convention in March to deal with three conservative resolutions on the authority of Scripture, women's ordination and homosexuality, Weeks was invited to set up ground rules for dialogue.

"We were asking people to engage in sacred conversation, and the goal was to understand one another and not try to convert the other person," says Weeks, an organization development consultant who has worked extensively in church settings. "There was a different tenor of cooperation, as opposed to wanting to win or lose."

The convention ultimately affirmed Scripture without insisting on a traditionalist interpretation, affirmed the ministry of women, and tabled indefinitely the resolution on homosexuality.

Halverstadt describes himself and Weeks as "team players."

"Everything we've done here in Denver — which is a fairly conservative diocese compared to the others we've been in — we have tried to do openly and within the system," he says. "When I first came here I told the bishop, Jerry Winterrowd, that I was in favor of Holy Unions [of gay and lesbian couples], and I planned to do that and I would not blindside him — I would keep him informed and work with him on how that might happen. That I wouldn't just steal off to a flower-covered hillside and bless people, that we would do it in the church so we would offer the same kind of dignity and respect for people of the same gender who are making lifelong commitments to one another as we would for people who are heterosexual."

When the first such ceremony was planned, Halverstadt scheduled a meeting with the bishop.

"My senior warden and I went in and the bishop said, you may not do it, and I said, I'm going to do it. The question became, how can we do it?"

After a day and a half of negotiation, Halverstadt was allowed to proceed under mutually agreed-upon conditions.

"I do not rehearse the people through their vows — they make their own vows to one another. I do not bless them in the name of the church — I ask them to face the congregation, I put my hand on their shoulders, and I pray for God's presence within their life together."

The bishop "took a lot of guff from the conservative clergy," Halverstadt says. "But the fact of the matter is, we hadn't broken a rubric, we hadn't broken canon, we had been in agreement with the bishop."

Eleven Holy Unions later, Halverstadt reports a lessening of controversy.

"Over time, people have discovered that it did not kill the church, it did not destroy the diocese. St. Barnabas has grown, we're much stronger than we were nine years ago. We've increased our pledge base, we've grown in size, we've got a choir of 35 — life has not dried up, it's the other way, and people recognize that."

For both Halverstadt and Weeks, the commitment to inclusiveness is grounded in their experience of the Gospel as a liberating force.

"I think my empathy comes from my own journey as a woman, and going through a liberation/consciousness-raising in the 1970s in a spiritual context," Weeks says. "The message of a liberating Gospel was very personal and experiential. I felt very aware of how groups are oppressed and left out of the mainstream and how the church, along with the rest of the culture, has participated in that."

Both Weeks and Halverstadt are trained spiritual directors and both serve as mentors with the Education For Ministry (EFM) program of The University of the South's School of Theology. Weeks also trains EFM mentors.

"A lot of my passion is about one's own journey and one's own spiritual growth and development," she says. "As people find their own liberation through the Gospel, my assumption is there will be empathy for others."

Halverstadt says he felt a call to priesthood from the age of 16, but did not go to seminary until he was 38, after serving in the Air Force and beginning a career in advertising and marketing.

"I was brought up in a conservative town by conservative parents, and I had a lot of trips laid on me in terms of expectations," he says. "When I flew in the Strategic Air Command, it was because I really did believe that it was the first team, that it was going to keep the world from falling apart. I had led a very, very responsible life — at my own expense. Part of my going to seminary was to try to get out of the shell that had been enclosed over me. A lot of my own journey, and I think it's true for all of us, is the journey out of the darkness of who we are expected to be into the light of who we are called to be."

"A LOT OF MY PASSION IS ABOUT ONE'S OWN JOURNEY AND ONE'S OWN SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. AS PEOPLE FIND THEIR OWN LIBERATION THROUGH THE GOSPEL, MY ASSUMPTION IS THERE WILL BE EMPATHY FOR OTHERS."

— Susan Weeks

"Which carries over into the issue for gays and lesbians in a big way," Weeks adds.

Halverstadt credits Robert DeWitt with nudging him into the seminary.

"I was in Philadelphia when he was bishop, and he went through such abuse during the sixties with all the racial adjustment that was taking place. His example around liberation issues was so substantial for me, it was what finally got me off my duff after 22 years of knowing I was going to go into the priesthood but never acting on it."

At Episcopal Divinity School in the early 1970s, Halverstadt was immersed in liberation theology and liberation movements. He graduated in 1975, but postponed being ordained until women's ordination was approved by the church.

Since coming to Denver, Halverstadt and Weeks have worked steadily to lay the groundwork for greater openness.

"We've introduced resolutions over a period of time in support of gay unions and gay ordination, which have all been voted down, but they've been visible," Halverstadt says. The introduction of one such resolution led to a year-long diocesan-wide dialogue, with the bishop calling in ethicist Tim Sedgewick to address the tension between conscience and community.

Halverstadt and Weeks have taken leadership roles in a wide variety of community organizations and projects.

Weeks was instrumental in the development of a mentoring program for children at risk and serves on the board of the Center for the People of Capitol Hill, the downtown district in which St. Barnabas is located. She is also involved with the Vincentian Center for Spirituality and Work.

Halverstadt heads the Grove Project, which is establishing a section of a park in Denver as a contemplative setting in memory of those who have died of AIDS. He was a founding board member of Project Angelheart, which prepares and delivers free meals to HIV and AIDS clients, and is helping to establish an employment readiness program called Ready to Work/Strive. He has also served as president of Capitol Hill United Ministries, a consortium of Capital Hill churches which lobbies legislators on issues of social concern.

Halverstadt and Weeks intend to remain in the St. Barnabas community, and have been asked by the bishop to work as consultants and facilitators of congregational development within the diocese.

Halverstadt says he is hopeful about the church's future.

"What I think is wonderful about the Episcopal Church is our ability to seek the middle way, to make some sort of commitment to one another in the midst of conflict and diversity. I think we will emerge from the issues we are facing today — whether it's how we interpret the Bible, or how we are inclusive to all people — discovering the strength of our unity. We are going through exciting times, and if we are just willing to hang in with each other, we will discover that we are people who are living under grace." ●

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of The Witness, *<marianne@thewitness.org>.*

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CONTENTS

8 **A missionary vocation in the strange land of the modern university** — An interview with William Willimon *by Andrew W. McThenia*
"Everybody serves something," says William Willimon, Dean of the Chapel at Duke University, "and I think one of the missions that Christians may have in the modern university is to at times point out what people are giving their lives to and just to say, 'Is it worth it?'"

14 **Of patents and courseware: the corporate takeover of the university** *by Camille Colatosti*
Corporate America is fast becoming a major source of funding for academic research, and that money has some significant strings attached.

18 **Law schools and corporate influence: money's power to shape ideas and opinions** *by Darryl K. Brown*
Legal analyses and arguments may not be marketable or patented, but corporations still find it very much worth their while to court law professors and law schools.

21 **Hip-hop campus activism** *by Johnny Temple*
The diverse audience of hip-hop music is providing common ground on which to unify disparate student groups for effective political activism.

22 **High-stakes injustice** *by Jane Slaughter*
The "standards movement" has caused legislatures to mandate one-shot tests that determine whether a child will be held back a year in elementary school, or whether she will graduate from high school. At the same time, a growing movement of parents and educators is resisting test mania, calling for schools that teach children to think, not to fill in the blanks.

24 **Pursuing the sacred in the academy's 'hallowed halls'** *by Robert Wuthnow*
The separation of reason from emotion and action that generally characterizes institutions of higher learning has fed the idea that scholarly approaches to religion contribute to the larger processes of secularization. But sociologist Robert Wuthnow says this view overlooks the significant contributions the academy makes to the public expression of religion.

on the cover
Yale University
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IMPACT VISUALS

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editor's Note
7 Poetry
13 Review
28 Short Takes
29 Classifieds
30 Witness Profile

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Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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Distorted report on depleted uranium?

In your May 2000 issue, Jeff Nelson writes of "depleted uranium weapons used by the U.S. during the Gulf War." I have investigated this serious charge and found it to be a distortion. The bombs used in the war were exclusively high explosives. The only depleted uranium was in our tanks. It seems that depleted uranium makes very tough armor plate.

I hope you ask Mr. Nelson to check the accuracy of his sources.

A. Wayne Schwab
Essex, NY

Ed. note: Here is Jeff Nelson's reply to Wayne Schwab's letter, as requested:

Thank you for forwarding me Wayne Schwab's letter and giving me a chance to answer some of his concerns about the use of depleted uranium [DU] during the Gulf War.

The use of DU has become very popular in the last decade of weapons manufacturing. It is used in tanks and also to coat armor-piercing munitions which can then be fired out of tanks or A-10 Warthog fighter planes. According to the Gulf War Research Center, allied troops fired almost one million rounds containing an estimated 300 tons of DU. Most of those hit Iraqi tanks or fell on Iraqi soil. U.S. soldiers were also exposed, either wounded by "friendly fire" or from inhaling contaminated dust as they clambered over Iraqi tanks at war's end. In the Presidential Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses' final report in December 1996 they concurred that, "U.S. service personnel also could have been exposed to DU if they inhaled or ingested DU dust particles during incidental contact with vehicles destroyed by DU munitions, or if they lived or worked in areas contaminated with DU dust from accidental munitions fires. Thus, unnecessary exposure of many individuals could have occurred." Many veterans now believe that DU exposure has been a contributing factor to Gulf War illnesses. DU is the by-product of the process for converting ("enriching") natural uranium for use as nuclear fuel or nuclear weapons. DU is approximately 40 percent less radioactive than natural uranium. The DU used in armor-piercing munitions is also widely used in civilian industry, primarily for stabilizers in airplanes and boats. DU poses an extremely low radiological threat as long as it remains outside the body. Internalized in sufficient quantity, however, via metal fragments or dust-like particles and oxides, depleted uranium may pose a long-term health hazard.

Three years ago, researchers from the National Cancer Institute and other agencies exposed human cells to depleted uranium and injected them into mice. They developed tumors within four weeks. In the U.S., DU is considered enough of a risk that the Environmental Protection Agency requires detailed plans for protecting people and the environment at the three sites where the material is stored. No such precautions exist in southern Iraq. Children still play near burned-out tanks and farmers still grow tomatoes — albeit stunted ones — in fields they say were hit with missiles. Although some residents have been moved out of the area, the Iraqi government says it has neither the resources nor the responsibility to clean up any uranium. There has been a 262 percent jump in leukemia and other cancers nationwide since the Gulf War, the Iraqi Ministry of Health reports.

The use of DU is an issue that must be further studied and understood by the public. I would encourage all readers to take it upon themselves to discover the realities of these weapons that have become a staple of the U.S. arsenal. A good place to start is the recent article by Susan Taylor Martin that was published in the June 5, 2000 edition of the St. Petersburg Times *entitled, "Children and War" (http://www.ngwrc.org/Dulink/children_and_war.htm). — J.N.*

'Plowshares Eight' 20th anniversary

September 9, 2000 is the 20th anniversary of the "Plowshares Eight" action in King of Prussia, Penn. It was the first in which an

actual nuclear weapon was damaged: the nose of the Mark 12A 337-kiloton nuclear bomb. It was a symbolic exposure of what most U.S. citizenry accepted: the need for total destruction of an "enemy country" by using nuclear genocide in defiance both of God's law and international law, even when its cost is beggaring our nation's social and international responsibilities.

The Plowshares Eight startled the American public by exposing the consequences of our Mutually Assured Destruction military policy. Over 60 Plowshares actions have happened since 1980.

This year is also my 20th anniversary of resigning from General Electric for providing arms for nuclear war. As a "new" resister, I'd like to tell you of certain "Acts of Grace" that happened during their witness time and trial:

In the Fall of 1980, when five resisters were in the Norristown prison, some 200 Indians on their "Long Walk of Survival" to the U.N. stayed in nearby Abington Friends Meeting. At an evening meeting I asked their medicine man to visit our friends in prison. He said it would be a community decision: The community directed that a delegation should visit. They were refused admittance at the prison. Imagine my surprise the next day to see the whole Indian community marching and drumming, surrounding the Norristown prison. Was it an act of grace that these two like-minded communities' paths crossed in Norristown that day?

The Plowshares Eight trial opened on Ash Wednesday 1981. As the trial opened and the courtroom filled, music started from a nearby church: "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?" Supporters first started humming, then singing — at which point the judge cleared the courtroom! Who chose that music? Why was it playing at that particular moment?

Following many Plowshares actions and trials, I was struck by the unexpected, unexplained happenings that transpired. These insights made me a believer in the rightness of their actions.

These simple examples are not meant to overshadow the Plowshares actions. Plowshares actions continue because the need has accelerated. Even today, there are those who believe that nuclear genocide is morally justifiable if our country is "threatened militarily." Our country still places their security in a nuclear god, not in the One God of us all.

Bill Stuart-Whistler
Co-chair, Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Nuclear Issues Group
Gwynedd, PA

For post-**General Convention** coverage
check out The Witness' website at

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- *Articles by Louie Crew and Katie Sherrod*
- *The text of Peter Selby's address on 'Debt in the Jubilee Year' delivered at The Witness' benefit reception*
- *Remarks by Witness award recipients Wally and Juanita Nelson, Betty LaDuke, Baldemar Velasquez and Douglas Theuner*

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Unmasking the powers in higher education

by Andrew W. McThenia

We are grateful to Uncas McThenia (Andrew is his real name, but anyone who knows him goes by the nickname he's had since childhood), an Episcopalian of the Willliam Stringfellow sort who has taught law at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va. for more than 25 years, for helping us develop this issue on the powers and higher education. In it we have sought to probe the ways the academy has become captive to the powers and how people who harbor a faith in the biblical promise of "a new heavens and a new earth" are able to witness to that faith as they work and study in its bosom. The topic is of special interest to those of us who have been conditioned to believe that a formal education, particularly undergraduate and graduate education, is the key to a better life for both the individual and society. This might often be true, but after reading this issue I think readers will have a better sense of the ways in which that knee-jerk presumption needs to be qualified.

— Julie A. Wortman, editor and publisher

INITIALLY THIS ISSUE WAS CONCEIVED as one exploring religion in the academy. However, it morphed as we went along. The major focus remains religion in the academy, but American higher education itself is undergoing extraordinary changes. The university as we have known it is, in many ways, a thing of the past. Corporate underwriting of research is bringing in a sea change in the culture of higher education. Traditionally, universities regarded ownership claims to research efforts as inconsistent with their obligation to disseminate knowledge in the broadest possible manner. Today, most research universities have technology licensing offices which commercialize discoveries and manage patent portfolios. At many institutions traditional academic types are being replaced with entrepreneurial people. That commercialization continues downstream from the elite research universities throughout higher education. It is felt on the community college level with technological changes such as online courses.

But first things first. How does religion fare in the academy? The answer seems to be that it is tolerated, as has been the case for at least the last 250 years. Peter Gomes, writing about the religious history of Harvard, points out that when Harvard was founded in 1637 it was assumed that Christ was "the only foundation of all social knowledge and learning." However, by the time of its 200th birthday in 1836, "*Veritas* [was] no longer necessarily understood as the comprehensive and revealed truth of the Christian religion, but as a truth which stood at the end of scientific discovery and verification."

Since that time the struggle for people of



"You're kidding! You count S.A.T.s?"

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faith in higher education has been to be both reasonable and faithful, discerning and doubting. By 1915 the hegemony of the enlightenment project had become such that the American Association of University Professors, in its declaration of principles, denied to religiously based institutions the name "university" because "they do not, at least as regards one particular subject, accept the principle of freedom and inquiry."

The uneasy compromise is that religion as a point of view is welcome in the academy so long as it offers itself with reserve and diffidence appropriate to liberal decorum. Academic freedom in a real sense means that religion can be a part of the university so long as it renounces its claim to have a privileged claim on the truth, which is, of course, what religion is all about — knowing the truth. While religion is tolerated, if it ever seriously challenged the ruling paradigm, it would find itself in exile.

While there are many conservative Christians who believe that the world of the academy has shut them out, there is little evidence that Christianity has been driven underground. Early this year a study sponsored by the Lilly Endowment was made public. The study concludes that religion is thriving on college campuses. It may not look like the campus ministry of yesteryear — most students are likely to consider themselves as spiritual rather than religious and denominational allegiance is pretty rare. However, religious classes are extremely popular and students often use the intellectual study of religion to sort out their own beliefs. The study found widespread tolerance on university campuses. And, as this month's profile of Michael Levinson points out, spirituality and social service are often strongly connected.

In this issue, Robert Wuthnow of Princeton, writing on "Pursuing the sacred in the academy's 'hallowed halls,'" accepts the reality of the uneasy perch of religion in the academy and suggests that the proper inquiry for academics is what kind of contribution colleges and universities can make to the public expression of religion. Among these, he points out, is the academy's promotion of tolerance for cultural pluralism.

But one of the dangers with our unquestioning acceptance of the tolerance pervading the academy is that religious folk will be lulled into forgetting our very real differences with the academy. We will forget that we really are strangers in a strange land. The principalities and powers are very seductive and turn self-evidently good, noble virtues against the Kingdom. Tolerance is an example. It is wonderful to live in an atmosphere of civility, and with all the religious strife throughout the world there is a good deal to be said for the peace treaty of liberal tolerance. But when tolerance leads to religious folk forgetting who, and most importantly whose, they are, then the powers have prevailed.

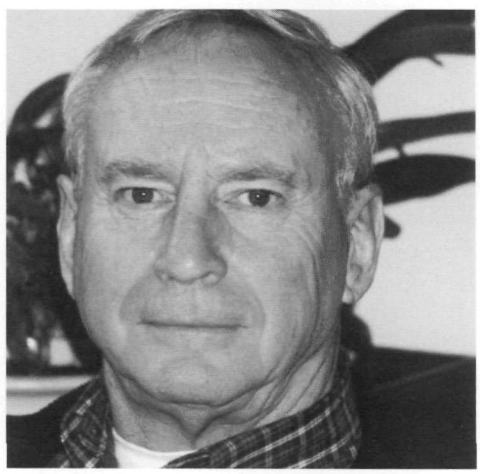
Corporate power, in particular, has subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, changed the historic mission of the university in America. At one time we worried about the military-industrial complex as a threat to our way of life. It was and remains so. But still below the radar is a powerful academic-industrial complex in which universities and researchers own equity positions in companies that support their work and online teaching threatens to diminish face-to-face contact with tenured professors and to increase the "franchising" of education.

Darryl Brown, a professor of law, describes the subtle ways in which corporate power influences the mission of legal education. While law schools don't have the sorts of research budgets that places like M.I.T. have, there are plenty of opportunities for law professors to sign on as consultants to corporate America. The history of private consultation is such that the law school accrediting authority, The American Association of Law Schools, has seen fit to warn against excessive private practice while encouraging law professors to provide more legal assistance to those who can't afford high private-practice fees. Indeed, corporate funding incentives seem to account for a large body of research critical of punitive damages — which is a major worry for corporate America — but a paucity of research on many topics critical to social justice, such as access to the legal system by the poor.

And as corporate culture's technocratic bias renames university students as either "inventory" or "product," another insidious principality, the standardized test, determines who enters the hallowed halls. The granddaddy of them all, the SAT, begun 50 years ago as a utopian experiment so that the Ivies could expand their base beyond the offspring of the WASP elite, has become such a powerful symbol that it stops almost all attempts at genuine discussion about education. Now the son of SAT, called the standards movement, is sweeping the country.

All this is to say that theologian William Stringfellow was right a quarter century ago when he argued that the powers are legion in the academy. But the articles in this issue also carry the message that there are important pockets of resistance on American campuses. William Willimon reports that the Christian community at Duke University provides a pretty constant reminder to him that life is different if one is religious. And Michael Levinson's efforts at Georgetown University began in an interfaith prayer service. In fact, the Georgetown Solidarity Committee was able to call Georgetown back to its own history by appealing to the strong tradition of Catholicism for a living wage, for just working conditions, and for a preferential option for the poor.

We people of faith must not forget that the cultivation of the mind — as Stringfellow would put it, "the exercise of definitely human faculties" — can lead not only to the cultivation of human originality and creativity, but also to the cultivation of conscience. And that is an important form of resistance. ●



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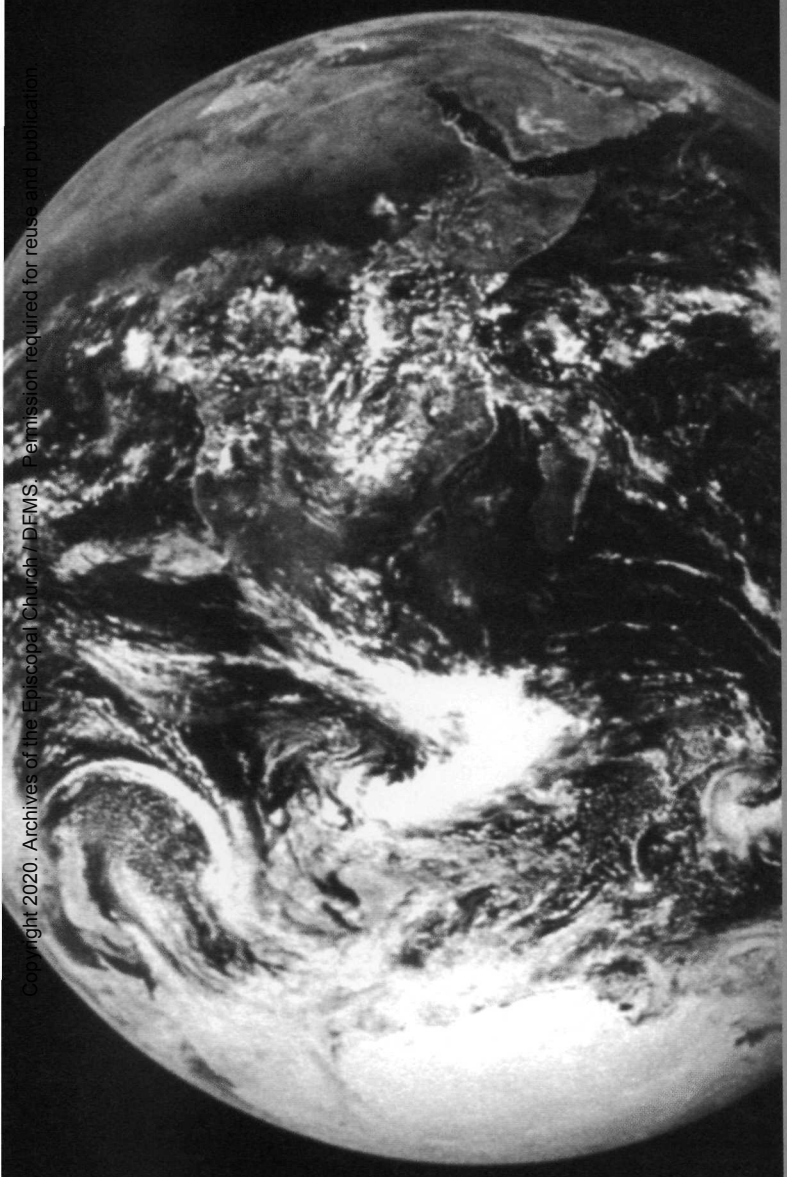
The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.



Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun?

A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises.

The wind blows to the south, and goes around to the north;

Round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.

All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full;

To the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow.

All things are wearisome; more than one can express;

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing.

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun.

Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new?"

It has already been, in the ages before us.

The people of long ago are not remembered, nor will there be any remembrance

Of people yet to come by those who come after them.

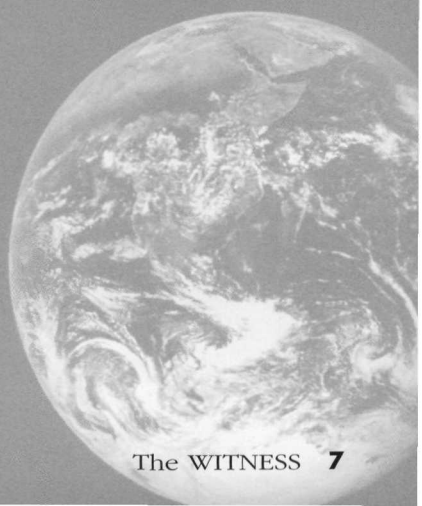
I, the Teacher, when king over Israel in Jerusalem, applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to human beings to be busy with. I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

What is crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be counted.

I said to myself, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a chasing after wind.

For in much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase sorrow.

— Ecclesiastes 1
(New Revised Standard Version)



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A MISSIONARY

In the strange land of the modern university: an interview with William Willimon

by Andrew W. McThenia

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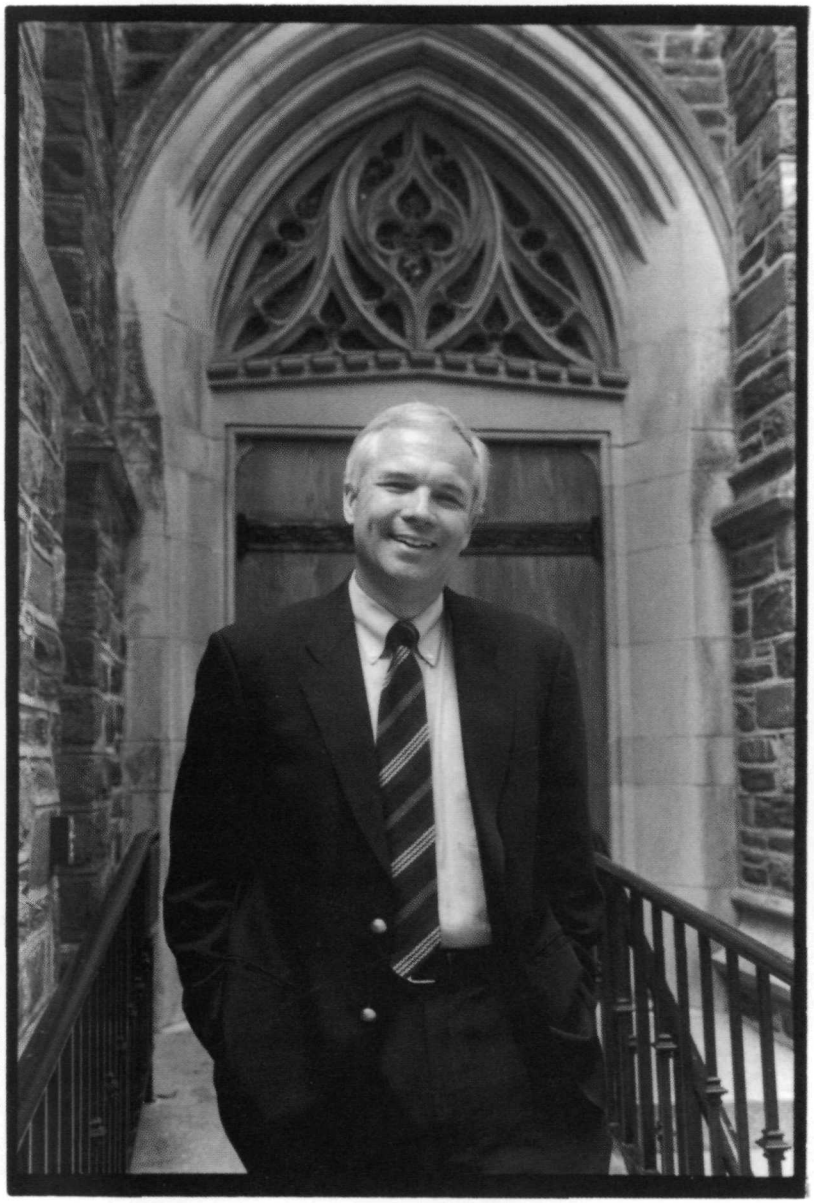

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WILLIAM WILLIMON has been Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Christian Ministry at Duke University for the past 16 years. His 1995 book, *The Abandoned Generation*, is one of the most thoughtful books on campus ministry written in the last decade; and his William Belden Noble lecture given on the 25th anniversary of Peter Gome's ministry at Harvard University, "Athens is a Long Way from Jerusalem but Cambridge is Even Farther," is a classic engagement of the powers at that institution. In addition to preaching each Sunday at the Duke Chapel, Willimon serves as a professor at the Divinity School. For the last several years he has taught a popular undergraduate seminar entitled "The Search for Meaning," which challenges the entire enterprise of the academy in this postmodern age.

In preparation for this interview I read, and in some cases reread, several of Willimon's books, including *The Abandoned Generation, Resident Aliens: Life in a Christian Colony* and *Reading with Deeper Eyes*. I also found copies of many sermons and lectures. I discerned a couple of important strains running through most of his writing. First, Willimon has spent a good deal of time thinking and writing about the arrogance of the modern university. For instance, at Harvard he argued that the modern university has such a limited view of the intellectual that it is no longer able to say who the God is it no longer believes in. "Indeed, when I read the purpose of this William Belden Noble Lecture, to lift up to Harvard Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, I was reminded of just how odd ... we Christians are. For us, the truth, that truth which the modern university is so touchingly inept in discussing, is a person, personal, a Jew from Nazareth named Jesus. ... That Harvard may not recognize our thinking as thinking is not surprising to us, considering the limits of today's flaccid secularists." Or on another occasion he said, "The modern world thinks of itself as open, broad-minded, enjoying unlimited vistas, when, in reality, it is a very closed, narrow way of living and looking. Many modern people have there-

fore come to believe that, in modernity, our world did not grow as was promised. Rather it shrank."

Second, he continues to insist that the church be the church and not be seduced by the tolerance of civic republicanism. He worries that the church has become too much like the Rotary Club, giving no theological rationale for people's lives. "We have replaced the intensity for religious experience with reasoned civility."

I was ready — or so I thought.

The problem with trying to conduct an interview with Will Willimon is that his natural language is the parable. Although he is certainly capable of linear discourse, he refuses to engage in it. I think his manner of speaking reflects a continual engagement with the powers in the academy. To listen to an interview with Will is akin to hearing Seamus Heaney read his new translation of Beowulf. Between episodes of Beowulf's exploits, the action awaits the telling of an even more ancient story which looks backward to an even more distant past. When asked a question that seemingly might be answered in 25 words or less, I generally got a wonderful five- to 10-minute story which wove through the lives of his students, his own upbringing, circled around to include the questioner and finally, after gently challenging the premise of the question, he would stop to breathe. If one reads or listens carefully to this conversation, she is likely to conclude that the world has shifted a few degrees. Where you stand now is not quite so comfortable as it was before Will started speaking.

The competing ways of knowing in the modern university have, as much as possible, banished the notion of promise from the world. Willimon's vocation has been to find, nourish, and celebrate those small islands within the university which insist that the promises of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are real and important. And that is what keeps hope alive. — *AWM*

ONE THING I ENJOY IN WORKING IN THE UNIVERSITY IS THAT YOU GET CLOSE PROXIMITY TO A NEW GENERATION. ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GENERATION IS THAT THEY'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYTHING BUT THE AMERICAN DREAM THAT THEIR PARENTS THOUGHT THEY HAD TO HAVE, SO THAT MEANS THAT SOME OF THEM OFFER A GOOD CRITIQUE OF THAT.

Were you raised as a Methodist?

Yes, my family lived on the same land in South Carolina since 1740 and we have a Methodist church that our family built and were patrons of over the years. By the time I came along we had moved into the church in Greenville. It looked like a First Methodist bank downtown. I have that background, but my family were farmers, school teachers, etc. I think probably a bigger factor in my life was that my father was in prison for embezzlement at the bank before I was born and, evidently, when he was paroled or let out, that was when I was conceived. My mother was 40 when I was born, my brother and sister were both in junior high and high school.

This is real Southern gothic. They had a family meeting and it was decided that it would be good for my father to just leave, that he had embarrassed the family. My mother was from North Dakota, they had met at college. His family told my mother, we'll look after you and your children. You will now be written into the will and Robert (my father) will be written out. And we will never mention his name again. And so he went away and I didn't meet him until I was a senior in college. So it's Faulknerian — or probably closer to Flannery O'Conner.

I once spoke to Charles Colson's group in Washington and said, when I was asked to come up here I was thinking I don't know prisons, but then I thought, wait a minute, your daddy was in one, and then your savior was in one, and by my count at least maybe a third to half of the New Testament was written in jail. In fact I heard Paul telling me if you never had anybody in jail or you've never been in jail, you gonna miss a lot of the Gospel. There may be stuff you are going to miss because you don't know Greek, but you just won't get it when I say to you, I write this letter to you in chains. If you have never been in chains you are just

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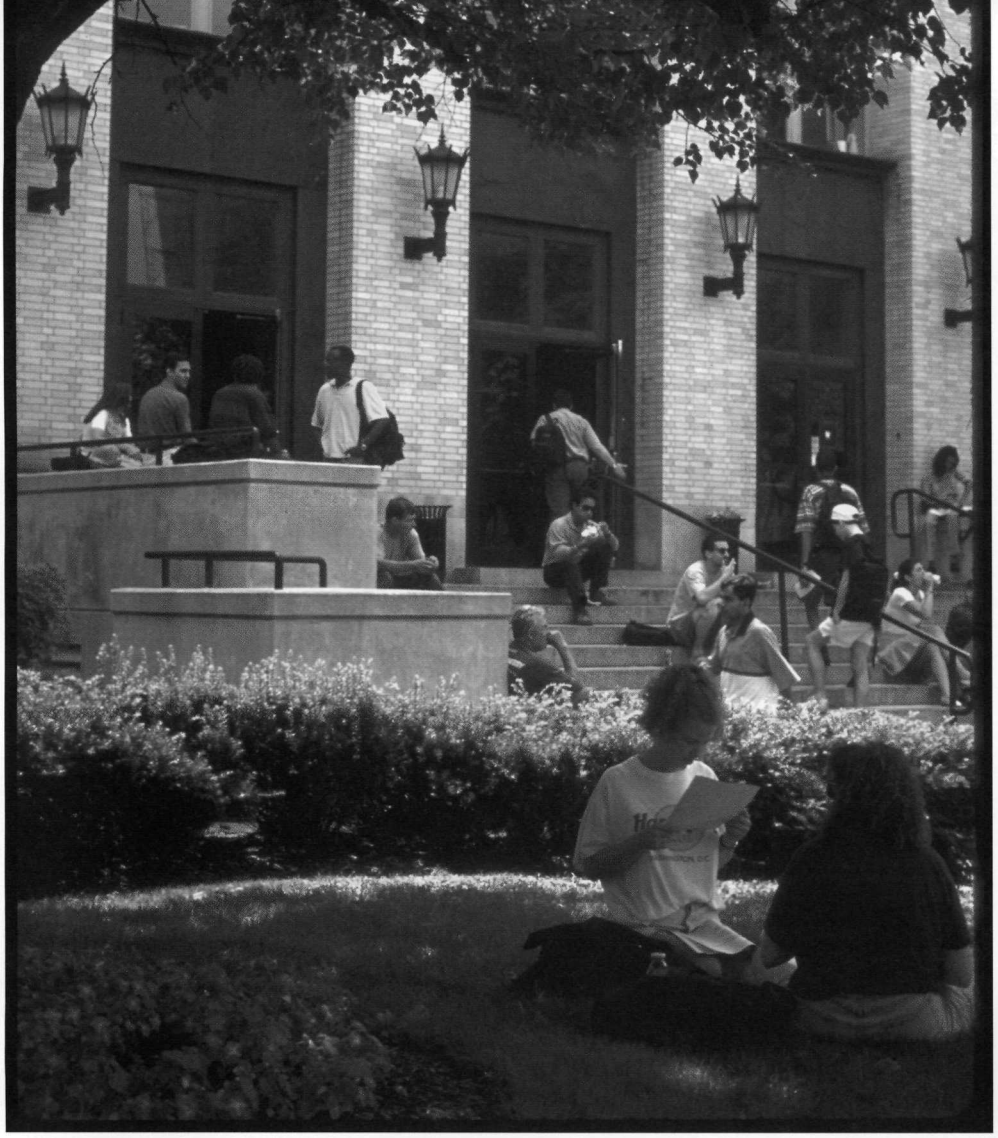

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gonna miss a lot of the letter and I'm prepared to say that there is something about our faith that goes together with jail.

I also remember in college meeting Carlisle Marney, who was a great Baptist prophet at Myers Park Baptist in Charlotte. We started talking and I said, I have this interest in religion, in God, and I've often wondered if Freud is right, am I projecting, is this my need for a father? And Marney said, "You are goddamn right it is! I've never met a preacher that was worth a damn that didn't have a bad daddy problem." And I said, don't you have problems with that? And he said, "God will use any handle he can get." I remember that being a moment of permission to pursue a religious vocation.

So, I went to Yale Divinity School and thought, I'll never come home again, this is great! I had moved to Nirvana. To hell with the South. I had a couple of experiences there, worked in the inner city on a mission project and I realized sin abounds everywhere, it's not just southerners. But I was a southerner and a child of the Vietnam era and somehow that has affected me. I just always believe the establishment is the problem. It's simple. And now, in the Methodist church the people who have power think of themselves as liberals. They think they are avant garde. They think themselves radicals. But they are in power. And it's my job to throw rocks at them and say terrible things about them.

I thought God had called me to spend my life in Methodist churches in South Carolina. And coming back to South Carolina, I really felt this great sense about coming home. They may be bastards but they are my bastards. They may be sinners but they are my sinners and it just felt good.

I loved being a parish pastor, but somebody from Duke showed up at my church one day saying, we need someone to teach worship. My bishop said, go on up there, you can stay a few years, and I did. But I didn't like teaching full-time, so I went back to South Carolina in an inner-city parish for four years of real hard work. While I was down there I got a call from Terry Sanford (the President of Duke) saying, we're looking for a chaplain up here. When he hired me, he said, "There are some things I like about you." I said what do you like? He said, "You've got your doctorate." And I said, well, how is that necessary for the job? He said, "It's not a damn bit, in one sense, but on the other hand you have a union card. You can stand toe-to-toe with these people." It turned out that Sanford was right.

[During a lunch break, as we walked the 200 yards from Willimon's office in the Chapel to the dining hall, he was stopped numerous times by students. It took us at least 15 minutes to make what would normally be a two- to three-minute amble.]

It is obvious that you have some rather close relationships with what appears to be a varied cross section of the Duke student community. What do you learn from the student community?

One thing I enjoy in working in the university is that you get close proximity to a new generation. One of the characteristics of this generation is that they've never known anything but the American dream that their parents thought they had to have, so that means that some of them offer a good critique of that. They've all had a car since they were 16, so they can say, why give your life to getting another car? And with 50 percent of them coming from separated homes, I find many saying, "I'm going to find somebody and I'm going to make it work. And I'm not going to be like my Dad, who blew his marriage for the company."

There are also some great moments, like when some young Christian is doing a critique of your discipleship and doesn't even

intend to. One Sunday after church I had a group of graduate students to my house for a kind of picnic, and to play basketball, etc. One student says, "You realize I've been here seven years and I've never been in a faculty home until today?" And I said, that is outrageous. That is disgusting, that is wrong. I believe in having students over. And then he said, "You've got a great house here with the woods and everything," and I said, thank you. He said, "Let me ask you something, as a Christian do you feel at all uneasy to be living in this nice a house?" And I said, now I'm remembering why we don't have you people over here that much! Now, it's coming back to me. He said, "Oh gosh! I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable." I said, you know, that even makes it more devastating, you're not even intending to hurt me. You people, you all might make a Christian out of me yet, I don't know.

Everyone's always lamenting how apolitical students are. Now, this is a prejudiced Christian comment, but I say that if some of them don't believe that Bill and Hillary are gods, that's okay with me — I don't have a problem with that. And if some of them are cynical about Caesar, well, sometimes it takes Christians years to learn that. If they figure that out so early in life, forgive me for being kind of pleased, because my generation was told there is only one way to a better world.

Tony Compolo was speaking here and somebody asked about abortion. He said, "I'm sick of talking about abortion with you short-haired evangelicals. There are 980 verses in the Bible on the evils of money and you can't name one good one on abortion. Let's talk about what Jesus wanted to talk about and if we have time we will talk about what you want to talk about."

There really is built into the Christian faith a kind of prejudice about some subjects. I started a sermon once quoting G. K. Chesterson, how we can have a good debate, an interesting discussion, over whether or not Jesus believed in fairies. That would be worth discussing. But, he said, unfortunately we cannot have a debate over whether or not he believed rich people were in terrible trouble. There is too much evidence there — there are just too many texts.

How do you characterize your role at Duke?

When I came here, I asked my predecessor, how do you see yourself, and he said, well, I like to think of myself as kind of the conscience of the university. I said, whoa, I'm not that good! Instead, the work of Lesslie Newbigin and others led me to the conclusion that the primary metaphor for my work ought to be that I was a missionary. Some of the skills that you learn in cross-cultural work are important. Newbigin said Christianity has had difficulty, and has collided with every culture in which it found itself, including the very first culture in which it found itself. I think Christians ought to remember that the tension we feel is often a tension of speaking French when everybody else speaks English. It is a tension of being a stranger in a strange land.

YOUNG CHRISTIANS IN A COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT REALLY IMPRESS ME. THESE KIDS FEEL LIKE THEY ARE UNDER ASSAULT. THEY FEEL LIKE "WE ARE THE LAST CHRISTIANS LEFT, IT'S US AGAINST THEM."

Everybody serves something and I think one of the missions that Christians may have in the modern university is to at times point out what people are giving their lives to and just to say, "Is it worth it? Do you actually think this will give you a reason to get out of bed in the morning?"

What are some of the tensions and excitement you experience in the University?

In writing *Resident Aliens*, (a book coauthored with Stanley Hauerwas) people sometimes asked me what the important influences in my life were. Often people thought it was the Mennonite church, but I said no, Stanley knows the Mennonites. For me the influence was the college campus. Young Christians in a college environment really impress me. These kids feel like they are under assault. They feel like "we are the last Christians left, it's us against them."

Recently the student newspaper had an editorial against me on the same-sex union policy. We just don't do same-sex unions in the Chapel and this upsets a lot of people. [When asked about the policy, Willimon said, "The policy on same-sex unions at the Chapel was made by me and the president for a variety of factors: They are not legal in North Carolina, the United Methodist Church prohibits them, and our sense that we are not yet ready to make this move. It's all under discussion."] Afterwards, I had several e-mails from students saying, "Doc Willimon, you don't know me, but I'm a Christian, keep up the good fight, don't lose heart, I will pray for you tonight, if you need to talk to me you can call here, etc."

Well, I probably disagree theologically with most of those kids, who tend to be conservative evangelicals, but these students offer me support and urge me to keep the faith. That is exciting.

Last year I preached Proverbs from the lectionary, the little Proverb that goes: "Better than silver or gold is a good reputation, a good name is better than riches." I told the congregation, I don't as a rule do Proverbs. I let Bill Bennett do Proverbs or that idiot that wrote *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and all that other crap. I never liked Proverbs because there was no God in Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is like a long road trip with your mother, just pick up your socks, and be polite to people. But here's one, "A good name is better than silver or gold." Get this one out and talk to

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Don Trump or Ted Turner. Ask them about that. I think they'll say go for the gold. Worry about your name later. Put this on a t-shirt and wear it on campus for about a week, and let me know how you do at fraternity rush.

After chapel, this kid comes up to me and said, "That was really comforting." I said, what? Comforting? He said, "I'm going to call my old man tonight and I'm going to tell him I'm not going to go to law school and he can go to hell." And I said, well don't mention my name when you call him! And I said to myself, isn't that curious? Proverbs is the establishmentarian wisdom for holding the world together. But if you're in the right context, it becomes a bombshell. It will blow something up.

I love those moments of being at the university. I think, isn't it fascinating that something like this will happen. Thank you, God, for letting me be here. So, I say, our modern university has restored the fun of being a disciple.

Is there a sense in which more conservative Christian students feel pretty beleaguered and sometimes unable to live into the tensions that are inherent in a university?

Perhaps. Some of them might say, "We don't have a belief that the world is bad, we haven't started out to withdraw from the world, it is just that when we became Christians the world shoved us out, or the world started treating us like we were weirdos, but that is the world, it is not us." Stanley Hauerwas always says Anabaptists didn't withdraw from the world, they just didn't like their children being killed. And if Christians don't get along with the world, a lot of the time it is a matter of the world, not so much the Christians. So I try not to be that judgmental when I encounter these people.

Touché! What about your relationships with the faculty and administration at Duke?

I work at Duke University, it's not a monastery. We don't want to withdraw from the world. Where the heck would we withdraw to? I say it is all God's world and the university just doesn't yet know that. But that is our problem. The Gospel means that God is going to get back what belongs to him and he's going to do whatever is necessary to get it. There have been times when I've talked about this university as some kind of godless, secular place. Well, there have been wonderful moments when I have been embarrassed to find out that people are asking tough, searching questions. I realize that God is unthreading all this facade we erect.

Tell me about some of your encounters with the principalities and powers at Duke.

Obviously the powers are legion here, as they are at any other institution. My thought on the powers is that they are always good, they are often self-evidently good, noble virtues, that are being used against the Kingdom of God.

I think the honor system at Washington and Lee is like that. To be honorable and to live in a community of trust is a wonderful thing. But so often we fetishize the honor system and it becomes an idol. Any system that defines one's goodness by another's lack of it, cannot be sacred. Jesus died because he was erasing lines, not building systems based on a neighbor's lack of goodness.

I led a discussion of the Duke Honor Code and religion. The students were organizing it and I was supposed to be the moderator. The question was, does your religion teach you that you should turn somebody in that you observe doing wrong? It is interesting. Are you willing to mess up your neighbor over this? I was so pleased that the Christians said things like, "Well, in Matthew, Jesus said, that's something between me and my neighbor. I wouldn't worry so much about turning a person in as I would talking to them." And they said, "My problem probably is that I don't care enough about most people to confront, it wouldn't be that I was afraid that they wouldn't like me. I have to confess that I just probably don't love people enough to even confront them."

Well, you know, truth, knowledge, wisdom, excellence, all of these things get in our hands, and get perverted.

Right after I came here I was telling somebody at the Divinity School that I was speaking to some military chaplains, and he said, "What in the world would you be saying to military chaplains?" I told him that I feel a kinship with a lot of these guys, we have a lot of stuff we can talk about because we are in similar lines of work. And he said, "You are at a university. How could you possibly compare the U.S. military, which is in the killing business, with the university?" Here we were standing there in front of our research labs and I pointed and asked, who do you think is paying for all of those labs over there? That's the Pentagon. I said, we're training people to be the sort of people who are willing to kill for Ronald Reagan, if he ever asked them to do that. And I said, the thing I find that I like about military chaplains is that they are very up-front, the best of them that is, about the deep ethical dilemmas involved in their work. I'm not.

I said, when I put on this suit in the morning I don't think a thing. But I know military chaplains who, when they put on what they wear to work, have a deep twinge of conscience at least. And I said, I ought to worry about the way I'm dressed. And what is that in service of?

What about the culture wars and post-modernism at Duke?

I think post-modernism has been useful. I found a lot of their observations truthful. But what to do beyond that? I like the unmasking they've done. It's great to see that a lot that we call the intellectual life around here, is called working for the Pentagon or Wall Street. It's odd how I feel at times closer to some of the radical fire-breathing feminists than I do to some of the mainline Christian types, because these people at least know everybody is standing somewhere. Everybody is caught by something. Christians, I say, are special, because we can name what we are subservient to. ●

Former Witness *contributing editor* ***Andrew McThenia*** *is a law professor at Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Va.*

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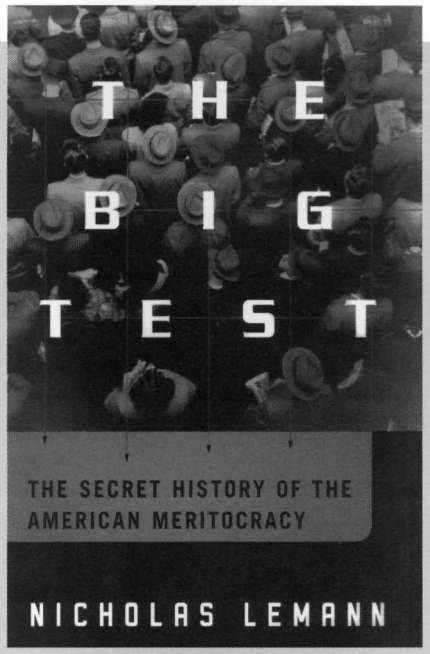
The Big Test

by Gloria House



The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy by Nicolas Lemann, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. 406pp.

THE DREAM of a nation led by persons who have won their rank by virtue of merit rather than wealth inspired the men whose lives were dedicated to the development, canonization and marketing of the Big Test, known to us all as the SAT, the arbiter of university entrance and subsequent life status. They dreamed that a meritocracy based on intellectual competence would lead to greater democratization of American society.

Nicolas Lemann tells the "secret history" of this movement through detailed narratives on the major players such as Henry Chauncey, whose passion for tests of all kinds evolved into his life's mission, the founding of the Educational Testing Service and the promotion of the SAT; James Bryant Conant, Harvard president, whose vision was that education should become "the repository of opportunity," replacing class privilege as the means to mobility and power; Clark Kerr, president of U.C. Berkeley, who envisioned a university attended by only the top eighth of high school graduates.

The author also relates the life trajectories of representative figures who found their way into the test-based meritocracy — for example, he introduces us to some of the first women to enter Yale Law School and some of the first Asians, including Bill Lann Lee, whom he depicts as a somewhat reluctant organizer of Asian student unity. Later, in 1997, President Clinton would call Lee to the post of Assistant Attorney General.

While detailing the historic activities of major and minor figures in the history of testing, the author also discusses at length many issues related to the tests controversy — such as the highly disputed policy of draft deferment for young men who scored high on the SAT, and the struggles between the proponents of affirmative action and the promoters of California's Proposition 209. The book is chock-full, spanning six decades of America's wrestling over how to separate the wheat from the chaff, to find and educate its most talented and deserving.

The weave of so much detail is sometimes intriguing, sometimes tedious. One feels at points that *The Big Test* might have been a nifty little book, for the moral of the stories is quite simply that the meritocracy movement, based on the use of exams which measured intelligence very narrowly and with culturally/racially biased items, succeeded only in creating a somewhat different kind of power elite, not in democratizing opportunity in American society.

What does the author recommend as an alternative for equalizing educational opportunity in the U.S.? Lemann proposes a national high school curriculum upon which all students would be examined. Those who master the curriculum and excel on the tests would be eligible for university. The author's idea rests on the assumption that every youngster would have access to quality instruction and systematic preparation for the examination. If facilities, teaching competence and learning resources were equal in our schools across the country, this might be the case; however, we know the inequities of our school system. So we have come full circle.

Perhaps what is missing here is the Big Picture. Equal educational opportunity — the freedom to move through society, discovering and fulfilling one's own potential — would accompany a more equitable distribution of other essential goods: adequate employment, food, shelter, health care. Can we devise measures to equalize educational opportunity and subsequent quality of life without first striving to meet such basic human needs of all citizens? Tests exclude systematically the majority of children of color and the poor from opportunities to develop their abilities, and many feel hopeless about their future. They attend dilapidated schools with frustrated teachers, many of whom have long ago ceased striving for excellence in disorganized bureaucratic systems. The children are often hungry and hence less capable of focusing their attention. Few have parents or relatives who are available to coach them and encourage them to study. They do not speak or write the language of the dominant culture, and would have to make intense effort to master it under the guidance of someone who really cared. Into this terrain interject the concept of meritocracy and apply the Big Test. We cannot miss the obvious contradictions for a society that aspires to democracy. ●

Gloria House is The Witness' *poetry editor and a longtime Detroit activist and educator.*

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The corporate takeover of the university

by Camille Colatosti



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"The past role of the university to serve the public has been hopelessly compromised."

Leonard Minsky, co-founder with Ralph Nader of the National Coalition for Universities in the Public Interest, laments that "universities, once proud defenders of academic freedom and critical thought, are now ever more exclusively the cradle of industrial invention."

According to Minsky, "The past role of the university to serve the public has been hopelessly compromised." This compromise came when universities began to conduct research on behalf of corporations, and to teach curricula that corporations design.

Eyal Press and Jennifer Washburn, authors of "The Kept University" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, March 2000), agree. Both are fellows at the Open Society Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building an open society in countries that are transitioning toward democracy, and to "correcting the deficiencies of the essentially open society of the U.S." Key to the mission of the Open Society Institute is challenging "the intrusion of the marketplace into inappropriate areas." Echoing Minsky's pessimistic view of academia, Press and Washburn write, "Commercially sponsored research is putting at risk the paramount value of higher education disinterested inquiry."

In *The University in Ruins* (Harvard Uni-

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versity Press, 1998), Bill Readings, a professor of comparative literature at the University of Montreal, states these concerns even more starkly: "The university is now an autonomous bureaucratic corporation responsive to the idea that what really matters in today's world is economic management rather than cultural conflict." The university, says Readings, "is simply a market for the production, exchange and consumption of useful information — useful, that is, to corporations, governments, and their prospective employees."

University mission

Are these dire assessments of academia correct? Has the mission of universities really changed? In his September 1998 *Witness* article "Hire Education: the Rise of Corporate Curricula," Christopher Cook reminds us that "the needs of industry have long been a driving force in defining education. The federal Morrill Act of 1862, for example, established land-grant colleges and universities which focused on agricultural technology as part of national economic policy and which hastened the mechanization of training." But the relationship between the university and the corporation is now tighter than ever and is intensifying at an unprecedented rate.

The campus itself, as David Noble, professor of history at Toronto's York University and author of *Digital Diploma Mills*, explains, has become "a significant site of capital accumulation, a change in social perception which has resulted in the systematic conversion of intellectual activity into intellectual capital and, hence, intellectual property." The university, then, has been reconfigured in market terms.

According to Noble, this reconfiguration has occurred in two phases. First, there was "the commoditization of the research function of the university." This transformed "scientific and engineering knowledge into commercially viable proprietary products that can be owned and bought and sold in the market."

Second, says Noble, is the "commoditization of the educational function of the university." In this phase, which has intensified with online education, courses are transformed "into courseware, the activity of instruction itself into commercially viable proprietary products that can be owned and bought and sold in the market."

Research becomes product

Lawrence Soley, the Colnik professor of communication and professor of journalism at Marquette University, discusses this first transformation thoroughly in his book *Leasing the Ivory Tower: The Corporate Takeover of the University* (South End Press, 1995). He argues that the university's research function has been sold to corporate America: "The ivory towers of America have been leased by corporations. Being 'politically correct' in academia today means having an endowed chair or a lucrative consulting contract." Below are some examples of the university/corporate marriage, what Soley calls "corporate easy chairs":

- *Lego Professor of Learning Research, MIT*
- *Dow Chemical Co. Research Professor of Economics, Chicago*
- *Sears Roebuck Professor of Economics, Chicago*
- *Nissan Professor of Economics, Chicago*
- *Federal Express Chair of Excellence in Information Technology, Memphis*
- *Fuyo Bank Professor of Japanese Law, Columbia*
- *Hanes Corp. Foundation Professorship, Duke*
- *Bell South Professor of Education through Telecommunications, South Carolina*
- *Coca-Cola Professor of Marketing, Georgia*
- *McLamore/Burger King Chair in American Enterprise, Miami*
- *Foley's Federated Professor in Retailing, Texas*
- *United Parcel Service Foundation Professor of Logistics, Stanford*

The way university research is conducted today, Soley explains, is also fundamentally different from the way research was treated in the past. Then, it was treated as knowledge to be shared in the public forum, among scholars who would build on each other's work.

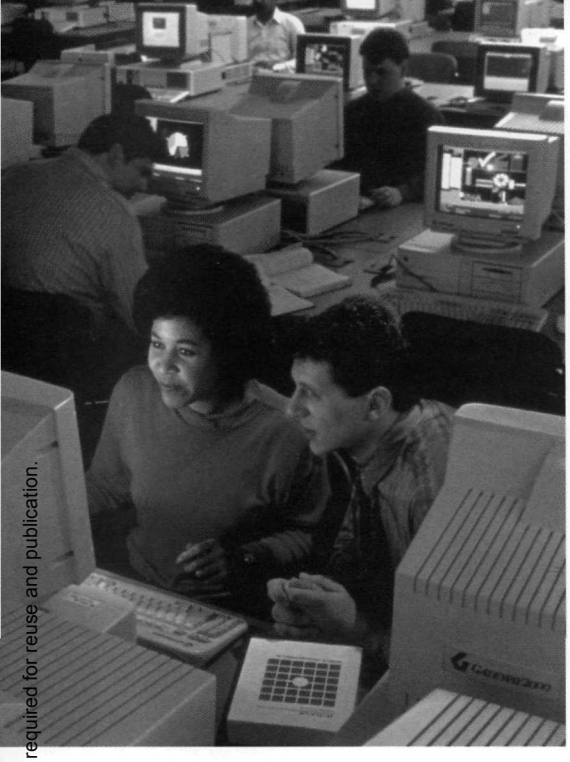
The transformation of research from public good to private product was not a gradual or natural change but the work of a deliberate lobbying effort. In the mid-1970s, corporations and universities, fearing increased international competition, joined to form the Business-Higher Education Forum. The goal was to increase U.S. competitiveness by changing the way universities conduct research and strengthening the relationship between academia and private business.

In 1980, directly as a result of these lobbying efforts, a new law called the Bayh-Dole Act, or the University and Small Business Patent Procedures Act, was passed. A 1983 executive order extended the legislation to large corporations, and the 1981 Recovery Tax Act increased the tax deductions corporations could claim for donations made to universities.

Prior to the Bayh-Dole Act, the results of university research funded by the federal government were considered public and could not be sold exclusively to one corporation or another.

The 1980 law changed this by making it possible for universities to own the patents, trademarks and licenses that might result from their research, even though the majority of university research — about $14 billion worth a year — is still federally funded.

This means that universities can now make deals with companies to give them exclusive rights to research. And universities are making deal after deal, as evidenced by the number of patents they are requesting. Before the 1980 law, universities produced roughly 250 patents a year. In 1998, 18 years



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after the passage of the Act, universities in the U.S. generated nearly 4,800 patents.

The Bayh-Dole Act transformed research from knowledge for the public good into "property" that is "owned" by a company and that cannot be shared easily with other scientists.

In instance after instance, universities agree to delay publication of research for up to one year in order to allow corporations to patent results. A 1994 Massachusetts General Hospital survey of 210 life-science companies found that 58 percent of those sponsoring research require delays of more than six months. In a second survey of 2,167 university scientists, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1997, nearly one in five researchers admitted to delaying publication for more than six months to protect proprietary information.

These delays concern Steven Rosenberg of the National Cancer Institute, one of the country's leading cancer researchers. "There's been a shift toward confidentiality that is severely inhibiting the interchange of information," says Rosenberg, who believes that "the ethics of business and the ethics of science do not mix well." The university ethical system, which promotes knowledge for the public good, is in direct contradiction with the corporate ethical system that emphasizes ownership and protection of trade secrets.

Soley presents an instructive example from Berkeley. Novartis, Inc. gave Berkeley $25 million to fund basic research in the department of plant and microbial biology. In exchange, Berkeley gave Novartis first right to all licenses on one-third of the department's discoveries, including research funded by federal sources. Novartis also has two seats on the department's research advisory committee. In addition, and far worse, Novartis has the right to require the university to delay publication of its discoveries for four months. This delay gives Novartis a chance to license discoveries but it also interferes with the development of new scientific discoveries.

Even worse than delaying research results, in some cases corporations have demanded that universities never publish the results at all, especially if the company considers results unfavorable. David Kern, formerly the director of occupational medicine at Brown University's Memorial Hospital, worked on research funded by Microfibres, a Rhode Island company that produced nylon flock. When Kern discovered evidence of a new lung disease among the company's employees, the company threatened to sue if Kern published his findings. Kern published the results anyway. Soon after, his position at Brown was eliminated.

Not surprisingly, this emphasis on corporate or commercial research affects other aspects of university life as well. While corporate grants may pay part of professors' salaries, explains Soley, researchers are not taken off the university payroll. Yet, these professors may be released from some or all of their teaching responsibilities. They are often senior scholars, showcase professors whose reputations are supposed to attract graduate and undergraduate students. Undergraduate students can rarely take their classes, however, since these professors rarely teach. And to fill the teaching slots vacated by these faculty members, the university may hire low-paid adjunct instructors or graduate student teaching assistants. In this way, says Soley, the adjunct, the graduate student and the undergraduate student are exploited, and education suffers.

Because contracts with corporations are complicated and because universities have added licensing and grant-seeking departments, the union of corporation and campus does not really bring additional moneys to universities. Instead, this union adds administrative costs while shifting the focus of universities from teaching to research. As York University's David Noble explains, between 1976 and 1994, expenditures on research increased 21.7 percent at public research universities, while expenditures on instruction decreased 9.5 percent. During this time, tuition continued to rise at unprecedented rates, sometimes as much as four times the rate of inflation. College students are supplementing the costs of research while the quality of education declines.

Courses become 'courseware'

Along with transforming the research that universities conduct, the union of corporation and campus has also changed teaching. Many define this change as the commercialization of classes in which training for a profession replaces education.

Peter Radecki, director of corporate services at Michigan Technological University, sees this shift as positive. "What's driving everything," he explains, "is the accelerating rate of technological developments. It used to be that you could get an education, a degree and a job. But, now, in some areas, as much as half of what a student learns as a freshman is obsolete by the time he graduates. For corporations to be competitive and for the university to be satisfying a real need, we have to change the education process. We have to amalgamate technological development, education, and corporate development and infuse technology into education. We need those corporate partners to verify that what we are teaching does not become obsolete."

Radecki points to a number of benefits in the marriage of corporation and university: 1) a high placement rate ("we train the workers corporations need"); 2) faculty development ("faculty go on sabbaticals and work for some of our corporate sponsors"); 3) industry advisory boards for every department ("these are populated by corporate

folks who make sure work is appropriate for their needs").

Radecki does believe, however, that the university also needs "to have some places that challenge us to think about other [non-corporate] models. What are other routes to happiness? I think an academic environment should provide a certain amount of that diversity."

But this distinction, according to David Noble, is not necessarily so easy to make because there is a real difference between "training" and "education."

"In essence, training involves the honing of a person's mind so that the mind can be used for the purposes of someone other than that person," Noble says. "Training thus typically entails a radical divorce between knowledge and the self. Here knowledge is usually defined as a set of skills or a body of information designed to be put to use, to become operational."

On the other hand, Noble argues, education entails "the utter integration of knowledge and the self, in a word, self-knowledge. Education is a process that necessarily entails an interpersonal (not merely interactive) relationship between people — student and teacher (and student and student) — that aims at individual and collective self-knowledge. Whenever people recall their educational experiences they tend to remember above all not courses or subjects or the information imparted but people, people who changed their minds or their lives, people who made a difference in their developing sense of themselves. Education is a process of becoming for all parties, based upon mutual recognition and validation and centering upon the formation and evolution of identity. The actual content of the educational experience is defined by this relationship between people and the chief determinant of quality education is the establishment and enrichment of this relationship."

College campuses are not factories that produce knowledge or stores that sell education. Yet, says Noble, the educational process is being divided into discrete and saleable items. The onset of online education makes this transformation even clearer. For online, the human interaction between teacher and student is removed.

As Noble describes the transformation, "In the first step toward commodification, attention is shifted from the experience of the people involved in the educational process to the production and inventorying of an assortment of fragmented 'course materials': syllabi, lectures, lessons, exams (now referred to in the aggregate as 'content').

"Second, these fragments are removed or 'alienated' from their original context, the actual educational process itself, and from their producers, the teachers, and are assembled as 'course,' in which they take on an existence independent of and apart from those who created and gave flesh to them.

"Finally, the assembled 'courses' are exchanged for profit on the market, which determines their value."

Instruction is therefore transformed into a set of deliverable commodities and "the end of education has become not self-knowledge but the making of money," says Noble.

He concludes, "In the wake of this transformation, teachers become commodity producers and deliverers, subject to the familiar regime of commodity production in any other industry, and students become consumers of yet more commodities. The relationship between teacher and student is thus re-established, in an alienated mode, through the medium of the market, and the buying and selling of commodities takes on the appearance of education. But it is, in reality, only a shadow of education, an assemblage of pieces without the whole."

Hope for the future

Still, there remains hope for the future of education. Noble sees the potential to combat the commercialization of education when faculty members remember why they entered academia in the first place: to teach, to help students become the adults they can be. Faculty, especially unionized faculty, says Noble, can act as campus leaders who refocus the university's attention on education.

Noble points to the example of his own faculty union at York University. By taking control of online education, faculty challenged some of the "in-corporation" of the campus. As Noble explains, "In 1997, faculty secured a new contract containing unique and unprecedented provisions which give faculty members direct control over all decisions relating to the automation of instruction. According to the contract, all decisions regarding the use of technology as a supplement to classroom instruction or as a means of alternative delivery 'shall be consistent with the pedagogic and academic judgements and principles of the faculty member employees as to the appropriateness of the use of technology in the circumstances.'"

Changes to instruction, then, will be made only when they "contribute to a genuine enhancement rather than a degradation of the quality of education," says Noble.

In March 1998, this attempt to refocus the university on education spread to other campuses including Berkeley, the University of Wisconsin, Harvard, and Cornell, which held teach-ins on the corporate influence on academia.

In May 1999, the American Association of University Professors likewise held a special conference to protest the corporate influence on academia. According to a June 1999 report in the *Philanthropy News Digest*, professors "spoke out about what they see as unacceptable corporate intrusion into research at their institutions." Professors also protested pressure they feel from their schools to pursue corporate funding at all costs, regardless of "the strings attached." Physicist Irving Lerch began an effort of the American Association for the Advancement of Science to protest "the commercialization of science."

Ultimately, as Leonard Minsky states, "The university should not be pursuing the goal of profit." The university is "one of the two institutions we look to for ethics," the other being the nation's religious organizations. It is time for everyone to take universities back and to provide professors and students with the freedom they need to learn and grow. "Democracy," Minsky says, "requires education free from corporate interest — free from any special interest." ●

***Camille Colatosti** is a professor of English and* The Witness' *staff writer.*

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Money's power to shape ideas and opinions

by Darryl K. Brown

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES have always had closer connections with industry and business than their European counterparts. The mission of land-grant colleges, for example, was to train students for agriculture and industry. Law schools, the training ground for professional lawyers, have also always had a clear goal of preparing students for traditional practice rather than transforming a flawed legal system. But business-university linkages are transforming many sectors of the academy once again, particularly in the sciences, as research leads to patentable products and processes with potentially huge commercial potential. Increasingly, in exchange for funding and even shares of the profits, professors and schools enter partnerships with industry, such as agreements not to share research results, that compromise critical parts of the university teaching and research tradition.

Compared to the sciences, law schools face relatively few of those sorts of blatant temptations. Legal analysis and arguments can have considerable value, but they cannot be patented, nor are they marketable in the usual sense. But law schools face temptations of corporate influence and threats to academic integrity of a different sort. Interestingly, it is a threat that bears strong resemblance to the current hot topic of campaign finance, because both problems hinge on how money subtly shapes ideas and opinions short of outright bribery. And both of those problems echo the lessons of the Gospels on the dangers that wealth poses to the Christian heart.

Law professors often have opportunities to work for the private sector. Maintaining some modest involvement in law practice and related endeavors can be beneficial for teacher, student and school, because the faculty member's teaching will remain informed by the experience of practice that she is training students to enter. While the most lucrative of those sorts of opportunities go to professors whose skills can benefit profit-making companies, there are also plenty of examples of law teachers who engage in some form public service practice as well. It is important to balance the former with the latter, for the direct benefit of the service and the example it sets. Such practice can influence a professor's thinking more broadly, and thus affect the teaching mission and law school structure — experience, after all, is key to shaping perspectives. Although The American Association of Law Schools discourages excessive private practice by full-time faculty members (so faculty don't short-change their teaching duties for more lucrative practice opportunities), it actively encourages pro bono activities. Still, a recent survey by the association found a third of law school deans lamented their faculties' inadequate commitment to *pro bono* service, and half could not say that "many of [my] faculty provide good role models to the students by engaging in uncompensated public service work themselves" — and that's only the deans willing to speak ill of their colleagues in a survey.

Corporate funding incentives seem to explain why we now have a large body of empirical studies and theoretical arguments critical of punitive damages — which corporate interests worry about and fund research on — but a paucity of information about an array of topics critical to social justice that don't interest corporations, such as studies on the harms caused to poor families due to lack of access to legal services.

The currency of lawyers is ultimately ideas and analysis: Lawyers can argue how current laws ought to be interpreted and applied and how they ought to be changed. Underlying those arguments are analyses of how the world is working under current rules — whether the worthy people and causes are being helped or hurt. One way that currency gets spent on behalf of monied interests is through consulting and lobbying fees paid to law professors who work for corporate interests.

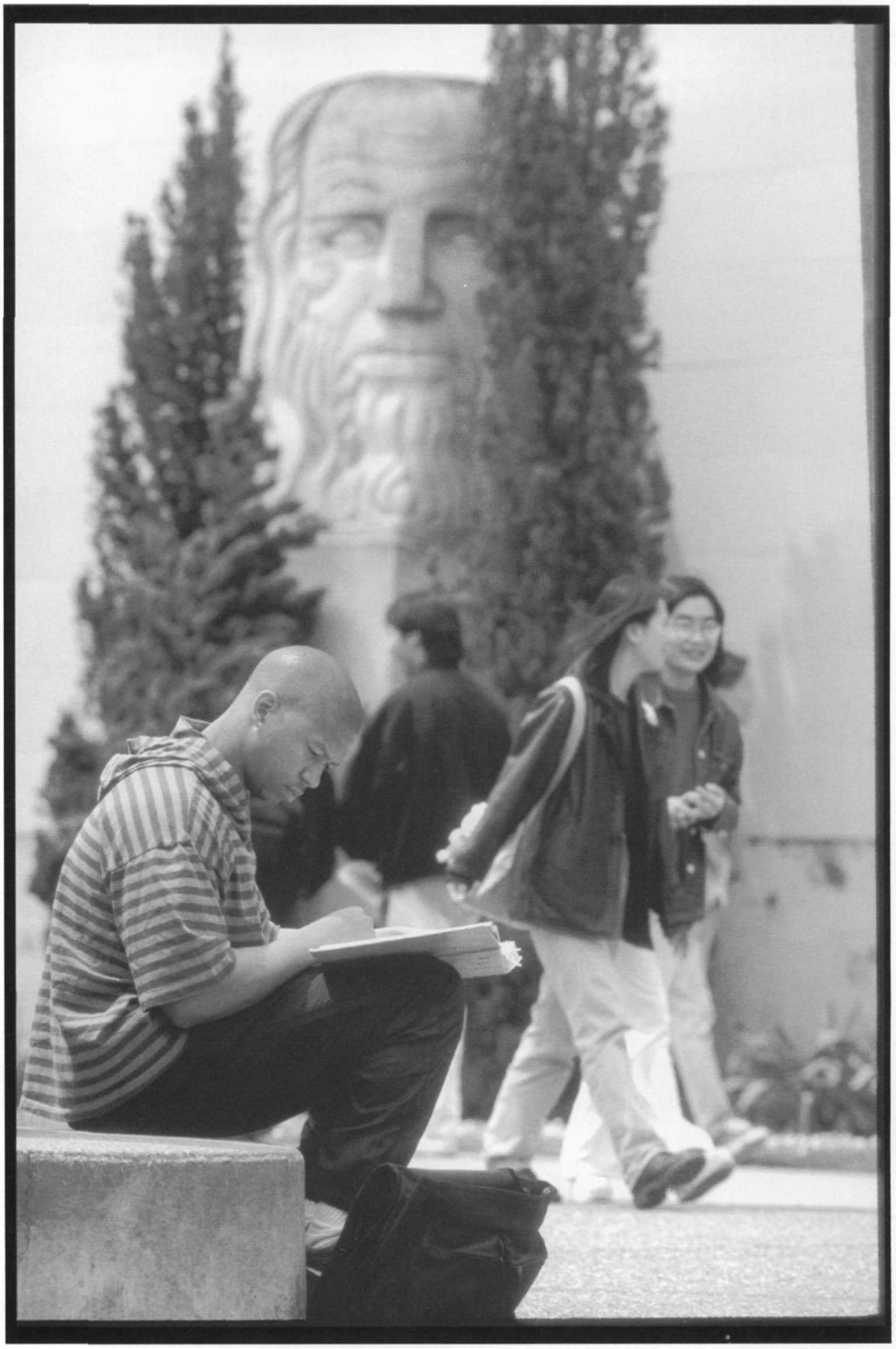
An example is that of GAF Corporation, which formerly produced asbestos and now faces liability from workers and others who suffered cancer and other injuries from asbestos exposure, the workers having not been informed of the risks. GAF hired Harvard law professor Christopher Edley to draft legislation the firm pushed in Congress, which would drastically reduce

RPORATE INFLUENCE:

its liability to asbestos claimants — in other words, limit the ability of asbestos victims to recover from the firm in court. GAF also hired Cardozo law school dean Paul Verkuil to testify before Congress about the benefits of the legislation; GAF's CEO donated $1 million to Verkuil's law school, which then named a Center for Corporate Governance after him.

On a smaller scale, corporate interests aim their resources directly at students. For example, the International Association of Defense Counsel annually sponsors a writing contest for law students. IADC entices students to engage in sympathetic research with prizes up to $2,000 for winning essays. Essays must be "on a subject of practical concern to lawyers engaged in the defense or management of civil litigation," that is, to IADC members, who represent corporations and their insurers. In this way, groups like IADC can influence the development of ideas that support their interests. Students writing on an IADC topic will not be spending scarce law school time studying other topics. If understanding tends often to breed empathy, students researching such topics will likely develop some sympathy for the interests of IADC's client base which is, in the end, often in conflict with the interests of tort victims.

Less blatantly — but sometimes only slightly so — corporations and corporate-oriented foundations fund research on issues in which they have particular interest. Here law schools face similar



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risks to scientific research. Corporate funding at least provides a strong incentive to define research agendas. Scholars choosing among several possible research topics are naturally tempted by the option for which someone is offering a large research grant. In this way, some topics get addressed and enter the public policy debate while others are overlooked. The most prominent example of a funder's effort to influence research agendas is the John M. Olin Foundation, a politically conservative firm that funds "law and economics" programs at most top law schools and many others. Another example is Harvard law professor Kip Vicusi, who has turned much of his attention in recent years to punitive damages in tort law (which includes products liability), and in many prominent articles he turned out to be a strong opponent of punitive damages. Vicusi has received substantial sponsorship of his research from corporations such as Exxon.

Such funding incentives seem to explain why we now have a large body of empirical studies and theoretical arguments critical of punitive damages — which corporate interests worry about and fund research on — but a paucity of information about an array of topics critical to social justice that don't interest corporations, such as studies on the harms caused to poor families due to lack of access to legal services, or the portion of convicted felons whose claims of innocence could have been tested with DNA analysis but weren't. The American Association of Law Schools is sufficiently concerned that it is urging a policy of legal scholars disclosing all funding sources and financial interests they have for their research.

My own suspicion is that blatant manipulation of data occurs relatively rarely, in large part because such things can be caught by other scholars who scrutinize the research. But much research, in law probably more than the sciences, requires interpretation of data and analysis based on value-laden premises and policy priorities; few important questions are easily answered objective ones. I suspect rather that corporate funding works much like corporate political contributions — the money finds people who are already predisposed to a corporate agenda. Even without corporate funding, Vicusi would not likely have a pro-consumer, pro-tort plaintiff, pro-corporate-regulation perspective. Compare Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell, the leading opponent of campaign finance reform and major recipient of corporate donations: His views on most issues probably would not change drastically if corporate money dried up. But well-healed "buyers" of research and political influence manage to find willing "sellers" of policy viewpoints that match their interests. With political campaign contributions, one can rarely identify a clear quid-pro-quo, a direct changing of one's views and votes in exchange for money. Yet we nonetheless have the strong sense that money corrupts politics. What corporate funding tends to influence the most, then, in law schools as elsewhere, is what issues get paid attention to, how many resources support attention to those issues, and how effectively and publicly research on these issues is spread. More subtly, it may affect individual scholars' views as they work on sponsored research and are influenced by others' sponsored research.

Peter Gomes, in his *The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*, summarizes the New Testament's teaching on material riches in a way that is relevant to understanding the risks of corporate funding in academic research. For Christians, "wealth is not a sin," Gomes notes, "but it is a problem." The rich need not necessarily forsake their wealth to follow Christ; Jesus did not require Zaccheaus to give away all his wealth. Nonetheless, Jesus did ask the rich young ruler of Mark 10:17-27 to give away his worldly wealth despite his faithfulness to moral laws, a request the ruler was unable to meet. Here we learn "how hard it will be for those with riches to enter the kingdom of God," which is echoed in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, where we are warned "those who desire to be rich fall into temptation" that may lead to "ruin and destruction." Wealth itself is not a sin, but the temptations and distractions it poses from life choices in accord with Christian love and charity are formidable.

Gomes' reading of Christ's message about wealth applies as well to corporate funding for the academy. Accepting corporate funding doesn't necessarily mean one is corrupted by it, but it is a temptation whose strength is increased by its subtlety. Law schools, like the legal profession more broadly, continually face their own version of the tension between material wealth and charity or (much the same thing) pursuit of justice. Corporate funding with an implicit agenda of serving commercial interests can lead one's heart as well as use of talents from a commitment to and effort for justice in the legal system for those least likely to obtain it due to material wealth imbalances.

There are signs of hope. At the same school whose dean was hired by GAF Corporation as a lobbyist, the Innocence Project thrives in its work for the wrongfully convicted. A model of justice work in legal education, it has also proved to be prime mover in destabilizing death penalty support and in bringing high profile praise to the law school. Across the country, law schools are showing an incremental but real commitment to clinical education that engages students in specifically serving the needs of the poor. And there are some foundations that fund such social justice causes; George Soros' Open Society Institute is a good example.

Nonetheless, the temptations of private funding seem to be with us indefinitely. Law schools, especially the elite ones, are now in an almost perpetual mode of capital-campaign fund raising, and the competitive pressure is to use funds for institution-building rather than public-spirited projects like legal clinics, public-interest scholarships, and loan forgiveness for poverty lawyers. My alma mater, the University of Virginia, for example, recently exceeded its $100 million capital campaign goal and decided to keep on fund-raising; it now has a palatial set of buildings named for rich donors but still a paucity of law clinics. Harvard, which raises much more, declines to lend the aid of its fund-raising apparatus to the Appleseed Foundation, a group led by Harvard law alumni to support public interest legal practice. Those sorts of pressures will continually pose the challenge that wealth always poses for commitments to charity and justice. ●

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Hip-Hop campus activism

by Johnny Temple

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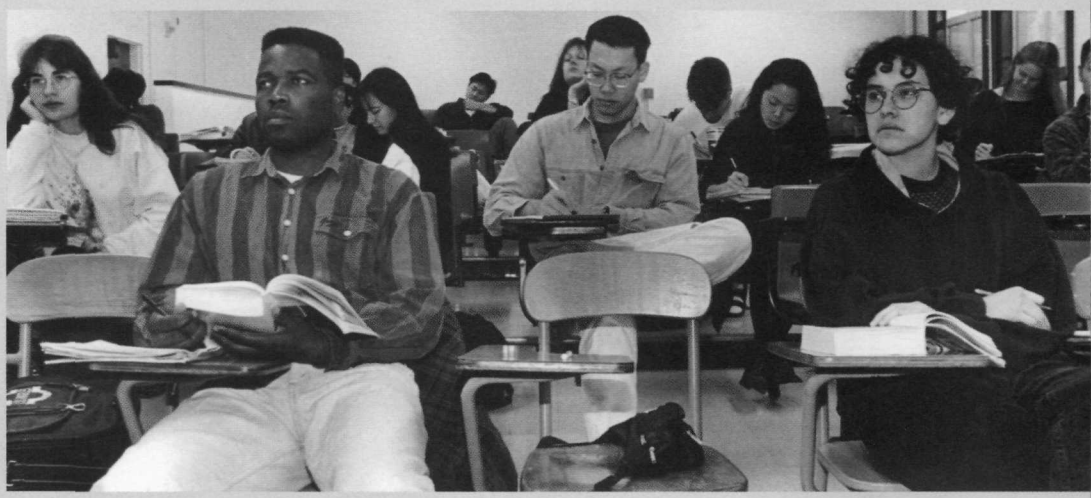
"YOU HAVE NO IDEA how much love I got for this," says David Jamil Muhammad, referring to his role as a student organizer of "Hip-Hop Generation — Hip-Hop as a Movement." The conference was held April 14-16 at the University of Wisconsin and brought together activists, scholars and entertainers to examine hip-hop as force for social change. Muhammad's interest in music has drawn him into the campus anti-sweatshop movement: "When I found out that some hip-hop gear was being made in prisons, I was furious." Muhammad later teamed up with a broad range of students, including some of the key organizers of the successful anti-sweatshop campaign at the university, to put together an event, which featured hip-hop trailblazers Africa Bambaataa and Chuck D of Public Enemy.

Forging multiracial, multi-issue coalitions continues to be a daunting task for student organizers, including Muhammad, who feels that "white paternalism" has been a major disincentive for students of color to become involved in progressive causes on college campuses. But according to professor Craig Werner, a faculty liaison to the UW conference, today's student activists are "smarter" than those in the recent past: "During the 1980s, all too often, the white left was willing to pursue ideological purity at the expense of ground-level realities of what things meant for black students. Interracial coalitions became very, very difficult. It is much better now. ... For a change, we've got the feminists, the Nation of Islam and the lefties all working together. And Lord knows, we need it."

While Rudy Giuliani's ongoing police assault on black men in New York City and the alarming victory of Proposition 21 [prescribing more prison time for juveniles] at the California ballot box have provided obvious targets for hip-hop-related political protests, much of the activism on college campuses is tied to a wider economic picture. Take, for example, the Prison Moratorium Project's "No More Prisons" hip-hop tour, which is designed to recruit and train prison activists. "We're linking the sweatshop issue, private-prison investments and the treatment of workers on campus," says PMP's Kevin Pranis. Sodexho-Marriott Services, a major investor in the private-prison industry and a focal point of the No More Prisons tour, managed to prevent a No More Prisons pretour event from taking place on February 15 at American University in Washington, D.C., because the company operates the venue where the event was supposed to be held. But the 40-city "raptivist" tour was aimed at college campuses and other locations with political visions delineated on the recent No More Prisons CD, a benefit compilation featuring hip-hop luminaries Dead Prez, The Coup and others, many of whom would be performing on the tour.



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Hip-hop music has a more diverse audience — racially and economically — than any other popular genre, and some campus organizers are finding that it can help to provide a common ground on which to unify disparate groups. Oberlin College senior Mie Anton, one of the coordinators of "Six Million Ways to Speak: Oberlin Community Hip-Hop Conference 2000," says, "When you look at our committee, there are so many different types of people from everywhere in the world. You realize that hip-hop has taken itself to a different level. Especially with our generation, we really grew up with it." At the University of Wisconsin, student organizer David Muhammad reflects on the purpose of his school's hip-hop forum: "We need jobs in urban America. ... The poor whites of this nation need jobs. Let's talk about the economy." ●

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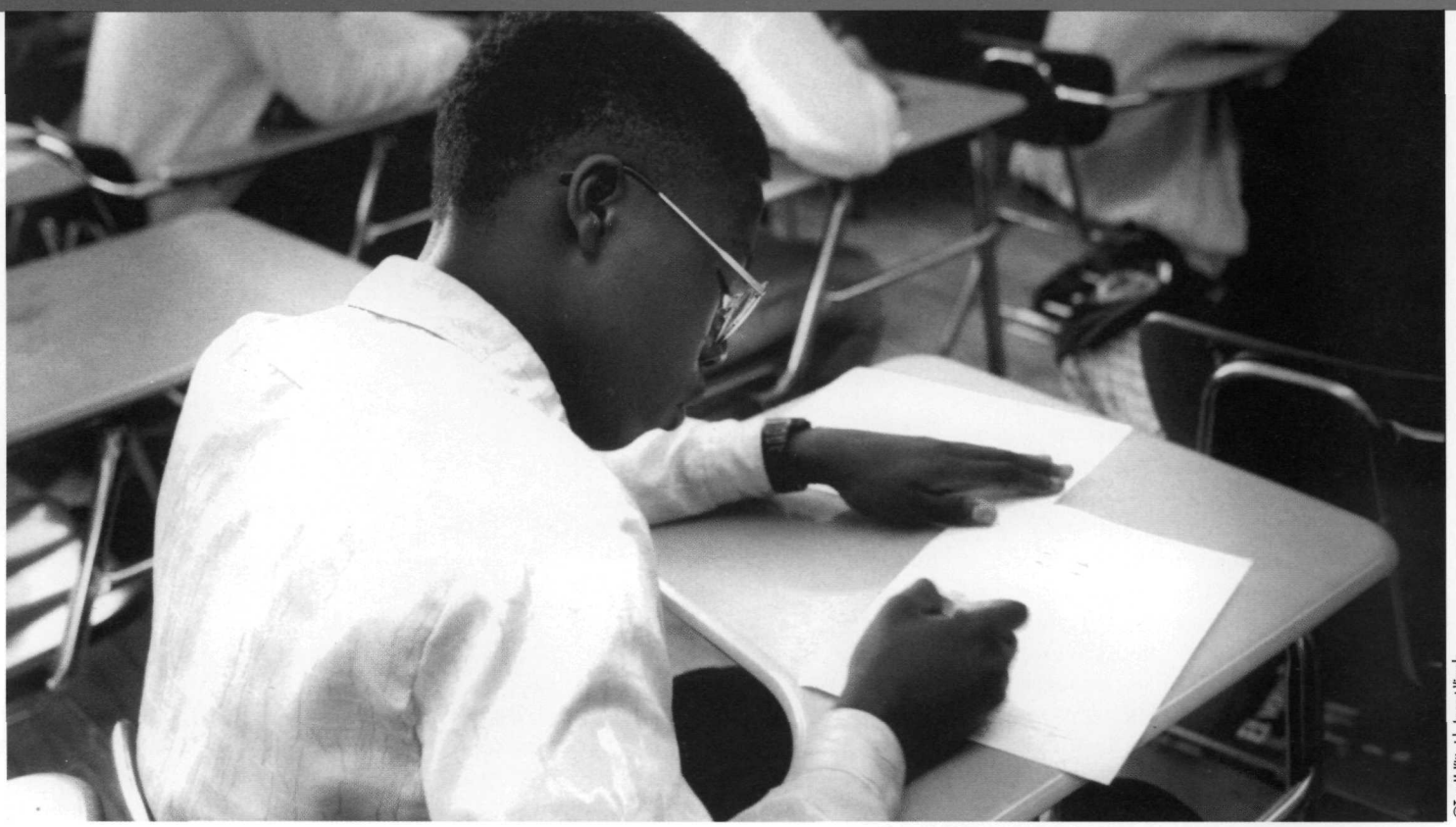
HIGH-STAKES



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Scapegoating the nation's young

by Jane Slaughter

HIGH-STAKES TESTS are on the rise across the country, as politicians of both parties seek to look tough on society's newest scapegoat, the young. It's called the "standards movement," and it's caused legislatures to mandate one-shot tests that determine whether a child will be held back a year in elementary school, or whether she will graduate from high school.

At the same time, a growing movement of parents and educators is resisting test mania, calling for schools that teach children to think, not to fill in the blanks.

"Testing is a cover for not dealing with the real problems of public education," says Joel Jordan, a 23-year high school teacher in east Los Angeles. "It makes the kids and the teachers a scapegoat rather than the politicians who set the conditions where teachers teach and students learn."

Jordan is a founder of the Coalition for Educational Justice, which brings teachers and parents together against high-stakes testing and in favor of smaller classes and better-prepared teachers. "The focus on tests forces teachers to narrow their curriculum, to fragment it into rote learning," says Jordan. Gil Leaf, head of a Quaker-run private school in downtown Detroit, agrees: "The movement for 'school reform' is going 180 degrees the wrong way. True reform would be to have more freedom for creative teachers, not less."

All the evidence shows that reliance on standardized testing does not improve learning. "The case against standardized mental testing is as intellectually and ethically rigorous as any argument about social policy in the past 20 years," says Peter Sacks, author of *Standardized Minds: The High Price of America's Testing Culture and What We Can Do To Change It*. "And yet such testing continues to dominate the education system ... bolstered in recent years by a conservative backlash advocating advancement by 'merit.'"

In 1980, says Sacks, just about half of the states had mandatory testing programs; by 1998, all but

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two did. In 18 states, high school seniors perform well on a multiple-choice test or they don't graduate; that number is expected to rise to 26 by 2003. Parents put so much stock in tests that real estate agents advertise a neighborhood school's scores to prospective home-buyers.

With so much at stake, the pressure is on to raise scores at all costs. So school systems re-gear curricula to "teach to the test," parents pay for after-school test prep courses, and legislators allocate money to teach children how to beat the test that they themselves have mandated.

In his State of the Union speech this year, President Clinton advocated that all schools institute programs that teach students how to take tests. Massachusetts and California are spending $20 million and $10 million, respectively, on test prep courses. In the words of Michigan State Board of Education President Dorothy Beardmore, "The test has become the tail that wags the dog."

What the tests measure

Test furor continues despite universal acknowledgment, among those who have studied tests, that their predictive ability is meager. In response to a request from Congress, the National Academy of Sciences last year issued a recommendation: "High-stakes decisions such as tracking, promotion, and graduation should not automatically be made on the basis of a single test score but should be buttressed by other relevant information about the student's knowledge and skill, such as grades, teacher recommendations, and extenuating circumstances."

Even the makers of the SAT, the college entrance exam, say that their scores should not be treated as precise measures; they admit that two students' scores must differ by at least 125 points before they can reliably be said to be different.

In any case, differences in SAT scores can predict only 16 percent of the difference among freshman grades in college. Monty Neill, director of the National Organization for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest), a clearinghouse for anti-test activism, points out that the single best predictor of college grades is which courses the student took in high school. Those who took tougher courses will make higher marks in college. Grades are the second best predictor, and test scores are a poor third.

Of course, the real kicker is that even college grades have almost nothing to do with success later in life; ask George Bush.

Yet administrators and politicians are anxious for hard numbers. Thus tests are promoted despite their irrelevance.

High income, high scores

The Bush syndrome enters in when you seek a predictor of students' test scores. There is one; it's money.

SAT scores for college-bound seniors increase consistently with family income, an average of 29 points for each $10,000. Those with family income under $10,000 a year average 871; those with incomes over $100,000 average 1130. The ACT, another college entrance test, shows the same trend.

The U.S. Department of Education looked at the backgrounds of students who made at least 1,100 (out of 1,600) on the SAT, which tends to be the cut-off for highly selective colleges such as those in the Ivy League. One-third came from the upper-income brackets and less than a tenth from low-income families.

Referring to a Michigan statewide test, Rich Gibson of Wayne State University says, "What MEAP measures is, first, class, next, race, and third, whether the teacher did nothing but teach to the exam."

Sacks notes, "The nation's elites now perpetuate their class privilege with rules of their own making ... legitimated and protected by a pseudo-scientific objectivity."

One reason the better-off kids make higher scores is that many take expensive test preparation courses. Hundreds of thousands of students go through test prep every year, generating over $100 million for the companies that coach them. Princeton Review guarantees to lift SAT scores by 100 points and ACT scores by 4 (out of a possible 36). The cost: $749 for 35 hours of instruction.

No dumbing down

The opponents of over-reliance on testing are not for dumbing down the curriculum. Quite the contrary. Gil Leaf notes, "Everybody agrees that by fourth grade kids should know two-place multiplication. That's a standard. But there are different ways to get there. Certainly that's true of history and literature, where the worst thing is to be a slave to the textbook and the testing process.

"In the name of standards, the curriculum is being designed to take the creative process away from the teacher. What that does is guarantee that those kinds of people we want to attract to teaching will not go, because of the lack of freedom."

And Joel Jordan says teaching to the test "takes time away from critical thinking, from projects, from enrichment activities that actually interest kids, as opposed to the mind-numbing test preparation exercises. And that widens the gap between better-off schools and inner-city schools. The schools that have middle and upper incomes, where scores already tend to be high, have no pressure to dumb down the curriculum this way."

Alfie Kohn, author of *The Schools Our Children Deserve*, notes that research shows that students rated by numbers "tend to lose interest in learning, they tend to pick the easiest possible task, and they tend to think less deeply and creatively."

The result, says Judy Depew, a social studies teacher in a Detroit suburb, is that "students are being trained not to be creative, critical thinkers, but cooperative, unthinking employees and citizens." ●

Jane Slaughter is a Detroit freelance writer.

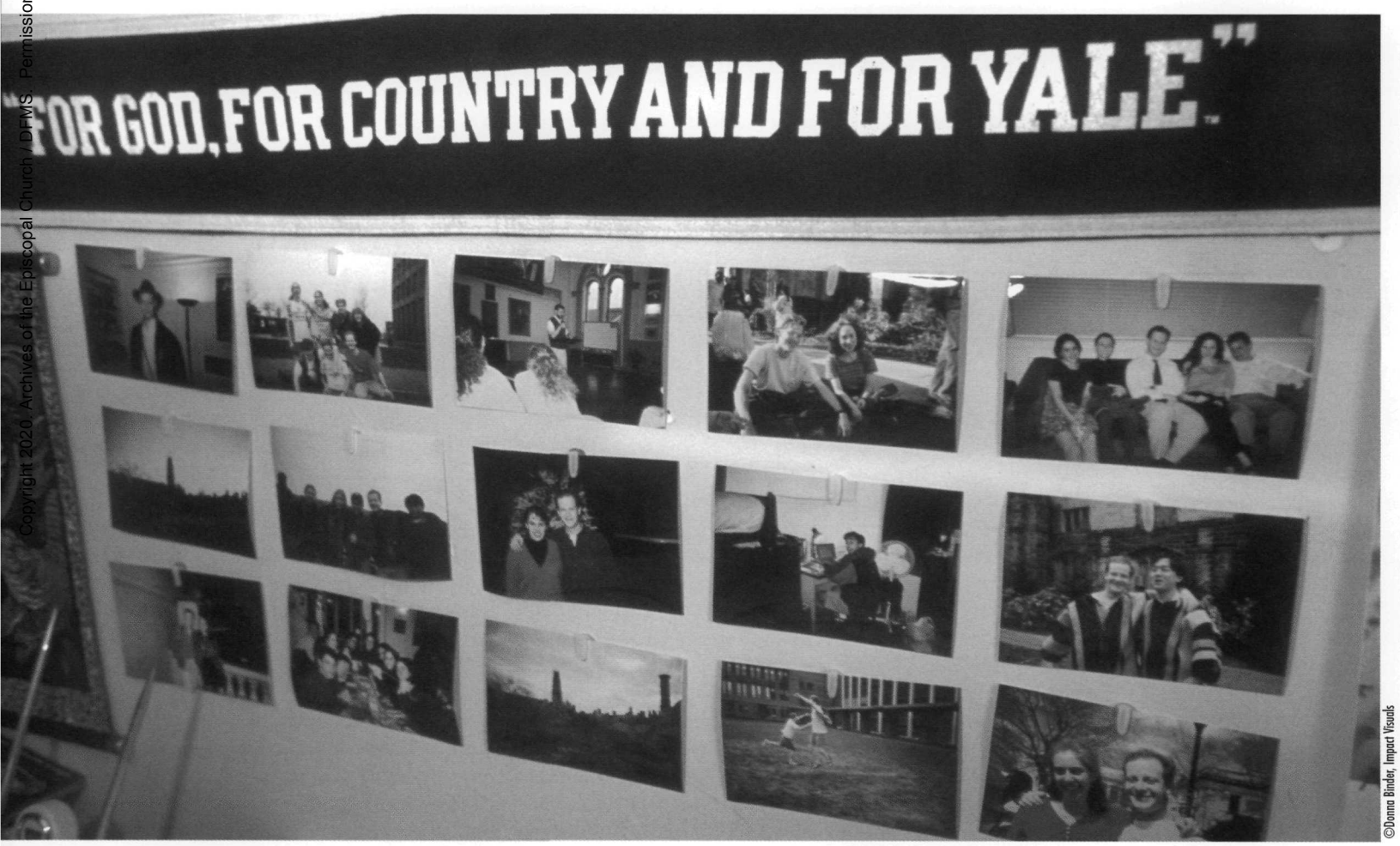
PURSUING THE

In the academy's 'hallowed halls'

by Robert Wuthnow

THE SEPARATION of reason from emotion and from action that generally characterizes institutions of higher learning reflects the lingering dualistic epistemology of the Enlightenment that presumes knowledge to be gained best by objectifying the world, viewing it as an externality, instead of attempting to appropriate it subjectively (or internally) through the counsels of feeling or through wisdom gained from direct action. While there have been significant philosophical challenges in the 20th century to this perspective, it certainly prevails in secular and church-related colleges and universities alike. Passion, trust, conviction, faith, and devotion are all subordinated to dispassionate statements about the facts or truths of a world viewed from outside. It is little wonder, then, that some have argued that scholarly approaches to religion contribute in subtle ways to the larger processes of secularization.

A second but related reason for believing that higher



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education is at odds with the sacred derives from the tension between what might be called creation, on the one hand, and discovery, on the other hand. Creation implies invention, novelty, the development of something new that in a deep sense reflects the talents and insights of the creator. Discovery, in contrast, implies paying close attention to the external world, grasping it as a given reality, so that what is new is only a description of what has always been there. Western religion has always distinguished the two by attributing creation to a divine being who is the author or originator of all reality, whereas discovery is more likely to be described as a human activity, such as learning to understand better the nature of created reality or gaining insight into the darker recesses of one's own nature.

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Valuing discovery or invention?

At the dawn of the scientific revolution the work of scientists was well described as an act of discovery. Natural laws inscribed in the world by its creator were there for the finding, just as new continents had been there a century earlier for the explorers. Academic work was in fact likened to reading a text — in one case the text might still be the written Bible; in other cases it was the word of God written in nature. Reportage of academic discoveries was thus largely a matter of communicating knowledge of a sacred realm that was already in place. This congruity between academic work and the sacred served well to legitimate the religious sponsorship of higher learning in church-related academies and the close connections that were drawn between moral philosophy and natural philosophy in secular institutions.

The present understanding of academic work, however, has shifted decidedly away from discovery toward creation itself. Artistic expression, in which a product is created that reflects the moods and interests of the artist, is perhaps the clearest model of this understanding. Increasingly, science imitates art in this respect, as measuring devices are known to alter the very realities they seek to measure, and as theoretical inventions are understood to alter the very possibilities of perceiving reality. The most highly valued academic work, therefore, is the creative process by which new ideas, new theories, or even new ways of expressing ideas are invented; by comparison, discovery is increasingly relegated to the realm of empiricism, fact-mongering, and technical specialization.

The limitation that this conception of academic work presents for the discussion of religion is that God remains fundamentally an entity to be discovered rather than one to be invented. Scriptural exegesis becomes a process of discovering insights within a closely circumscribed field of textual meanings and applying these insights to changing circumstances. Going beyond discovery to create an entirely new conception of God is, however, to move beyond the pale of most confessional traditions. The resultant strain between these two modes of understanding reveals itself, therefore, either as heterodoxy confronting orthodoxy or as more highly valued creative expressions confronting the less highly valued processes of textual interpretation.

The main consequence of these two limitations — depersonalized reason and the devaluation of discovery — for the public expression of religion through academic organizations is that academicians tend to talk about religion in ways that are seldom valued highly within their institutions themselves, while the most creative contributions to spirituality come largely from outside these institutions. What a typical layperson might read in the newspapers would thus be a report of an academic study of the religious beliefs of the American population, but this reader would not expect to learn that a fundamental new theory of God had been produced or that the authors of such a report had won a Nobel Prize for their efforts. Nor would this reader be likely to rely on such a report for guidance in his or her own attempts to seek God. Higher credence would be given to a playwright who wrote from the deep anguish of having been imprisoned by a totalitarian government, a recovering alcoholic who had struggled with the depths of personal pain, or in the rare instance an academic marginal to any specific department or discipline who wrote from personal reflection more than from systematic empirical inquiry.

Separating knowledge and moral discourse

Part of the reason why public discourse about the sacred would be shaped more deeply by nonacademics than by academics is that higher learning has erected a boundary not only between reason and emotion but also between knowledge and moral discourse. The public pronouncements of academicians are more likely to take the form of descriptive statements than that of normative prescriptions, in part because of the way in which the role of the academy has come to be understood in modern societies. This role involves a deliberate retreat from active engagement in public life to protect the purity of scholarship itself. It also grants ultimate authority for the manipulation of social structures to government organizations, taking only a detached advisory role in policy-making. The fact that government in democratic societies generally refrains from intruding on the private decisions of individuals, however, leaves a large realm untutored either by government or by the academy. This realm, often described as personal morality, has always been subject to the pronouncements of religious institutions, either at the level of congregations or hierarchies. When these organizations functioned with cultural authority and higher education consisted mainly of church-related organizations, a natural division of labor existed that allowed the academies to focus (in the best circumstances) on moral philos-

ophy rather than on concrete moral prescriptions. With the erosion of the churches' authority over the lives of many people in modern societies, however, a gap has been created in moral discourse that seems to be filled by common sense, ad hoc and situational reasoning, television, and other purveyors of moral fiction more than by institutions of higher learning.

Instead of simply attributing this failure on the part of academicians to address moral issues to a lack of nerve or shortsightedness of vision, however, we must try to understand it in terms of the kind of authority modern culture confers on academicians. Their authority as culture producers inheres mainly in the special advantages assumed to derive from specialized, critical reflection. The point of academic institutions is, after all, to provide opportunities for such reflection, and the fact that resources flow to these institutions both reinforces and attests to the legitimacy such reflection has acquired. Scholars interested in religious and moral questions are thus most likely to be given credence for analytic and critical studies. Taking their cue from the natural sciences, they may try to understand how the sacred functions — why it works or does not work — but in analyzing the divine in this way, they are more likely to recognize that they are examining human assumptions about God instead of observing God directly. Their authority as dispassionate scholars is also likely to encourage critical orientations rather than the sort of celebrations of the divine one might expect from a liturgist or a poet.

Scholars' views of nature also suggest another limitation on the kind of authoritative knowledge they may be able to produce about the sacred. These views are heavily oriented toward technical mastery and manipulation. The rationale for much of the funding that goes toward applied research, and even for basic science, is that the knowledge gained will help us better control the physical environment. The prospect of government's being able to engage in social engineering has encouraged a similar technical orientation in the social sciences, and even in the humanities much of what passes for historical studies and literary criticism has a manipulative orientation either in the sense of better mastering the future by knowing the past or in discovering the techniques by which meaning can be created and deciphered in literature. At one time, of course, the shamans who preceded modern academicians concerned themselves largely with the technical manipulation of the gods, but in modern societies this technical orientation is largely in disrepute. Scholars may legitimately concern themselves with manipulating nature but not God. That function has thus been given over to the various television preachers, prayer warriors, and mediums who claim specialized talents in influencing the divine.

Symbolizing the navel of the world

One other limitation of the academy deserving mention is that the secular knowledge it produces is often shrouded in such sacred conceptions that this knowledge — as well as its pursuit — takes the place of religious conviction. Anyone familiar with the capital fund-raising drives and alumni relations of colleges and universities will immediately grasp this point. Institutions of higher learning symbolize a sacred space — the navel of the world — where truth is closer, where the mundane concerns of business and family can be bracketed from view, where athletic prowess and physical beauty are at their peak, and where the youthfulness even of aging professors and alumni can safely be preserved. If the pursuit of knowledge is in some way a sacred quest, it is all the more so because of the special places (we call them "hallowed halls") in which learning takes place. Religious congregations have an advantage over these institutions insofar as they are able to lay down the foundation values learned in early childhood, but higher education enjoys an enormous competitive advantage over congregations in being able to capture the full attention of young people just when they are questioning their childhood values and adopting the ideas they will carry into adulthood. When religious ideas are fully integrated into the formal and hidden curricula of the campus, this advantage can work to the benefit of public religion. Studies documenting negative relations between the attainment of higher education and the retention of religious convictions suggest a different pattern, however. Campuses may delegitimate religion by subjecting it to critical reason and sanctifying alternative values, such as relativism, the pursuit of secular knowledge for its own sake, or even raw careerism, narrow professionalism and crass materialism.

These limitations notwithstanding, the campus environment also enjoys certain features that contribute positively to the public expression of the sacred. One of the most important of these is the atmosphere of open, unrestrained intellectual inquiry that is often associated with higher education. Just how open this atmosphere actually is has been questioned in recent years, especially by critics who argue that higher education is dominated by a subtle, but powerful, liberal ideology that prevents genuine consideration of politically or religiously conservative perspectives. Compared with many other institutional settings, the academic environment has a relatively strong norm against imposing explicit ideological tests on the activities of those engaged in serious intellectual pursuits. The upshot is that students and faculty often find the academy a more conducive setting in which to engage in frank explorations of religious values than virtually anyplace else. In contrast, the same person may feel uncomfortable in the congregational setting because certain answers are assumed to be precluded from the outset or because clergy function not only as spiritual guides but as commandeers of volunteer labor and charitable donations. Secular campuses probably convey the image of being most open to exploring issues, including religious ones, from all angles with nothing other than genuine intellectual integrity at stake, although this image often does fall short of reality because of ingrained prejudices against the value of faith or the wisdom of religious traditions themselves. Church-related campuses may preclude some of the freedom to explore from all possible angles because of their loyalty to particular traditions, yet this limitation may be more than compensated for by the seriousness with which the religious life itself is taken.

In attempting to communicate the results of these explorations to the wider public, scholars in these various settings are also

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likely to experience similar advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage accruing to the scholar in a secular academic setting is that whatever conclusions the scholar chooses to publicize may be accorded the respect that comes with a presumably objective approach. The disadvantage is that a deeply impassioned plea framed in confessional language by such a scholar is likely to earn trouble for that person within the academy itself. For scholars at church-related colleges, the obverse is likely to pertain: Trust may be granted only by an audience sharing the same confessional tradition, but speaking passionately from this tradition is less likely to be regarded as a breech of academic norms.

The technical or applied knowledge mentioned earlier also gives institutions of higher learning some clear advantages in influencing the shape of religious institutions. Scholars may find it beyond their legitimate roles to invent new gods or manipulate existing gods, but they can produce knowledge that the leaders of religious hierarchies take seriously enough to influence the direction of these hierarchies. Studies of how the churches promoted anti-Semitism were at one point influential in encouraging church leaders to adopt different official policies toward Jews. Studies in more recent years documenting that congregations were able to accept women in clergy roles have been instrumental in encouraging denominational leaders to champion gender equality in the churches.

The academy's best roles

If we ask what kind of contribution colleges and universities can make to the public expression of religion, one obvious answer is that academic knowledge can play a valuable technical role. Such knowledge will probably not capture the imaginations and hearts of pious individuals, but it will be of interest to the leaders of institutions who shape the goals of churches or public policy toward the churches. Knowledge of this kind is unlikely to earn the high respect that more creative contributions in the natural sciences and the arts are likely to receive, but its social and cultural impact may be considerable. The reason for this is that conceptions of the sacred are very much a function of the institutions that produce them. These conceptions, in short, are cultural products and, unlike the weather or some feature of physical geography, are therefore subject to the shaping power of cultural institutions. Academic knowledge helps, in turn, to guide these institutions. It plays an archival role, if nothing else, preserving the past so that religious institutions can know more easily if they have strayed from or remained true to this past. Academic knowledge also functions as a mirror in which religious leaders can view themselves and their activities. It may not tell them what to do, but it can help them correct their course should they so desire.

The greatest challenge in public religion to which academic knowledge can respond positively is the growing level of religious and cultural pluralism in modern societies. Although pluralism has sometimes been thought to lead inevitably to greater secularity, the future of religion in pluralistic societies is probably more indeterminate than that view would suggest. Pluralism can stimulate competition among religious traditions, and it can be layered into deeper personal religious convictions as well. Academic knowledge has for several centuries advanced the cause of cultural pluralism, claiming to present a more enlightened vantage point than that available in any particular tradition and championing egalitarianism, mutual respect, and the search for shared values among pluralistic subcultures. Academic knowledge has continuously been put forth in universalistic terms said to be relevant and applicable in the wide variety of settings.

Arguments couched in universalistic language serve a vital function in public discourse about collective values. Indeed, it might be argued that the chief role academics can play in expressing public religion is that of arbiter or translator, framing arguments in detached, externalist terms so they can be understood and debated across a wide spectrum of confessional traditions. Congregations, denominational hierarchies, and religious special interest groups may also do this in their efforts to reach pluralistic audiences, but academies are in a better position to do so because they do not have to speak from the perspective of any particular religious tradition. Church-related colleges are of course somewhat more constrained in this than are secular institutions of higher learning, but many church- related colleges have been able to devise charters giving themselves sufficient autonomy from host denominations that faculty and students still have relatively wide latitude in exploring intellectual questions. Academicians in both types of settings have the cultural authority to raise critical questions and to pose religious issues in broader — historical, cross-cultural, and cross-confessional — terms so that these issues can genuinely become part of the wider public culture. Being able to speak about religious language, instead of having to speak in religious language itself, is of special value when competing religious arguments are at issue.

On balance, then, the view that colleges and universities necessarily are subject to, and contributors to, a secularized public culture seems mistaken, as does the view that colleges and universities must tighten their ties to sponsoring religious bodies if they are going to resist these secularizing pressures. Secularization misconstrues the question because it suggests a linear trend away from something definably religious toward something patently nonreligious. A more compelling view of the changes taking place in modern societies is one that recognizes the simultaneous interplay of the sacred and the secular. Colleges and universities have contributed significantly — and will continue to contribute — to this interplay. They are among the chief producers of secular knowledge, but they also provide valuable enclaves in which special types of religious knowledge can be produced and preserved. ●

Robert Wuthnow *is Andlinger Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University. This piece is an edited excerpt from* Producing the Sacred: An Essay on Public Religion *(University of Illinois Press, copyright 1994 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois). Used with permission of the University of Illinois Press.*

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Religious leaders challenge war on drugs

A coalition of "Religious Leaders for a More Just and Compassionate Drug Policy" is challenging the way faith communities are being drawn into the "war on drugs." In a recent press release they explained their concerns.

"On May 10, the U.S. Drug Czar stood with Dr. James Dobson and his Young Life Christian Ministry and applauded this program for its fight against drugs. General McCaffrey claimed that religious institutions are the most effective vehicles for keeping youth off drugs. McCaffrey also cited the Fellowship of Christian Athlete's 'One Way 2 Play' program, The Salvation Army's drug treatment programs, and various church, mosque and synagogue involvement in 'drug-blighted areas.' The General concluded that 'for all of us, remaining drug-free is a matter of faith.'

"McCaffrey's co-optation of faith-based language to lend support to his 'war on drugs' is particularly offensive to one group of rabbis, imams, priests and ministers who have joined together in an organization called Religious Leaders for a More Just and Compassionate Drug Policy.

"The Rev. Howard Moody, coordinator of the organization, responded to McCaffrey's enlistment of religious groups by noting that the General's war on drugs is in fact a 'war on our youth' who are addicted to illicit drugs. 'Instead of giving them help and treatment, we send them to prison for long terms,' he explained. 'Our own kids are the "prisoners of war" in this immoral and unwinnable conflict. Its victims and casualties, especially African-Americans and Latinos, grow every year, filling our newly built prisons.'"

Religious Leaders recently issued a "manifesto of conscience" calling for "a more equitable and humane way for treating those who abuse licit and illicit drugs," and are gathering signatures. The text is available at <http://religious leaders.home.mindspring.com>.

Granny D links ecology, finance reform

Granny D (Doris Haddock), the 90-year-old woman who walked across the country speaking for campaign finance reform, was arrested April 21 in the Capitol Rotunda with the John Muir Democracy Brigade, a group merging finance reformers with environmental activists (*The Nation*, 5/15/00).

"At a press conference Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*, said a broad consensus is developing about the menace of global warming. 'The only people that seem not to get it work in that building behind us, [which] may have something to do with the millions and millions of dollars that flow into that building from the interests that do not want to change the status quo.' After telling the group, 'We must declare our independence from big money,' Granny D led the 32 demonstrators into the Rotunda, bearing large banners proclaiming CAMPAIGN FINANCE CORRUPTION LEADS TO ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION."

Earlier this year, the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund newsletter printed excerpts from Granny D's 90th birthday speech:

"For those of you who have lived a long life and think you are finished with it, I tell you that, if you will pray for courage and look to the needs of your community rather than yourself, a great energy and happiness will come to you. Indeed, your community needs your wisdom and your patience.

"In a time when people are so stressed in their lives and are so unaware of what it means to truly live well, to live free, to live with enough leisure and confidence to be the stewards of their own lives and communities, in this time, we strangely find ourselves having to explain why it is a bad thing if multinational corporations control our elections, and why it is a bad thing if our elected leaders no longer represent the interests of the people.

"Where do we march to make a fight of this? Not against our government, but against those inside and outside of it who have set up their cash registers in our temples of democracy."

Anti-Indian groups

Honor Digest recently published a listing of organizations working against Indian interests.

"A national umbrella group called Citizens for Equal Rights Alliance ... has its own newspaper, website, email, and congressional spokespersons. Senator Slade Gorton

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(R-WA) is an unabashed mouthpiece for these groups.

"Connecting with other right-wing groups into a coalition called the 'Alliance for Freedom,' the anti-Indian groups meet in Washington, D.C. once or twice a year to converge on Congress They urge that reservations and sovereignty be terminated, and legal precedents are overturned. CERA recently formed a non-profit charitable organization called Citizens for Equal Rights Foundation (CERF), so that people can get a tax deduction for contributing to the hate agenda and messages.

"It's not just Congress that is a focus for these groups. They frequent the halls of state legislatures and actively field candidates for election at every level of government.

"Preying on the ignorance of mainstream press and Americans in general, CERA and its cohorts are able to gain airing of false information. One example is the 'all Indians are now rich from gaming' myth. This makes good press copy. The fact that tribes are using some of the gaming revenue to reacquire homelands is especially galling to the anti-Indian forces.

"Here are some of the groups targeting the sovereignty, treaty rights, human rights, land interests and survival of American Indian tribes: Citizens for Equal Rights Alliance (CERA), All Citizens Equal (ACE), Protect American Rights and Resources (PARR), United Property Owners of Washington (UPOW), Upstate Citizens for Equality (UCE), Proper Economic Resource Management (PERM), Hunting & Angling Club, Arizona Coalition for Public Lands, American Citizens Together, Seneca County Liberation Organization, and, in Canada, the Organization of Fishermen & Hunters (OFAH)."

Prisoners counted out

Census rules for counting prison inmates will drain federal assistance from urban areas most in need of it, Tracy Huling and Marc Mauer write in *The Chicago Tribune* (3/29/00).

"The census counts inmates, mostly residents of inner-city communities, as part of the populations of towns where they are incarcerated. The combined impact of this regulation and the near doubling of the prison population since 1990 could yield a substantial shift in government dollars and political power from urban to rural areas.

"Prisons have become a growth industry in rural America and the majority of new prisons are now built in rural communities.

"Not surprisingly, the benefits that rural communities derive from the census count come at the expense of urban neighborhoods, whose members represent a substantial portion of the inmates in rural prisons. In New York State, for example, while 89 percent of prisoners are housed in rural areas, three-quarters of the inmate population come from just seven neighborhoods in New York City. These neighborhoods, and prisoners generally, are disproportionately composed of low-income minorities — half of all inmates are African-American and one-sixth Latino. Thus, the urban communities hardest hit by both crime and criminal justice policies are now similarly disadvantaged by losing funding and political influence through the reapportionment process." ●



Jim West

Locked-out workers at the Detroit News *and* Free Press *marked the fifth anniversary of their strike against the papers July 13, 2000 with rallies at the* Detroit News *building and at the papers' printing plant in suburban Sterling Heights (shown here). It was at the printing plant five years ago that thousands of unionists defied police, blocking the gates to keep Sunday papers from being delivered.* The Witness' *Jeanie and Bill Wylie-Kellermann became involved in the controversy when they organized a group of religious and civic leaders called Readers United in an effort — sometimes involving civil disobedience — to bring both sides to the bargaining table. With a recent ruling by a three-judge federal appeals court that the strike was not caused by management's unfair labor practices (saving management from owing workers as much as $100 million in back pay), the unions are renewing their call for a boycott of the papers.*

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CLASSIFIEDS

Ministry of Money retreat

Women's Perspective of the Ministry of Money is offering a "Currency of the Spirit" retreat Oct. 20-22, 2000 at Wellspring Retreat Center in Germantown, Md. The retreat is designed to help women with discretionary income clarify their resources, passions, struggles and creative tensions in order to move into a plan of action for the future. Facilitators are Tracy Gary, Helen LaKelly Hunt and Rosemary Williams. For information call Rosemary Williams at 203-336-2238 or email <rwilli7994@att.net>.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

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Connecting 'ivory-tower' and real-world realities

by Marianne Arbogast

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WHEN MICHAEL LEVINSON was a freshman at Georgetown University, he heard a Honduran factory worker near his own age speak on campus.

"She was 20 years old, she was a single mother with two kids, and her wages were not enough for her to even provide food and shelter and clothes for them," Levinson, now a junior, recalls.

Moved by her story, Levinson and another student organized an interfaith prayer service, asking students from different faith traditions to speak about what their tradition taught on labor rights. He was soon drawn into the Georgetown Solidarity Committee, the anti-sweatshop group which had sponsored the Honduran woman's visit.

As a business school student majoring in finance and international business, Levinson says he is unique among his fellow activists. With a minor in theology, he is unique in the business school as well. But the combination has served Levinson well in the students' campaign to address the forces that exploit workers who produce Georgetown logo apparel.

The campaign began with an investigation into the factory code of conduct required by the Collegiate Licensing Committee (CLC), which handles licensing for Georgetown and other universities.

"There was nothing about a living wage, nothing about women's rights, and the document said that the companies only had to abide by the laws of the country where the factories were located — or whatever the prevailing industry standard was," Levinson says. "The other thing which was not in the CLC was full public disclosure of factory locations, and that was considered key by us and by the larger student movement. So we tried to get meetings with our administration, to ask them to sign off the CLC and require full public disclosure."

When their request went unheeded, the Solidarity Committee began educating and organizing on campus.

"We did a fashion show, having students dressed up in Georgetown sweatshirts strutting around, and someone with a bullhorn saying, 'This student is sporting the new Georgetown sweatshirt, only $12.99 at the Georgetown book store, made by 13-year-old girls in Honduras who make 56 cents an hour.' We were trying to connect the two worlds — what the students know, with what the actual conditions were."

After collecting 1,000 student signatures on a petition, representatives from the Solidarity Committee met with the dean of students. They were told that they could not ask companies for full disclosure, because it would force them to reveal trade secrets.

"That was not true," Levinson says, "because often one factory will subcontract with several different corporations, so you have Nike, Reebok and Jansport items being made side by side in the same factory. Also, there's a difference between developing super-computers and t-shirts — it's not exactly rocket science."

They were also told that, since Georgetown had over 200 licensees — producing everything from sweatshirts to Barbie dolls — and Georgetown contracts were insignificant within each company's budget, the students' demand was unrealistic.

In January of 1999, the Solidarity Committee organized a forum at which an ethicist, an economist and a labor rights expert from the Georgetown faculty all endorsed the students' position. When the administration still failed to respond, the students held a sit-in in the office of Georgetown president Leo O'Donovan.

"Thirty-two of us committed to participate in civil disobedience," Levinson says. "We figured out some very specific goals. At this point, we knew that we couldn't just ask them to drop the CLC, because Georgetown does not have the capacity to handle our own licensing. But we knew the CLC could ask companies to give us full public disclosure and abide by a code of conduct that Georgetown would develop on its own. So we went in the office on a Thursday and sat down and, after a little tense negotiation, the administration allowed us to be there without calling the police. We also had people on the outside organizing rallies and a prayer vigil."

On Tuesday afternoon, 85 hours into the sit-in, the administration agreed to the students' demands.

"They agreed to require full public disclosure, to adopt a code of conduct that we had developed in negotiations, and to give students a decision-making voice in the process," Levinson says. Levinson was one of four students elected to a new Licensing Implementation Committee.

"Once I got on the Committee, I started learning about all the business aspects of implementing real-world activist policies," he says. "We sent out a letter to all of our licensees saying that we would require them to publicly disclose, and we set up a deadline six months later — which was this past January. As of now, 70 percent of our licensees have complied. We have a big stack of papers and we're trying to put on the Internet thousands of factory locations where Georgetown stuff is made."

The next step — a plan for monitoring the factories — was complicated by the emergence of the Fair Labor Association

(FLA), an industry-based monitoring organization, in May of 1999.

"Then it was only a charter, and we didn't really know what was going on," Levinson says. "I remember poring through an 80-page document, spending hours upon hours analyzing it."

When it became apparent that the FLA would offer no significant challenge to industry practices, the students tried to prevent Georgetown from signing on. They were unsuccessful, since they were unable to propose an alternative. So, along with student activists throughout the country, they set about creating one.

"Students, in conjunction with workers, in conjunction with nonprofit groups and labor groups and religious groups, began to develop the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC)," Levinson says. "This was an alternative monitoring plan that would be worker-friendly, and would work with worker groups in the producing regions, to provide the space for workers to organize for themselves. And the WRC would be a means by which they would have access to millions of dollars of licensing leverage here in the U.S."

In December of 1999, the Licensing Implementation Committee formally recommended that Georgetown withdraw from the FLA. The request was turned down.

"At this point we realized that there were several levels of inertia we would have to work through," Levinson says. "Besides being the bureaucracy that the university is, which is hard to move, most universities have corporate ties. At Georgetown, Fr. O'Donovan is on Disney's board of directors — which happens to be one of our licensees. The CEO of Levi Straus is on our board of directors. It was never that Fr. O'Donovan said, 'My good buddy Philip Merino, who's the CEO of Levi Strauss, told me that if we signed off the FLA there would be hell to pay.' But there have been blocks that should not have been there."

While Levinson reports "amazing support" from the Georgetown faculty and Jesuit community, he believes that, in university policy, corporate influence has often outweighed spiritual values.

"Georgetown is traditionally a Catholic university, and there's a strong tradition within Catholicism for a living wage, for just working conditions, for a preferential option for the poor and oppressed," he says. "But Georgetown was profiting off the labor of the poor and oppressed and not doing anything about it."

His contacts with student groups elsewhere have convinced him that "in terms of accomplishing goals, the religious orientation of the university matters less than its size and the amount of revenue it receives from licensees, and the depth of the economic ties it has with corporations."

As the WRC took shape, the Solidarity Committee focused on increasing student support, enlisting a wide array of student organizations to lobby the administration. They also made it known that they were planning a second sit-in. On April 4, the week before the sit-in was to take place, the university agreed to pull out of the FLA and join the WRC.

WE'RE THE ONES WHO PAY TUITION, AND WE'RE THE ONES WHO LIVE ON CAMPUS, SO WE FEEL THAT IT IS OUR UNIVERSITY.

The following week Levinson, along with another student and the dean of students, traveled to New York to attend the WRC founding conference, which included representatives from 45 universities, advisory council members, human rights groups and representatives from several of the producing regions.

"We started to hash out the structure of the organization," Levinson says. "It's not a group of idealistic students talking about things that they don't know. It's being done very intelligently and very thoroughly, with all of the voices that need to be heard at the table."

Despite the major commitment he has made to this effort, Levinson finds time to play in Georgetown's jazz band, give trumpet lessons to children at the YMCA, and volunteer weekly at a soup kitchen. He also leads music at a Catholic Mass (his own tradition) and sings with the African-American Protestant Gospel Choir.

This year, he hopes to start an organization focusing on business and social responsibility. "Within the business school you have a vocabulary that you learn, and a mode of thinking that you enter into, and within that vocabulary there is no place for human rights," he says. "We have a course on social responsibility that we are required to take, but most of it deals with ethical accounting issues and such, not really justice issues."

Levinson says his experience with the anti-sweatshop movement has opened his eyes to larger issues of corporate influence at Georgetown.

"Student voice has been amazingly limited," he says. "If you look at any real decision-making process, there are no students represented. And if you look at the 15 most active directors on our board, 10 of those are CEOs of corporations. We're a Coca-Cola campus, we've signed a lease that says only Coca-Cola can be sold. We just lost our post office and postal workers were fired because of a contract with Mailboxes, Etc. Slowly, our university is being compromised. But so far, we've been able to put student pressure, because students are the primary stakeholders within a university. We're the ones who pay tuition, and we're the ones who live on campus, so we feel that it is our university. And if you can organize and mobilize that student voice, then you can accomplish change." ●

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of The Witness.

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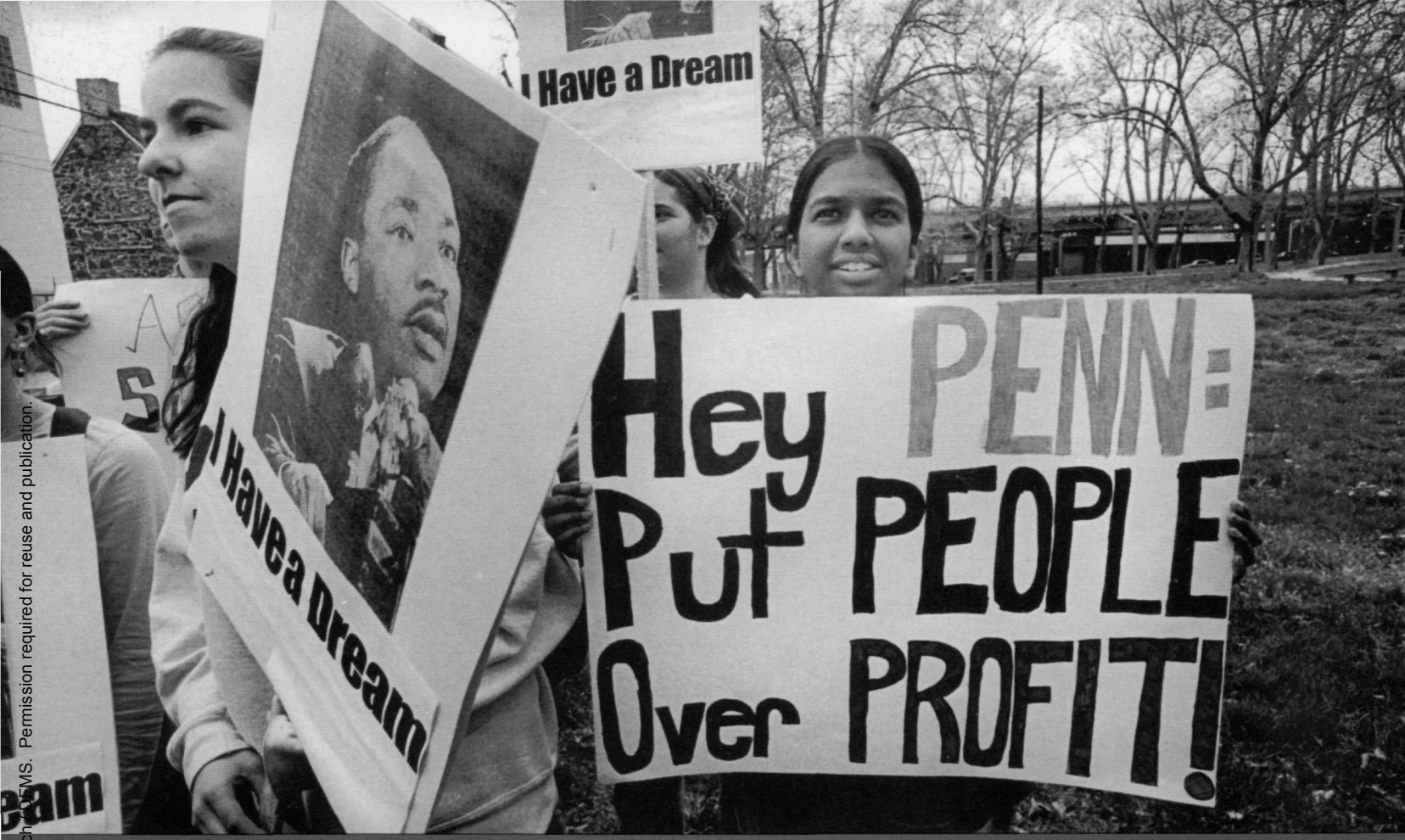

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WITNESS MAGAZINE

The Witness



VOLUME 83
NUMBER 10
OCTOBER 2000

INTENDING COMMUNITY:

Honoring people and place

CONTENTS

8 **"The icon 'round God's neck":** *toward sustainable community — an interview with Larry Rasmussen by Marianne Arbogast*
Any meaningful community-talk today has to include the whole of creation, according to theologian and author Larry Rasmussen. Rasmussen describes some of the "earth-honoring communities" he has visited and calls for a Christianity that values pluralism and respects its connections to both people and place.

14 **Hamtramck, Mich.:** *a small city grapples with diversity and change by Camille Colatosti*
Residents of "the most multicultural city in the state of Michigan" are working to creatively address the tensions — and strengths — inherent in a diverse community.

18 **Re-seeding community:** *a monastic experiment in ecology and ecumenism by Marianne Arbogast*
A small women's Benedictine community in the midwest is expanding the boundaries of traditional Roman Catholic religious life to embrace members of other Christian denominations, while also working to restore the prairie lands where they live.

20 **L'Arche communities:** *learning to live from the heart by Richard and Stephanie Bower*
Communities which include members who are mentally disabled reveal fundamental truths about what matters in life.

26 **The calling walk:** *attending to the community of life by Mary Romano*
A contemplative exercise in a natural setting leads to heightened awareness of the whole community of life.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editorial Notes
7 Poetry
24 Short Takes
25 Classifieds
28 Book Review
30 Witness Profile

on the cover

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IMPACT VISUALS

Volunteers from the community and across the country work in a community garden in Detroit as part of the Detroit Summer project, a three-week program where young people come together to work on projects to improve the community and to participate in educational activities.

on the back cover

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IMPACT VISUALS

Organized by Chicago's Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS), Neighborworks Day brings together people from businesses, local government, community organizations and NHS boards and staff to volunteer time for community improvement projects.

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OCTOBER 2000

Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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De facto apartheid

I am writing as someone who reads *The Witness* at the Michigan State University Library. The July/August issue on Denver 2000: Signs of justice and hope was even more compelling than what I had come to expect. This year brings me two separate but related assignments: I'll be serving as the President of the East Lansing Board of Education at a time when vouchers are the latest rescue-du-jour on the ballot for public education; I also serve as a volunteer member of the Lansing Catholic Diocese's Advocates for Justice Committee, attempting to form a minority-plank voice within the Catholic church here in Michigan opposing vouchers as bad public policy.

With all that as an introduction of sorts, you will understand why I was so impressed with your issue featuring Jonathan Kozol and the de facto apartheid faced by so many students in America. I'd like a copy of the issue for me to share with my colleagues on the East Lansing Board and my other colleagues in the Lansing Catholic Diocese. I applaud the work you are doing and call down blessings on your head in great abundance.

Rod Murphy
East Lansing, MI

Congratulations

Congratulations on the July/August 2000 issue of *The Witness*. You did a wonderful job of integrating so many aspects of this bioregion. We even heard from friends of ours from New York and Kansas City who enjoyed reading it.

Cathy Mueller
Denver, CO

ED. NOTE: Cathy Mueller of Earth Links not only provided us with a great article on that ministry, but also helped us become acquainted with the region during the issue-planning process. We are very grateful for her help.

No easy answers

Recently, while talking to my niece who lives in Colorado, I spoke about the April 2000 issue on No easy answers: Gender and sexual ethics for a new age (A REAL WINNER!!! Thank you for having the courage to educate this 83-year-old straight person!) and she would like to read it, but I don't want to give up my copy. Please send her a copy and sign her up for a gift subscription.

Betty Rees
Ann Arbor, MI

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log on to The Witness

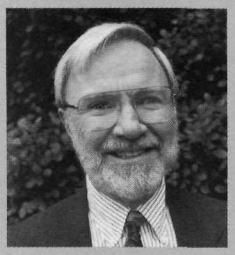
Money:
God's principal rival
Comments from Peter Selby

Spirit of Justice Awards:
Awardees respond

After Denver 2000:
Louie Crew, Katie Sherrod, Jack Winder

WITNESS BOARD ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT, DIRECTORS

The board of the Episcopal Church Publishing Company [ECPC], publisher of *The Witness* magazine, has elected a new board president and four directors.



At a board of directors meeting held in Denver, Colo., on July 9, 2000 ***Stephen Duggan*** was elected president of ECPC. Duggan currently serves as the Treasurer of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church.

Newly elected directors include ***Jane Dixon***, Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, ***Ian Douglas***, Associate Professor of World Mission and Global Christianity at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. and ***Chester Talton***, Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles.

John Zinn, ECPC treasurer, was elected to a second term. Zinn is the Chief Financial Officer of the Diocese of Newark. Other directors are: ***Owanah Anderson***, elder, author and long-time Native American advocate; ***Richard A. Bower***, recently retired as the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in Syracuse, N.Y. in order to continue his work in El Salvador and the U.S. on awareness and justice in immigration issues; ***Louie Crew***, author, founder of Integrity and Associate Professor of English at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey; ***Harlon Dalton***, member of the Yale University Law School faculty; ***Anna Lange-Soto***, Co-Vicar of El Buen Pastor in East Palo Alto and San Mateo in the Diocese of California, ***Mark MacDonald***, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska and Native American advocate; and poet, writer, and human rights activist ***Mitsuye Yamada*** of Irvine, Calif.

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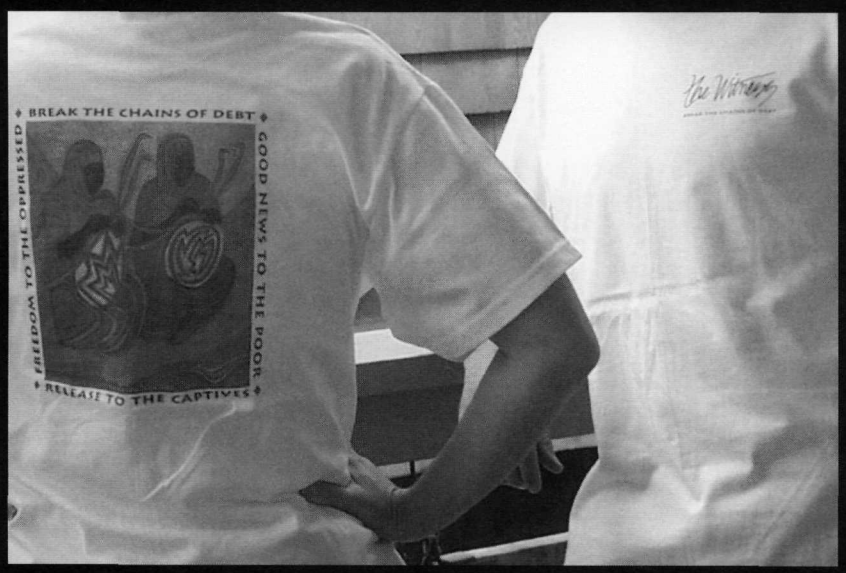

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Intending 'queer' community

by Julie A. Wortman

Thomas Berry, one of today's foremost thinkers on ecology and religion, once said in an interview in *Parabola* that he is constantly asked about hope.

"It's not an easy question to answer, except that there's no existence without hope," he said. "I think constantly of the future of the children, and of the need for all children to go into the future as a single, sacred community. The children of the trees, the children of the birds, the children of the animals, the children of the insects — all children, including the human children, must go together into the future."

His last sentence brought me up short. Of course I knew that trees and birds and animals have children, and that all life is interdependent. But when I hear "children," my mind is conditioned to picture the human variety. And when I hear "community," I think of the bonds between human beings — which, God knows, are challenge enough to forge and sustain.

Yet at some level, doesn't all community require bridging the gap between ourselves and the "other" whom we perceive as different and separate from us? Doesn't it require resisting the conditioning that tells us who belongs and who does not?

In this issue we have tried to look at some efforts to build community across difference — difference in nationality and race, religious denomination, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability. We have highlighted, especially, the frontier that Berry points to — our need to live in community with the earth — because we believe what Larry Rasmussen (interviewed in this issue) says: Any community-talk that does not include the whole of creation is obsolete.

The natural world is more than a stage for human activity. People and place are bound together intimately. There is no hope for the future if we exclude anyone's children.

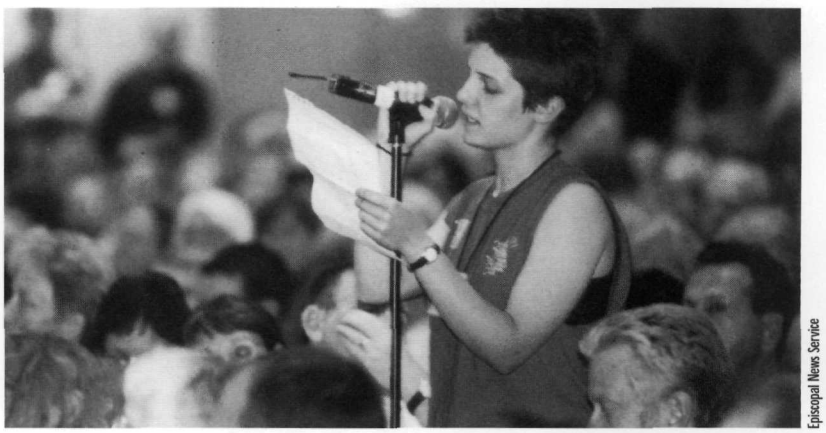
— Marianne Arbogast, associate editor

MANY PEOPLE LEFT the Episcopal Church's General Convention this past July feeling that some decent progress had been made in the acceptance of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered (glbt) people into the life of the church. After all, for the first time — and by an overwhelming majority that included prominent conservative leaders whose anti-gay views have been well publicized over the years — the General Convention officially recognized that members of the church are living in committed lifelong relationships other than marriages and that these relationships can be characterized by "fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God." The convention also promised that the church would do its best to supply "the prayerful support, encouragement and pastoral care necessary to live faithfully by [these values]."

At odds with this promise was the convention's rejection of a proposal to develop possible rites (to be tucked away in the Book of Occasional Services) for signifying the holiness of such relationships. Such a move, opponents were able to successfully argue, would be just plain too much for the good folks back home. Still, many proponents of the full inclusion of glbt people in the life of the church felt we had moved one step closer to our goal. It is, they said, only a matter of time.

So why did I leave Denver feeling so disheartened? The WOW2000 (Witness Our Welcome 2000) gathering held in DeKalb, Ill. a few weeks later offered a chance to think through much of the answer. The event attracted about a thousand people committed to the ecumenical "Welcoming Church" movement aimed at making Christian churches "inclusive" communities — that is, communities not just grudgingly tolerant of, but positively glad for, their glbt members.

Asked to define "inclusive community" during the conference's opening session, Roman Catholic feminist theologian and ethicist (and new *Witness* contributing editor) Mary Hunt observed, "It seems odd to speak of the



Episcopal News Service

Open hearing on sexuality resolutions at General Convention.

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Christian idea of 'inclusivity' because my understanding is that the norms of Christianity are love and justice, norms which are expressed in the Christian practice of sacrament and solidarity — everyone is welcome!"

The next morning another feminist theologian, the Episcopal Church's own Carter Heyward, underscored Hunt's remarks.

"A just world," she said in a wry play on words, "is one of the queerest things in this world. Our struggle for gender and sexual justice is something much more than a struggle to be accepted to participate in the unjust structures of this world. To be 'queer' is to refuse to collude with any injustice."

Although the WOW2000 audience enthusiastically embraced both Hunt's and Heyward's messages as expressing the very heart of the Welcoming Church movement's mission, any sense of self-congratulation was quickly dispelled when a number of black participants protested both the gathering's racial tokenism (a very diverse slate of speakers, but the all-too-typical situation of the otherwise sparse presence of persons of color) and some participants' apparent obliviousness to the workings of white privilege.

"I don't mind rejection when I see it coming," pointed out the young black woman who bravely took the lead in calling the group to accountability, "but I am hurt by it when it comes in a gathering where we say all of me is welcome all the time." As Urvashi Vaid of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute stressed in a panel presentation that immediately followed, "We need an 'intersectional politics,' because we are not single-identity people."

The incident highlighted a basic requirement of making good on an intention to be inclusive that author and Episcopal priest Eric Law rehearsed at the beginning of the conference. "Inclusive community," he said, "engages in the practice of extending its boundaries when challenged that it is not inclusive."

The biggest stumbling blocks to such a radical widening of the circle in the church, needless to say, is the widely worshipped idol of church unity and the political impulses which use this abstraction to justify an anything-but-queer status quo.

At the WOW2000 conference banquet Michael Kinnamon gave his own personal experience of how this phenomenon works. An ordained Disciples of Christ clergy person and prominent ecumenist, Kinnamon was in 1991 nominated for the position of General Minister and President of his denomination. He and his wife had previously made a modest, not very public, commitment to glbt concerns by joining GLAD (Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples), an affiliation which was included in the General Minister nominee profile that was circulated during the election process. Very quickly he was branded the "pro-gay" candidate and the election turned controversial, with Kinnamon at the restless center. (One angry man wrote him repeatedly, ending each letter with, "News of your death or resignation will be welcome.")

"At the beginning of the nomination," Kinnamon told us, "I still thought in political terms: 'How can I keep from offending all parts of the church?' That was soon no longer possible, and thus I was freed to approach the months leading up to [the election] theologically: 'How can I best proclaim the good news of God's amazing love?' The question was no longer, 'Do they like me?' but, 'Am I faithful to my understanding of the Gospel?'"

That understanding received rigorous testing during the election process. At one pre-election meet-the-candidates gathering, a Disciples minister ended a question with a qualifying afterthought, "After all, these homosexuals are just worthless scum."

"What haunted me throughout those months," Kinnamon recalled, "is that I was in the position of leadership and I did not denounce him.

"Why? I tried to to tell myself that I was just caught off guard, but the truth cuts deeper. My life's work as an ecumenist centers on reconciliation, on the attempt to hold community together, on the insistence that diverse voices be heard. But that night I realized there is something fundamentally impoverished about an understanding of reconciliation that left me unprepared to respond immediately and forcefully to this man."

Taking his cue from Paul's ability to live with enormous diversity because every member of the body is equally an undeserving recipient of God's grace, Kinnamon said it finally became clear to him that "one cannot stand above the fray in the name of a reconciling vision.

"I learned that, while we are, in Paul's words, 'ambassadors of reconciliation,' we can speak that word too easily and too early. I learned that unity, if it is of God, is inseparable from justice. I learned that we must be willing to risk — to disrupt — our partial, temporary unities for the sake of God's inclusive oneness. I learned that in a dangerously narrow world we dare not be caught off guard. I learned that the church, by its very nature, must be an aggressive counter-culture to every society bent on exclusion."

As I headed home from DeKalb, I realized my own deep disappointment — and, yes, anger — over the General Convention's decision to continue tolerating the exclusion of glbt people from the rites of the church was rooted in the simple Christian conviction that some things, queerly enough, are categorical. Quite bluntly, it is not okay to draw the circle more narrowly than creation's reality. And if the folks back home don't understand this, it is evidence of our church leadership's failure to make the concept clear.

Everything we know of God's reality is that it involves more, not less, than we believe. The sanctity of marriage isn't in dispute here. But there is sanctity in other relationships, too. And, most importantly, the historic privilege of some is never an acceptable reason to deny the dignity of those long denied it.

The fact is, politics, not theology, is driving the church's decision-making. And, quite frankly, although I can't claim any virtue in this regard, I am weary of it. As Michael Kinnamon reflected of his "worthless scum" experience, "Though everything in my guts doesn't want to, I must recognize this man as my brother in Christ. But this relatedness is precisely the point. For his sake and the church's, my response should have been, 'Brother, sit down! Such talk has nothing to do with the good news we proclaim. Such talk has no place in a community of those who know that they are redeemed only by grace.'"

What a queer place the church would be if we cared for each other enough to risk rejection in this way. Our willingness to do so, I believe, has everything to do with the sort of community we intend. ●

Julie A. Wortman is Witness editor/publisher.

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Beguinage revisited

by Janet Shea



It is a thirteenth-century beguinage,
a community of holy women — mothers, aunts,
ancestral sisters — tending the sick.
Mary of Oignies, Juliana, Marguerite ...
shuttle trays of soft food, medicinal tea,
warm milk to the many suffering
souls to be cared for: Old women, children
on cots, restless babies in cribs.

Every so often a sister stops to rest, leans
against the bannister or door jamb. Mary
of Oignies, weakened by the marks of stigmata,
wipes the back of her hand across her forehead,
swipes a bleeding palm down the sides of her apron.

Local friars, arrayed in hooded burlap,
sit on the porch with neighborhood
men in plaid shirts, caps swinging between their knees
all awaiting instructions from the women. The men
were summoned to ward off encroaching disaster,
invasion, a possible flood. Already their boots
are slick with mud. Already the wind howls, rain
pelts the roof, fir trees like old bones creak
in the woods out back.

Bonded in time and place, tired of waiting,
the men convene in the cellar. They hammer,
check beams and joists, sandbag the foundation, trace
strategic escape routes on a torn and crinkled
map, vigilant for marauders, heretics, petty thieves.

Later, in my grandmother's Victorian, a labyrinth
of hallways and stairs, sisters ... Patricia,
Virginia, Mary Louise ... gather at Grammy's
oak table for supper. Overhead, mothers and aunts,
in rooms pungent with the aroma of lavender
and oil-of-wintergreen, settle in bed, side
rails secured, night lights aglow, The Sacred
Heart of Jesus, consoling the wall. Nearby
children and babies breathe easy, exhaling
in sleep a fragrance of warm milk and honey.
The winds out back coo like a covey of doves,
the rain a soft patter on glass.

After supper the eldest cousin retreats
to the pantry, a tumble of disarray.
She chooses among the monochromatic cache
of Mother vessels a familiar blue bowl, dried
up and cracked, its vanilla rim chipped.
She fills it with tapioca.

"I enter the circle of holy ones," she whispers,
returning to the table,
the ancient vessel steady in her hands.
Sisters and cousins, we welcome her with song.
We tell stories, pass the bowl of abundance,
feast in the mounds of meringue. White
peaks whipped firm, but not stiff.

Janet Shea is a poet who lives in Tenants Harbor, Me.

THE ICON 'ROUND



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GOD'S NECK

Toward sustainable community — an interview with Larry Rasmussen

by Marianne Arbogast

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LARRY RASMUSSEN is Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York. His recent books include *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Orbis, 1996) and *Moral Fragments and Moral Community* (Fortress, 1993). Last year he delivered a series of Kellog lectures on "Re-framing and Re-forming Community" at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. Rasmussen recently returned from a sabbatical year during which he visited earth-honoring Christian communities around the world.

Marianne Arbogast: You have said that any God-talk and any community-talk that focuses solely on human beings and excludes the rest of creation is obsolete.

Larry Rasmussen: It simply doesn't do justice to creation if we only talk about community and human beings. Scientists of all kinds these days are saying, in effect, that nature is a community. The genome, for example, underscores the fact that we share the basic code of life with the rest of the community of life. The same physical laws apply across the board in the material universe. There are many different ways in which one could say that the proper word for describing creation is as a community. And Christians have said that for a long time, but since the Industrial Revolution, especially, we've limited our community-talk to one species only, that came on the scene very, very late. We occupy, as human beings, the breadth of a hair at the end of a football field in the life of the universe. So when we talk as though we were the only members of the community of creation that count, that's simply quaint.

I think it's actually worse than that. It really means that we're worshiping a species idol or a tribal god or even a race god — as though the human race were all that mattered among how many million species. Or that one planet — ours — around a kind of middle-sized star in a universe of probably a hundred billion galaxies, is all that counts. So I think any kind of community-talk that doesn't include the whole creation doesn't do justice to creation and isn't worshiping the God of creation. I want to expand the very notion of community to include the whole cosmos.

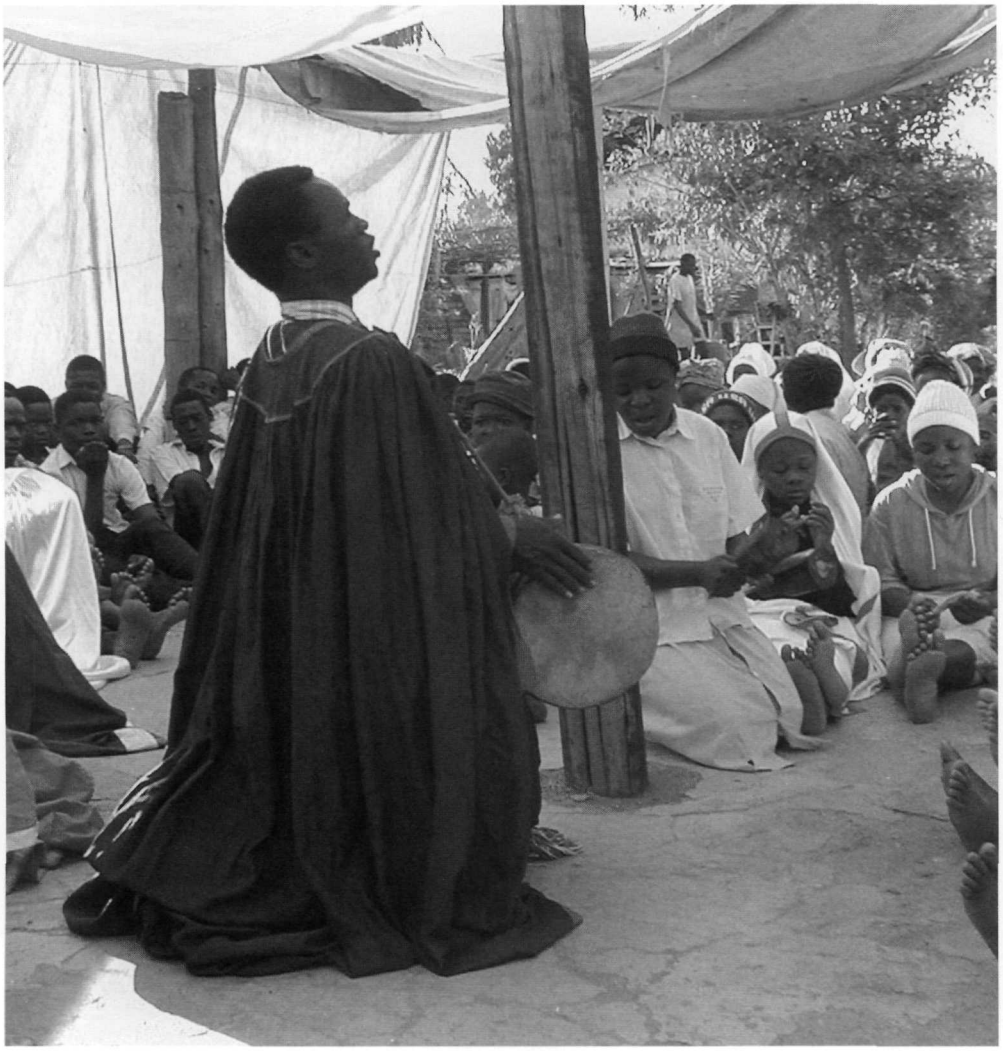
M.A.: I'm interested that you say Christian tradition upholds that, and that you date the human tendency to think only in terms of ourselves as beginning with the Industrial Revolution.

L.R.: That's a major turn, because from the time of the rise of the Industrial Revolution in the West we came to view ourselves as a kind of ecologically segregated species. We set ourselves up as subject over against the rest of creation as object I call it apartheid thinking on the species level. And then we turned all of the talk of salvation, redemption — all the great theological words — to focus only on human beings. For the Hebrew prophets, for example, redemption is always the redemption of all creation, deliverance is always deliverance of people and the land, liberation is always the liberation of the whole community of life.

For the modern world, the Industrial Revolution is where the constriction really takes hold, but theologically it's prepared for by the Middle Ages. Medieval Catholicism took a wonderfully rich notion of the whole universe being alive and a sign of God — but, in practice, medieval Catholicism focused salvation on the standing of human beings before the judging God. And with the Reformation,

I do not think the question is, how do we wrap the global environment around the global economy? I think the proper question is, how do you wrap both economies and environment around healthy community?

Photos by Larry Rasmussen



When they celebrate Eucharist, they plant trees, they gather the harvest or they dedicate seed.

too, the focus became a focus on how human beings are faring in the presence of God, and salvation and redemption became reduced to the human community and human species only. And you can go back somewhat farther than that — although it's surprising to see how in the patristic teachings and the Orthodox understanding of creation you don't have the separation of the human species from the rest in the way that it developed elsewhere.

M.A.: You have argued that we should think in terms of "sustainable community" rather than "sustainable development." What's the difference?

L.R.: First of all, we have to listen very carefully to how people use these words because there isn't a single agreed-upon definition. I've had people say, "What you mean by sustainable community is what I mean by sustainable development." But the distinction is a meaningful one because, in most cases, "sustainable development" assumes the fact and operation of the global economy and tries to sustain that ecologically. It tries to green the present efforts to integrate the economies of the world into a single global economy.

It assumes a long history that started 500 years ago with the first wave of globalization, when European tribes settled the rest of the planet in a series of neo-European civilizations here and there. Then, the language of "development" emerged after World War II, when all economies and societies were placed on the same spectrum, of whether they were "developing" (or "underdeveloped") or "developed," but you measured them all the same way — their social well-being was measured by their levels of production and consumption of goods. You didn't ask about biological wealth or cultural wealth, you just asked about economic well-being, and you identified that with society's well-being.

And then the third wave of globalization is the post-1989 triumph of liberal capitalism, or the market itself, as the model for society, and its very economistic measure of well-being for the whole world. So when people talk now about sustainable development, they are assuming that history of those waves of globalization and asking, how do you make that environmentally or ecologically sustainable?

I do not think the question is, how do we wrap the global environment around the global economy? I think the proper question is, how do you wrap both economies and environment around healthy community? What is an economy for? What economy is supposed to be for is to help facilitate healthy communities. So start with local and regional community and ask, what are the proper economic arrangements, the proper

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political arrangements, the proper care of the earth for healthy community, and how do you sustain that?

I do not want to assume that the global economy — and its tendencies toward monocultures and its tendencies toward disrupting local democracy, removing people's capacities for their own self-provisioning, self-organizing, self-directing activities — is that which should necessarily be sustained. I want something where folks — all the folks — have a greater say in what their life together will be, and that requires a kind of decentralization that "community" indicates and "sustainable development" does not.

M.A.: In your lecture series last year at the Episcopal Divinity School, you said that an important task for the church today is to "rightly valorize Christian pluralism," and you contrast that to both orthodoxy and liberal tolerance. What's the difference between tolerance and valorizing pluralism?

L.R.: Tolerance was looked to, especially out of the Enlightenment, as a way of overcoming those terrible religious wars and the intolerance that has characterized so much of human history. So tolerance was a great gift of liberalism and the Enlightenment, and I don't want to sound like I don't favor tolerance and prefer the alternative! But tolerance of itself doesn't build community — certainly not among enemies and not even among interdependent strangers. Tolerance issues the invitations, but it doesn't set the table or talk about the terms by which we live together, other than not bothering one another. Well, not bothering one another is necessary, but it's not sufficient.

I think it's necessary to value the pluralism itself. How do you create community out of muti-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-lingual reality? I live in New York. There are 144 languages spoken in the city and we've got all kinds of people who occupy the same island here, and they've got to find ways to get along. So it's a terribly important modern experiment and one that requires, for Christians, valuing Christian pluralism itself. And saying that it's *because* Christianity is expressed differently credally and culturally that it is a gift — that it can speak to so many people's different ways of leaning into the world and still provide commonality. But we have to get over the notion that Christianity is a European religion, for example. It started on three continents simultaneously and was never homogenous. I think we need to use that very fact of Christian pluralism from around the world in learning how to create community out of plural reality.

M.A.: I was struck by the statement, in one of your lectures, that "Jesus got crucified because of the folks he ate with."

L.R.: The table and meals are always a microcosm of society, quite apart from Jesus. Society is what it eats. And how it eats, how the food is grown and gathered, who serves it, how it is produced, who's invited to the table, who's not invited to the table — all these reflect the divisions and strata in the society. Jesus, by eating with tax collectors and sinners, is crossing the division of "we" and "they" that all societies have insisted are important and that are always reflected at the table. And he gets in trouble for building a movement that puts the marginal at table on equal terms with those at the center. You've got tax collectors, who are colluding with the Roman occupation, eating with others who are part of a movement to be rid of the colonizers. However, the terms are the terms of equality.

M.A.: You have suggested that when we talk about Eucharist we need to think in terms of real economics.

L.R.: Yes. What is the economy of the Eucharist? What do the practices of shared community at the table mean for all of the tables that are set by us humans and society? I think we have radical economics and radical politics embedded in the meaning of the sacraments themselves. They're not a kind of private space that pertains only to the gathered life of the church — they're the public space as expressed by members of the church.

M.A.: Where do you see examples of the kind of community-building needed today?

L.R.: One example is Threshold Farms, which brings farm produce to the church where I and my family belong, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, on 100th and Amsterdam. Threshhold Farms is a part of what's called CSA, community-supported agriculture, where small farmers growing produce offer subscriptions to city folks. We pay x number of dollars a share for the growing season, and then on a weekly basis we pick up the produce. The farmers use this urban-rural link for their livelihood and there's a real community dimension to it. Recipes are shared, subscribers are invited to participate in events at the farm, kids are especially welcome. Once in a while, in town, folks will stay on a Tuesday when we have pick-up of our produce and we'll all have a community potluck together. That's a very different experience from industrialized agriculture where the farmer is producing for a mass market and where the consumer doesn't know how or where the food was grown, and has no meaningful relationship to the producer of the food.

Another kind of example is faith-based community organizing, where the churches become anchor communities in the efforts of people to address the needs of their neighborhoods. The philosophy of some of the community organizing has changed. Instead of organizing around an issue — say, more jobs, or getting rid of a toxic waste site — and then dissolving until the next issue comes around, there is an effort to organize for the sake of creating community and supporting community gifts and assets, and then, from there, taking on the issues as they arise.

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Another example is the Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary in Baguio City in Luzon, the northern island of the Philippines, where I spent some time during my sabbatical year. In 1991, an earthquake destroyed much of Baguio, including the convent, and they decided to rebuild not a convent but a bio-shelter and to establish an ecological sanctuary. Baguio's a mountainous city and they're on top of one of the hills. They established the sanctuary there, in part, to preserve the 200-year-old pines that are being lost to deforestation as the city grows. But it wasn't just that kind of protectionist thing. There are 14 "stations of the cosmic journey" in the ecological sanctuary, that express the whole tale of evolution as a religious tale. It's all told Filipino-style. A Philippine artist and students from the university, together with the sisters, said, how do we tell the story of who we are as peoples of these islands as a part of the cosmic story?

The Maryknoll community has, for a long time, been working with the peoples of the mountains who have lost much of their land and some of their culture to the impact of international mining and logging interests. So this ecological sanctuary with its meeting-place, which is called Center for the Integrity of Creation, is a place where the urban poor and the rural poor come together and work on how to address the sustainability of their own local communities and the region. The ecological sanctuary is an effort to provide the context, host those meetings, but also give it ritual shape. Every major event there starts with earth prayers. They are danced in the environmental theater by people who are having the meeting and by students from the school for the deaf which is in the sanctuary itself. It's a beautiful example of community-building, of sustained efforts at sustainable community that addresses the issues of the human community together with the issues of environmental well-being. They would just say "the justice issues" and mean by that society and nature together.

M.A.: Could you say more about your recent sabbatical?

L.R.: It was a wonderful year. I have a research project — and I'm trying to find people interested in joining me — that I call "Song of Songs: Christianities as Earth Faiths." "Song of Songs," of course, refers to that earthy little book of the Hebrew Bible where you've got two love stories going on at the same time — you've got this sensuous love between human beings, and then you've got the sensuous love of these passionate souls for the land and its life. But it's also a reference to a statement by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in an address on the foundations of Christian ethics in 1928. He says: "The earth remains our mother just as God remains our father, and our mother will only lay in the father's arms those who are true to her. Earth and its distress — this is the Christian's song of songs." So Bonhoeffer is saying that fidelity to God is lived as fidelity to the earth.

I want to find the expressions of Christianity that contribute to earth-honoring ways of living. So I went looking for communities that were already living earth-oriented, earth-enhancing ways of life. I purposely picked a very wide spectrum of confessional, cultural, racial, ethnic, geographical expressions of Christianity. I think the wrong way to go is to try to develop an eco-theology and call people to an eco-church as some new and separate stream. Instead, we need to draw upon the deep traditions that have been around a couple of millennia, expressed in a variety of ways. So I asked the communities I visited, what deep traditions of Christianity are you drawing upon and what are you doing with them?

The Maryknoll Ecological Sanctuary was drawing on rich Catholic sacramentalism and Roman Catholic mysticism and traditions of the contemplative life, and their work was deeply informed by that.

The Coptic Church in the desert in Egypt was drawing upon the traditions of the desert fathers and the desert mothers as it greens the desert. In that tradition, the desert is the place of death and barrenness and the assaults of Satan and evil, and the way in which you show resurrection or new creation or new life is to green the desert. You create Eden on the home turf of death itself. So the greening of the desert is theological as well as a way of putting food on the table.

The African Association of Earthkeeping Churches in Zimbabwe was another. This is part of a group of African-initiated or African independent churches that are trying to, as they say, "regain the lost lands and reclothe the earth." When they celebrate Eucharist, they plant trees, they gather the harvest or they dedicate seed. They try to restore the land, but they're also working very hard for land reform, which is a big, volatile, contentious issue in Zimbabwe, because the land was taken by the colonizers and the best land is in the hands of white Zimbabweans who are a small minority.

Then I went to the Iona Community in the Inner Hebrides off the coast of Scotland. The Celtic tradition is a tradition of creation-filled asceticism. You say no to one way of life and yes to another way of life, and live it out with very disciplined spiritual practices. It's the tradition of the monks. This creation-filled asceticism intrigued me, because so much of asceticism has been earth-denying and body-denying.

One of the other communities I visited was Orthodox Alaska, because the Orthodox Church in Alaska, which was founded by the Russians, is overwhelmingly native American. I wanted to see what kind of synthesis there was of a native American cosmology of sea and land and sky, with Russian Orthodox earth-filled asceticism. One of the iconographers there who's a native person himself told me a Russian saying that he says is a favorite: "Earth is the icon that hangs 'round God's neck." In the iconic tradition you take

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the particulars of earth — you know, there's a plant, there's a saint's face, there's a raven, there's a wolf. These are all ways of looking at the reality of earth in order to enter into the mystery of God and the cosmos.

M.A.: It must have been encouraging to experience that breadth of positive models.

L.R.: Yes, and it was great fun when I would tell people in one community about the ones I'd been to before. They found it so energizing to know that there were other folks concerned with the same things, because oftentimes they felt they were the only ones, and often they met a lot of opposition in their own churches. Many of them encountered the criticism that attention to the environment was detracting from attention to people's issues and problems. (The African Association of Earthkeeping Churches never met that because the problems were one and the same — they had to survive on degraded land. I've never found a poor community that has said, it's either the environment or people, because they experience degradation to the environment as a part of the same dynamic by which they experience oppression.)

One of the reasons I emphasize valorizing Christian pluralism is because to be rooted and honor earth means doing so in a particular place. You can't do that generally. It's the flora and the fauna, it's the geology of a particular place. So you have to be able to have varieties of Christianity that can give expression in a variety of places. You have to think ecologically about ecumenism and ecumenically about place. It was fascinating to me to see how desert spirituality mirrored the desert, how mountain spirituality mirrored the mountain, how Celtic spirituality mirrored Ireland and the west coast of Scotland. All the images in their prayers are images of the world around them — it's just good reporting! So the pluralism of Christianity needs to be one that lets that Christianity resonate with the people and the place together. ●

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It was fascinating to me how desert spirituality mirrored the desert, how mountain spirituality mirrored the mountain, how Celtic spirituality mirrored Ireland and the west coast of Scotland.

HAMTRAMCK,



Greg Kowalski

Hamtramck artist Denis Orlowski standing before one of many murals he has painted throughout the city.

A small city grapples with diversity and change

by Camille Colatosti

MY HUSBAND, Phillip Kwik, grew up in Hamtramck, Mich., where we now live. He lived with his parents, four sisters and one brother in a wood-framed house crowded on a standard 100 x 30 lot. He played with the neighborhood kids, attended mass on Sundays at the Catholic church down the street, and walked to school during the week. His parents owned a candy and beer store — Kwik's Beer and Wine. This store, with barely enough room for a counter, beer cooler and ice cream freezer, supported the family for 30 years and put all six children through college.

When we first started dating, about 10 years ago, I realized that my husband's connection to his hometown differed from any feeling that I had ever had for a place. Hamtramck, to him, was home. As he puts it, "Hamtramck is people-centered. It's real. We have neighborhoods and neighbors. You can walk around Hamtramck and interact with people." It didn't take me long to see that I love Hamtramck for the same reason that he does: This is a place that defines community.

Hamtramck is a 2.2-square-mile-city surrounded by, but politically independent from, Detroit. In the1950s, it was home to about 50,000 predominantly Polish-American working-class immigrants. It was best known for its rowdy bars, fresh kielbasa, crowded blocks, meticulously maintained lawns and Polish bakeries.

The Dodge Main auto manufacturing plant, located in Hamtramck from 1910 until it was demolished in 1981,

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employed, at its height, over 25,000 people. It was the place of one of the first sitdown strikes of the United Auto Workers. In the spring of 1937, Dodge Main workers forced Chrysler to recognize the union. This strike revealed the power of the people of Hamtramck, their ability to join together to fight for a common cause. My 83-year-old father-in-law, who participated in the strike, remembers this struggle with pride. "Hamtramck people have always known how to get something done," he says.

New immigrants

The Hamtramck of today, with almost 18,000 people, differs from the Hamtramck of 30 or 40 years ago, when my husband was growing up. The Polish Catholic dominance is decreasing. While there remain three Catholic parishes, they have lost population. The schools at one parish closed all together; the other Catholic schools are shrinking. The Polish fraternal organizations — the Alliance of Poles and the Polish Falcons — left the city and moved to the suburbs.

Hamtramck does remain an immigrant community, however. Some immigrants still come from Poland, but many more come to Hamtramck from other parts of the world. A large population of Arab-Americans, mostly from Yemen, arrived in the 1970s, and continues to bring family and friends to Hamtramck. At around that same time, Albanians arrived from Yugoslavia. More recently, beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing to the present, immigrants arrived from west Asia — Pakistan and Bangladesh, especially. Bosnian refugees have also settled in Hamtramck. According to Walter Wasacz, a reporter with the weekly community paper, *The Hamtramck Citizen*, Hamtramck is "the most multicultural city in the state of Michigan." Over 65 percent of the children who attend Hamtramck public schools speak English as a second language. Nearly 20 percent of the students speak Arabic at home; 15 percent speak Bengali; 14 percent speak Serbo-Croatian; 7 percent speak Polish and another 7 percent speak Albanian.

This diversity is intoxicating. When I walk down the street, I hear different languages spoken. The rich spicy scents of Middle Eastern food and curry compete with the smells of cabbage and kielbasa. I hear the call from the mosque as well as the bells from the parish church. The girls who live across the street wear traditional Indian dress as they strap on inline skates and race each other down the cracked sidewalks. Small boys play cricket in the parking lot of the neighborhood school. The women who push baby carriages down the block sing lullabies in Bosnian.

Suburban refugees and artists

In Hamtramck, there is also another group of newcomers — refugees, not from war-torn countries, but from the suburbs. Most are young. Many attend college at nearby Wayne State University, a huge public school located five minutes from Hamtramck, or at the Center for Creative Studies, a nationally renowned arts school.

Ellen Phillips moved to Hamtramck six years ago. "I grew up in the suburbs, but I was looking for a real community," she explains. "I had a sense of something missing in my life but I wasn't able to put my finger on it. I came to a festival in Hamtramck and found something here. I said to my husband, I think this is it.

"Not a day goes by," continues Phillips, "whether I'm walking or riding a bike, without something happening that makes me feel profoundly connected to life. Yesterday, I saw a little old lady stop to wave at a cat in a store window. When I walk out my front door, I wave to my neighbors and the kid riding by and I know that I am part of something larger than my own life."

Hamtramck is also home to many artists. Autumn Dunbar is one of them. Now 31 years old, Dunbar moved to Hamtramck 11 years ago when she was a student at the Center for Creative Studies. It was the bustle of Hamtramck's main shopping street, Joseph Campau, on a warm afternoon that attracted her.

"I prefer to live in a community where I can walk to shopping," she explains. "And I like the little front lawns. They're unique. The streets remind me of New York." Dunbar also likes the diversity of her neighborhood. "At dawn and dusk I can hear an Arab neighbor saying his prayers," she says.

As Greg Kowalski, chair of Hamtramck's Historical Commission and author of *Our Town: The Story of Hamtramck*, explains, "Artists and other creative people are attracted to the city for its grittiness." In fact, Hamtramck's current mayor, Gary Zych, is a sculptor who was born in Hamtramck and raised in the suburbs. He moved back to the city when he began teaching at Lawrence Technical University.

According to Wasacz: "We can compare Hamtramck to areas like New York, Brooklyn and Queens. People left the city for the greener pastures of the suburbs and now many of them, or their children, are moving back to the city where they see fabulous opportunities and a kind of energy that they long for."

Preserve our parks

This energy, and the potential of all Hamtramckans to work together to create the kind of community we want, became clear in 1996. That year, then Mayor Robert Kozaren joined with the city's director of public housing to devise a scheme to use Housing and Urban Development funds to replace the city's major park — Veterans Memorial — with a police station.

Veterans Memorial Park had been neglected for almost 20 years. Its six tennis courts had grown cracks and were almost completely covered with weeds. The city did not mow the park at all. Litter was strewn everywhere. Rotting boards and a rusting

fence surrounded the skating rink. Swings were taken down and never replaced.

The threat of the bulldozer spurred the community to recognize the park's importance. A group called Preserve Our Parks formed in 1996. My husband was president and I served as secretary. Approximately 20 people, of mixed ages and ethnicities, met weekly to discuss ways to save the park.

We took a three-pronged approach: First, we questioned the legality of building a city police station with HUD funding. Second, we put a referendum on the ballot in November 1996. The referendum created the Ordinance to Preserve Park Land, prohibiting the city from putting a building on a park without first winning a two-thirds vote of the people. The ordinance won 65 percent of the electorate. Days before the election, HUD ruled that the Hamtramck Housing Authority would be misappropriating funds if it were to build a police station on the park.

The third prong of the campaign involved not only saving the park but also repairing it.

Volunteers chopped down weeds and mowed the lawn. We installed tennis nets, new swings, trash cans and benches. We replaced the old boards around the skating rink. This past summer, we ran an inline hockey program for over 100 children. In the fall, we will hold our fifth annual Childrens' Day, a free festival for children. The event features arts and crafts, sports, games and prizes and draws over 1,000 children.

Preserve Our Parks was successful because it involved the community — young and old, children and adults, all nationalities. The campaign also led the community to remember its history: Once parks and recreation were important to the city. Veterans Park was home to Hamtramck's championship Little League team in 1959, the only team in Michigan ever to win the Little League World Series. Hamtramck also produced tennis champions, including Jane Peaches Bartkowicz.

Reviewing our history led us to discuss the future: What kind of community could Hamtramck become? Shouldn't we have well-tended parks and green spaces? And just as important, the Preserve Our Parks campaign showed that united, we can improve our lives. Sharon Buttry, an American Baptist minister and the executive director of the Friendship House — a Hamtramck community service agency — describes a feeling that many of us share. "Hamtramck is a place that you can get your arms around. It's not just statistics here. You can have hope that something can be done, that we can change people's lives."

Community nightmares

Unfortunately, for every success like Preserve Our Parks, there are dozens of other stories in which former Hamtramck officials' poor decisions resulted in economic or environmental nightmares.



Richard Hyska

Hamtramck teens at Preserve Our Parks' Children's Day — a children's festival in 1999.

In 1980, Hamtramck and Detroit officials conspired to allow General Motors to build the Poletown Assembly plant on the border of the two cities. Together, both governments razed 465 acres of land, knocking down hundreds of homes, 16 churches, two schools, a hospital, and the closed Dodge Main plant. In addition, the cities gave GM generous tax abatements of 50 percent over 12 years. Despite this corporate welfare, the workforce at Poletown never reached more than half the proposed size, and the surrounding industrial park, promised to revitalize Hamtramck, never materialized.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, this trend continued. The funky two-story bowling alley was replaced with a Rallys, while the city's last movie theater was torn down for a Wendys. A strip mall, complete with chain grocery, as well as drug and auto parts stores, was built at one of the city's main intersections, the site of the former high school. Across the street, a McDonalds was erected.

In an attempt to become a player in the real estate game, Hamtramck purchased the site of the former Sherwin-Williams lead paint factory. When the city later sold the land to Freezer-Services, the new owner discovered, not surprisingly, lead-contaminated soil. Freezer-Services sued the city and the taxpayers were forced to pay $6 million for the clean-up.

And in 1991, former city officials allowed a medical waste incinerator to open in a poor, predominately Arab-American and African-American neighborhood. This facility, the only commercial one in the state of Michigan, pumps mercury into the air at 30 to 60 times acceptable rates.

These policy disasters led many into the public realm. Some, like my husband Phillip Kwik, Ellen Phillips and Gary Zych, ran for and won public office.

Zych and Phillips are proponents of "new urbanism" — the idea that Hamtramck needs to maintain and expand its sense of neighborhoods and community. Kwik and

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Rob Cedar, the founder of the Hamtramck Environmental Action Team (HEAT), have developed an inside-outside "green strategy": Kwik on the inside as president of the City Council, writing and passing tough environmental ordinances, and Cedar on the outside, applying the much-needed community pressure.

"People in Hamtramck are victimized by corporate pollution," Cedar says. "We have to adopt a new way of thinking so that we don't bend over backwards for industry. We deserve clean air. We want our community to be a green place to live."

Race

In order for Hamtramck to grow, people will need to redefine not only their relationship with development and the environment, but also their relationships with each other. A number of conflicts plague Hamtramck. These are related mostly to diversity and to differences in political expectation.

As Kwik sees it, "Divisions among people are largely racial, sometimes phrased as the 'new' versus the 'old' people. The security that existed in this community when I was growing up — when the large majority of the population was Polish Catholic — is no longer there. To me, this makes Hamtramck exciting, but to some this makes Hamtramck scary. So many encounters that I have with others make some mention of race or nationality."

A recent encounter with an acquaintance, a Polish Catholic woman who is selling her house and moving to the suburbs, is representative. She told me not to worry because she sold her house to a young Catholic couple. In City Council chambers, one member — a Polish Catholic man — complains repeatedly about "those new stores." While he speaks in code, all know that he is referring to a strip of new restaurants and clothing shops owned largely by Bangladeshi-Americans.

"The comments about race keep us divided," says Kwik. "They make it clear that there is not an acceptance of diversity and difference." Hamtramck's young people note this obsession with race as well. Sixteen-year old Sammy has lived in the U. S. most of his life. He came to New York from Bangladesh when he was a year old and he has been in Hamtramck two years. He likes the "different colors in Hamtramck," he says. "But everyone is classified; everyone is in one category or another and people don't mix so much."

The reluctance to mix is especially clear in city politics. In Hamtramck's 78-year history, all but a handful of elected officials have been Polish-American Catholics. A few were of Ukrainian descent. Only one African-American has ever been elected to public office. No people of Arabic, Bangladeshi or Albanian descent have been elected.

About 30 percent of the city's workforce is African-American. But until Mayor Zych began his term in 1997, there were no African-American department heads. Recently, the city hired its first Bangladeshi-American — Shahab Ahmed — to fill the new position of multicultural director.

Ahmed tries to welcome newcomers to Hamtramck. "A lot of people are coming here from other countries," he explains. "If they find someone in the mayor's office with an accent, they feel they are talking to someone who understands."

Since taking the job in 1998, Ahmed has made a concerted effort to include newcomers in the political process; he also helps people earn their citizenship and register to vote. In 1997, there were only 67 Indian voters in Hamtramck, Ahmed says. Last year, there were 450 and now there are close to 800. People are motivated to get involved in politics.

Despite his achievements, Ahmed admits that working in City Hall can be difficult. "Some of the longtime workers and some Hamtramck citizens come directly up to my face and say racist things, like 'we have a boat to ship you back home.'"

This anti-immigrant feeling became clearest during the 1999 mayoral and city council election, when Ahmed ran on a slate with Zych and Kwik. The opposing mayoral candidate — a Polish-American Catholic who has lived in Hamtramck his whole life and whose father served as mayor 20 years ago — was supported by a group called Concerned Citizens for a Better Hamtramck. CCBH claimed that non-citizens would be voting in the election.

The group registered as challengers to the November 1999 election, in order, as they put it in their literature, to make sure that the election remained "pure." On election day, CCBH challenged more than 40 voters for "citizenship," violating those voters' civil rights. According to the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, whom Zych and Kwik called to investigate the discrimination, "Some voters were challenged before they signed their application to vote. Other voters were challenged after they had signed their applications and their names had been announced. The challenged voters had dark skin and distinctly Arabic names, such as Mohamed, Ahmed, and Ali."

Worse, the City Clerk's office, which runs the elections, clearly allowed these violations to continue. City Clerk Ethel Fiddler has made it known that she does not support Mayor Zych or the new direction of the city.

Justice Department officials said that they had not seen such blatant violations of the Voting Rights Act since the 1960s. Because of this, a number of important changes will be put in place: All election officials, including the Clerk, must undergo a training program; all election materials must appear in English, Arabic and Bengali. Each polling place must hire at least one bilingual Arabic-American and one bilingual Bangladeshi-American. In addition, a federal examiner will oversee all elections until December 31, 2003.

Ahmed is hopeful about the changes that will be put in place. He is also optimistic that he, or another immigrant, will be elected to public office in the near future. While he did not win a city council seat in 1999, he lost by only 100 votes (out of 3500 cast). "If there were an Arab-American or a Bangladeshi on Council, things would be different," he states.

Ahmed's optimism is shared by others in Hamtramck. As Buttry explains, "There is, in Hamtramck, an underlying sense of hopefulness. This is why people stay here. We can envision what our actions can do. We all focus on community: What will the future look like? How can we define ourselves? How can we reach our potential and use Hamtramck's conflicts constructively, to create the kind of world that we want to be remembered for 100 years from now?" ●

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RE-SEEDING

A monastic experiment in ecology and ecumenism

by Marianne Arbogast

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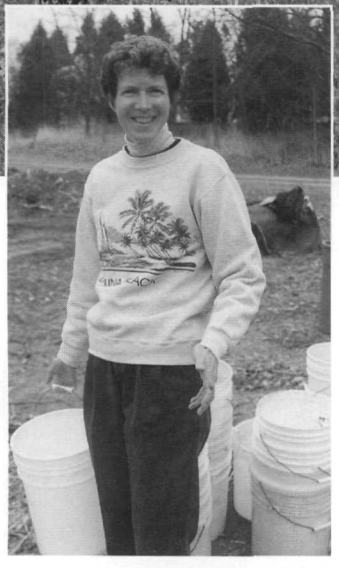

Lynne Smith, an ordained Presbyterian minister and Benedictine sister, joins in the community's work of restoring the prairie lands surrounding it.

WHEN THE SISTERS of St. Benedict of Madison, Wis. established their monastery in 1954, they were surrounded by pastureland. Today, they are ringed by high-priced homes and recreation developments. But for the small, traditionally Roman Catholic community of women, the changes provided a catalyst which led them to a new commitment to the land and a new venture in ecumenical monasticism.

A decade ago, after a developer approached them with a proposal to build a golf course on their property, the sisters decided they needed to do some planning of their own. "We had consistently said no to the developers on selling any of our land, but we began to realize that the building being done around us had begun to heavily silt in a small glacial lake on our property," says Joanne Kollasch, the community's director of formation and one of its founding members. "We were beginning to lose the wildlife, the deer and the birds. So we began an initiative to reclaim the lake by dredging some of the silt, and also to re-seed the hills with prairie grasses and plants."

The community is now committed to restoring half of their 130 acres of land to pre-settlement prairie, and the reclaiming of 10,000-year-old "Lost Lake" has been officially designated as part of the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed Demonstration Project. "It will look the way it did before the Europeans arrived," says Marykay Bell, director of communications for the monastery's large conference center, and an Episcopalian. "They are planting native wildflowers and grasses and building up an oak savannah. Hospitality is a Benedictine charism, and the restoration of the land is hospitality to the people who come here and to the land itself."

As the sisters continued their visioning process, they were also drawn to embark on a unique ecumenical experiment.

"Since we were doing this planning, we said, let's do some planning for the community," Kollasch says. "We asked, what kind of monastic presence will we take into the next century? The strain of ecumenism was very strong for us, because from 1966 we had an ecumenical retreat and conference center. So we took the next step, which was to invite celibate Christian women of other denominations to form community with us."

A number of women have explored the possibility of membership, and this past June Lynne Smith, an ordained Presbyterian minister, made her first profession of vows, joining Kollasch and Mary David Walgenbach in the core monastic community. (Three other sisters are retired and living elsewhere.)

"Ecumenical work has always been an important part of my own life and ministry, but a lot of ecumenical work is done on the national level, as

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opposed to actually living it out," Smith says. "This is pretty exciting to me. I don't know of any other monastic community I could join without becoming either Roman Catholic or Episcopalian." Smith maintains membership in the Presbyterian Church and has formed ties with a local Presbyterian congregation.

"Each tradition has its own gifts and strengths, so the women who come will bring those," she believes. "The strength of the Roman Catholic — and not just Roman Catholic, but the Benedictine tradition — is liturgy. The Presbyterian heritage is theological reflection and study of the scriptures. What unites us is the Liturgy of the Hours, which is Benedictine. That liturgy was there before there were any splits in the church. We all take turns leading. It is so lifegiving to me — it's powerful to pray together like that."

Kollasch also stresses that the goal is not to erase distinctions. "We need to help people understand that we're not setting up some new sect, and that traditions do not wash out in an ecumenical community."

But in the day-to-day rhythm of monastic life — marked by prayer, retreat work, hospitality and care for the earth — "there is so much more that unites us than divides us," she says. "The question should not be, why are Christians coming together, but why are they separated? We take as normal the separation, but we should take as normal our common baptism.

"Ecumenism finds an easy entry into Benedictine monastic life, because of the values of respect for persons, hospitality and dialogue," Kollasch says. "And Benedictine life is organic. How do you define clearly what is a tree? By the time you get through defining it, you're not interested. There is something of that in the Benedictine psyche. There is a great deal of emphasis on love of poetry, of beauty, of nature. Those things are universal."

St. Benedict's Center has hosted not only Christians of various denominations but Jewish and Buddhist guests as well — including, once, the Dalai Lama.

"People who live here expect that we will pray with Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Hindus sometimes, on any given day," Kollasch says. "So it is an easy next step to live in community together."

The core community forms the heart of a much larger circle of spiritual kinship. An ecumenical group of men and women called the "Community of St. Benedict" meets regularly for prayer, reflection and mutual support. Benedictines from overseas often live at the monastery while studying in the U.S., and the staff of St. Benedict's Center forms yet another circle of extended community.

"Our co-workers buy into the vision very deeply," Kollasch says. "Our groundskeeper, for instance, is married, but he is a monk in his heart. He's been here a long time, and he subscribes to care of the earth.

"If you put this community of ours in the center you can draw some concentric circles around it, and how porous you make the membrane has to do not only with the community but with how other people identify with that community. I tell people that there are many doors to St. Benedict's.

"The spirit of St. Benedict says, respect people of all backgrounds. Benedict took into his monastery the barbarians who were overrunning Europe, the wealthy as well as the very poor. That tradition of hospitality, to receive each person who comes to the monastery as Christ, gives the framework in which to insert 21st-century dynamics. People still need acceptance. When they come to the monastery, we don't ask them to pass a test on their beliefs. They are looking for something in this place, so we invite them in and hope they find it. There is dialogue in which we and the guests learn and are blessed."

St. Benedict's regularly offers a program called T.I.M.E. — Together in Monastic Experience. Participants spend three to six days sharing in the life of the community. Each day begins and ends with silent centering prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours is prayed in common in the morning, at midday and at dusk. Mornings are spent in conference or dialogue, afternoons are given to manual work — often outdoors — and evenings are free.

The sisters have also led retreats with brothers from the Taizé community, hosted the Madison Interfaith Dialogue, and held a Jewish-Christian-Buddhist retreat. Numerous volunteers also come to St. Benedict's to help with earth-tending projects.

At the dawn of the new millennium, 175 people showed up for a New Year's Eve gathering which had been advertised on local radio and television stations. Guests shared a meal, then chose between a variety of spiritual exercises including centering prayer, Taizé prayer and a hymn sing. At midnight, everyone gathered around a bonfire on the hill outside.

"It was fun and people absolutely loved it," Kollasch says. "And there were people from a lot of different backgrounds."

In the transition to a new style of monastic community, flexibility and patience are important, she says.

"It has to be the experimental approach, not an approach whereby you figure it all out in advance. It is very important for us to learn to hear each other. We can't do that if we have determined all the answers before we have the questions. The vision must have its time, I'm convinced of that. We have to take the approach of waiting, seeing, not casting it in a mold." ●

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Learning to live from the heart

by Stephanie and Richard Bower

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Stephanie Bower with Eric, a core member of the L'Arche community in Syracuse, N.Y.

L'ARCHE BEGAN 36 years ago in the northern French village of Trosly-Breuil, with three men living in community. Jean Vanier was a French Canadian philosopher, the son of a prominent family in Quebec, Canada. Raphael Simi and Philippe Seux were two men who had lived most of their lives in mental institutions.

"I had created inner barriers to protect myself from my fears and vulnerability," Vanier writes in *The Heart of L'Arche*. "In this beginning of community, the three of us, I began to learn to live from the heart."

L'Arche is French for "the Ark," a safe place to hold people where God's covenant has been manifested. There are now approximately 120 L'Arche communities around the world, including 14 in the U.S. Rooted in the teachings of Jesus, especially the Beatitudes, L'Arche offers family to the outcast and hope to neighborhoods where they live.

Learning to be community, to be family together, is at the heart of L'Arche. Vanier reminds people continually that "society regards people with disabilities as 'misfits,' 'sub-human.' The birth of a child with a handicap is considered a tragedy for a family. But in L'Arche we discover that these people have a great openness of heart and capacity for love; they seem to reveal what is most fundamental in all of us. Living with them in community can be difficult, but it also transforms us and teaches us what really matters in life. We may come to L'Arche to help the weak, but we soon realize that, in fact, it is they who are helping us."

Taking time to be present

A L'Arche assistant of several years (assistants are the people who live in community with the core members, those who are mentally disabled), Stephanie Bower recalls that "one of my earliest lessons in L'Arche was to take time to be present to people. Trying to be efficient in the many tasks that needed to be done, as well as keep core members involved in meaningful activities, I asked a core member of my community, Eric, if he would like to have coffee with me. While I was preparing the coffee, I remembered I was supposed to make a birthday cake. Time was of the essence. I began preparations for the cake. I gave Eric his cup of coffee at the kitchen table near where I was working. By this time another core member had expressed interest in helping cook. I began to involve this person in mixing the batter. Realizing that I had somehow forgotten my promise to Eric, I tried to involve him too. When I asked him if he would like to help, he simply pointed to the coffee, looked me straight in the eye and said very quietly, 'You and I are having coffee together.'

"What I had promised was to share coffee and to be fully present to him, not to do something. I asked his forgiveness. We sat and sipped coffee together for several minutes in silence. In due time the cake got made. In the meantime I had learned an important lesson that has affected all of my relationships since then. I began to listen deeply and with my heart to people I love."

At the heart of the L'Arche family is the spirit of celebration. Everything gets celebrated in L'Arche — healing, return from time away, birthdays, anniversaries, sacramental milestones such as baptism and confirmation, achievements as well as failures.

And L'Arche is a community of forgiveness. Members of the community, both core members and assistants, may bring years of loneliness and rejection — and often even deep anger — to the common life. Many people who are mentally handicapped feel guilty just for living. This guilt is often expressed in anger. Individuals who are mentally disabled are people who live with an open directness. The hurt and pain they have lived are inevitably expressed, touching the more repressed pain of the assistants.

Core members

Sandrita, a child whose home had been swept away in the 1998 Honduran hurricane, was brought to the L'Arche house, Casa San Jose, in Choluteca. Sandrita, mentally disabled, lived in a loving but poor home, with many siblings and no discipline. Most of the skills she had learned to cope with her earlier life were disruptive to this new community. After a little more than a year in L'Arche, Sandrita is learning how to forgive and be

Lifesharing Communities

by Linda Strohmier

MY DAUGHTER MAGGIE, now nearly 30, has lived for the last 11 years in a "family of choice" called the Life Needs Coop, part of a larger community of lifesharing families known as Cadmus Lifesharing Association. Maggie is multiply handicapped — brain-damaged, with multiple physical handicaps. She is also absolutely at home in this family, where she knows herself to be whole and wholly accepted — essential, even.

Maggie's particular household is the largest in Cadmus. Nick and Andrea Stanton are the heads of the household, which they share with seven to 10 handicapped adults and three to eight "co-workers." The household is constantly shifting in composition and number, depending on who needs a vacation, who needs respite care, how many volunteers from overseas have come to work and live alongside, and even how many of Nick and Andrea's five children or their six grandchildren are staying over for a few days or a few weeks.

The house, whose kernel is a two-over-two New England farmhouse with a walk-in fireplace built in 1750, has grown, like the family — a bit here, some more there — into a rambling, comfortable home surrounded by flower beds. There are now at least four usable common room spaces and 12 or so bedrooms in the main house, decks and balconies and patios on three sides, plus offices and shops in outbuildings and the barn, which also houses an eight-loom weavery and a pasta-producing operation, the handiwork of their middle son, a professional chef.

This lifesharing community is rooted in the Camphill Movement, started by a German pediatrician, Karl Koenig, in Scotland in the late 1930s. Having fled Nazi Germany and its eugenics program, Koenig and a group of coworkers began a household and school to care for "spastic children" near Camp Hill, outside of Glasgow. Camphill has since grown into a worldwide movement of schools for

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handicapped children and of larger and smaller communities in which handicapped and non-handicapped adults live together.

Lifesharing varies the Camphill model by basing itself in individual family units, each an economically viable, independent entity. Life Needs Coop/North Plain Farm is a lifesharing household, now associated with six other lifesharing households in southern Berkshire County, Mass. Each household stands alone, but they collaborate in sharing activities, community meals, work projects, and each member's own specialized skills. They weave with Andrea, bake with Nina, work on recycling with John, frolic in the river behind Rachel's house. Each household is a "family of choice" or "volunteer family" guided by a married couple or individual dedicated to creating and maintaining a healthy extended family life. People with disabilities are included in these extended families as in a natural family.

In Cadmus Lifesharing, the motto is: "Everyone is perfect in their essential being, and everyone is handicapped in bringing their essence to expression." In practice, that works out to mean that everyone in a lifesharing house genuinely needs and is interdependent upon everyone else there. Or, as the Cadmus Philosophy statement says, "The Cadmus Lifesharing Association seeks to create a community in which it is no handicap to be handicapped."

Maggie knows that, while you might think she lives at Life Needs Coop to be taken care of, instead she is an essential part of the whole functioning family. Yes, she needs help bathing and dressing, and she gets it. On the other hand, one day this spring Andrea called to ask if we could rearrange Maggie's spring vacation time so that she could stay with them for the two weeks they had Amy for respite care. Amy is a more profoundly handicapped young woman — non-speaking, probably autistic — with whom Maggie has formed a strong bond of care. She will sit for hours talking with Amy, reading to her — inhabiting her world and often giving voice to Amy's needs and wants, which she seems to intuit. Andrea called to say that they just didn't think they could manage Amy for those two weeks without Maggie. It was one of the proudest moments of my life. It's also, I think, the essence of "lifesharing." ●

Linda Strohmier is a priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, N.J.

Intentionally, L'Arche seeks to build community across language, religious and cultural barriers.

forgiven. She is learning that no matter what, she is welcomed and cherished.

Richard Bower met Santos, another core member of the Choluteca L'Arche community, on a visit during his sabbatical in Central America. Santos, a man of about 30, had been in this community about 13 years. He does not know his parents, nor any of his family. He was abandoned in the streets of Choluteca, autistic and with severe physical defects.

"He was welcomed into the L'Arche family, and over the past 13 years has learned a bit how to speak, and a lot about how to communicate," Richard says. "He walks and he works now with his hands with 80 percent of full capacity. He makes beautiful hammocks in the L'Arche workshop, something he is very proud of. His eyes sparkle with excitement and warmth. He loves to sing and celebrate, and is the leader of most of the celebrations in his small community. He can be demanding and bossy at times, but that is mostly because he has moved from passivity to being empowered in his life."

Ted is a core member of the L'Arche Community in Syracuse, N.Y. He came to L'Arche as a young adult, abandoned as an infant by his family, living in an institution. Ted was unable to speak, hardly able to navigate. He was so troubled, so angry when he came to L'Arche that assistants had to take turns caring for him. There were long weeks when assistants had to change every 15 minutes or so because of the turmoil Ted was experiencing. The community did not think it had the capacity to keep Ted in their midst. But they remembered that there were no outcasts in L'Arche, and Ted remained.

Today, 20 years later, Ted is a lovely, caring, joy-filled member of the L'Arche family. He has come home, and the richness of his gifts, the exuberance and joy he brings to his new family, are signs of what can be true for the whole human family.

Core members are welcomed for life to these communities. Some come from the streets, some from institutions, some from private homes. Assistants come from all parts of the world, bringing a variety of motivations. Intentionally, L'Arche seeks to build community across language, religious and cultural barriers. Some assistants serve for two or three years, some longer, and some with a lifelong commitment. This dynamic of permanent and transient members, and of an international mix, offers both a gift and a challenge.

Signs of healthy communities

From his 36 years in L'Arche, Jean Vanier has reflected on the signs of healthy communities. First, he identifies health in community as the kind of openness to the weak and needy in one's own community that opens our heart to others who are weak and needy. A second sign, says Vanier, is the way a community humbly lives its mission of service to others in gentle mutual ways, not using or manipulating, but empowering them. A third sign is that, as we begin to recognize and value the gifts we find in others, we move beyond our own tight certainties, and become more open to each other and to what is new. A fourth sign is that a community can learn and grow from its errors, moving beyond the need for superiority, open to God's truth from wherever this truth comes. Rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition, L'Arche has grown into a vital ecumenical community, and in places like India has sought to live in faith with people of non-Christian religious traditions.

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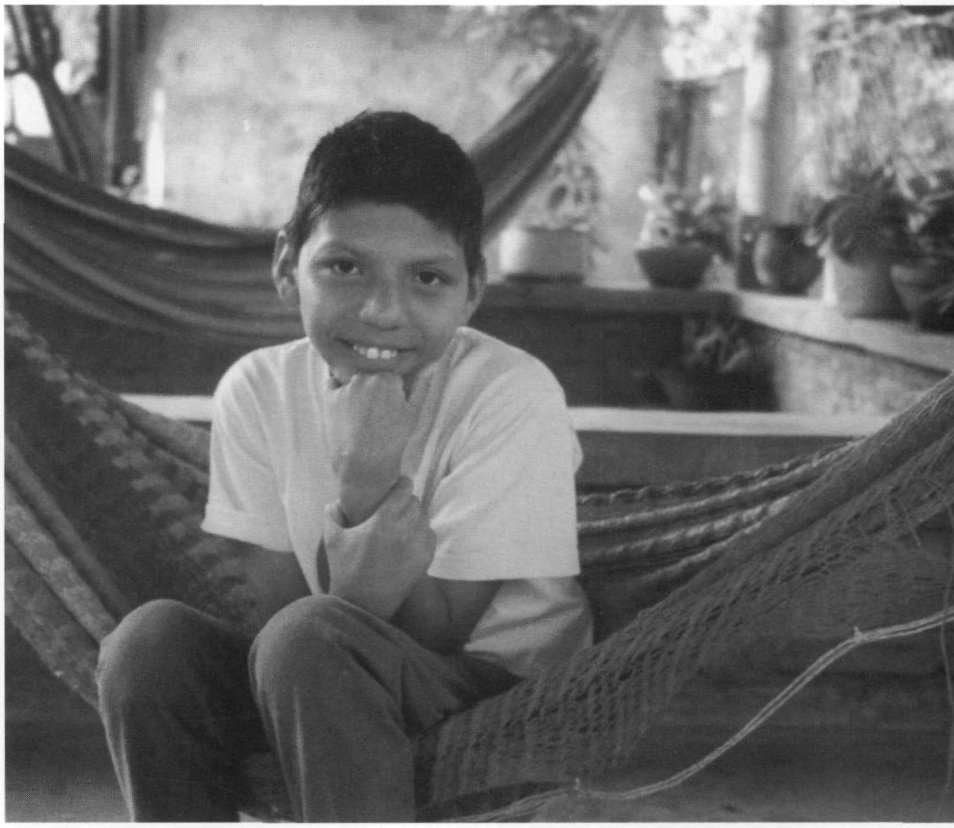
"Our communities want to witness to the church and to the world that God knows all persons in their deepest being and loves them in their brokenness," Vanier says (*The Heart of L'Arche*). "L'Arche is not a solution to a social problem, but a sign that love is possible, and that we are not condemned to live in a state of war and conflict where the strong crush the weak. Each person is unique, precious and sacred."

Our lives so often (even in the church) are shaped by competition, rivalry, busyness, fear and guilt. We have found in L'Arche not a perfect community, but one which seeks to live the Gospel life of welcome, sharing and simplicity. We have learned new ways to live the unity which is God's dream for all people. We have learned that faithfulness means we learn and are shaped by the weakest members of our community. And we are learning that reconciliation is made possible by communities that have "a simple life-style which gives priority to relationships" (from the *Charter of the Communities of L'Arche*).





Most of all, we have learned what it means to be a sign and not a solution. Solutions come and go, make sense one day and not another. But living in community is a sign, a light of hope that society can truly be human. Jesus lived his sign in being present with and offering healing to the outcast, the marginalized. L'Arche roots its sign in welcome and respect for the weak and the downtrodden. Jesus did not solve all the spiritual and social problems of his day. Neither does L'Arche. But L'Arche, living the way of Jesus, seeks to give concrete expression to the reality of the reign of God in our world.

We have been drawn to L'Arche because L'Arche communities "want to be in solidarity with the poor of the world, and with all those who take part in the struggle for justice" (*Charter of the Communities of L'Arche*). L'Arche has renewed our commitment to live in and foster healthy communities, in the church as well as in places where we live. ●

Lita (left) and Melvin (top), are core members of Casa San José in Choluteca, Honduras.

__Stephanie D. Bower__ is an assistant with the L'Arche Community in Syracuse, N.Y. Earlier this year she served L'Arche in Choluteca, Honduras for three months. __Richard A. Bower__ is the recently retired Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in Syracuse and a member of The Witness' *board of directors. He has been appointed by the Presiding Bishop to be the Episcopal Church's link with L'Arche U.S.*

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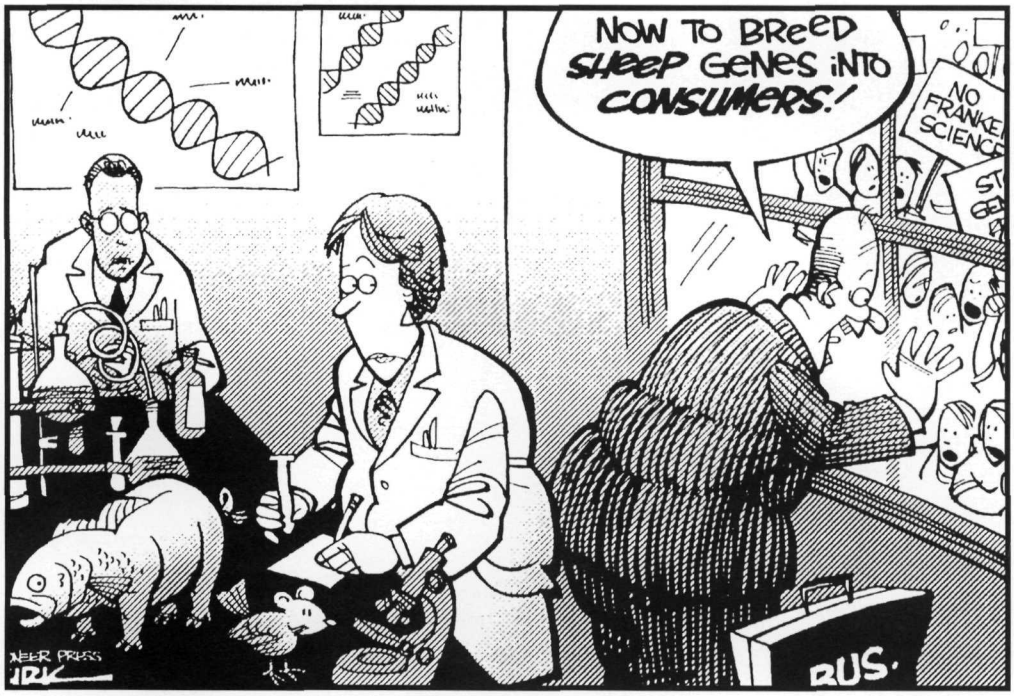

Moratorium 2000 calls for halt to death penalty

Helen Prejean, spiritual advisor to death-row inmates and author of *Dead Man Walking*, says it's time for her supporters to step up the pressure on their elected leaders to stop state executions. "The first thing I'm asking folks to do," says Prejean, "is sign the Moratorium 2000 petition, to put their name down and commit themselves to ending this terrible system."

Coordinated out of an office in New Orleans, the Moratorium 2000 campaign already has more than 80,000 signatures — and thousands more are arriving each week. The signatures will be gathered for presentation to the United Nations in December, in honor of International Human Rights Day. State groups will also use the names from their area to lobby state legislatures for a moratorium.

"A moratorium is like a cease-fire in a war," explains Prejean. "It's the first step towards peace on this issue, with governments agreeing not to execute any more prisoners. Many people find it's a safer way to begin moving away from their support of the death penalty, like a mid-point, so they can really take a look at what we are doing."

It's a particularly newsworthy topic these days, with a diverse group of moratorium supporters like Pat Robertson, actress Susan Sarandon, Illinois Governor George Ryan (a Republican), and musician Bruce Springsteen. The presidential candidates (both death-penalty supporters) are routinely confronted by questions about capital punishment. The movement against executions has been fueled by discoveries of innocent men on death row, stories of public defenders who were drunk or asleep during trial and a disproportionate number of poor minorities on death row.

"We can show that this is a broken system that can never be fixed," insists Prejean. "And we've got to stop this killing now, with an immediate moratorium."

Moratorium 2000 hopes that those who sign onto the petition will be willing to get further involved with the struggle by participating in local activities and circulating the petitions in their communities.

To sign the petition and make donations, visit the Moratorium 2000 website (www.moratorium2000.org). For materials, contact the Moratorium 2000 office: P.O. Box 13727 New Orleans, LA 70185; (504) 864-1071; <info@moratorium2000.org>.

— *Theresa Meisz*

Phone strikes and 'free time'

"In Sunday's *New York Times* (7/30/00) there was a major article on a possible impending telephone workers strike — the CWA (Communication Workers of America) vs. "Verizon" — what was Bell Atlantic, plus other global-corporate parts," writes Rabbi Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center (www.shalomctr.org) in an email communication to groups involved with the Center's "Free Time/Free People" project.

"As you know, about two years ago, the Shalom Center began bringing together people from a broad spectrum of religious communities and traditions with some secular scholars, to address the issue of overwork in American society, and its destructive impact on families, neighborhoods, and spiritual life.

"Among the folks we started working with was Jobs with Justice (JwJ), a national network of pro-labor community people and the most creative energies in the labor movement. JwJ invited us to lead a workshop on Free Time/ Free People at their recent annual national meeting, including a sub-conference on Religion & Labor.

"The conference had about 700 participants — about 150 from religious groups/congregations, about 200 students, maybe 100 from various community organizations, the rest from labor.

"There was a very strong sense of excitement and forward energy, and a consensus that specific critiques and issues fit within a critique of the increasing anti-democratic power of global corporations, which have been growing in their power to brush aside national governments, labor unions, environmental groups and consumers.

"How did this perception of growing corporate power and this feeling of more resistance-power co-exist? Through a sense that public attention and organizing energy are now focused on the right place, and that workers, students, religious folk, and environmentalists are beginning to see a common oppressiveness in global-corporate institutions that endanger the values of each of those gatherings of people.

"There was a plenary session with five or

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six major figures from labor movements in South Africa, Europe, Latin America, and Asia — as a working effort to bring together a transnational labor movement to resist the new global corporatism.

"Most of the workshops were focused on nuts-and-bolts stories of effective organizing, rather than on theoretical or ideological debate. In the religion-labor discussions, there was some discussion of the difference between 'calling a collar' — that is, getting a priest/ minister/ rabbi to come speak on behalf of a labor struggle so as to give it legitimacy in public eyes — vs. the notion that labor unionists might listen to religious concerns closely and deepen their own approach to organizing by taking religion seriously.

"Here is where the Free Time/ Free People project comes in.

"Once upon a time, the labor movement fought for the eight-hour day and the 40-hour week. More recently, large parts of it have succumbed to sheer money-ism and have not complained even at huge amounts of compulsory overtime, because it pays more.

"But this is now changing. The CWA telephone struggle is an example.

"The entire JwJ conference, instead of only sitting in classrooms to learn together, went on Friday afternoon to join a mass picket line at a nearby Bell Atlantic plant. Most of the workers there answer phone calls from customers who need various kinds of information. The work force has been halved over the last two years. But the work has not. So workers are now on intense speed-up.

"When a certain number of calls pile up unanswered, the bosses announce 'red alert.' That means no one can leave the desk, stretch, shmooze, pee — no free time. This is one of the major oppressions against which CWA is organizing.

"One of CWA's major concerns is that after two generations of being a unionized company, Bell Atlantic/ Verizon is now making sure that the new-tech areas in the bigger 'Verizon' holding company are not unionized — so that the phone workers are being boxed in and will not be able to resist such speed-up pressures.

"As we pointed out in our own workshop at JwJ, the Free Time vs. Overwork issue could call forth a cross-class alliance. Fancy lawyers at fancy firms, blue-collar workers with no time to breathe, and very poor workers holding two or even three jobs to barely get by are all being overworked. Addressing this issue could bring them together.

"JwJ invited the Shalom Center to create a 'Welcome to the Sabbath' of some sort for the whole conference, not just the Jews.

"What I chose to do Friday evening was to begin with invoking one of the great labor organizers of all time — i.e., Moses — who in a society where construction was very big business organized Bricklayers Local #1 (an image from A. J. Muste). I talked about how hard the organizing was — even workers who joined the union quit when the boss, CEO of Egypt, Inc, got tougher. But finally they called a strike and won.

"Two strands of practice grew from this victory: rules against exploiting workers or foreigners and — Sabbath. I connected that with the CWA/Verizon struggle — red alerts, etc. — we had learned about on Friday afternoon.

"And I said that even organizers need to rest, to reflect, to sing, to celebrate with joy.

"So — I hope you all will reflect on your own experiences with forced overwork, and the ways you could make 'space' in your lifetime, and on how these experiences point the way toward what we should be doing next to open up Free Time."

Accessible congregations

The Accessible Congregations Campaign, a project of the Religion & Disability Program of the National Organization on Disability, Washington, D.C., seeks to recruit 2,000 congregations by Dec. 31, 2000 that are committed to removing their barriers of architecture, communications and attitudes and welcoming people with disabilities. To date, the campaign has received commitments to become hospitable and welcoming to people with all types of disabilities from 1,256 congregations of all faiths nationwide, including 94 Episcopal Church congregations. Campaign leaders believe that access to worship for people with disabilities is as vital as access to employment, transportation, health care and education.

Visit the campaign's website at www.nod.org for more information and to find a list of congregations by state.

—Lorraine Thal

Voting for faith, not theology

The Christian Science Monitor's Peter Grier reports (8/10/00), "Polls show atheism would be far more damaging to a presidential or vice presidential candidate thatn adherence to any major religion.

"But U.S. voters prefer that candidates' public religiousity remain bland. General pronunciations of faith and values win votes. Specific theological discussion can lose them."

CLASSIFIEDS

Preaching award competition

Virginia Theological Seminary invites all Episcopal preachers — bishops, priests, deacons, laypersons — to submit one sermon for the 2000 John Hines Preaching Award. Sermon must have been delivered to a congregation between I Advent 1999 and end of Pentecost 2000. Prize: $2000. Write The Rev. Robert Burch, VTS, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304. Email: <Bburch@vts.edu>.

The Way of the Wolf

The Way of the Wolf on CD. Brand-new reading by author Martin Bell. All stories and poems from the bestselling book, including the Christmas classic "Barrington Bunny." 2-CDs $24.95. Call 906-643-6597 or visit <barringtonbunny.com>.

Order of Jonathan Daniels

An Episcopal religious community-in-formation striving for justice and peace among all people. OJD, PO Box 29, Boston, MA 02134; <OrdJonDanl@aol.com>.

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Mary Romano

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THE

Attending to the community of life

by Mary Romano

LIKE SO MANY who enjoy living in Colorado, I love to hike in the mountains, along the streams, through dense woods, and to pristine alpine lakes, discovering the many vistas, treasures, and natural wonders of our state. Yet, most typically, in my adult life, I have hiked toward a designated location, walking with the goal of seeing something specific — a waterfall or a particular vista.

On one wet September morning, while traveling on the West Elk Loop scenic drive in the Kebler Pass area , I experienced a vivid reawakening of the benefits of a less intentional way of walking, a way I knew as a child.

My husband and I were heading off for a week-long vacation, enjoying the Colorado mountains. We needed to be in Crested Butte by evening, but it was still early in the day, and we had no specific goal other than to enjoy a relaxed time in the hills. Since we had spent most of the morning together, inside the car and rain-beaten, we were a bit edgy — so we were quite comfortable with the idea of each taking off in our own chosen direction to spend a bit of solo time outdoors.

I meandered down the side of the hill, being careful to walk gently on rocks or pebbles, as there was no trail and the ground was rather soft. I had no goal in mind, other than capturing yet another variation of the favorite vista before me. After a few moments of observing the vast sea of aspen and evergreen on the laps of the mountains across the valley, I was struck by the absence of agenda in this moment.

My slow, careful steps reminded me of a "calling walk" exercise that I had experienced during a workshop. The idea is that rather than deciding consciously where to walk (as we most typically do), you simply walk, quiet your mind and allow yourself to be called by the wild, by all the life-forms around you — the rocks, the wind, the cricket — opening yourself to listen to the guides around you.

With this agenda-less opportunity before me, I began shifting my intentions to open my heart to the "Call of the Earth," as Theodor Roszak has described it. I simply began to listen with my heart open. My eyes softened their focus, attentive to the varietal hues of this wet, terraced slope. My ears began to notice more subtle sounds, even the sounds of the moisture dropping from leaf edges to the grass below. My heart grew more sensitive, deepening in appreciation of the variety of fertile, moist life around me. My pace was slow and mindful as I carefully and respectfully placed my steps on rocks and gravel to minimize my impact on the soft, rain-soaked soil. Yet the direction of my travel was not intentioned by my desire to go any particular way — rather, I was being called.

The call came not from a single voice, but from a sort of intuitive interaction with a vibrant community of organisms — plants, creatures, air, moistness and stone — surrounding me. The first bit of nature that called me was the color of the leaves of some scrub oak. Then the moisture

CALLING WALK

among the grasses — and the colors of the foliage dying, going to sleep for the fall — all kept drawing me back to the edge of a bramble of decomposing branches and rotting leaves, still wet from an early morning rain.

Among this earthy moist thicket, I saw a small spiral shell, like the kind you find along a beach. I had first seen this type of shell on the west side of the Bellvue hogback, north of Ft. Collins. The shells, roughly an inch in diameter and one-quarter inch wide, form a spiral like most any other shell you'd find along the shore of the ocean. I assumed they were some recent ancestors, uprooted with the uprising of this hillside, exposed from some long-ago sea bed. Preserved somehow in near-perfect condition, they appeared to be recently occupied — like the kind of shell I would find on the beach. But I could not imagine a snail living so far from the ocean, here in Colorado! Over the years, I'd been left with questions in the back of my mind: How old were these shells? When did they live? Why were the shells in such perfect condition, and not fossilized into stone?

And now, here on Kebler, the same type of shell! I drew closer to see more detail. There were familiar subtle bandings of browns, grays and white, shimmering lightly in the rain — and then I saw it move! There was a snail inside. This was not an ancient home, but a land-dwelling snail! I was filled with gratitude toward the little creature.

Time seemed to melt away. What in actuality was about 20 minutes in duration seemed like hours. The experience of the present moment was much fuller and richer than any typical experience of time.

Much of what had prepared me for this "calling walk" was my study of ecopsychology over the years. Ecopsychology is a new field that attempts to heal the gap between humanity and the earth. Ecopsychology recognizes that sanity must include sustainability and a strong and mutually-enhancing relationship with the natural world. Specifically, ecopsychology proposes the concept that at the core of our mind is the "ecological unconscious" or "ecological self" that is present in each of us at birth, but becomes muted and silent as we age, dampened by our corporate-industrial, consumerist culture. Ecopsychology contends that the suppression of this ecological unconscious is the root of madness in industrial society and that the road to sanity and sustainability is opening the access to this ecological unconscious.

Additionally, my inquiry into the emotional lives of animals (described by J. M. Masson) and consciousness of other life-forms — mammals, birds, insects, or plants — has led me to know that we, as a species, are not alone in our communication. We are capable of caring, loving relationships with our pets, and trusting, working relationships with draft animals, certainly. But there is also the potential for communication beyond our limited language, and even beyond our five senses, that allows us to "speak to" or "listen with" other forms of life.

It is experiences like my calling walk at Kebler Pass that bring such understandings to life, that help us know in a deeper way that we are not separate from the natural world — we are within the diverse community of life which is part of a complex, self-organizing system, moving through our creative journey through time and space, all part of the original gift born of a fireball. We share the energy of that creative moment with all that is. The natural world is always speaking to us, calling us home. If we nurture a willing openness to our intuitive abilities, we will hear that call. ●

Environmental activist and Colorado native ***Mary Romano*** *works with EarthLinks in Denver, Colo.*

The direction of my travel was not intentioned by my desire to go any particular way — rather, I was being called. The call came not from a single voice, but from a sort of intuitive interaction with a vibrant community of organisms — plants, creatures, air, moistness and stone — surrounding me.

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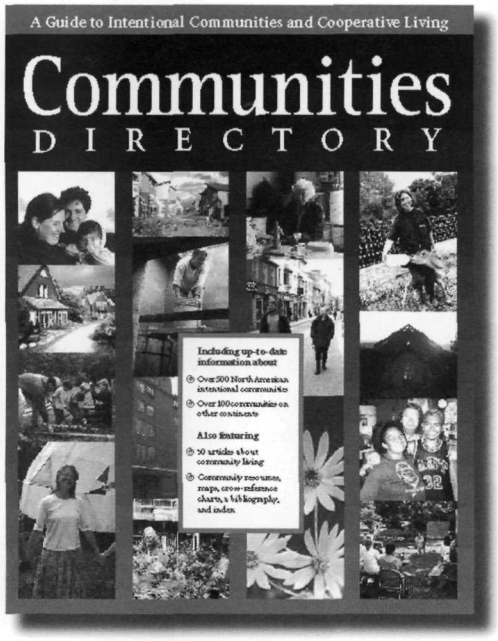
Communities Directory

by Joseph Wakelee-Lynch



Communities Directory: A Guide to Intentional Communities and CooperativeLiving,
Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC),
Rutledge, MO, 2000

To order, write
Communities
138 Twin Oaks Rd.,
Louisa, VA 23093

JUST ABOUT 18 YEARS AGO, I joined an intentional Christian community in Washington, D.C. Ronald Reagan had been elected president, and his secretary of state, Alexander Haig, was eager to confront the Soviet Union, perhaps by using nuclear weapons. I had recently spent five weeks in Japan, highlighted by a sojourn to Hiroshima, and I was determined to respond politically and personally. Fortunately, I had discovered a community in which my political commitment could be united with my faith.

I vividly recall a bright, warm, late Sunday afternoon in D.C. At the intersection of Columbia Road and 16th Street, the sun illuminated several churches, turning their walls golden. I peered down Columbia Road into the neighborhood where I'd make my new home, a neighborhood ravaged by riots in 1968. I uneasily pondered the step I would soon take. But the reassuring words of the Psalmist were in my mind:

> *"Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;*
> *you have made my lot secure.*
>
> *The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;*
> *surely I have a delightful inheritance"*
>
> *(Psalm 16:5-6, NIV)*

The choices that people make to live in community, it seems to me, are probably rooted in both a critique of culture — a society's politics, lifestyles, ecological policies, power structures, gender relations — and belief, or for religious people faith, in an alternative. For most of us, building community engages our head and our heart, and communities born in one without the other are probably destined to fail. The absence of flexibility and love and the absence of vision are usually fatal to community life. For religious people, faith may also be essential; it certainly is a kind of community grease that can keep the wheels turning even on uphill slopes.

The *Communities Directory*, published by the Fellowship for International Communities (FIC), is a massive compendium of community models, the work of many hearts and the fruit of social and political critique. The current volume is the third edition produced by FIC, a nonprofit, educational organization that acts as an information hub and a community-building resource. FIC also offers referrals and support resources to people who want to learn about community living, including weekend conferences on managing the nuts and bolts of life together.

Compiling this resource was a multi-year project for Jillian Downey and Elph Morgan, the project's managing editors. To gather information, they mailed several thousand surveys and traveled the country in an old RV to visit communities. They paid their way by offering 10 hours of work a week in return for room and board.

The "Communities Directory" consists of a list of communities with their self-descriptions, articles about many aspects of community life, an annotated reading list, maps, and a listing of organizations serving as resources for community or alternative lifestyles. Information is included about more than 700 communities, more than 100 of them located outside of North America. That the communities have provided their own descriptions is noteworthy. The editors offer a kind of caveat emptor to readers about evaluating information included in the book. "The FIC," explain

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the editors, "asked communities to participate only if they do not advocate violent practices or do not interfere with their members' freedom to leave their group at any time." But Downey and Morgan caution that the FIC has few resources with which to verify any group's claims. In effect, they've asked participating organizations to follow an honor code.

The communities included defy categorization: rural, urban, Christian, New Age, environmental, vegetarian, lesbian, nonviolent, egalitarian, service-oriented, devoted to political resistance and civil disobedience.

One, made up of eight people, was formed as recently as 1997; another, the Hutterian Brethren, was formed in 1528, and has 40,000 members spread throughout communities across the U.S. and Canada.

In fact, the diversity of views about this most excruciating and exhilarating of ventures is a great strength of the volume. The directory includes articles about cults, etiquette for community visitors and how to nurture longevity, along with useful advice about the finances of community: land trusts, common ownership, housing zoning laws, and even capitalization.

It's gratifying to read the comments of a Catholic Worker member, who also touches on the Atlantic Life Community, because those communities often work on political resistance as much as on their ways of living together. And the reflections of a lesbian community that is determined to counter patriarchy are enlightening for anyone interested in examining power and gender relations.

The book offers a great deal for communitarians to wonder about, though much of it is admittedly based on anecdotal evidence. For instance, eras that spawned communities were the 1990s, the 1960s and 1970s, and the 1930s and 1940s. Most communities fail before reaching their fifth year, perhaps because people change, because a community lacks the flexibility to adjust to the changes in its members, or because a community's central mission or purpose is too vague, making expectations muddy and conflict difficult to resolve.

The *Communities Directory* is very much a handbook on forming and living in communities. Maybe that's why the most gripping articles are about death: the death of a community and the suicide of a community member who lost a battle with depression.

Carolyn Shaffer, in "Committing to Community for the Long Term: Do We have What It Takes?" writes about the loss of her labor of love. She takes the reader through a forest of doubts and questions as she relates how she finally agreed to disband a community that two years earlier she had pledged herself to through a vow much like the marriage promise ("for richer and for poorer, in illness and in health, until death do us part"). She thought she'd live the rest of her life there. Shaffer draws crucial distinctions between duty's burden and commitment's engagement, and she makes clear the danger of subtly rooting a selfish investment of one's ego in a group's altruistic goals. Most of all, she helps to map out the complex and sometimes shifting ground of integrity on which we stand in community. One must be able to stand on integrity, Shaffer advises, to remain in community. But knowing what integrity demands we do, and discerning when integrity requires that we act, or not act, is the height of wisdom for those who see community life as a long-term endeavor.

THE COMMUNITIES INCLUDED DEFY CATEGORIZATION: RURAL, URBAN, CHRISTIAN, NEW AGE, ENVIRONMENTAL, VEGETARIAN, LESBIAN, NONVIOLENT, EGALITARIAN, SERVICE-ORIENTED, DEVOTED TO POLITICAL RESISTANCE AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

In "Mental Illness in Community: What Can We Offer?" Rajal Cohen recounts the life-changing experience of her friendship with Delancey, a woman who came to community with a history of depression and suicide attempts. Cohen goes partway down roads of questions: Did the community fail Delancey? Did it fail its members? Were its decision-making structures part of the community's inability to solve Delancey's problems? Those torturous roads have no ends, as Cohen recognizes, and she brings the reader back to the harsh but unavoidable reality that life in community must be more than a political experiment, even if it is partly that. Community at its fullest is a way of life, with all its tragedies, joys, victories and unanswered questions.

The death of community, like the death of a loved one, takes years to accommodate to (probably, one never gets over it). It is the loss of a vibrant agent of love, at the least. We may hope that a sense of peace will someday follow today's agony and grief. But when one leaves a community in anger, perhaps we should hope to gain humility as much as peace. Those departures are akin to divorce, and in relationships, as perhaps all of life, true wisdom lies in understanding one's faults. The *Communities Directory* serves its purpose as an encyclopedic primer; it also sheds a bit of light on the mysteries of, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it, "life together." ●

***Joseph Wakelee-Lynch** is a writer and editor in Berkeley, Calif. For the past six years, he hosted a radio interview program in Claremont, Calif.*

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'Round our skiff be God's aboutness

by Julie A. Wortman



Ruth (second from left) & Bobby Ives (far right) with class of 2000.



'Round our skiff be God's aboutness

Ere she try the depth of the sea.

Seashell frail for all her stoutness,

Unless Thou her Helmsman be.

— prayer from the
Hebredian Islands off Scotland

THEY BEGIN by jointly building a Monhegan skiff. From there they move on to something a bit more complicated — a dory tender, say, or perhaps a peapod. By the time their nine months of apprenticeship at The Carpenter's Boatshop are up, they've each become experienced at handling and caring for carpentry tools and machines, can point to a couple of boats they've built on their own and, if needed, can competently row or sail them. In addition, Robert (Bobby) and Ruth Ives hope, each will have gained a deeper understanding of life lived in Christian community. "May [every apprentice] not only build fine wooden boats," the Ives say in the final section of the handbook every student who joins the community receives, "but may they with God's blessing build their own lives into ones of love and peace so that they can more gently serve in the world about them."

The 1849 farmstead which houses the boatshop — a classic New England farmhouse with an attached barn and a rambling collection of outbuildings planted along the further wooded reaches of Branch Road in coastal Pemaquid, Me. — reinforces the idyllic, rat-race-eschewing image which the Ives' gentle prayer projects. So do the muffin-abundant "tea breaks" held in the barn each weekday morning, the late-afternoon sailing excursions out of Round Pond harbor and the clucking free-range chickens — the source of the fresh eggs served at meals around the 12-seater dining room table which determines the Boatshop community's size.

Still, however warmly offered, the life the Ives annually invite eight boatshop apprentices and two instructors to share is one founded on a disciplined devotion to a Benedictine "rule" of life — a life not only of shared work, but also of prayer, study, service, worship, recreation and hospitality. Apprentices pay no fees for tuition nor for the simple room and board they are provided; neither do the Ives pay them for their work.

"We've been in the red for 21 years!" laughs Bobby Ives. But the struggle to keep the Boatshop ministry afloat is continuous. Fifty percent of the barebones budget comes from selling the boats the community builds, 40 percent comes from donations and 10 percent from payments made to the Ives for a variety of reasons — Bobby is an ordained United Church of Christ minister who occasionally officiates at weddings and funerals, and there are honoraria for speaking engagements. Barter is another way the community survives and, although it is a not-for-profit enterprise, the Boatshop pays taxes out of a commitment to the small rural community in which it is located.

Yet the Boatshop community's daily life is driven, not by financial considerations, but by the Ives' desire to "live right," as one of last year's apprentices put it.

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Both Bobby and Ruth Ives have been exploring what that might mean since early adulthood. Bobby, who comes from a family of Congregational ministers, was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. Ruth, who studied philosophy, church history and ethics in college, had since high school been drawn to upholding "the Gospel's relevance" through social service.

They met at a lecture on "Divine Providence" at the University of Edinburgh in 1971. The newly married couple became schoolteachers at the one-room schoolhouse on Maine's Monhegan Island in 1973. Island residents persuaded Bobby to pursue ordination so he could officially serve the Monhegan Island Church. A couple of years later the Ives moved to Louds Island off the Pemaquid Peninsula in the hope of helping keep that small rural lobstering community alive. On weekends they rowed to the mainland where they served the Sheepscot Community Church. From 1977 until June of 1979 they served the churches in Round Pond and New Harbor.

By then the parents of young children, they wanted to find a way to minimize the discontinuities between an intentional, but Sundays-only, congregational life and the daily process of living out Christian values and commitments in the midst of working for a living and raising a family. The Carpenter's Boatshop ministry was their answer, combining Bobby Ives' love of boats and woodworking with their joint desire to live lives of discipleship.

"Jesus talked about life and relationships," Bobby reflects. "Everyone has their own path to walk, but you also walk it daily with others."

The structure of that daily pace at The Carpenter's Boatshop is clear: 7 am breakfast; 7:20 am devotions; 8 am boatshop work begins; 10 am tea break; 12:30 noonday meal; 12:50 pm a reading for group reflection; 1:15 pm quiet/prayer time; 1:30 pm boatshop work; 4:15 pm clean-up; a break for sailing, weather permitting; evening meal. Everyone helps with the domestic chores, but evenings are free (apprentices may work on personal building projects until 10 pm, when all power tools must be shut down).

The weekly schedule includes a Wednesday chapel service and designated times for community decision-making. Saturday afternoons and Sundays are free time, although participation in a local worship service is encouraged. Saturday mornings are reserved for "service work," most notably with the Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) that Ruth Ives directs — a program that provides families with help in paying their light and power bills, getting crucial repairs made and finding needed appliances or furniture. "I have a compulsion to be of service as much of the day as I can," admits Ruth Ives, who regularly receives five to 10 phone calls asking for CHIP assistance each day.

"If you don't allocate time for the things you feel are important, it gets absorbed into things you don't want to do," says Bobby Ives of the ample time provided in the Boatshop schedule for spiritual reflection and recreation. "Scheduling means that you do these things, freeing you for the full diversity of life."

Boatshop instructor Lisa Casey agrees. "I've learned that it is important to the rest of the community how I spend my time," Casey says. "The schedule is a daily reminder that it is my life and that I should be taking care of myself."

But, she adds, 12 people on the same schedule, with a typical age range of 19 to 65, has its limitations — and stresses.

"The frictions that arise," says Bobby Ives, "are an opportunity to learn how to live more compassionately with each other." The Ives bring differences in values to the surface by raising controversial topics such as sexuality, gender and other social justice issues in the context of weekly chapel gatherings devoted to the Boatshop goal of learning how to "live without fear, love without reserve and willingly work for peace, justice and the common good of all."

But the perennial issue of dispute, Bobby Ives says, is "Music!" Classical music is played in the workshops until 12:30 pm each day, but the community takes it in turns to choose the afternoon's listening fare. "The person who chooses Country Western is in for it!" he says with a laugh. "Or one time there was a big complaint when a particular apprentice chose only Celtic music — and apparently the same particular piece over and over."

Trivial as this and other problems that arise might seem — differing perspectives on how clean the workshop and other communal areas should be kept is another routine source of strong feelings — it is the process of working problems out that is critically important, the Ives stress.

"Working out problems is how communities are formed," says Bobby Ives. "Our hope is to learn how to work problems through in a way that values everyone as God's creation."

"The open-mindedness here is not all that common," observes recent Boatshop apprentice Bruce Dove, a former trucker and schoolteacher from Alaska. "I came to learn a way of life, something about community as much as how to build a boat — though that is certainly an asset."

Indeed, that practical asset, the very concrete enterprise of learning to build, and sometimes restore, finely crafted wooden boats, remains the tangible tie that binds each year's apprenticing community. This month, right about now, the class of 2001 will be finishing its first Monhegan skiff, a group project that provides a course in the basics of the boatbuilder's craft. Soon they will take it to the nearby ocean and, once everyone is on board, launch it. If their group effort has been successful, they will all remain dry; if there is a weakness, they will all begin bailing.

Either way, say the Ives, they will have learned their first important lesson about the joys — and challenges — of sharing a common life. ●

Julie A. Wortman is editor/publisher of The Witness. *For more information about The Carpenter's Boatshop contact them at Branch Road, Pemaquid, ME 04558; 207-677-3768.*

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WITNESS MAGAZINE



RESISTING POLITICS AS USUAL

VOLUME 83
NUMBER 11
NOVEMBER 2000

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WITNESS MAGAZINE

CONTENTS

8 **The Shadow Conventions:** *'A citizens' intervention in American politics'*
by Camille Colatosti
The alternative conventions which "shadowed" the Republican and Democratic Party Conventions this past summer offered American voters real political debate on critical issues such as poverty and campaign finance reform.

12 **Challenging two-party politics:** *an interview with Ralph Nader*
by Bill and Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
The Green Party's presidential candidate talks about his campaign and possible remedies to the "real issues of structural power abuse" that threaten U.S. democracy.

16 **Walking the God-talk in politics today:** *resurrecting a public theology*
by Fredrica Harris Thompsett
Religious talk has been playing an increasingly prominent role in political campaigns, but people of faith, says this seminary professor, need to be increasing their engagement in public life.

20 **Resisting money politics:** *an interview with Naomi Klein*
by Jane Slaughter
"Anti-corporate Deadhead" Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo* (1999), talks about the alternatives to electoral politics being pursued by the next generation of activists who, she says, have no stake in the system.

24 **Striving for equity:** *overcoming the tyranny of the majority*
by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott
Majority rule, points out gender-equity activist Virginia Mollenkott, does not necessarily meet the criteria of an ideal democracy.

26 **Fusing the spiritual and the political:** *the Image on a coin*
by Arthur Waskow
Using the Talmud in interpreting the New Testament passage about Jesus and the Pharisees who ask him about paying Roman taxes, says Rabbi Arthur Waskow, changes our understanding of the spiritual and political nature of each text.

on the cover

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IMPACT VISUALS

Demonstrators march without a permit down Broad St. in Philadelphia during the Republican National Convention last July.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
5 Editorial Notes
6 Media Review
7 Poetry
28 Short Takes
29 Classifieds
30 Witness Profile

VOLUME 83
NUMBER 11
NOVEMBER 2000

Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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LETTERS

Privileged access to the truth?

Reading the September issue last week, one particular sentence in Andrew McThenia's editorial brought me up short: "Academic freedom in a real sense means that religion can be a part of the university so long as it renounces its claim to have a privileged claim on the truth, which is, of course, what religion is all about — knowing the truth."

What exactly do we mean when we claim that Christianity has a "privileged claim on the truth"? This issue has arisen in a number of contexts for me recently — including a discussion on "truth" in a lay course I am revising — and I am increasingly concerned about the way in which the claim to have privileged access to truth can be used to manipulate and oppress others.

We all know only too well how such truth claims are used to manipulate and oppress in cults and in the religious right. Yet the same can happen in "mainstream" churches too. Just this week Rome has stated that other Christian communions should not be referred to as "sister churches," indeed not even as "churches." The reason? Roman Catholicism has a privileged access to truth. Last summer American Episcopalians and Lutherans came into full communion, with the proviso that the ELCA accept an Episcopalian definition of the historic episcopate (a condition not acceptable to all Lutherans, see for example *dialog*/Spring 2000). The reason? Episcopalianism has a privileged access to the truth.

It seems that claims that one's church or tradition has a privileged access to truth are manifestations of the Powers just as much as anything else. I can understand that the context of McThenia's article referred to religion (in general) in the context of the university, and would not wish to argue with his statement. What I am concerned about, however, are the implications of such a claim. For once such a privileged access (or claim) is acknowledged or allowed, Pandora's box is open and the lid is off for good.

My thanks for a thoughtful and stimulating journal.

Peter C. King
East Sussex, England

The Witness at its best

Marianne Arbogast's thoughtful essay on "The pro-life, pro-choice debate" in the April issue represented to me *The Witness* at its very best. The "anti-stereotype" examples that she cited surely encourage all of us to strive to manifest a deep human respect toward those whose approaches to abortion are difficult for us to countenance.

Richard J. Cassidy
East Aurora, NY

Depleted uranium

Depleted uranium (DU) is not used as a coating on armor-piercing shells [as Jeff Nelson claims, see Letters, *TW* 9/00], but in what is called a long rod penetrator which pierces breached armor because of kinetic energy and on account of its density. E-mail <armymag@ausa.com> and they will be happy to refer you to valid sources.

Oh yes, even the Army is concerned about DU, as they are about many things which impact their troops' welfare — for example, they would dearly love to get Congress to buy effective chemical agent suits, low-tech life savers that Congress ignores in favor of fancy technology that makes money for big contributors.

War is stupid, occasionally unavoidable, and generally benefits no one. But for this guy who went nowhere special and only got medals for showing up, my brief time as a soldier is something I am justified in being proud of.

James Moher
Nashua, NH

Not renewing

At least for this year, I won't be renewing my *Witness* subscription. I've become disturbed by the insularity of the Christian social-jus-

tice movement, by the perspective embodied by William Willimon in the September 2000 issue. He shows great hostility for the "flaccid secularists" of the university, the "godless" place that "just doesn't yet know" that it belongs to God. Although he qualifies this by saying that he's had "wonderful moments where I have been embarrassed to find out that people are asking tough, searching questions," I was still appalled. The consciousness of our Christian identity can so easily become a fetish, become a way of doing our good deeds in public for all to see and admire. Acting "from a Christian perspective" implicitly denies secular or ex-Christian people a moral basis for the things that they do. If "we're" out here picketing sweatshops "for Christ," than why are "they" doing it? Do their efforts somehow not count? Do they not love their neighbor as much as we do because they don't consciously love him "for Christ"? Is love not love? Is virtue not virtue? Last time I checked, God makes the sun shine and the rain fall on everyone.

Having said all that, I want to belatedly add that all that fire-breathing should be placed in context of my wild and total admiration for your magazine and its undaunted courage in "living humanly in the midst of death." Thank you so much, and I'm sure that when I've calmed down and have somewhat more money, I'll subscribe again.

Savannah Jahrling
(via the Internet)

We need a new rite

The 2000 General Convention's decision not to approve drafting of a rite to support faithful relationships other than marriages [see Louie Crew's post-GC comments at www.thewitness.org and Julie Wortman's editorial, *TW* 10/00] was a very unwise decision. There should be a rite for gay and/or lesbian persons and also for other persons who are either widowed or divorced but who would like to live with one another as human individuals. I have believed for a long time that gays and lesbians should be able to live with one another. But now that I am 83 years of age (I retired as Bishop of Central New York in 1983) I know many persons who are in my age bracket who would like to be able to live openly and honestly with a person of the opposite sex so they would not have to live alone. I am not one of these, but living in a retirement home, persons who know I am a retired member of the clergy often talk about such things to me.

Several days ago a friend said he and his female friend (the three of us had recently had dinner at his apartment) wished that there was some way they could live together. He said another clergy person had told him that "if you two live together, you would not be welcome at our altar."

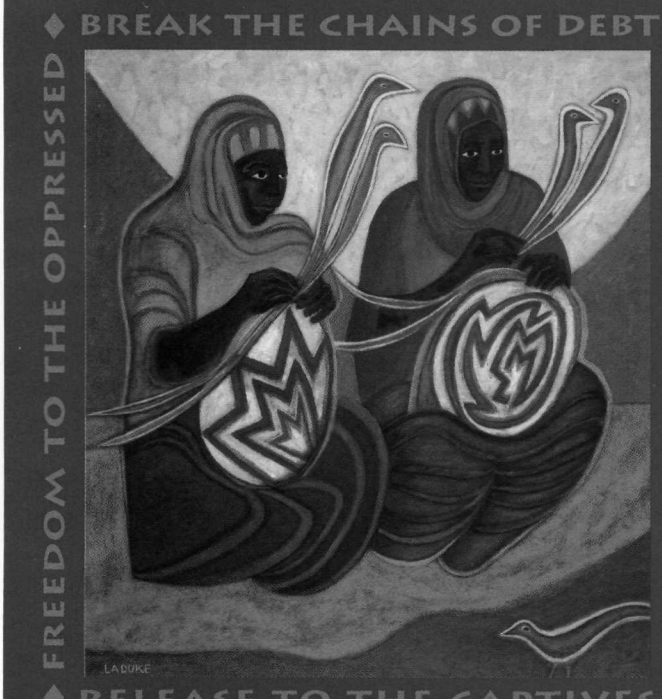
To me, when Scripture says, "God's Son, Jesus Christ, so loved the world that He gave His life for all persons," that means to me EVERY HUMAN BEING.

Ned Cole
Liverpool, NY

Witness praise

I share my copies of *The Witness* with church friends. They appreciate your caring, thoughtful writing (as do I). We need the help and inspiration your subjects discuss and hope you continue.

Mary Kiefer
Cleveland, OH ●



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On collars and raising questions

by Julie A. Wortman

I WAS BEMUSED, recently, to read an editorial in a conservative church periodical noting the fact that Jane Dixon, the Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (and, happily, a new member of *The Witness*' board of directors), had been seen on television at the Democratic National Convention asking "questions publicly of persons who presented positive stories about Mr. Gore's candidacy." Deplorably, our editorialist scolded, she was wearing her collar at the time!

Give me a break! Far from an injury, I consider anything that gets people thinking about the relationship of their moral values to the choices they make at the polling booth a benefit to us all — no matter the collar-wearing bishop or religion-professing candidate in question. *Anything* to move us beyond the superficial God-talk and right-wing idolatries of today's politics. Luckily, there are many encouraging signs in this election year that significant numbers of progressive citizens are not only examining the connections between their deepest convictions and public policy, but they are also finding ways to give political voice to their conclusions without settling for soul-destroying political compromise. In some cases this means taking to the streets, in others it means creating intelligent alternatives to the corporate captivity of the dominant parties' political campaigning.

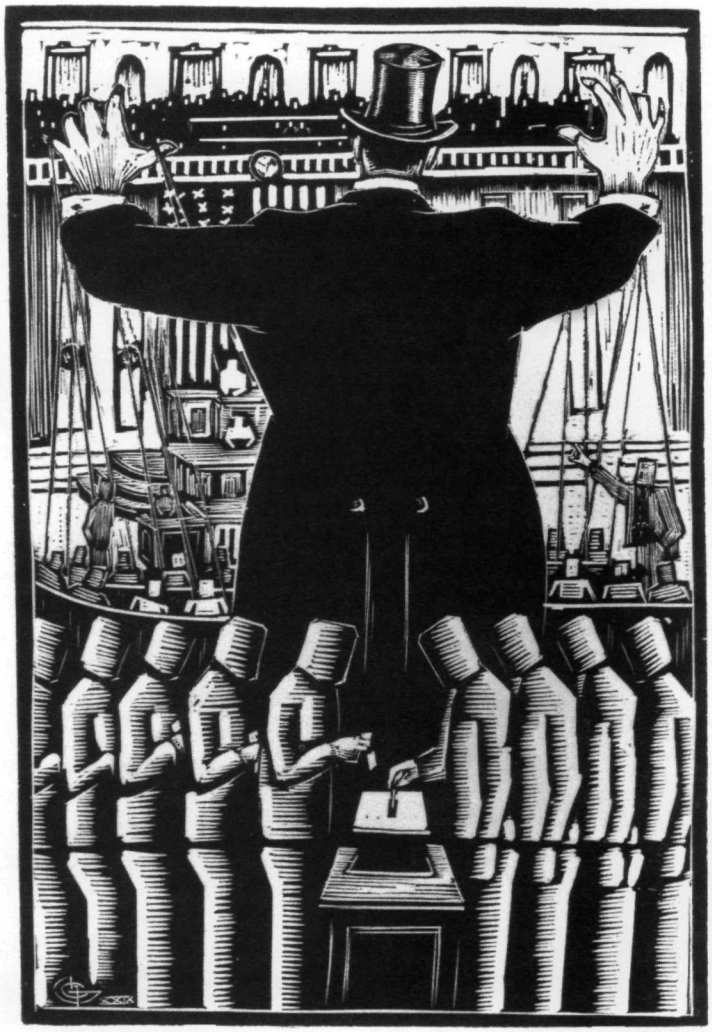
In this development, I believe, we are beginning to see the fruits of a political shift long in the making. At its root has been a deep hunger for an integrated way of living in which daily choices are made in mindfulness of global implications — and spiritual practice becomes a form of political activism. Over the past few years, *The Witness* has brought attention to the iceberg-tips we could see — the community food security movement (see *TW* 1/2-99), the Free Time/Free People campaign (*TW* 1/2-00), the socially responsible investing movement (*TW* 3/96), the 15-year-old bioregionalism movement (*TW* 6/99) and the array of earth-honoring and justice-seeking intentional communities that seem to be on the increase (*TW* 10/00), to name just a few. This is the ant-and-spider resistance of which Korean theologian Chung Hyun Kyung spoke in a 1997 interview with then *Witness* editor Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann (*TW* 7/8-97): "Like the ant, every one of us, in our local places, can make a small hole [on behalf of justice] in our locality. But we also are spiders. With the Internet and all this information organization, we make connections like spiders. We do works in our communities and keep our light alive, keep our hope alive. It will accumulate."

And the accumulating seems to be gaining momentum. No one, for example, not even those who put out the call for concerned people to make their witness at the World Trade Organization's Seattle meeting last November, expected the vast crowds that turned up for that massive protest on behalf of global quality of life. And the speed with which the "Shadow Conventions" were organized this summer still seems miraculous. Both times, people of faith were prominent participants.

So, bizarrely enough, I am not feeling as gloomy this presidential election year as I might. Not because I think my candidate will win (this is the first time in a long time I've *had* a candidate), but because progressive religious people — some wearing collars, to be sure, and many others simply wearing their faith — are showing up, values intact, and raising important questions.

You go, Jane. ●

Julie A. Wortman is editor/publisher of The Witness.



Henery Glintenkamp, Voter Puppets 1929

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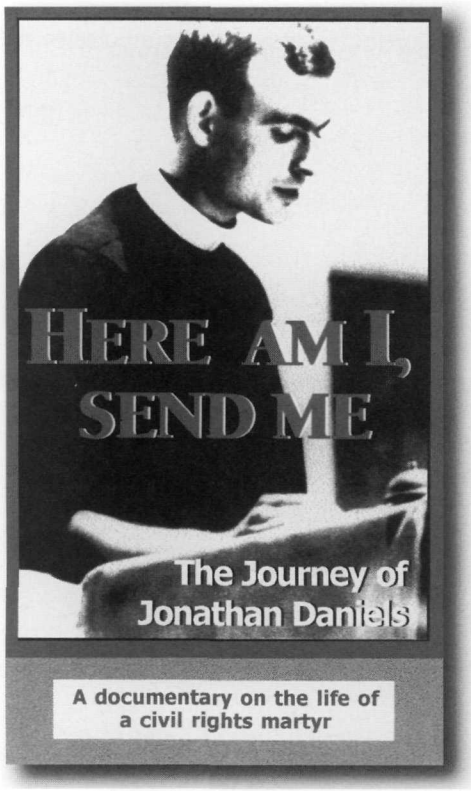
The freedom to resist politics as usual

by Anne E. Cox



Here Am I, Send Me: The Journey of Jonathan Daniels

Lawrence Benaquist and William Sullivan, producers

The Episcopal Media Center (Atlanta, GA)

HAD POLITICS AS USUAL held sway in the early 1960s, the civil rights movement in this country would never have happened. Particularly for those born and bred to the social and political mores of life in the southern U.S., black and white alike, the rules of engagement were clear: Wealthy whites made the rules; blacks and poorer whites followed the rules or else.

So what changed things? Resistance to politics as usual, refusal to continue to toe the line, recognition that there are some absolutes that are not open to political negotiation and compromise. Most of all, respect for the dignity of every human being, regardless of the consequences.

The story of Jonathan Myrick Daniels, told in the 1999 videotape, *Here Am I, Send Me* from Atlanta's Episcopal Media Center, is the story of one who died resisting the white political structure that held sway in Alabama in 1965. A 25-year-old white seminarian at the Episcopal Theological Seminary (now the Episcopal Divinity School) in Cambridge, Mass., Daniels woke up to racial injustice in 1963 while a student at the seminary. He had spent his undergraduate years at the all-white (and all-male) Virginia Military Institute (VMI), where he gingerly navigated the hazing inflicted on first-year students and went on to edit the school paper and graduate as valedictorian of his class. The video portrays him as a young man who pragmatically adapted and worked through his circumstances, but also as someone who constantly questioned himself internally — wondering, for instance, if going through with the painful and humiliating "rat-line" at VMI, as he did, was endorsing an oppressive system.

The film suggests that responding to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s call in the spring of 1965 for white clergy and others from the north to join their black brothers and sisters in Selma was for Daniels a matter, finally, of responding to Isaiah's question, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" with the only possible answer, "Here am I, send me."

More compelling than answering Isaiah's call, however, is Daniels' discovery of the freedom that comes with conscience. After being tear-gassed during a voter registration march, he wrote that up to that point he would have gladly taken a rifle to fight his enemies, but he now saw that the white men who opposed him were also captives of racism. As a Christian facing the cross, he said, he suddenly saw that he was totally free to give his life, if need be, for the liberation of all those caught up in this struggle in an eagerness for "the kingdom that is no longer hidden." Thus he was free to work to integrate the Episcopal Church, free to register black voters, free to go to the most segregationist county in Alabama, free to love even members of the Ku Klux Klan.

And so it was that in this new sense of freedom that Daniels died, shot by Tom Coleman, a special deputy sheriff who never spent a day in jail for his crime despite the many witnesses who saw him shoot Daniels outside a grocery store in Hayneville, Ala.

This compelling film is more than a tale of a modern martyr. It is about the courage of one Christian, the quiet conversion that led him to act on behalf of liberation — and the difference his life has made in ours.

Through dogged spiritual effort, Daniels came to a moral point that eludes too many of us, a point where he recognized some unavoidable absolutes: Absolutely, he needed to go and place his white body next to the many black bodies marching in Alabama. No negotiating, no waiting until his education was finished, no acquiescing to his fears about his personal safety.

In this time of complacency and political expediency in so many churches, this is an important film because its message is that true freedom in Christ is the freedom of which the Magnificat speaks, the freedom through which "the mighty are cast down and the lowly are lifted up" — absolutely. ●

Anne E. Cox is an Episcopal priest and artist who runs a small landscaping business in Martinsville, Me.

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Grant Wood 1939

The Unknown Citizen *by W.H. Auden*

TO JS/07/M/378
THIS MARBLE MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY THE STATE

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A gramophone, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation,
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

March, 1939

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THE SHADOW CO



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Thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of downtown Los Angeles during last summer's Democratic National Convention.

'A citizens' intervention in American politics'

by Camille Colatosti

RED, WHITE AND BLUE BALLOONS filled the large convention hall. Flags decorated the walls. Signs — many, again, with a red, white and blue color scheme — blared slogans: "End the Drug War," "Legalize Marijuana," "We Need a Living Wage," "Save the Rainforest," "Free Circus Animals," "Moratorium on Capital Punishment," and more. Speakers included Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Paul Wellstone (D-MN), The Reverend Jesse Jackson, Rabbi Michael Lerner, Governor Gary Johnson (R-NM), Congressperson Maxine Waters (D-CA), singer David Crosby and campaign reform activist Granny D. Actors Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins made an appearance at the podium; Al Franken made the audience laugh and Arianna Huffington — syndicated columnist and former Newt Gingrich confidant — served as host.

The occasion? The Shadow Conventions. The first, held at Philadelphia's Annenberg Center from July 30 - Aug. 3, paralleled the Republican Convention; the second, held in Los Angeles' Patriotic Hall, took place from Aug. 13-17, at the same time as the Democratic Convention. Each drew about 2,500 participants — mostly political, community and religious activists.

Calling for a politics of ideas, not of electioneering

Free of charge and open to the public, the Shadow Conventions, according to organizers, were meant "to challenge the two major

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party conventions to genuinely engage in debate and in a politics of ideas, not a politics of electioneering." Chuck Collins, co-founder and co-director of United for a Fair Economy, a national organization concerned about the growing income and wealth gap in America, was one of the Conventions' conveners. As he explains, "The real party conventions were boring, scripted coronations devoid of substance." The Shadow Conventions were the place for "the voices of the people left behind. Our slogan was 'a citizens' intervention in American politics.' It is the citizens' friendly and patriotic duty to intervene when things get out of control."

Criticism of the Democratic and Republican parties has been deepening this election season as both their two presidential candidates — Al Gore (D) and George W. Bush (R) — hope to control the political middle. Each claims to be "inclusive" and "sensitive." Each claims to represent that part of the population left behind in the current economic boom. Yet, each supports welfare reform and capital punishment. And each seems to defer to the corporations who sponsor their conventions and fund their campaigns.

As Ruth Conniff wrote in an aptly titled article in *The Progressive*, "Speak Democracy, Deliver Plutocracy" (8/15/00), "It was confusing enough to hear the Republicans at their convention make a left-wing critique of the last eight years, championing 'those left behind' by the economic boom and borrowing a line from the Children's Defense Fund to promote their new policies of inclusion. But if the Republicans are pretending to be Democrats, so are the Democrats."

She describes a "Motown Bash" at the Democratic Convention, honoring Representative John Dingell (D-MI): The Edison Electric Institute, the Nuclear Energy Institute, the American Gas Association, and the National Mining Association were the sponsors.

Scott Harshbarger, president of the campaign-finance-reform organization Common Cause, described the Democratic Convention as a "made-for-TV infomercial characterized largely by lavish corporate-sponsored receptions." The Republican Convention was, of course, no different. Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, who visited both conventions, noted that, "with the exception of tobacco," the same corporations were present at both. "The only difference," he added, "is GM offered the Democrats and the Republicans Cadillacs. The Democrats accepted. The Republicans declined the offer, and instead opted for Buicks and Chevys."

According to Margaret Prescod and Lisa Fithian, members of the organizing team for the L.A. and Philadelphia Shadow Conventions, "Both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party are bought, paid for and are accountable to a small number of the corporate elite." The Shadow Conventions were, they say, a way to let the political parties know that the majority of people are not fooled.

The Shadows' sponsors

Six national organizations sponsored the Shadow Conventions. These groups were the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, Common Cause, The Lindesmith Center/Drug Policy Foundation, United for a Fair Economy, Call to Renewal and Public Campaign. All nonprofit, grassroots advocacy groups, they brought with them expertise on at least one of the Shadow Conventions' three themes: campaign finance reform; poverty and the growing wealth gap ["Half of humanity is living on less than two dollars a day," says Harvard professor Cornel West. "The richest 225 individuals have more wealth than the bottom 43 percent of all humankind."]; and the failed war on drugs and the corresponding rise in the prison population [Federal and state governments will spend close to $40 billion this year fighting the drug war; 50 percent of those imprisoned in 1999 for drug offenses were imprisoned for possession; the U.S. has 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's prisons.].

"These issues have something important in common," explains Episcopalian Carter Echols, a national organizer for Call to Renewal, a new federation of faith-based organizations and denominations who are coming together to end poverty. "These issues all look at problems on which we do not have enough dialogue. They also concern stratification around money. Whether or not you have money influences how these issues affect you. If you have money and are white and get involved with drugs, you will be treated differently than if you are a person of color and are poor."

Each sponsoring organization was responsible for a specific day or part of the Shadow Conventions. One day at each convention was devoted to each of the three themes. The National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, an organization devoted to increasing employment options for the poor, United for a Fair Economy and Call to Renewal organized the poverty days at each convention. Common Cause and Public Campaign, two organizations dedicated to campaign finance reform, organized the days on that theme. The Lindesmith Center/Drug Policy Foundation, a drug policy institute dedicated to broadening the debate on drug policies and related issues in order to reduce the harm caused by drug abuse and drug prohibition, organized the days devoted to ending the war on drugs.

The groups moved quickly to make the Shadow Conventions happen. As Chuck Collins of United for a Fair Economy explains, "We had our first full group meeting in June. Whatever we pulled off was pulled off in a short amount of time." Given the magnitude and success of the conventions, this short time frame seems amazing, says Collins. The host of the Shadow Con-

continued in sidebar on page 11

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They note that "more people did not vote in the last election than did. That in itself is a vote." They also argue that Democrats and Republicans have not so much failed America as "succeeded in what they set out to do. They are accountable to who they intend to represent, but they're not accountable to us. What they have not done is to represent or stand for what people need. Industry is being deregulated, but politics is more regulated than ever, but not by the voter. Governments have been privatized and only those with a lot of money can buy."

Indeed, big money has dominated this election. A recent Common Cause study reveals that this election season candidates will raise more than $500 million in "soft money" — unregulated campaign contributions. This is 80 percent more than was raised in the 1996 presidential election.

Organizers of the Shadow Conventions also argue that the Democratic and Republican Conventions are no longer places for real political debate and discussion. As Common Cause's Harshbarger explains, "The reason for doing the Shadow Conventions is that neither of the major conventions are addressing very important issues that affect a lot of people." Collins puts it even more starkly when he asks, "What's happening to our democracy?"

Playing to the press, but providing real political debate

Organizers scheduled the Shadow Conventions with the press in mind. The bulk of the big name speakers addressed the Conventions between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., before protestors took to the streets and before the Democratic and Republican Conventions began. For instance, John McCain, Jesse Jackson and Al Franken all spoke before lunch. The strategy, as *New Republic* reporter Michelle Cottle described it, allowed "the TV cameras [to] swoop in, get their footage of Jesse Jackson or Paul Wellstone, and swoop back out."

The Shadow Conventions' afternoon sessions were less glitzy. These were the ones geared not to the press but to activists. There were intense debates on solutions to poverty, for instance. Call to Renewal's Carter Echols explains: "We had people who didn't agree, people who felt welfare reform was the greatest and people who thought this was the worst thing. We did dialogue in some new ways. We were all people who were solution-driven and who have an investment in ending poverty."

There was also real debate about campaign finance reform. As Chuck Collins explains, "There were business groups who support curtailing soft or unregulated money, but do not support public funding of elections, and then there was Public Campaign, a national organization devoted to what it calls the Clean Money Campaign" — a system of full public financing for election campaigns, with no private financing at all.

Echols found the Shadow Conventions positive both in terms of the impact they had on the major parties and on the benefit they provided participants. "We know that our existence created anxiety for the major parties. A lot of people in the Republican Party got pressure not to speak. There were people who were scheduled to speak and who then jumped off. From the Republican side, we were painted as left-wing liberals. From the Democratic side, we were painted as a Huffington/[Warren] Beatty event, just a bunch of fluff and not serious. In both cases, there were efforts to discount us, but we were too present and too successful to be discounted."

Echols adds, "For faith-based people who participated, they had increased visibility about their work. They were also able to connect with others and to realize that they were not alone. Both Bush and Gore paid lip-service to partnering with faith-based organizations, and we said to them, 'We don't want just a pat on the head.' We let them know that we are competent national leaders doing real work."

Echols also believes that positive working relationships were forged among different organizations. "Across topics, we developed a strong sense of a shared ethic. It was very clear that poverty is at the heart of why campaign finance reform is needed. Until we deal with the fact that corporations can buy whatever they want and that the wealthy are running the political system, why should we believe that poor people are going to be on the political agenda?"

Issues, not individuals

The Shadow Conventions did not endorse a presidential candidate. Collins explains, "We're concerned about issues, not individuals. We want all the candidates to endorse the issues that are important to Americans."

Collins also urges people to "see your vote as just one small part of exercising your citizenship rights in a democracy. We all need to be concerned about the corporate takeover of our democratic process. The debate is being shaped and narrowed by money. This will not serve the majority of Americans. We need to take back our democracy."

Nevertheless, some speakers at the Shadow Conventions did make their preferences clear. When Senator John McCain endorsed George W. Bush, he was soundly booed.

Jesse Jackson argued that "the power is not in the ticket; the power is in the picket," but he endorsed the Democrats at the end of his speech. "I will choose to support not just Gore and Lieberman," he said. "I support that Congress ... I say on November 7, let's fight back and stay out of the bushes."

Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) also endorsed the Democratic ticket, though his endorsement was weaker than Jackson's: "I'm going to support the vice-president and be out there, but you know what? Regardless of what position you take vis-à-vis the vice-president, Ralph Nader or others, when this is over, I really do believe that we need to build a kind of independent political force. I didn't say third party, but you know what? We've gotta stop waiting for other people to put forth the new ideas ... I'm tired of waiting. It's time for us to find our own voice, to do our own organizing."

Others made it clear that they were not going to wait until November to build an independent political force. Cornel West of Harvard University said, "I am an independent. And I'm a free black man. I speak my mind and heart and soul. And that's why I'm for brother Ralph Nader. Not because he's a perfect candidate — no candidate is perfect. But for me, on personal grounds, I reached a point where working people and poor people are so disregarded and disrespected by a corporate-dominated Democratic party, that you have to begin a new cycle somewhere with somebody. And this broad-

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ens the discourse and broadens the engagement. And maybe we can see a little leftward leaning in the Democratic party. We shall see. We shall see."

Doris Haddock, best known as Granny D, walked across the country in support of campaign finance reform. At the Shadow Convention in Los Angeles, she, too, urged the creation of independent political forces. While she did not directly endorse Nader, the implication was clear from her remarks:

"As we enter this period of great struggle, let us be willing to have short-term losses for long-term gains. This means that we must vote our hearts and let the chips fall where they may. What would be worse than having someone in the White House for four or eight long years who doesn't believe in campaign finance reform, who doesn't believe in social justice, who doesn't believe in environmental sanity, and who doesn't believe in individual rights?



Labor unions participated in the Democratic National Convention as the L.A. Shadow Convention drew attention to issues of economic justice.

"I tell you what would be worse. What would be worse would be four or eight years of someone who gives us the illusion of reform, the illusion of justice, the illusion of environmental sanity and the illusion of individual human rights. Don't think of your vote as a day trader's investment in the candidate of the moment; vote for the long term. Invest in the moral progress of your nation."

Granny D challenged convention attendants not to accept Al Gore as the lesser of two evils. "The future must be our concern," she said, "not any one election. Don't outsmart yourself by spending your one vote on an attempt to keep the worst candidate from winning; America will never get great leaders if we vote that way." ●

Camille Colatosti *is* Witness *staff writer.*

The Shadows' sponsors

continued from page 9

ventions, Arianna Huffington, first contacted Call to Renewal's Jim Wallis, one of the foremost experts on poverty in America. From there, says Collins, the other organizations came together.

Huffington is a story in herself. Most recently the author of *How to Overthrow the Government* (Regan Books 2000), Huffington has moved in Republican circles for more than 10 years. Originally from Greece, she was educated at England's Cambridge University, and wrote several books before moving to the U.S. in the 1980s. Her political career began when her now ex-husband, Texas oil millionaire Michael Huffington, who served one term in Congress, spent $30 million of his own money to run for senator of California in 1994. He lost (he also subsequently divorced his wife and announced his homosexuality). Arianna became a regular commentator on many television talk shows, founded her own think tank and began to write her syndicated column. She also became an advisor to Newt Gingrich.

Huffington claims that "a series of epiphanies" led to her transformation from conservative Republican to progressive anti-poverty activist. As she explained in *USA Today*, "I really believed the Republican party would get involved in addressing issues such as child poverty, health care and education. But there wasn't the collective will to put the ideas into practice."

Call to Renewal's Jim Wallis applauds Huffington's change of heart and mind, "We've waited years for someone like her. Her enthusiasms are worth taking seriously."

United for a Fair Economy's Chuck Collins agrees: "She brought tremendous gifts; with her connections, we created a real head-turning event. The media visibility was one of the real benefits. Poverty and the wealth gap became national issues. The Shadow Conventions had tons of press with national coverage; we did radio talk shows; John McCain's speech at the Shadow Convention was covered live on CNN."

Collins notes that activist protests and conferences occur every campaign year, "but they fly below the radar screen of public attention." This year, with Huffington's connections, press coverage was different. "The Shadow Conventions were well-attended, broadcast live on CNN and C-span, and broadcast over the Internet. They served as a political homebase for the majority of Americans who are disaffected with the major parties." ●

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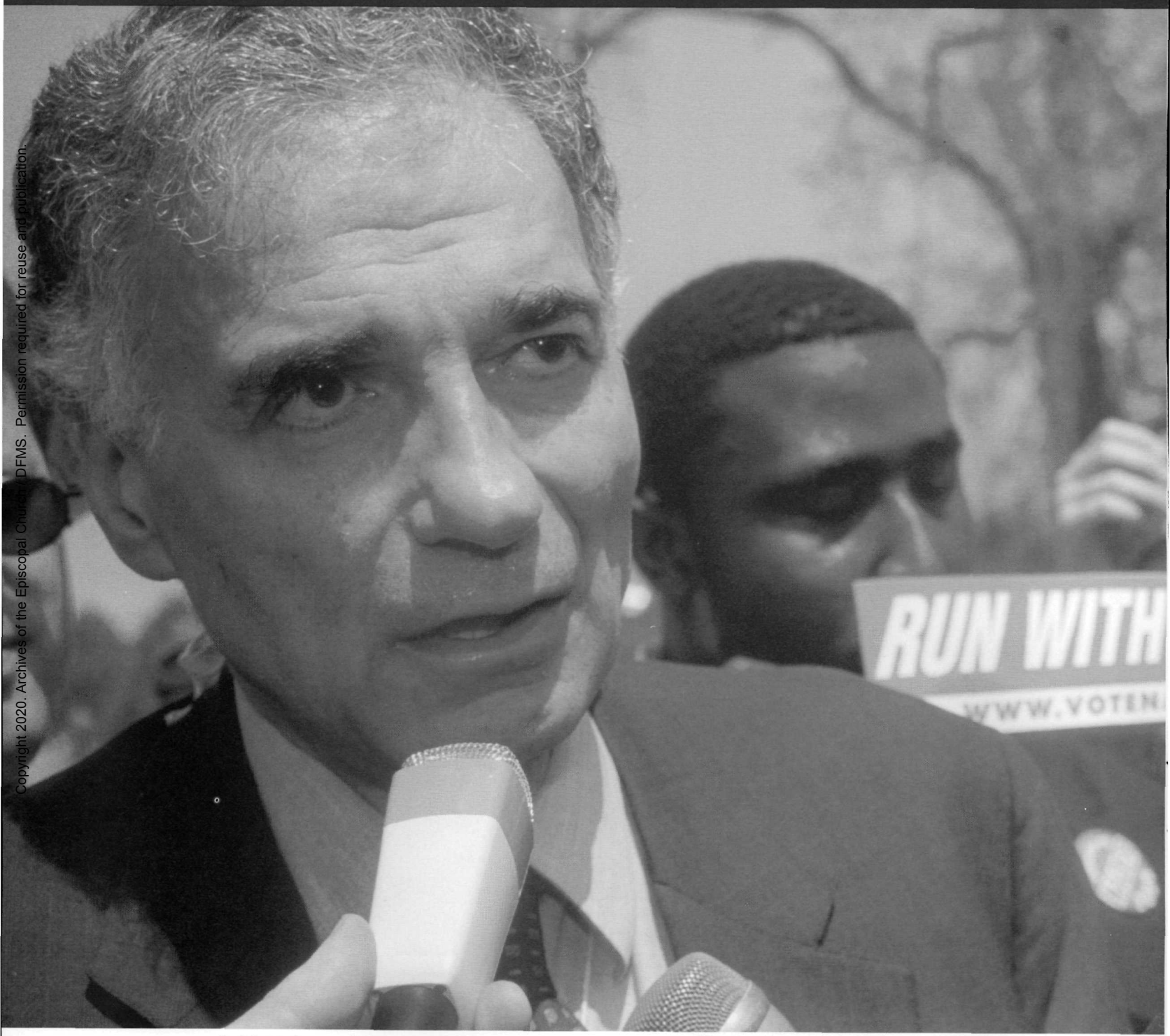
CHALLENGING TW



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Ralph Nader, speaking at a Labor Day rally in Detroit this past September.

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An interview with the Green Party's Ralph Nader

by Bill and Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

RALPH NADER, along with his Green Party running mate, Winona LaDuke, gained the presidential ballot in 43 states. The epitome of a Public Citizen for three decades, Nader has forced debate on issues ranging from GM's Corvair to the Dalcon Shield. He may be best known, however, for "Nader's Raiders," the host of young activists who have challenged corporate power and built a public interest movement in this country.

Once, querying him on PBS about what he'd do if actually elected, Jim Lehrer expressed concern about Nader's capacity to comprehend the complex array of federal agencies for which he'd be responsible as president. Nader was nonplussed and bemused:"Well, I don't know anybody," he finally replied,"who has sued more of them."

In 1996 Nader merely"stood" for President, neither raising money nor campaigning, but this year he's been aggressively running. Polls suggested he could pull 7 percent of the vote. If he draws 5 percent, the Greens will be eligible for federal campaign support in the future and be established as a credible voice and choice.

The New York Times editorialized against Nader on the premise that he is cluttering the political playing field and distracting voters from the clear-cut choice which they regard Bush and Gore as representing. His candidacy has also been controversial, even divisive, in left circles where many argue that his strong showing in swing states like California and Michigan could effectively elect George W. Bush. That position may best be represented by the Sierra Club, which regards a vote for Nader as environmentally irresponsible. Nader, however, is losing no sleep over the prospect of playing"spoiler." His observation is that the only difference between Republicans and Democrats is the relative speed"with which their knees hit the floor when the big corporations knock on the door."

He regularly makes three points on the"spoiler question." First, that the "evil of two lessers" approach simply legitimizes the downward slide into corporate captivity. Second, there is nothing preventing Al Gore from"stealing Nader's issues." Go ahead. Let Gore open up on corporate crime, corporate welfare, the WTO, environmental and economic justice. And lastly, he points out, rather than diselecting Gore, Nader voters may actually tip the narrow balance in electing a Democratic Congress.

There was a little anti-slavery party that led the way in the 19th century, the pro-women's-right-to-vote party, a workers' party, farmers obviously, the Progressive party. So third parties have led the way, especially when they have emerged out of a citizen movement which needed a political parallel.

We spoke with Nader by phone just after his return from the Republican Convention, where he'd been smuggled onto the floor during Dick Cheney's acceptance speech. We asked him about it.

Ralph Nader: There was a huge mob of press all around. It sort of shook up the Florida and Michigan delegations before they got wise and took us back to the runway area on the outside. Someone asked,"Why are you here?" I said, "Because it's so grotesque, you have to see it to believe it!" Basically it's a dance between the politicians shaking down the business lobbyists for huge gobs of deductible cash because the IRS has ruled it all a "business expense." They're dealing a terrible blow to democracy and politically accountable parties.

The Witness: This raises for us something of a theological question. Corporations were originally forbidden to participate in the political process. But we're now 100 years into a Supreme Court ruling that grants these commercial powers the legal status of persons before the law with "rights." Even their money is treated as free speech. What's your take on that? Is it reversible?

R.N.: Well, we first developed that idea in 1975 in our book, *Taming the Giant*

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The Green Party Convention at Gas Works Park in Seattle last June.

Corporations. Unfortunately there's that Supreme Court decision in 1887 declaring corporations as persons under the 14th amendment. So, you can't do it by statute, but you might find some states that will begin conditioning or revoking the charters of badly behaving companies. That can be done at the state level or by referendum redefining a corporation as a non-person. It is also possible to make the charter a much more conditional mechanism for corporate misbehavior. A state could throw the company into a trusteeship just like creditors can, or banks. Remove the board and the officers and put in trustees to straighten out the corporation. That does it without laying off workers or closing down the company. Federal law does precisely that for crooked labor unions. Why not for crooked corporations?

T.W.: Given the scale which corporations have assumed these days, how close are we to seeing them succeed even nation states as the preeminent structures of power?

R.N.: Well, very close indeed, because they now command, overwhelmingly, capital, labor, technology and government influence. There's no countervailing economic model of any power operative in the world. Well, there are models that are superior, but they're not the power. What kept capitalism less destructive of its workers and other constituencies was the way they viewed the specter of communism and socialism. There are a lot of models — such as the Bangladesh microcredit or other cooperative models — but basically we see these giant corporations merging with one another like Colossus astride the globe. As the title of David Korten's book says, corporations rule the world. They need not do it directly, but primarily through government proxies. Giant corporate power merges with government, turning government against its own people and making it largely an "accounts receivable" for corporate demands: subsidies, handouts, inflated contracts and bailouts. The corporate welfare matrix.

T.W.: Running for president and raising these issues, you must believe we're not so far down the line on globalization and this fusion with the nation state that government couldn't still be in a position to put the brakes on, or reverse it by creating some new measure of political accountability?

R.N.: Well, yes. I think first of all that the global corporations are losing the important symbols. They no longer can make a claim to patriotism, because pitting one government against another, they really have no allegiance to the U.S., other than to control it. They talk openly about being multinational, anational corporations. And second, they're losing the sovereignty issue, because they're undermining sovereignty in sending petitions to Geneva and the WTO and the like. And third, if things turn bad, if there is ecological disaster, if there is a recession, then that's when the groundwork that's now being laid with the Green Party, with the increasing debate around the country — not yet in the mass media — about corporations as persons and corporate charters will flower. And that is what's important: to be ready with a process of dialogue, a battery of facts, a knowledge of history, and models of corporate accountability, so that when the tide does turn, the progressive forces in the country are ready. You know, that is what the Right did. When Reagan came in, they had all kinds of plans — from Heritage Foundation and Cato and so forth — ready to move. And that's what was missing in the 1930s. It was pretty ad hoc from the citizen point of view. Franklin Roosevelt filled in some blanks, but the 1930s represented a great missed opportunity to deal with corporate charters and corporations as persons.

T.W.: What would you urge people to be doing now to lay that groundwork?

R.N.: Well I think they should be part of the Green Party movement, which is discussing real issues of structural power abuse and what the remedies might be. As well as setting out substantive policies like universal health insurance or shifting power through checkoffs for consumer groups, vís-a-vís banks, insurance companies, HMOs, cable companies and the like. We've got to address poverty, which is a huge agenda, and economically develop inner-city neighborhoods. We must deal with all the environmental areas from environmental racism to ozone depletion and global warming. And we must repeal Taft-Hartley, which is a chokehold on labor. Let votes count by removing private money from campaigns.

T.W.: How do you view the street activity going on in Philadelphia or on a massive scale in Seattle? What's the connection

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between street politics and alternative electoral politics?

R.N.: Well, it's very important. First, because the media will pay attention to people who engage in non-violent civil disobedience and protest. At least they will give marginal notice, where they wouldn't pay attention if these groups had sedate press conferences with nice reports. Second, it's an important recruiting opportunity for young people, in particular, who really begin to develop an understanding of how power works in the society and the world. And they tend to commit for a long time. When you talk to people now in their 50s and 60s who have been activists all their lives and say, "How did this happen to you?" "Well, I went to a major anti-war rally" or "I went to a major Earth Day demonstration, or a Civil Rights March." So for recruiting to swell the ranks, it's very important. Thirdly, it feeds right into the Internet activity of citizen groups and all the websites which both prepare the groundwork for these demonstrations by putting out the alerts and inviting people to come to a certain place and time. People are hugely energized by the resultant demonstrations.

Now, that's the first step. Obviously, that doesn't take you to more than first base and you've got to get to home plate. But you don't get to home plate without getting to first.

T.W.: So you would see home plate as the electoral end of things?

R.N.: Yes, once the civil culture mobilizes then there's a political corollary. In terms of the Green Party, they go together and they work together. They each become more authentic. There was a little anti-slavery party that led the way in the 19th century, the pro-women's-right-to-vote party, a workers' party, farmers obviously, the Progressive party. So third parties have led the way, especially when they have emerged out of a citizen movement which needed a political parallel.

T.W.: Could we ask about a couple of issues that you didn't mention? Nuclear weapons, for one. You've made statements on the huge financial benefits to the weapons makers and environmental fallout, but how do you see these weapons as an element of foreign policy? Are they moral? Necessary? Legal?

R.N.: Well, we've got to drive to abolish them! Even former Strategic Air Command General Butler and Paul Nitze, the hawk of hawks, are talking this way. I mean, a real major push to arms reduction and not just holding the line. Who are the big enemies anymore? We've got a military budget geared for the Soviet Union and a Progressive China. That's not the situation. So that's another area we want to talk about — missile defense and F22 and Osprey and all those boondoggle-type weapon systems for Lockheed's or General Dynamics' profit.

T.W.: You mentioned environmental racism — how seriously do you see the racial divide in this country and what is the role of the federal government in addressing it at this point?

R.N.: Well, the role is obviously to keep enforcing the civil rights laws and affirmative action and preventing police brutality and housing discrimination. One of my favorite concerns is marketplace exploitation and employment discrimination. I would think we have to put a huge class component in dealing with race issues. If you go after class and have any success, that will modify very significantly racial animosities — at least between people and neighborhoods. You don't see the racialism in areas with better living standards that you do in poor areas.

One way, for example, to deal with the merchant exploitation of African Americans and Hispanics around payday loans or rent-to-own rackets at 200 percent interest rates, is to grow community development credit unions where people's money is recycled in consumer-owned institutions offering decent interest rates. That's the greatest antidote to the loan-shark business. So, you see I'm focussing on areas like these, or redlining, that civil rights advocates traditionally ignore.

T.W.: Jeanie recalls from working with you 20 years ago on Detroit's Poletown struggle that you lived a pretty simple life. Unmarried, a spartan apartment, no car or credit card.

R.N.: Yeah, that's still true.

T.W.: How do you see the connection between that and your political work? And, moreover, how do you take care of yourself? A political campaign is pretty brutal. Perhaps they are systematically brutal so that candidates tend to be — spiritually one might even say — deformed by them. How do you resist that and how do you take care of yourself in the midst of this?

R.N.: Well, I've been in training for many years. I've travelled a lot. Going into 50 states between March 1 and June 20 is a little more intense than usual, but actually I did nearly that in 1986 when we tried to keep the insurance companies from destroying tort law.

Second, I'm a very calm person. You have to have some minimum sleep and you have to have a good diet. And you try not to burn yourself out. Don't drink; don't smoke. And you keep a historical perspective, you keep a little humor, and keep your eye on the ball. And you don't develop a political ego — on which I may have gone to the reverse extreme — it's hard for me to say I, I, I, every day. I do use the "we" more often because it is a "we" after all — there's a whole team together on this.

And, finally, if you have to campaign knowing that should you say a certain thing you're not going to get money from some special vested or corporate interest, that creates a lot of tension. We don't have that tension. We say what we mean. We mean what we say. If people want to give, they can give. We take no PAC money. We take usually no soft money. That simplifies matters. And it develops a certain purposeful tranquility to the whole campaign. ●

Bill ***Wylie-Kellermann*** *is both book review editor and a contributing editor of* The Witness. *His wife,* ***Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann****, is* The Witness' *senior editor. They live with their two daughters in Detroit.*

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WALKING THE GOD-TA

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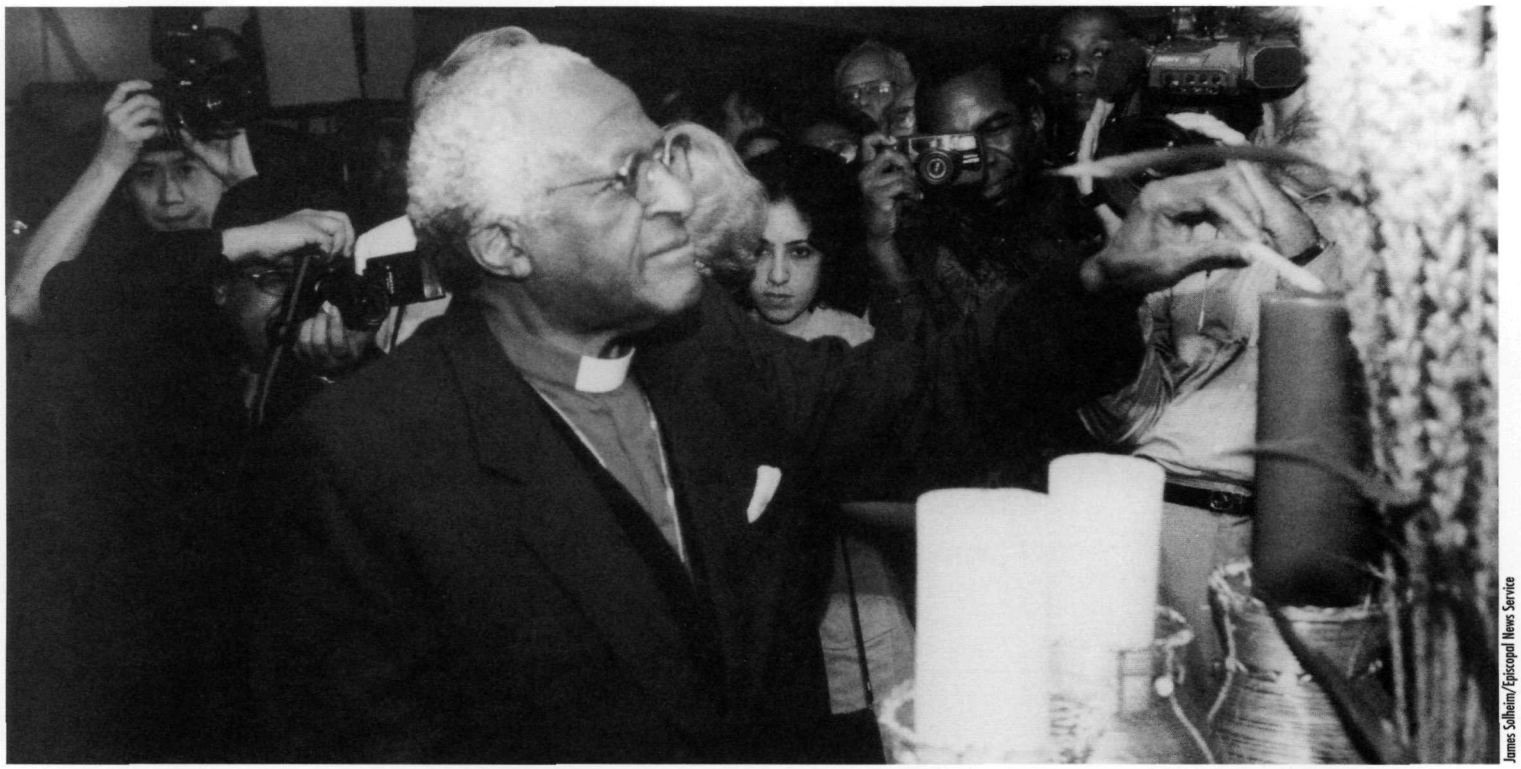

James Solheim/Episcopal News Service

Retired Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmund Tutu, lights a peace candle during ceremonies launching a Peace Center honoring his struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

Resurrecting a public theology

by Fredrica Harris Thompsett

COLUMNIST GEORGE F. WILLS recently reported that we have to go back to the presidential campaign of William Jennings Bryan to find more invocations of God and Christ than there are in politics today. The irony is that recent studies show there does not seem to be a corresponding increase in active public engagement by persons of faith. I call this the "more talk, less action" incongruity. Or, to turn toward a similar and apt Texas aphorism, perhaps our situation can be described as "all hat and no cattle!"As a Christian, a feminist and an Episcopalian inheritor of the Anglican emphasis on exercising moral responsibility in the world, I believe we are currently facing a perplexing paradox and perhaps an ethical crisis.

According to Robert D. Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), levels of participation are diminishing in virtually every area of civic life, whether secular or religious. Such shifts, he says, began in the 1960s and accelerated over the past two decades. Putnam also describes an ominous decline in "social capital," which is the valued accumulation of time, talent and treasure that fosters outward-looking social connections, cooperation, and trust among and beyond like-minded communities.

Participation may be too lofty a standard for measuring civic interest. Even the simple act

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of following media coverage of public events has suffered. A recent study of television network newscasts reveals lagging interest in domestic coverage and low market ratings for overseas news. It is estimated that more people watched television's popular "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" than tuned into coverage of the two national political conventions. Print news media, particularly newspapers, face decreasing markets as well. Some observers of public life estimate that we are, with few exceptions, on our way to becoming a country of disengaged, civil illiterates.

Disestablishment in a 'passionately Christian nation'

What does this have to do with the multifaceted relationship of religion to politics and to public life in general? A few words about history might help. Despite newspaper editorials to the contrary, the selection of Joseph Lieberman as the vice presidential Democratic candidate has not suddenly turned political attention toward religion. In large measure, such attention has been there all along. Whatever the framers of the Constitution's First Amendment exactly had in mind — and this is still under dispute today — they were not trying to draw distinctions between religious and irreligious persons. The spirit of this provision was to prevent the state from using religion to privilege or divide citizens. James Madison thought that the best sort of relationship between religion and the government was one of "mutual interdependence," with no one religion being "established" over others.

The question is whether the constitutional framers intended disestablishing religion as a prelude to secularizing politics. If so, they failed. As Karen Amstrong reports in her recent study of fundamentalism, *The Battle for God* (2000), "By the middle of the 19th century the new secularist United States had become a passionately Christian nation." Moreover, the reform movements spun off by the revivals collectively known as the Second Great Awakening were not only focused on individual conversion, they were directly aimed at changing society. Abolition, temperance, penal and educational reform and other endeavors were progressive, modernizing efforts that helped 19th-century evangelicals learn planning and organizing strategies to intervene in public life.

Another episode in which religious leaders became actively involved in societal reform occurred in the last decades of the 19th and the early decades of the 20th centuries. The social gospel movement, which attracted clergy and laity in the Episcopal and other churches, challenged notions that clergy should not engage in politics. This movement resulted in organized reform efforts to address the injustices of industrial society and to work for improved living and working conditions for laborers.

Mobilizing evangelicals and fundamentalists

Both Armstrong and Martin Marty ("Will Success Spoil Evangelicalism?" *Christian Century* July 19-26, 2000) also point toward a more recent escalation in organized religious involvement in American politics and public life. This pivotal change began in the 1960s and continued in the 1970s and 1980s with the resurgence of fundamentalist and evangelical Christians as a mobilized political force. In this period, Marty notes, evangelicalism left behind its early 20th-century quiescence and emerged as an organized participant in both the local civic and national political scene. Marty adds that this was one of several adaptations in the changing public face of evangelical commitments, including shifts from otherworldliness to worldliness, from disapproving popular culture to adopting it, and from focusing on the "dispossessed" to proclaiming "family values."

Armstrong also asserts that fundamentalism as a political force is clearly here to stay. In a new book William Fogel, a cliometric economist, describes the rise of the Christian Right as *The Fourth Great Awakening* (2000). He lauds the preeminence given by evangelicals to personal responsibility and individual spirituality in times that he describes as materially prosperous. Not only are the poor and working poor excluded from Fogel's viewpoint, systemic social analysis and public intervention in support of the dispossessed are replaced by private, autonomous enterprise. If Fogel is accurate, it is difficult to imagine what role this new-style evangelicalism might have in pro-actively and systemically addressing the "common good" and the work of the larger body politic.

Let me add two more historical observations about the entanglements of religion and political life. Political piety and religion have long been part of the presidential campaigns of both major parties. William Lee Miller in *Piety Along the Potomac* (1964) identifies religion in modern presidential campaigns with Eisenhower's Cold-War piousness, and others have traced presidential piety through Clinton's visibility as a biblically steeped Baptist. Second, it is important to name the significance of African-American Christianity as a definitive force in the national conversation and social transformation of political and civic life. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s stands as vivid testimony to public theology at work. Informed by the prophetic vision and mobilization of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders, "public" and civic spaces like polling booths, schools and libraries were at last opened to the local community.

If anything is new these days, it is that Senator Joe Lieberman, the first Jew nominated on a national ticket, is a member of a minority faith. Political piety is no longer, although in fact it never was, exclusively a Christian, a conservative, or a Republican domain.

Public theology: an oxymoron?

Yet, for many Americans today— especially for those in predominantly white denominations — making connections between theological and civic obligations can be challenging, given the sharp divisions many in this society make between public and private realms of life, divisions not generally experienced by those in the African-American community. Is it the case, as poll takers note, that religious commitments are essentially seen as private, personal, spiritual beliefs that are best contained within religious services? Or are religiously affiliated Americans — whether Jews, Christians, Muslims or others — truly sent forth with strength, courage and with a responsibility not only to "talk the talk" but also to "walk the walk" as citizens of the church and of the world?

When I recently told a neighboring seminary colleague that I was exploring the dynamics of "public theology," he quickly declared this phrase an oxymoron. All religion, he insisted, was personal. Denominations, he assured me, have no business speaking out on political issues, although (as I pointed out) denominations and ecumenical and interreligious groups often do take public stands on wider societal concerns. What was most evident in our extremely labored conversation was that we were working out of vastly different theologies.

Feminist ethics have always held that "the personal is political." Theology is substantially a matter of public discourse and civic consequence. Apathy and disengagement from public life — whether in local and national elections or in the wider sphere of community and civic life — are theological issues. Accordingly, part of the solution is theological. Who we believe God is, what we affirm as the character of humanity, and how we envision the mission of our religious institutions are three questions that come first to mind.

Resisting a 'too small God' ...

Today's tendency to invest deeply in personal spirituality and problem-solving has too often left the primary protagonist, God, out of the religious picture. How can we bear witness to the intended reign of God, let alone remain faithful to the biblical witness of people at work in the world, if our central image of God is at best personal? The late Joseph Sittler, in his 1986 book, *Gravity and Grace*, bluntly describes this theological error: "We are tempted to regard God primarily as a God for solitude and privacy and only secondarily a God for society."

Sittler echoes for me the indictment repeatedly made by the great African-American preacher, Samuel D. Proctor, that we have settled for a "too small God." In a privatized theological imagination this "too small God" apparently has little room or sufficient power to address the purposes of humanity and of all created life.

William Temple, an influential 20th-century Anglican theologian and Archbishop of Canterbury, once acerbically remarked that it was a great mistake to think God is chiefly interested in religion. Think about it. Temple went on to argue, in his popular book *Christianity and the Social Order* (first published in 1942), that the doctrine of the Incarnation results in a positive attitude toward the world that was redeemed by that event. This doctrine also grounds the duty of Christians to interfere in temporal as well as spiritual matters. For Anglicans and other Christians, God's intervention in the Incarnation is a reminder of the social and ethical consequences of exercising moral responsibility in the world which God so loved (see John 3: 16). The theological failure of a "too small God" minimizes anticipation of God's continuing revelation, let alone judgment, in the affairs of this world.

... and a limited sense of mission

Passivity about participating in civic and public life, at least among Christians today, is reinforced by limited, parochial teaching about the mission of the church. Churches are accountable for informing their members' expectations. If the cause of peace and justice is not at the heart of a church's mission and witness, then we can expect empty piety and sentimental, Hallmark-card theologies with starkly limited Gospel promises. The promise of the Gospel is fuller than personal salvation, as important as this is. The biblical emphasis on forgiveness liberates Christians — individually and collectively — to promote justice, peace and love.

Part of the failure of many churches to preach the full promise of the Gospel is apparent in preaching. Recently, a longtime urban pastor was alarmed to hear a well-established New York City rector boast that in 20 years of preaching he had never addressed a social or political issue. This remark prompted a course that Frederick B. Williams and I are teaching at the Episcopal Divinity School entitled, "Prophecy, Advocacy and Responsible Preaching." Here we will pay specific attention to the public and pastoral role of biblical preaching on difficult topics. Our goal is similar to that advanced by Lutheran theologian James M. Childs, Jr. in *Preaching Justice: The Ethical Vocation of Word and Sacrament Ministry* (2000): "Preaching justice is at the core of the church's gospel proclamation." Like William Temple, Childs argues that seeking the reign of God includes community dialogue and advocacy, as well as activism.

This is but one of several steps we can take in theological schools to challenge those who persist in separating faith from political and social action. Overall, Episcopalians and other biblically informed Christians need to reexamine our theological roots lest public theology becomes a forgotten or, as for Anglicans, a discarded vocation.

Confronting a false dualism

Another is to encourage reexamination of the contemporary tendency to separate personal religious claims from political and civic responsibility. I admire the title of Barbara A. Holmes' new book about Congresswoman Barbara Jordan's ethics, *A Private Woman in Public Spaces* (2000). Most Americans are both/and people, seeking privacy while living in community. Moreover, for most of the world's citizenry, sustained privacy is a luxury affordable only to privileged persons. Choosing between public and private understandings of ourselves is a false dualism.

Similarly, it is a good idea to challenge visions of Christianity that insist upon apolitical religion and limit expectations about religious leadership. It was a small step, yet a public act to be applauded, when Massachusetts' Episcopal bishop, M. Thomas Shaw, spent a month this past spring in Washington, D.C. as a congressional intern learn-

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ing about politics and the roles that religious leaders can play as public policy advocates. Shaw's rationale was that "our public life is very much a part of our [religious] journey." At one point, Shaw described his political internship as a "journey into the heart of God." In his words and actions, this church leader gives priority to the public good and refuses to separate the life of faith from politics and social action.

While we are examining our assumptions about politics as usual, it is also important to look to the margins of political and civic activity. Here various groups, individuals, and coalitions — many without fanfare — are shaping consequential responses that ethically engage the intersection of politics and religion. Sociologist Mark Chaves suggests that institutionalized habits formed a century ago are not adequate for today's challenges ("Are We 'Bowling Alone' — And Does It Matter?" *Christian Century* 7/19-26/00). We might well expect new and renewed expressions of activism. I have in mind such networks as Protestants for the Common Good, or the "Hip-Hop campus activism" described in a recent issue of *The Witness* (9/00). Such efforts can move outward, welcoming diversity while identifying systemic economic issues. This has been true, for example, in the international women's movement. Robert Putnam also finds particular reasons for optimism among young people. He points out that youth who join service organizations and serve as volunteers are more likely to remain politically active as adults. Electronic media can identify new opportunities for organizing and building coalitions. Participation matters, Putnam insists, pointing to higher levels of education, child welfare, and health care in those states and cities that foster civic engagement.

Moving beyond WWJD

Still, as Martin Marty reminds us, there are very good reasons to be wary about the intersection of religion and politics: "Faith can produce staying power, prophetic insight, creative visions — just as, admit it, faith can be twisted into idolatry of nation, party, and policy" (*Sightings*, 9/5/00). But being cautious does not prohibit dialogue and action. The health of the nation can benefit from sustained theological reflection on complex public issues. A clear example of the significance of religion in public life can be seen in the theological narratives of Martin Luther King, Jr. Here, as elsewhere, a variety of voices is important for assuring freedom. The cultivation of conscience obviously involves much more than wearing a "WWJD" bracelet, or declaring an annual "Jesus Day."

Meanwhile, the most enduring strategy is to look for and work for the coherence of words and actions! Do I work, as well as pray, for peace and justice? Does the preacher "walk the talk"? Does a politician's rhetoric of morality and religious claims jibe with her public record? Are public analysts and journalists helping us see through religious stereotypes to deeper issues at stake?

Public theology can make a thoughtful, if not determinative, contribution to the central social issues of our time. Our shared life demands such informed commitment. ●

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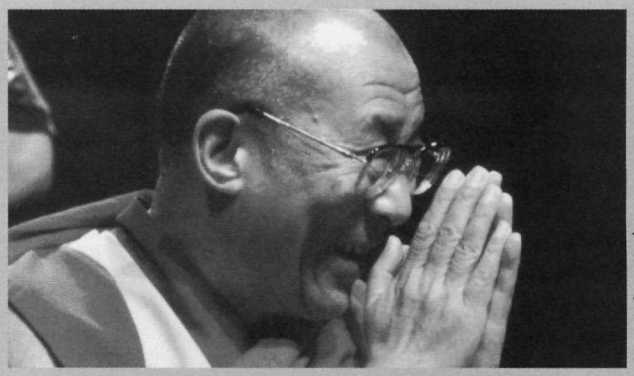
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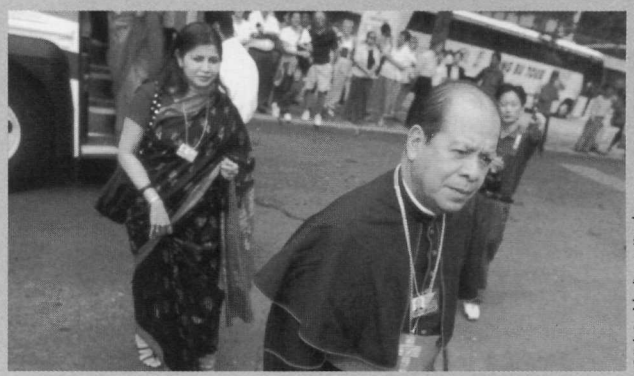
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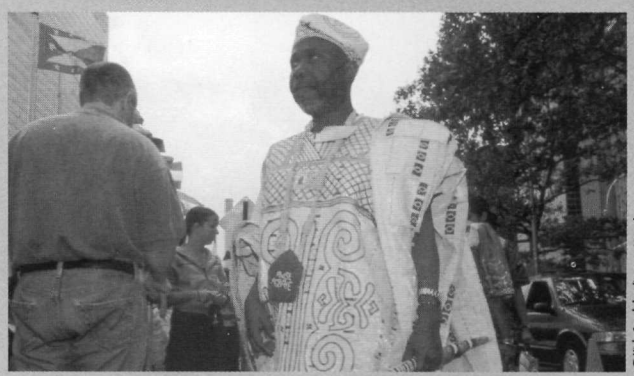
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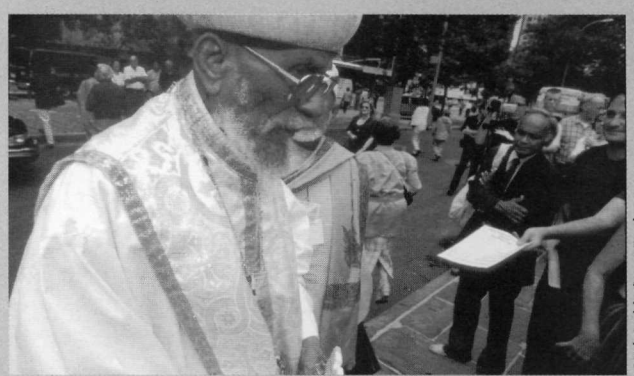
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Global religious leaders gathered at the U.N. in late August to discuss their moral role in promoting world peace. The Dalai Lama (top), who did not attend, was only belatedly invited. The U.N. organizers apparently feared offending China by including him.

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RESISTING MON

An interview with Naomi Klein

by Jane Slaughter



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NAOMI KLEIN, 29 and a native of Toronto, is a self-described "anti-corporate Deadhead." That means that if protesters are in the streets against the World Trade Organization in Seattle a year ago, or confronting the World Bank in Prague this September, she's there. Her 1999 book, *No Logo*, captured the spirit of the worldwide anti-corporate movement, spearheaded by the young, that confronts head-on the corporate domination of our cultural, political and economic space. Sometimes that movement is called "anti-globalization," but in fact its foundation is a profound internationalism.

No Logo both predicted "Seattle" and explained how corporations' profit strategies are backfiring, creating in the next generation a core of activists who have no stake in the system.

The Witness: You've written about the alternative politics exemplified by the Seattle demonstrations against the World Trade Organization (WTO) and by the protests at the Republican and Democratic conventions. Can you sum up what these protests are about?

Naomi Klein: Pretty much all the issues fit into the analysis that corporations have grown far too powerful and that there needs to be a citizens' movement to rein in that power.

It's important to understand that Seattle didn't begin it all. The U.S. is playing catch-up. Seattle was an important turning point, but there had been protests of that size, of that level of militancy, even with that level of diversity, in other cities around the world. In June 1998 there was an anti-debt, Jubilee 2000 protest where people created a human chain all around Birmingham [England] when the G-7 leaders were meeting there. That was followed by an anniversary of the WTO, in Geneva, with riots that went on for two days. Then, June 18, 1999, you saw the riots in London, in conjunction with the G-8 summit in Cologne. There was a counter-summit in Manila during the APEC [Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation] summit. Seattle was really about Americans joining an international movement in midstream.

The strength of Seattle was the coalition of young protesters and labor. It was Teamsters and turtles; that was what made it extraordinary. But Seattle was also about Jose Bove [the French sheep farmer who led an attack on a McDonald's outlet] coming from France and meeting the leader of the Philippines peasant movement, who then came and testified at Bove's trial in France; and *maquiladora* workers marching with steelworkers; and Indian farmers who had been campaigning against genetic modification of foods meeting British campaigners and American campaigners. That was the strength of Seattle—it was all those coalitions.

The internationalism of this movement is not just a hobbyhorse. It is the *power* that it has. And the internationalism is exactly where the World Trade Organization and the World Bank leaders around the world have targeted their attacks. This is where they're trying to break the coalition. Immediately after Seattle, *The Economist* magazine ran a cover of a starving Indian child: "Why are you trying to take my food away?" Their rhetoric is, "Global trade is a mass philanthropic project, and you people are just selfish."

T.W.: How do people who are acting out of a faith perspective fit into this grand coalition?

N.K.: A lot of the anti-sweatshop work has come from church groups. Sweatshops became a moral issue. But there's a real diversity in religious activism on the sweatshop issue. There are very radical religious leaders who see their work within the context of a labor movement, and then there are religious groups who use a charity model. The charity-based model has created a lot of discord among labor activists in the developing world, who aren't sure whether this is about supporting their right to form unions, which is really the only thing they're interested in, or is it about feeling sorry for young child laborers?

EY POLITICS



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The charity model means that instead of looking at root causes of why Nike might use child labor to produce soccer balls, you just sit down and try to negotiate with the company, get them to pass a resolution. There wouldn't be worker involvement. It sends a message to workers in the developing world that this is not about building an international labor movement, it's just about appeasing the conscience of shoppers in America. One of the very few groups that has successfully unionized free-trade-zone workers is a church group in the Philippines. They're a very radical group that believes that the Catholic Church is the church of the poor, and what that means is that they have to bring unions into the free trade zones. If they had just been an independent union that had decided to try to organize those workers, there would have been a serious crackdown. There's a very clear and understood rule that you're not supposed to unionize the free-trade zones. But because that church was the absolute center of the community, that left the authorities very little room to move.

T.W.: You've written that much or some of the movement actually calls capitalism into question. What's the difference between anti-corporate and anti-capitalist?

N.K.: For many people, anti-corporate means a perception that corporate power has grown in a very unhealthy way. That we as

nations have had a balance in our relationship with corporations that grew out of New Deal-type policies, that we learned as nations to rein in the power of our national corporations, and as corporations have gone global, we have lost the ability as citizens to counterbalance that with any kind of system of rules and regulations. So what we need is to figure out new ways to do globally what we did on a national scale. That's not anti-capitalist.

Then, for a lot of other people, anti-corporate politics is anti-capitalist politics with training wheels. It's a process that leads to a questioning of the entire system. You start by talking about Nike sweatshops, and then you talk about how the larger picture is really corporate power, and then the next thing you're talking about is how you have to smash capitalism. I've seen that happen with lots and lots of young activists. Which does not mean that they're socialists and communists, because a lot of them are green anarchists.

T.W.: In *No Logo*, you write that corporations' own strategies are creating resistance.

N.K.: What we've seen is a convergence of all these pockets of anti-corporate activism — all these people deciding to go after corporations in a way that uses the power of corporate marketing against itself.

I was in my early 20s, in the most desirable demographic, and I experienced myself what seemed like a new voraciousness in marketing. We went from being really uninteresting to marketers, when they were still interested in baby boomers, to being stalked by marketers. All these ideas we thought were very cutting-edge were suddenly appearing in Benetton ads.

So one part of the resistance was a rise in ad-busting and culture-jamming, which is basically street-level media criticism. Culture-jamming takes many, many forms, but say, downloading an advertisement and changing the message so it says something that the company wouldn't want. Scaling up the side of a building and changing a Big Mac billboard. Changing Joe Camel into Joe Chemo, hooked up to an IV machine. For a lot of young activists that I know, that was a first taste of direct action against corporations.

Young people today have grown up with the idea that there isn't a moment's delay between when a new idea enters youth culture consciousness and when it gets sold back to you in the form of a Sprite ad. Everything's been co-opted, whether it's been feminism in Nike ads, or the very idea of being a rebel — anything. This logically leads you to the idea that you want advertising to shut up every once in a while. So that's a shift.

And that attitude, of hand-to-brand combat, was spreading to different areas. You could see it in the McLibel trial in Britain [where McDonald's sued two environmental activists for libel]. They were using all the power of McDonald's against itself to, in effect, put this massive multinational corporation on trial, and by extension put the entire economic model on trial, very consciously.

T.W.: How and why did "branding" get to be so ubiquitous? What are some examples?

N.K.: When I started to write the book I didn't understand the difference between advertising and marketing. I wanted to write about anti-corporate activism, and I knew that a lot of the young people who were getting involved felt they were over-marketed-to, but also that they had the freedom to go after these corporations, because they in no sense expected job security, or basically anything, from them. They felt that corporations' messages were everywhere, but on an employment level, maybe you'd get a barista job at Starbucks [the people who serve the coffee], but it's not like they're the anchor of your community and you have to be loyal to them because they employed dad for 50 years.

By reading marketing books and magazines, I came across this idea that has gripped the corporate world in the last 15 years: If you want to be a successful corporation, you don't just have to advertise more and better. You have to produce a brand—not a product. If you read these books you get the sense that if you produce your own product, somehow you're lowly, you're a lower order of corporation.

Branding is this rush towards weightlessness, becoming a hollow corporation. Instead of a product, what corporations are about is the dissemination of a brand idea, whether that idea is "transcendence through sports," if you're Nike, or "community," if you're Starbucks.

T.W.: It used to be that corporations wanted to be seen as solid, like the Prudential rock.

N.K.: Now being solid is being cumbersome, being weighed down. This is what the downsizing of the late 1980s, early 1990s has turned into. All that restructuring and streamlining led to this fundamental questioning of production itself.

T.W.: Well, somebody still has to do the production of all those sneakers and coffee beans.

N.K.: Your contractors, your Taiwanese and Korean contractors who produce the stuff, they aren't the top order of corporations. The most respected corporations on Wall Street are the ones who have managed to figure out how to produce nothing. If you're a manufacturing company, the model is Nike, which doesn't own any factories; it's a brand-production machine. You hear a lot about companies embracing "the Nike paradigm." If you're Microsoft, the way you do it is by keeping a third of your workforce classified as temps. If you're Starbucks you do it by doing what everybody in the fast-food industry does, which is to convince their workforce that they're not really workers, that they're students, they're just trying to make a little bit of extra money, so they don't expect job security.

When I started to understand this mania in the corporate world for producing brands, not products, the two sides of the argument that I was researching in *No Logo* came together. One of them was this rise in more voracious marketing and the loss of public space to marketing, and the other was the loss of job security. It was the same piece of ideology fueling both of these phenomena.

T.W.: And so for the activists, it all fits: We hate you, Gap, for all kinds of reasons, including the fact that you own sweatshops.

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N.K.: Exactly. We hate the fact that you have colonized our neighborhoods, we hate the fact that you're co-opting youth culture in your advertisements, we hate the fact that you use sweatshops, and we also hate the fact that the only jobs we're going to get from you are as sweater-folders.

That's why the companies are so confused, because they've always assumed that they were dealing with 1970s-style boycotts — they just had to stop doing the thing that people were upset about, and then all the anger would be defused. What they're finding is that their very active coming at people with public relations is just seen as more intrusion.

T.W.: What is the relationship of this sort of alternative politics to traditional electoral politics? Or is there any?

N.K.: The reason you have this generation of activists who've made the decision to go after corporations is that they have decided that the traditional means of politics, i.e., going after government, no longer works because government is so beholden to corporations, that essentially there's been a power shift. The way you respond to that power shift is by going to where the power is, and the power is with the corporations. They're realizing that in many cases the best way to get at policy is to get at the corporations themselves, and then you get the attention of your political leaders.

The best example of that might be the campaign against genetically engineered foods in Europe, which was an anti-corporate campaign that turned into a policy campaign around labeling. First the activists went after supermarket chains, and got many of them to agree not to carry GE foods anymore. Then, once a few corporations are successfully targeted, they often turn to the politicians and say, "This isn't fair — you have to level the playing field and develop some sort of across-the-board legislative response," for instance, that genetically-engineered or modified foods have to be labeled. Which is what happened in Europe.

So it's an alternative to electoral politics. Just because you realize that it doesn't matter which party you elect, they're all going to do the same thing, doesn't mean you're going to just play dead; you have to find other ways to change the world. What was significant about the protests around both the Democratic and Republican conventions was that for a lot of younger activists, it was the first time they were even giving the time of day to politicians. And they were doing it not to say who to vote for, but to say, "This entire system is corrupt, but we're not just going to leave it at that. We're going to politicize the way in which money has taken over politics." ●

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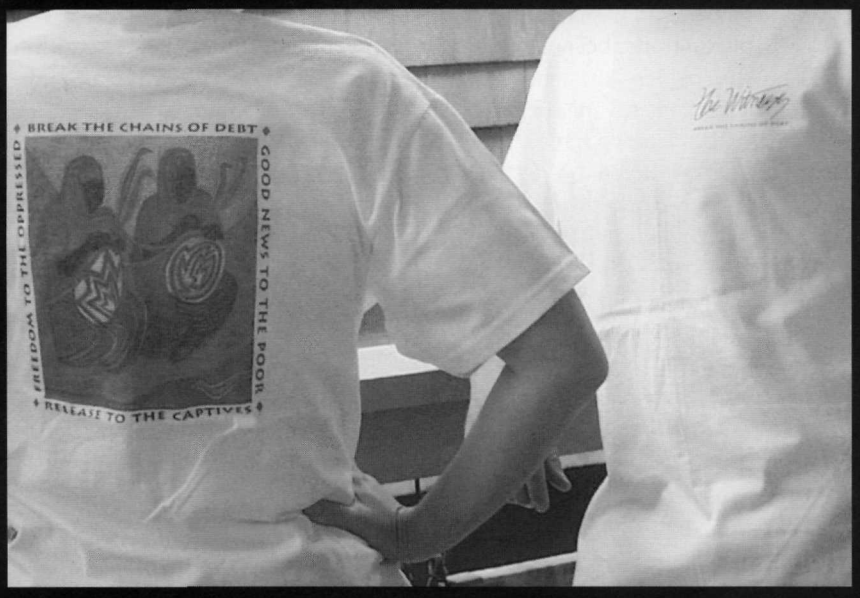

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STRIVING FOR EQ



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Lani Guinier

Overcoming the tyranny of the majority

by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY where the majority rules, change can take a long time — even after attitudes have begun to shift. For instance, although most Americans would give at least lip-service to the concept that men and women are equal citizens deserving of equal opportunity, attorney Deborah L. Rhode estimates that "at current rates of change, it still would take more than three centuries to achieve equality between the sexes in political representation."

And, of course, merely electing equal numbers of males and females is not the same as electing people with a firm commitment to human equality. Yet a transformative vision of gender equity is necessary in order to transcend, convince, and overcome the opposition of moneyed, seniority-oriented "old boy" networks. As Rhode comments in her 1997 book *Speaking of Sex*, "we are unlikely to establish gender equality as a political priority without substantial changes in the electoral process." Although Rhode is talking chiefly about dimorphic male-female equality, what she says is just as true in the context of achieving omnigender equity or any other positive social change.

How then to bring about change a little more rapidly than three centuries? Rhode offers some suggestions born of her several decades as professor at Stanford Law School: Those who care must agitate for campaign finance reform so that the system is "less hostage to financial influence"; must try to increase voter knowledge; and must seek public recognition of gender pioneers. Only 5 percent of national historic landmarks are currently dedicated to women. Imagine the percentage of publicly displayed paintings, statues, and plaques honoring transsexual leaders, or gay or lesbian leaders! Even retrieving our history is a major project, let alone achieving public recognition. I remember gazing in awe at the bust of lesbian novelist Willa Cather in the state capitol in Lincoln, Neb. Even though she was being honored for her local-color artistry, not for her transgender leadership, it was a first for me, and a great moment.

Rhode also suggests the old standbys: writing letters, organizing fund-raisers, building networks among colleagues and friends, sending checks to organizations with gender-related concerns. "Overall," Rhode writes, "America's foundations target less than 5 percent of their funding to the specific needs of women and girls. Some 60 women's funds are now struggling to fill the gap, but their endowments remain quite modest."

The need for funding is even more desperate, of course, in those organizations that are working to expand society beyond binary gender definitions. In my own charitable giving, increasingly I am trying to give larger percentages to those organizations least likely to attract widespread funding because of their cutting- edge commitment to justice for people of all sexes and/or genders. I hope others will do the same as the following principles become better known: that male-female gender differences have been overemphasized because of unquestioning acceptance of the binary gender construct; that everybody suffers because that construct does not meet the needs of society as well as an omnigender construct promises to do; and that the objective of an omnigendered society, according to Martine Rothblatt in *The Apartheid of Sex* (Crown, 1995), is "to provide equal, non-discriminatory opportunity for personal fulfillment to all persons."

As much as I support Deborah Rhode's suggestions, however, I am still left pondering her statement that if we are ever to make gender equity a priority in American politics, we need "substantial changes in the electoral process." Lani Guinier is someone who has given considerable thought to those "substantial changes." Although Guinier's focus is primarily racial equity, Yale law professor Stephen L. Carter, writing in the foreword to Guinier's 1994 book, *The Tyranny of the Majority* (The Free Press), is certainly correct that "whenever there are consistent winners and losers, her analysis applies." In my opinion, Guinier is a person to take very seriously because of her honorable career as a civil rights litigator with, as Carter comments, "a deep firsthand knowledge of both

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UITY

the theory and practice of her art."

President Clinton has admitted that withdrawing his nomination of Guinier to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department was the low moment of his first year in the White House. And since the transgender political movement is also a civil rights movement, we do well to consider Guinier's suggestions about how to break through the tyranny about which she writes.

Guinier's point is that, "In an ideal democracy, the people would rule, but the minorities would also be protected against the power of majorities." To achieve that, "we may need an alternative to winner-take-all majoritarianism ... the 'principle of taking turns.'" But "giving the minority a turn does not mean the minority gets to rule; what it does mean," Guinier explains, "is that the minority gets to influence decision-making and [therefore] the majority rules more legitimately." When minorities perceive that the system is fair enough to respond to their concerns, political stability is enhanced: "Losers continue to work within the system rather than seeking to overthrow it."

For decades I have been involved in the effort to achieve equal representation and opportunity for women in Christian ministries and in local and national religious decision-making bodies. And for almost as long, I have been active in the effort to achieve justice for Christian gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (glbt) people. Repeatedly, these causes have been frustrated by the tyranny of the majority. For instance, according to John Leland, who reported on two *Newsweek* polls last March, although "only" 46 percent of the American general public still believes that homosexuality is sinful, those churchgoers who are elected as delegates to denominational conventions tilt in the other direction, with roughly 46-48 percent supportive of equality for their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members, and about 52-54 percent denying that equality on the basis of the "sinful lifestyle." Yet that slim majority continues to block access to church rituals or union ceremonies for those glbt members who request them.

And although 83 percent of the general public says that homosexuals should have equal rights in employment, within most Christian denominations that 52-54 percent majority continues to block the ordination of openly glbt ministers or priests. In many local congregations where a large minority wants to proclaim the congregation a welcoming and safe space for glbt people, that move is similarly blocked by the tyranny of a small majority.

It is in these and similar situations that Guinier's suggestions could make a difference. One of her suggestions is to give minorities a voice in the decision-making process by the use of cumulative voting. Each voter is given multiple votes which they can distribute as they see fit. For instance, a church voting on five new policies could give each member ten votes, which they could distribute according to the intensity of their preference. Some voters might put all ten of the their votes for or against a policy that would forcefully impact their lives. Other voters, feeling less strongly impacted, might put two votes for or against each policy. "Like-minded voters can vote as a solid bloc, or, instead, form strategic cross-racial [and/or cross-interest] coalitions to gain mutual benefits. This system ... allows voters to organize themselves on whatever basis they wish."

Therefore, Guinier says, "any self-identified minority can plump or cumulate all its votes for one candidate [or one policy]."

Guinier does not pretend that cumulative voting is a radical new idea; rather, she points out that in Clinton County, Ala., which uses cumulative voting to elect both the school board and the county commission, the system has elected three white Republicans and four Democrats (three white and one black), whereas previously only white Democrats had been able to achieve election. And in some Western European democracies that use similar cumulative voting systems, national legislatures have "as many as 37 percent female members compared to little more than 5 percent in our Congress."

Guinier is more cautious about her second remedial voting tool, supermajority voting, which requires that "more than a bare majority of voters must approve or concur before action is taken." Again, this voting system is nothing new: Guinier points out that it was used to give small-population states equal representation in the U.S. Senate. And the Reagan administration approved the use of supermajority rule in Mobile, Ala., where "the special five-out-of-seven supermajority threshold is still in place today and is credited with increasing racial harmony in that community." The advantage of supermajority voting is, of course, that it gives "bargaining power to all numerically inferior or less powerful groups, be they black, female, or Republican" — or, I might add, Democrat, people of any non- normative race or ethnicity, and people of any non-normative gender or sexuality.

I am in full agreement with Guinier's basic thesis that "democracy in a heterogeneous society is incompatible with rule by a racial monopoly of any color." And I extend that thesis to say that democracy in a heterogeneous society is incompatible with rule by a gender monopoly or any other monopoly of any one inflexible configuration. ●

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Professor of English, Emeritus, at the William Paterson University in Wayne, N.J., was guest editor of* The Witness' *April 2000 issue on sexual and gender ethics. This article is adapted from her forthcoming book,* Omnigender: A Christian and Trans-Religious approach to Gender Justice *(Spring 2001, The Pilgrim Press).*

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FUSING THE SPIRITUAL

The Image on a coin

by Arthur Waskow

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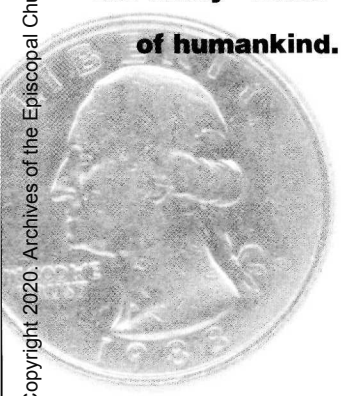
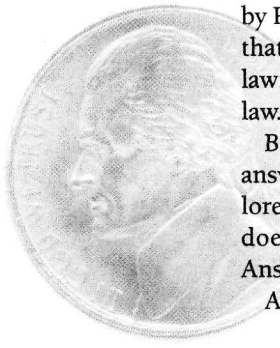
The Rabbis drew an analogy between the image a human ruler puts upon the coins of the realm and the Image the Infinite Ruler puts upon the many "coins" of humankind.





ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN, and most puzzling, stories of Jesus' life is the tale of an encounter concerning the image on a coin.

The story appears in Matthew 22: 15-22, Mark 12: 13-17, and Luke 20: 19-26. It is almost the same in all three places.

According to the story, some of Jesus' opponents among the Pharisees sent people to trick Jesus into saying something that would provide a pretext for his arrest. (The Pharisees were the religious grouping who initiated the reforms and reinterpretations of Torah that became Rabbinic Judaism — and who in general sided with the poor against the Roman occupation and its allies in the Jewish "establishment." Some scholars today see Jesus as himself a Pharisee, among their "radical" wing. In that case, "the Pharisees" as a body were probably not his opponents, but some among them probably were.)

One of them asked him: "Rabbi, we know that what you speak and teach is sound; you pay deference to no one, but teach in all honesty the life-path that God requires.

"Give us your ruling on this: Are we or are we not permitted to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor?"

Jesus saw through their trick and said to them, "Show me a silver coin. Whose image is on this coin, and whose inscription?"

Let us pause for a moment. What was the "trick"? Since the coin had Caesar's image on it, with the inscription "*Divus*" — "God" — use of the coin might constitute idolatry in Jewish law, and thus be forbidden. But by Roman law the taxes must be paid. So the "trick" was that by answering one way, Jesus would break Jewish law; by answering the other way, he would break Roman law. Either way, he would be subject to arrest.

But Jesus had not quite answered. Instead, he had answered the question with a question. (Says the folklore, this is an old Jewish habit. As it is taught, "Why does a Jew answer a question with a question?" Answer: "Why not?")

According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus answered: "Whose image is on this coin?"

The man who had challenged him answered, "Caesar's!"

And then Jesus did respond: "So give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

This answer, say Matthew, Mark and Luke, took his opponents by surprise, and they went away and left him alone.

But for 2000 years, Christians have argued over what this answer meant. What is Caesar's and what is God's? Does the answer suggest two different spheres of life, one ruled by Caesar and one by God? Does it mean to submit to Caesar's authority in the material world, while adhering to God in the spiritual world? How do we discern the boundary?

Why did the questioners go away? Was it simply because Jesus had avoided the horns of the dilemma they had brought, and so could not be arrested for his answer?

Or was there a deeper meaning to the answer? Is the answer simply a koan, an answer that forces the questioner to seek a deeper question or break through into enlightenment?

Now let us introduce a passage from the Babylonian Talmud, that compilation of the wisdom, the debates and dialogues, the puns and the parables, the philosophic explorations and the practical decisions of thousands of rabbis living over a period from about the beginning of the Common Era to about 500 CE, some in Babylonia and some in the Land of Israel.

Our passage from the Talmud appears on Sanhedrin 38a (Soncino transl., p. 240):

"Our Rabbis taught: Adam, the first human being, was created as a single person to show forth the greatness of the Ruler Who is beyond all Rulers, the Blessed Holy One. For if a human ruler [like the Roman Emperor] mints many coins from one mold, they all carry the same image, they all look the same. But the Blessed Holy One shaped all human beings in the Divine Image, as Adam was shaped in the Divine Image [Gen. 1: 27], *'b'tzelem elohim*,' 'in the Image of God.'

AND THE POLITICAL

And yet not one of them resembles another."

Let us absorb this. The Rabbis drew an analogy between the image a human ruler puts upon the coins of the realm, and the Image the Infinite Ruler puts upon the many "coins" of humankind. The very diversity of human faces shows forth the Unity and Infinity of God, whereas the uniformity of imperial coins makes clear the limitations on the power of an emperor.

Now reread the story of Jesus with a single line and gesture added:

"Whose image is on this coin?" asks Jesus.

His questioner answers, "Caesar's!"

Then Jesus puts his arm on the troublemaker's shoulder and asks, "And Whose Image is on this coin?"

Perhaps the troublemaker mutters an answer; perhaps he does not need to. Not till after this exchange does Jesus say, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."

Now there is a deeper meaning to the response, and to the troublemaker's exit. Jesus has not just avoided the question and evaded the dilemma: He has answered, in a way that is much more radical than if he had said either, "Pay the tax" or "Don't pay the tax" — a way that is profoundly radical, but gives no obvious reason for arrest.

Jesus has not proposed dividing up the turf between the material and the spiritual. He has redefined the issue: "Give your whole self to the One Who has imprinted Divinity upon you! — You, you who are one of the Rabbis, my brother Rabbi — you know that is the point of this story! All I have done is to remind you!"

The coin of the realm will matter very little, if the troublemaker listens.

So the questioner walks away, suddenly profoundly troubled by the life-question that he faces.

We might ask, why does the line I have inserted not appear in the three versions of the story that we have?

It is possible that the line was censored out, as Christian tradition faced both the threats of an Empire to shatter this religion, and the invitation of an Empire to become the Established Church.

Or it is possible that Jesus never needed to say the words, because his "Pharisee" questioners understood the point perfectly well. After all, on the basis of the passage in the Talmud, we can easily imagine that the teaching comparing God's Image on Adam to the Emperor's image on the coinage was already well-known among the rabbis.

For me, this reading of the two passages — one from Talmud, one from the New Testament — brings with it two levels of greater wholeness and deeper meaning.

The first level is that each of the two passages enriches the meaning of the other. Read together, they fuse the spiritual and the political, instead of splitting the world into two domains. In this reading, the claim of the Divine Ruler to rule over an emperor includes the political realm. God can create infinite diversity and eternal renewal, and so is far richer than the imperial treasury — which can create only uniformity and repetition. But this is not just a philosophical or biological point. Because God rules over all rulers, because God calls forth from every human being a unique face of God, each human being must follow God — not Caesar.

Without the passage from the Rabbis of the Talmud, this meaning of Jesus' response remains unclear. Without the tale of Jesus, the Talmud passage seems "merely theological" — without a thrust into everyday life. To become whole and create wholeness in the world, the passages need each other.

Yet the editors and framers of the Talmud and New Testament took care that both passages appear in neither text. They were walled out against each other. So the second level of wholeness that this reading teaches me is the importance of mending the fringes of the Jewish and Christian traditions.

In Jewish tradition, what makes a garment holy is the careful, conscious tying of *tzitzit* — a certain kind of fringe — on the corners of a piece of clothing. Just as a landholder must let the poor and the landless harvest what grows in the corners of his field, so these corners of a garment remind us that it is not "good fences make good neighbors," but good fringes make good neighbors.

What makes a fringe a fringe is that it is a mixture of my own cloth and the universe's air. What makes *tzitzit tzitzit* is that they are tied according to a conscious, holy pattern — not left as helter-skelter fringes. They are fringes that celebrate their fringiness.

That is what we need between traditions. Not the dissolution of all boundaries, nor the sharpness of a wall, a fence — but conscious, holy fringes.

I think these two passages are *tzitzit* of both traditions, reaching out as threads of connection that also honor the two different garments on which they are tied.

If we fail to tie such sacred fringes or let them become invisible, the garments lose their holiness. So let us turn with newly open eyes to see what Rabbi Jesus and the Rabbis of the Talmud shared, as well as where they differed. ●

***Arthur Waskow** is a Pathfinder of ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal. He is author of* The Freedom Seder ; Godwrestling ; Seasons of Our Joy; Down-to-Earth Judaism: Food, Money, Sex, and the Rest of Life ; *and* Godwrestling — Round Two *(recipient of the Benjamin Franklin Award in 1996). In 1983 he founded and continues to direct The Shalom Center, a division of ALEPH that focuses on Jewish thought and practice to protect and heal the earth and society. Website: <www.shalomctr.org>.*

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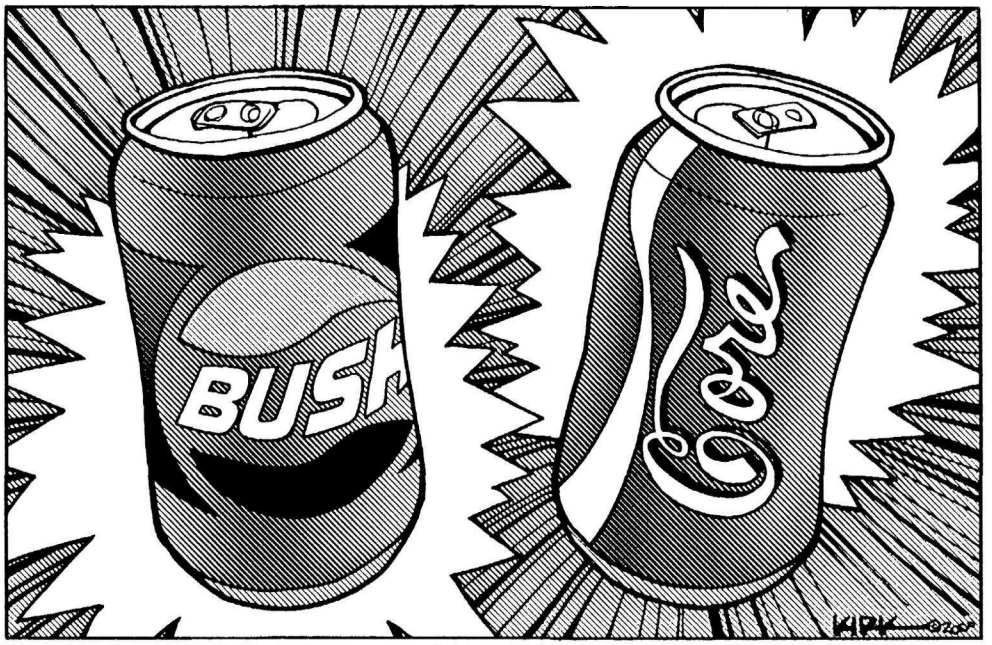

THE AMERICAN FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

Selling water

Globalization is exacerbating a growing worldwide water crisis, according to Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians (*Resist Newsletter*, 6-7/00).

"Forces are already established that would see water become a private commodity to be sold and traded on the open market, controlled by transnational corporations and guaranteed for the use of private capital through global trade and investment agreements through the World Trade Organization (WTO)," Barlow says.

"In industries ranging from municipal water and wastewater services to an explosion in bottled water to massive bulk water exports by tanker, corporations are lining up to exploit the increasingly desperate global demand for water. 'Water is the last infrastructure frontier for private investors,' says Johan Bastin of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

"The world of privatized water is overwhelmingly dominated by two French transnationals, Vivendi and Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux. They are joined by mega-energy companies like Enron, that has just set up a water division headed by Rebecca Mark (who swears she will not rest until the entire world's water is privatized) and by global shipping companies eager to begin the global trade in commercial bulk water. ...

"Water must be exempted from both NAFTA and the World Trade Organization, as must the trade in genes, seeds, air, health, education, social services, natural resources and culture. That is not to say that those of us living in water-rich areas of the world don't have obligations to water-scarce regions, especially given the fact that it is the corporations of the First World that have caused such devastation in the Third. But there is a world of difference between water-sharing and water-trading. You can be sure that under the WTO, it would not be the world's poor who would gain access to water; rather, countries, water-intensive corporations, free trade zones and wealthy communities able to pay top dollar would win the prize."

Klan adopts a highway

"A stretch of highway sponsored by the Ku Klux Klan was recently named after civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks," according to the *SPLC Report* (6/00). "Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan signed legislation in late May that created the Rosa Parks Highway, a portion of Interstate 55 near downtown St. Louis. The Klan won the right to join the state's Adopt-A-Highway cleanup program in November and was assigned the I-55 stretch.

"'I think the governor appreciated the irony of the KKK picking up trash along the Rosa Parks Highway,' a spokesman said."

'Interculturation'

Asked in an interview about "inculturating" the Gospel (*The Christian Century*, 8/00), world religions scholar and Roman Catholic priest Raimon Panikkar replied that "it is of interculturation that we need to speak — that is, of a meeting between traditions and cultures, and not the implantation of one culture in another. It would only be a proof of colonialism to pretend that one religious message, like the New Testament, has the right and the duty to inculturate itself everywhere, as if it were something supracultural. The church ought to take existing traditional cultures more seriously, and work for their mutual fecundation. ... The Christian truth is not the monopoly of a sect, a treatise imposed by a kind of colonization, but an eruption that has existed since the dawn of time, which St. Paul defined very well as 'a mystery that has existed since the beginning,' and of which we Christians know only a very small part."

Why not give them Mercedes?

"The U.S. is on the verge of undermining an international missile control regime with the potential sale of 25 ballistic missiles to the tiny Persian Gulf State of Bahrain," according to the Council for a Livable World (*Arms Trade Insider* #36). "The U.S. intends to squeeze the missile under the limits of the Missile Technology Control Regime by making modifications to its range and payload. The U.S. has repeatedly berated other countries for potential violations of the missile regime, and will surely set a precedent that the regime's limits

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on the sale of ballistic missiles can be ignored or bent to suit one's needs.

"It is ironic the U.S. would modify the missile, considering the U.S. chastised the French-British consortium Matra Bae Dynamics for a proposed sale of the Black Shahine cruise missile to the United Arab Emirates in November 1998. The consortium proposed that it would alter the missile's capabilities to qualify under the regime's guidelines. The regime's voluntary guidelines limit the sale of ballistic missiles with a range over 300 kilometers and over 500 kilograms of payload. In that case, the U.S. argued that the sale undermined the spirit of the regime, but it now appears that the U.S. missile should not be held to the same standard. Given U.S. policy against the spread of ballistic missiles to developing nations, it is hypocritical to sell these modified ballistic missiles to Bahrain.

"Furthermore, introducing the ballistic missiles to the Persian Gulf will exacerbate the existing regional arms race. If the U.S. sells these missiles to Bahrain, the other countries of the region will want similar missiles, further eroding regional security and the missile regime.

"Bahrain has no need for these missiles because it already has missiles in its arsenal capable of defending against any potential invasion. Secondly, Bahrain serves as the host for the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, a massive deterrent force in its own right.

"Bahrain has served as one of the U.S.' closest allies in this region, allowing bombing runs from its soil during times of crisis with Iraq. If this sale is to serve as essentially a reward for past good behavior, there are other, safer methods to achieve this. As one Congressional staffer remarked, 'If we are doing this sale just to make Bahrain happy, why don't we give them some Mercedes instead?'"

Alienating allies

Writing about the convention protests, Juan Gonzalez notes that he saw "disturbing signs of class and racial bias even among some of the most committed protesters in Philadelphia and L.A." (*In These Times*, 9/18/00).

"There was, for instance, the young activist outside the West Philadelphia puppet-making center that police raided, arresting 70 people inside who had committed no crime. A phalanx of young cops, most of them black, had been posted outside the warehouse while commanders negotiated the surrender of those inside. The raid itself was inexcusable and a clear violation of basic civil rights, but the cops on the detail were courteous and well-behaved. I listened in astonishment as the young white activist began to berate the black cops, calling them traitors to the memory of Martin Luther King, defenders of racism and oppression, and a variety of other names.

"As someone who has spent years chronicling the harrowing experiences of untold numbers of black and Latino cops within urban police departments in this country, I have no doubt that the average black officer encounters and often battles against far more racism than that young radical could ever hope to imagine. Not to recognize that even within the most repressive agencies and institutions of our society there are many men and women of good will battling for justice — people who could be potential allies — is an arrogance and immaturity the new movement cannot afford."

Tax resisters' gathering

The 15th annual New England Gathering of War Tax Resisters is set for Nov. 17-19, 2000 at the Woolman Hill Conference Center in Deerfield, Mass. There will be a workshop for those new to war tax refusal as well as opportunities to talk with long-time refusers. For details, contact Melinda Nielsen, 24 Clark Ave., Northampton, MA 01060; 413-584-5608. ●

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PROFILE

Taking on public policy as a matter of Christian stewardship

by Marianne Arbogast

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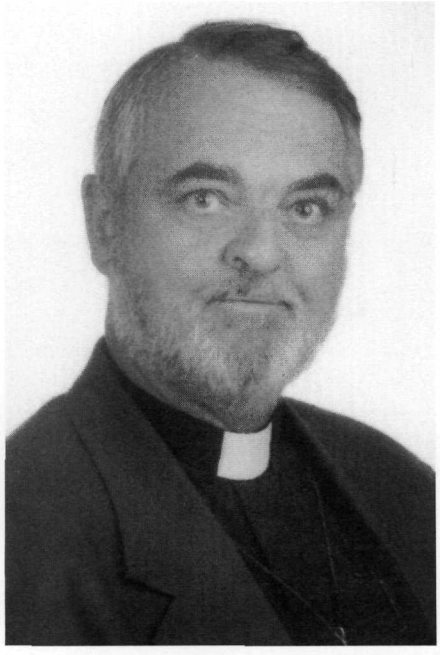

"It takes a lot of psychic energy to start with, to get beyond all of the name-calling and shibboleths that all of us carry around with us, to asking, where can we see God inviting us to act in ways that express God's justice and mercy?"

WHEN PETER PETERS was asked to represent the Diocese of Rochester at an ecumenical public policy meeting in Albany several years ago, he found the experience unsettling.

"Albany is a very unnerving place to be," he says. "It's a bit like Washington, D.C. — big buildings, offices, bureaucrats and lots of things going on. I'd done a bit of lobbying and advocating before, but not a lot, and so I found myself asking, why do I feel this way and how does the church gain confidence to be part of this process?"

Upon returning home Peters, rector of St. Luke's, Fairport, N.Y., set about creating a public policy task force in his congregation, as well as one on the diocesan level.

"I decided that, for me, my most significant community of empowerment was the church and, in particular, the congregation I serve," he says. "It seemed that if I was going to try to integrate my faith life with my civic life, that would be the arena in which I needed to test this out. So I called some people together and said, I want to form a public policy group."

The group — which adopted the name PPICS (Public Policy Issues and Christian Stewardship) — pledged themselves "to rediscover the Church's traditional role in supporting/assisting the poor and the needy, and to discover how this is to be expressed in the present political climate."

They decided to begin by focusing on one issue and chose welfare reform.

"What we discovered in practice was that it takes a long time for us to study issues and become well-versed enough that we feel we have something to offer others," Peters says. "It takes a lot of psychic energy to start with, to get beyond all of the name-calling and shibboleths that all of us carry around with us, to asking, where can we see God inviting us to act in ways that express God's justice and mercy?"

Since the group included members who spanned the political spectrum, there was a need "to find a common discourse," Peters says. "There was a real effort to say, how do we as Christians relate to the poor, and to recognize that not all of us trust government agencies as being the best equipped to meet the needs of the poor. We didn't solve the problem of who should do the delivery, but we did recognize that we ought to be involved in getting something done."

By Lent of 1997, PPICS was able to organize a teach-in on welfare.

"We had over 60 people on Sunday evenings coming to talk about welfare reform," Peters says. "And then, something really remarkable happened — a city church came out to the suburbs to join us. It was a Baptist church, and they wanted to join us in conversation. It enriched us enormously. Then we had welfare people come out and talk to us, and that blew my mind. Here were these young women talking to us about their experiences with a dignity and an invitation to recognize their dignity that was compelling."

As a result, St. Luke's established an ongoing relationship with Lake Avenue Baptist Church.

"One of our most conservative members became involved in the Lake Avenue Baptist Church Outreach Program," Peters reports. "He was particularly concerned that they get some support for a youth initiative they were trying to do, and he and another member of the group leveraged money for the program. We found that one of the skills we brought to

the table is skill in knowing how to leverage things — and that was a way that we could become empowering of others."

Peters feels it is important, however, to maintain a focus on advocacy.

"It's easy to get tempted to become simply a traditional outreach committee, getting connected with hands-on experiences," he says. "We've tried to say no, we have the role of advocacy. We want to advocate in areas of public policy on behalf of those who are disempowered, and we want to educate the community about the impact of public policy on the disenfranchised or the marginalized. We also are willing to leverage ways to assist existing programs, but we're not going to become an outreach program of the church."

Peters also meets every other month with the diocesan public policy task force "to consider ways in which we can best serve the diocese to give it a more public voice.

"We've not done anything incredible yet — the most we've done so far is to get on board with the rural farmworkers bill. Farmworkers were not subject to New York State labor laws, and we became part of an advocacy group to try and get that changed. That has been somewhat successful; they are now treated under minimum wage law, they have the right to a day off a week and to have bathroom and handwashing facilities in the fields.

"The other thing we're trying to do is give people in parishes a theological rationale for being involved in public policy. The essential theological part of that is to say, look, public policy is really an aspect of Christian stewardship. One thing that's been given to us is power, and how we use our power — political and civic — is an aspect of stewardship."

The diocesan task force has held a workshop and created a study guide on "The Church and Public Policy." Peters is aware of at least two congregations, in addition to St. Luke's, which have begun their own task forces.

Peters does not regard himself as an activist.

"I haven't been the kind of person who has been out banging the drums," he says. "I'm a member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, but have not been an aggressive member. But I am a person with a thorough commitment to what church is: Church is not a retreat, church is an engagement with the living God and a community through which one joins the living God in working for justice."

Peters traces the beginning of his vocation to a priest who befriended him in Sydney, Australia, where he landed after running away from his home in England at age 16.

"It was this very conservative evangelical setting, and the priest led me to a personal relationship with Christ. And for me as an adolescent, a young man who had run away from an unhappy home, it was an incredible sense of belonging. I wanted to be part of that, and the best way I saw of being part of that was being a priest. Wherever I have lived, the church has always given me that sense of belonging. What's become more important to me is belonging to a community that has a real sense of place and context for ministry, and belonging to a community that is seeking to deepen its relationship with the mystery we call God."

After ordination, Peters worked in a parish in a university town in Australia before coming to the U.S. to study at Yale and then Vanderbilt.

"I had begun to drift from this evangelical, personal-salvation sort of focus before leaving Australia, and I was beginning to ask myself, what is it about my relationship with Christ that has to do with how I behave in the world around me? And as I encountered people at Yale and later at Vanderbilt, and read people like H. Richard Niebuhr and Reinhold Niebuhr, I began to understand that I was now in a relationship with God who was seeking to make God's rule manifest among us.

"What I've done since then is continue to read and reflect on how theology and context relate. I've become much more aware of the fact that my context shapes how I hear and read theology.

"Also, my wife, Gayle Harris, has been to me an enormous source of having my consciousness raised about my assumptions. I grew up poor and a school drop-out, and now I have a PhD. How did that happen? Well, a lot of it happened because I decided that I needed to make a better job of my life. But a lot of the doors that opened for me seemed to open with some degree of ease, and as I listen to Gayle tell her story, it's a different story. There's the sense that being white and male, it's easier to knock on doors than it is when you're black and female. She faces challenges that I would never be faced with, and she's questioned in ways that I'm not questioned."

Peters regards Anglican tradition as supportive of the church's voice in the public square.

"Anglicans are really able to raise up this passion for the common good. Incorporated in our liturgy is an awareness that we live together as a political society. We pray for our political leadership. We pray for our institutions of government and civic concern. They are central to our sense of who we are as a people."

Peters believes that when people want the church to "stay out of politics," it is most often out of fear of "the animosity, the divisiveness, the shrillness of the voices in the public square. They want a safe place where they will not be treated with the same kind of rhetoric.

"I'm trying to encourage them that, yes, the church can be a safe place, but we need to take the risk of dealing with differences and conflict, and putting them on the table in such a way that we maintain respect for each other. If the church does not encourage conversation around public policy issues, it really is conducting a kind of museum exercise — you know, let's do the ancient crafts and pretend that we're ostriches for a couple of hours. This is a place where we need to reflect, but also leave here ready to engage the wider world." ●

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of The Witness.

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Authur Taylor, 10, Community of Hope, Washington, D.C. 1989 / *SHOOTING BACK, A Photographic View of Life by Homeless Children*

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WITNESS MAGAZINE



EVIL IS MIGHTY

but it can't stand up to our stories

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CONTENTS

8 **Doing theology through personal narrative**
by Ina Hughes
The stories of our lives, says newspaper columnist Ina Hughes, "is the mother tongue of faith." Everyone is called to be a storyteller, because that is how we do theology.

12 **Embodying the 'Great Story'**— *an interview with James W. McClendon*
by Ched Myers
James McClendon's pioneering embrace of a narrative way of doing theology, history and ethics has challenged scientific, historical and critical approaches to the Bible and helped make a distinction between what he calls "primary" and "secondary" theology.

16 **Breakdown transfigured into breakthrough** — *New Beat Poetry as theological discourse*
by Jim Perkinson
"In a society dominated by advertising, capable of instantly commodifying every new impulse of creativity and selling political resistance like an 'X' on a T-shirt," writes performance poet Perkinson, "poetry is prayer" — and prophecy.

20 **Lo Cotidiano** — *finding God in the spaces of the everyday*
by Loida I. Martell-Otero
In the Latina/o worldview, *los del pueblo* (the people) are considered to be the true theologians. U.S. *feministas/mujeristas* have developed the concept of *lo cotidiano* as a theological category of knowing that embraces the "whole of doing and thinking" of *los del pueblo* in their mundane, routinized — and often oppressed — daily lives.

23 **And God grinned** — *First Adventist Church of Washougal*
by David James Duncan
An excerpt from *Brothers K* (Doubleday, 1992) offers a memorable glimpse into the lively theological imagination of Everett, a distressed POW (Prisoner of Worship).

on the cover

©Sean Kernan

From *Cara Pura*, a show of Mexican portraits inspired by the Mexican painter Hermenegildo Bustos travelling in Mexico, 2000-2001.

DEPARTMENTS

3 Letters
4 Editorial Notes
6 Keeping Watch
7 Poetry
19 Media Review
26 Short Takes
27 Classifieds
28 Witness Profile
30 Index 2000

VOLUME 83
NUMBER 12
DECEMBER 2000

Since 1917, ***The Witness*** has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

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The sexual revolution and the young

Although it was not my fortune, good or bad, to be in Denver for the General Convention last July, when that assemblage concluded I was left with a feeling of depression similar to Julie Wortman's (see *TW* 10/00, ed. notes). This state has worsened as I read "The Comfortable Pew," written by Pierre Bonnet in 1965. Thirty-five years ago this non-churchman, evaluating the Canadian Anglicanism from the outside at the invitation of the Church, observed many of the same inequities talked about today. Two of those are related: the nuances of the sexual revolution and the perceptions and convictions of the young.

In the course of the open hearing on sexuality resolutions at Convention a high-school student from Minnesota made a poignant statement. She observed that the Church was no longer communicating to her generation. Specifically, she referred to sexual preference and gender identification. In her school, she said, those were nothing more than facets of an individual of no more significance than hair color.

As Michael Kinnamon is quoted as having said, devotion to reconciliation is self-defeating when it results in failure to confront actions blatantly opposed to the message of love. Hating the sin while loving the sinner is an indefensible position, leading as it does to the implicit message that all would be well if you would become like me. At the base is fear, clearly expressed by the racist who observed, "If the Black gets his rights, who does the poor White have to feel superior to?"

In the more than 30 years I have been reading *The Witness* I have seldom been disappointed. Keep on going on!

Jack McAnally
Wilsonville, OR

Looking good

Today we received our first two issues, September and October 2000. They look good! Reading the October letters, we find a laudatory reference to your April 2000 issue, "No Easy Answers: Gender and Sexual Ethics for a New Age." Please send us a copy of this and any other recent issues on glbt concerns right away.

Bob and Gwenny Bergh
Riverside, CA

Not activist enough

Please remove my name from your subscription list. It is probably a good magazine for some, but not activist enough for me.

Arlene E. Swanson
Minneapolis, MN

Holiday conscience

We are writing to ask *Witness* readers to join in the People of Faith Network's Holiday Season of Conscience Campaign aimed at Kohl's. The jeans Kohl's sells are made by sewers at Chentex, a Taiwanese-owned factory in Managua, Nicaragua. Although under Nicaraguan law forming a union is legal, Chentex management and owners are responding by firing and threatening workers who attempt to organize. The Chentex factory produces 20,000 to 25,000 pairs of jeans a day for Kohl's. The sewers earn pennies for each $30 pair of Kohl's jeans they sew. (For more info., see <www.nlcnet.org>).

The U.S. Labor Department has dispatched an investigator to the scene, but without a word from Kohl's, the customer, Chentex is unlikely to listen. So we are asking people of faith to write letters to Larry Montgomery, CEO of Kohl's Corporation, N56 W17000 Ridgewood Dr., Menomonee Falls, WI 53051, <Larry_Montgombery@kohls.com>. It doesn't have to be a long letter, or a partisan letter — even a "letter of inquiry" asking Kohl's what is happening in Nicaragua is valuable.

David W. Dyson
pofn@clould9.net

The church, stories and 'lower education'

by Ched Myers

This month we consider the power of sacred stories to save lives as an antidote to the sentimentalizing of the Christmas season in both church and shopping mall. Through the articles he's assembled, guest editor Ched Myers teaches us that telling the "great" stories of our lives and traditions is an essential theological enterprise for these times, a way of doing theology that preserves the nuance, paradox, contradictions and multi-dimensionality of that life-giving, flesh-and-blood reality of God-with-us. Facing up to Herod and the too-abundant blood of innocents requires a courage that doctrinal abstractions seldom inspire. Faithfulness more often suckles on tales that liberate our hearts and imaginations — and remind us that the angels also sing for us. We're especially grateful to Myers for showing us that storytelling is never mere child's play — except in the deepest sense.

— Julie A. Wortman, editor and publisher

[Thanks also to Timothy Whelan of Rockport, Me. and to the folks at LensWork (www.lenswork.com) for their generous and valuable help in locating the fine art photography found throughout this issue.]

I will tell you something about stories ...
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.

They are all we have, you see. All we have to fight off illness and death ...
Their evil is mighty, but it can't stand up to our stories.

So they try to destroy the stories, let the stories be confused or forgotten.

They would like that ... because we would be defenseless then.

—Leslie Silko, *Ceremony*

FOR THE BETTER PART of two centuries, modernism has waged a relentless war against narrative ways of knowing. The forces of rationalism, abstraction and science effectively marginalized, suppressed or destroyed cultures of story. Utilitarian facts were privileged over useful fictions, and the propositional eclipsed the poetic, while narrative was relegated to parlor, theater, or reservation. And as Native American novelist Silko rightly warns, as people became confused and forgetful about their stories, they became increasingly defenseless against the onslaught of the myths and machines of modernity.

The Enlightenment used the principle of criticism to unfetter our minds from the "pre-rational" myths of religion and traditional culture. More recently, however, the postmodernist movement has used the same critical capacity to unmask modernism's own master narrative: the myth of "Progress." This totalizing narrative has functioned to legitimate capitalism, the Euro-American colonization of third- and fourth-world peoples, and the technological domination of the earth.

The deconstruction of modernity's "story" has been accompanied by a remarkably swift unraveling of its hegemony. Not only are such formerly revered notions as "objectivity" now widely suspect, we have also seen a resurgence of narrative epistemology. The field of biblical studies offers a telling barometer. The historical-critical paradigm of looking "behind" or "through" scriptural narrative in order to extract historical or doctrinal data held sway for 150 years in mainstream circles. Yet in the space of the last two decades, not only did new narrative approaches to biblical criticism resurface in the academy, they now widely prevail.

Many deconstructionists insist, however, that there can no longer be any master narratives. The alienating, fragmenting experience of modernity has shattered Humpty, and his story can't be put together again. Unfortunately, while such a dictum may be plausible in the insular context of university-based cultural studies, it does little to impact the continuation of history's only remaining hegemonic grand narrative, that of globalizing capitalism.

As a "post-modern traditionalist," I believe that recovering the power of narrative is key to the double task of resisting capitalism's cosmology and reconstructing a more humane culture. If Silko is right that sacred stories are all we have to "fight off illness and death," then what resources do we, the orphaned children of modernity, have to work with?

The dominant narrative tradition in North America — television and cinema — is hardly sufficient. Neal Gabler wrote recently that the media industry is exhibiting "narrative fatigue."

"Almost imperceptibly, we have been losing our stories. ... From MTV to the latest movie blockbuster ... what you find is creeping plotlessness."

Gabler asserts that while previously films attempted to fashion archetypal storylines that resonated, now technology provides a "less taxing, more dependable means of affecting the audience ... Through special

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effects and creative sound, filmmakers realized they could generate sensations in the audience without the need for a narrative."

Such "sensational-ism," reproduced everywhere from advertising to the dramatics of professional sports, socializes us deeper into a passive culture of spectacle. These stories are just entertainment. In contrast, I would propose the older and wiser tradition of biblical story as the best resource for a cultural process of narrative renewal — at least for Christians! Sadly, however, biblical literacy is at a low ebb among the churches in North America. I have observed this repeatedly as I teach, train and facilitate adult scripture study around the country and across the ecumenical spectrum. But I have also noted two interesting phenomena.

One is that, of the Bible stories adults do know, most were learned when they were children (e.g. in Sunday School or at family devotions). The other is that many persons in the professional ministry did not significantly broaden their biblical literacy in theological seminary. While they may have learned a fair bit of methodology for analyzing biblical texts, they did not necessarily come away with a sense of the "Great Story" of Scripture.

These two impressions suggest that we would do well not to underestimate the enduring power of "lower education." We might call this the art of communicating compelling stories simply and (at least initially) with as little complicating theory as possible, in the belief that such stories shape character, community and (God willing) history. It is time for the church to reject modernity's pejorative derogation of stories as a second-rate way of knowing, for it has not served us well. Happily, as the various pieces in this issue demonstrate, efforts to recover sacred story are well underway.

The profile of Tom Boomershine and the Network of Biblical Storytellers gives an example of a movement that seeks to nurture both the craft and the discipline needed for narrative competence. And Ina Hughes shows how the new literary genre of "creative nonfiction" reclaims the narrative character of life.

According to Paulo Freire, popular education begins with stories, though ones we discover, not ones that are imposed. People learn best by generating and reflecting upon narratives from their own lived contexts. In this vein, Loida Martell-Otero describes how Latino/a theology gives priority to precisely such everyday experience — *lo cotidiano*. Bill Wylie-Kellermann reviews an important book that rediscovers the hermeneutic vitality of the urban marginalized. Finally, Jim Perkinson testifies to the prophetic power of street-level poetic rhythm as "the first word of creation."

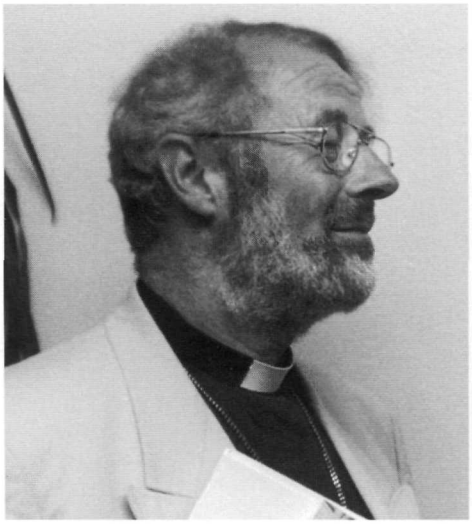
When I was asked to guest edit this issue of *The Witness*, I knew immediatly that I wished to interview James W. McClendon, a pioneer of contemporary narrative theology and my dearest teacher. Just as we were going to press I received the sad news that Jim had passed away at his home in Altadena, Calif. It is with a profound sense of indebtedness and gratitude for his work and witness that I dedicate this issue to him.

This narrative renaissance is good news for the church, and for cultural reconstruction. By reaching deep into our storied past we can rehabilitate the future. The evil in our history is indeed great, but it can't stand up to our stories. ●

Ched Myers lives in Los Angeles.

Unpayable debt – have they understood?

by Peter Selby



IN THE JUNE 2000 ISSUE of *The Witness* I tried to paint a picture of people's faces in the Jubilee 2000 demonstration at the G7 Summit in Birmingham, England in May 1998. They wore the expressions of liberation. Economists they might not be; nor politicians either; nor people who constantly attend demonstrations of one kind or another. But in substituting a human chain for the chains of debt they demonstrated a deep understanding of what freedom in Christ might be like. It's like breaking the chains of debt, throwing off a burden you could no longer carry.

In their tens of thousands they understood that. They understood that some of the debts of the poorest countries had been unjustly incurred. They understood that many of them had been paid off many times over because of the hugely increased interest charges of the last two decades. They understood that having two-thirds of the world impoverished by trade systems that produce debt was no way to run the world, and in the end no way to achieve our prosperity. They understood that in Birmingham in 1998 and in Cologne at the summit of 1999. And it looked as though the politicians were really having to take that popular movement on board and make policies on the basis of the same understanding.

So what has gone wrong? And why has the 2000 Okinawa summit produced so little as to be insulting to the aspirations of the campaign and, even more, to the desperate needs of the world's poorest? Basically the problem is that a movement around justice has been turned into an economics of grudging charity. The so-called HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) program is run by creditor nations who have the power to impose conditions on the economies of the poorest for the alleviation of debt.

Of course we want any debt relief to be channelled into improved life conditions for the poorest people — so do the poor themselves. But that is not the same as insisting that the poorest countries take on board the requirements of late capitalism: low public spending, trade liberalization, a free market in money. Those orthodoxies of western economics at the end of the 20th century are neither what the poorest nations want nor what will produce real gains for the poorest of their populations. Imposing that kind of "structural adjustment" leads to poorer education and health care, and the steady "trickle-up" economics that enrich the elites. That is what the demonstrators of Jubilee 2000 at Birmingham, Cologne and Okinawa understood so well, and that is the understanding we have yet to convey to our political leaders.

Ann Pettifor, the forthright director of Jubilee 2000 here in Britain, has always said the campaign ends in December 2000: "Other people may want to make a career out of this, but I don't," she once said. And so the national office will surely close. But it is already clear that there is a groundswell in favor of a continuing campaign for genuine jubilee. There is much debate about the form that will take, and as far as Britain is concerned it will be a while before it is clear how that will evolve.

But what cannot be in doubt is the need to build on the popular understanding that is Jubilee 2000's greatest achievement. We have generated a greater commitment to international development than has ever been there in the past. And we have conveyed something of the real character of liberation as the redeemed in Christ have understood. Many Christians who had no idea that the Bible was so strong on economic justice know it now, and many who knew nothing about Christianity know at least that it has something profound and trenchant to say about usury and jubilee.

So where do we go, we who want that wider and deeper understanding to be shared? I suggest we take the route of making connections. The fact is that in our wealthy countries are millions also living under the burden of unpayable debt, and the economically well-off know deep within themselves that a life built on credit (what is credit but the huge debt of wealthy people?) is a house built on sand. We need a movement for the relief of debt — at home as well as overseas. We need to get people to talk honestly about economic enslavement — of the rich as well as of the poor, and of the burdens they cannot afford to carry.

"I've never talked about money in church — except when the church needs money." Countless people have said that to me, and it has to change. Economic liberation has to change our prayers and our lives. Then the politicians will start to understand what their voters, deep down, already know. That is the campaign we need, on both sides of the ocean. ●

Peter Selby is the Bishop of Worcester, England. His commentaries are a periodic feature of "A Global Witness" on *The Witness'* website, <www.thewitness.org>.

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Winter Fire

by Rose Marie Berger, for Josephine Jochimisen, Deer Creek Township, Wisconsin

The fire stretched its old bones,
snapping and popping, as it loosened
itself into the weary wood.

They found Josie's body in the basement.
The twisted modern art of her walker
had fused with the beveled panes
of the kitchen windows. Her grip
slipped as the first floor furring
strips burned beneath her.

Patrick, her son, had not missed
a morning milking in twenty years.
In the barn he leaned into the warmth
of his Guernseys, their breath
forming thin smoke in the frozen air,
and thought of his brother in Germany.
Machines hissed and sucked.

The fire spread like daffodils
on a hillside, a blanket of fierce
yellow melting buttercups, verdigris
greens of old copper and deep
lake blues. Patrick rolled himself
into the burning house until he
nearly smothered in the scent.
He could not find her.

There was a lumbering of trucks —
hoses hissing, voices falling off
short in the sharp air. When the
trucks ran dry, the men cracked
the pond and sucked the last depths
of summer onto the house, wildly
raining frogs, algae, minnows
through the roof.

In those last moments, Josie
called on the angels in the names
of her sisters — Fats, Chub, Snooks —
and her grandfather, Gus, who
held her when the floor collapsed.
Then they all snuck away
to the breathing place under the pond ice
where even the fire could not hide.



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Poet ***Rose Berger*** lives in Washington, D.C.

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TELL ME A STORY, AN

Doing theology through personal narrative

by Ina Hughes

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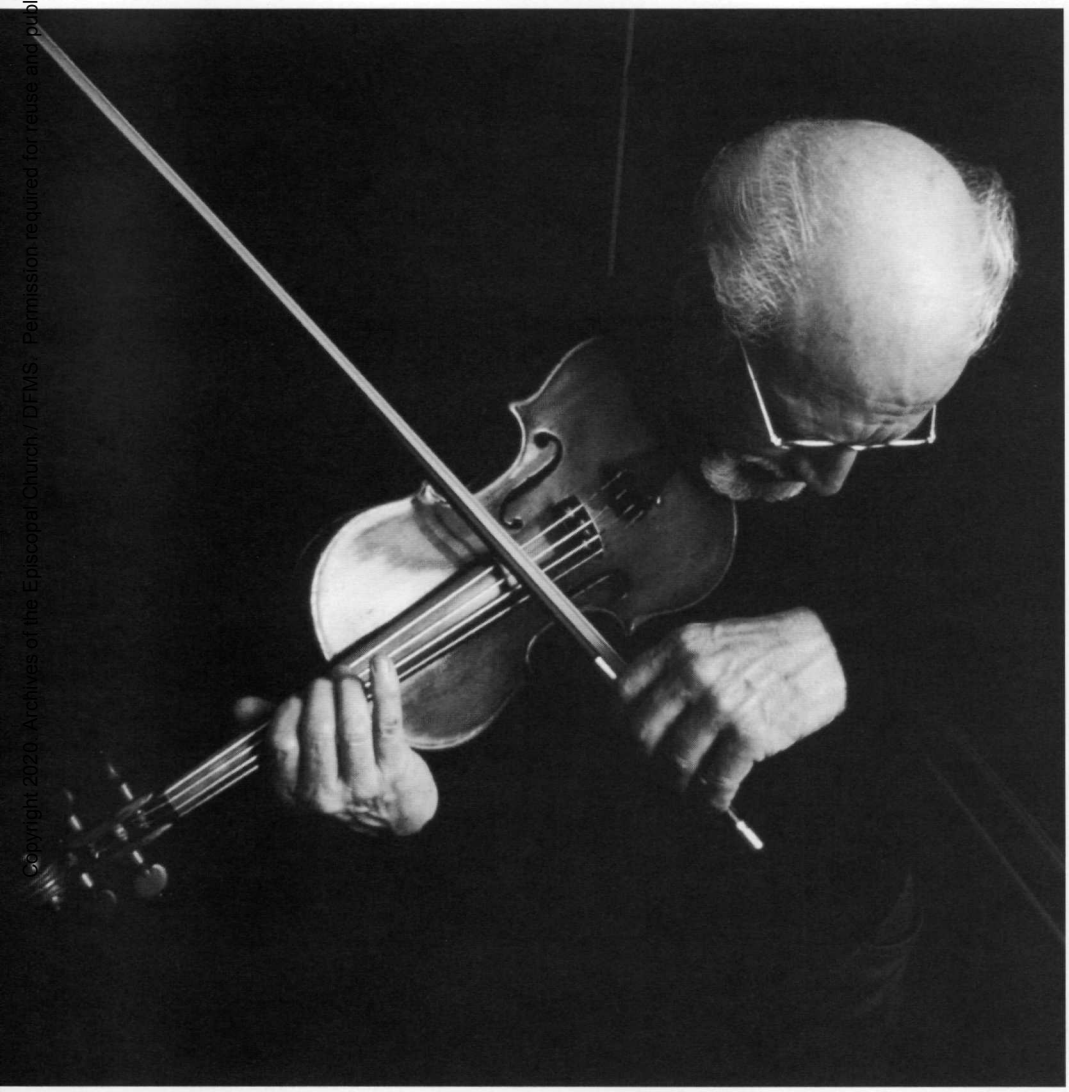

THE SPIRITUAL CHRONICLER and prose-poet laureate of the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel, prefaces his book, *The Gates of the Forest*, with this parable from real life:

When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jews it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted.

Later, when his disciple, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion, for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say, "Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer." And again the miracles would be accomplished.

Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: "I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient."

And it was sufficient.

D I WILL REMEMBER

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It is not by accident that all great teachers of every religion used stories to get their message across. You can preach me a sermon, show me a doctrine, recite a creed — and I might be impressed.

But tell me a story, and I will remember.

Scholars generally agree World War II not only reconfigured maps, it changed the way bookstores, libraries and publishing houses did business. It used to be that when people went to buy or check out a book, most of what they had to chose from was catalogued under "fiction" and displayed on shelves near the front door. That way the general public wouldn't have to bother scrounging around among dusty poetry anthologies, textbooks and volume after volume of dry-to-the-bone historical compilations.

Fiction. Everybody wanted fiction.

Nonfiction was the wallflower of the literary world: too boring and academic to be entertaining, too self-restrained to tell a zippy story, too stifled to inspire or stay with the reader beyond the moment. Creative nonfiction was an oxymoron, and writers of plain old "not fiction" — it being the only kind of writing described by what it is not — had the reputation of being people who weren't clever enough to make anything up and whose calamaties and happy endings were so homemade they were unconvincing.

Other than cookbooks, dictionaries and an occasional coffee-table book to match the drapes, adults preferred to spend their money on fiction. In elementary schools of the 1940s, nonfiction was, for all practical purposes, limited to little orange biographies of dead white males in American history, Booker T. Washington and Florence Nightingale being the token exceptions.

Nonfiction, creative or otherwise, was to literature as attic sale is to boutique.

Then things began to change, and it was storytellers like Eli Wiesel who started the ball rolling in another direction. Carnage in Europe had devastated whole nations. News traveled faster than ever before, and returning soldiers got home with less time "to put the war behind them." Rumors of wartime atrocities rolled across both the Atlantic and Pacific, atrocities we Americans not only could not imagine, but didn't want to.

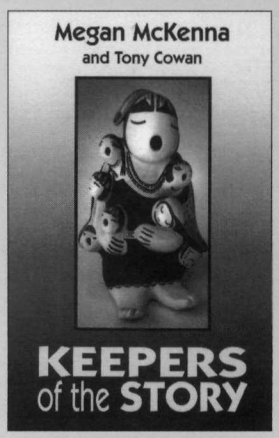
People became less and less satisfied with second-hand reports, myths, commentaries and the John Wayne/Doris Day version of reality. *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life* magazine, the news reels at the movies made events more "current" than ever before. We wanted to read the letters soldiers wrote their moms back home, hear for ourselves the stories from concentration-camp victims, understand the theories and political intrigue of the Normandy invasion.

But even more than that, we wanted to know what people did to survive emotionally and spiritually, because if we knew that, we might be able to believe in, or even construct, our own principles and religious values. William Howarth, who teaches Creative Nonfiction at Princeton, explains it this way: Personal stories flourish in a period of great upheaval. People need something concrete, something real to hold onto.

Nonfiction began its regeneration in the early 1940s. In the 1960s, the personal narrative quickly grew into a genre in its own

Keepers of the story

Storytellers Megan McKenna and Tony Cowan are authors of *Keepers of the Story* (Orbis, 1997), a useful volume of tales drawn from many religious traditions — Old and New Testaments, Sufi mysticism, Native American traditions and Eastern religions — and designed not only to help the reader understand storytelling as a powerful form of communication but also to equip those interested in learning how to become effective storytellers themselves. "Stories are crucial to our sense of well-being, to identity, to memory, and to our future," the authors assert. "Some say storytelling is essential to our survival as human beings."



right — as so-called "creative nonfiction." Both of these were times of serious flux. People began to lose sight of who they were. The lines began to blur between faith and reason. Old truths clashed with new discoveries.

We needed real stories, of real people, told with grace and honesty, to see us through.

Oral tradition wasn't even good enough anymore. We wanted to read and re-read these true-life stories, to bring them into our homes because they had made their way into our hearts. We wanted to own them for ourselves, and so both writers and readers began putting more intellectual and emotional energy into nonfiction. Stories whose purpose and intent it is to tell the truth as we know it became more popular than fiction.

Ancient Greeks thought there to be only two genres of writing: poetry and history. There was less interest in labels. No Dewey decimal system yet devised to separate off different kinds of writing, and writers did not have to choose a category in which to define themselves. No line was drawn between storyteller and philosopher. This seems odd to us. Either a story is true or it is not. Nevertheless, Heinrich Schumann used Homer's "Iliad," a nonfictional "document" you might call it, to locate and unearth the actual remains of Troy.

Poetry and history together.
Essentially that is what creative nonfiction is: poetry and history together. Fiction is "made up." Personal narratives or, as it is called today, creative nonfiction, are stories we discover, stories that explain who we are and what we believe. A fancier name for it might be biomythography, but creative nonfiction is nothing less than truth wearing its Sunday clothes.

The nonfiction is in the experience-based nature of these stories. The writer makes a contract with the reader that what she is writing is the truth as she knows it. The creative is in the telling. As opposed to directions on a can of soup or the intricate details of the life cycle of a dragonfly, or even the objective reporting of a good biographer — all of which fall under the non-fiction umbrella — creative nonfiction challenges the writer to uses language and plot in such a way that the reader's story and the writer's story merge into one, the confluences of two rivers.

The implications of all this for theology are obvious.

The Bible is a collection of stories, and although they are in a class by themselves, I have come to believe that holy writ is a continuum. The personal parables we share out of our own experience and the psalms of both lament and praise we compose in our hearts are all part of the same sacred testament, bearing witness to the mysterious ways in which God works.

It isn't doctrines and dogmas that save us when the chips are down. It isn't a working knowledge of the teleological, axiological and ontological proofs of the existence of God that will pull us through the rough patches. What pulls us through are the stories we have been told, or discovered for ourselves. Stories of lost sheep and good fathers, of a rich man in a purple robe, a little boy opening up his picnic lunch, and three women racing through the dawn to find someone to share their story with.

Like all sacred scripture, such stories are meant to be shared. Creative nonfiction is the mother tongue of faith.

Alex Haley once said that when a person dies, a whole library dies. He didn't mean everyone is endowed with the kind of lively imagination that can fabricate great plots and cliff-hangers out of the what-ifs of life. He is describing how you and I have in us stories only we can tell, and if we don't tell them, they will die with us. Stories are our first inklings of immortality. They hold alive the people we have loved and lost awhile. They keep happy experiences fresh, worthy perspectives documented long after their due-date has expired.

They give grief a meaning and
courage a purpose.
The stories of our life become our life. They give witness to family and interpersonal dynamics, show how faith and values are honed and made shatter-proof. Or not.

In them we reap the ability to survive, perhaps even distinguish ourselves as we take on the ghosts and giants that haunt a spoiled, over-stimulated culture. We learn from the stories we are told what is important, how to differentiate between the things we should celebrate and the things we should fear. Because of the stories in us and around us, we have less excuse for boredom, for failure, for diminishing the kind of person we were meant to be, either by God's design or family expectations.

Hard as they try, and we find a hearty supply of efforts on the bestseller lists, impersonal how-to books don't pack the wallop a good story does — whether it's thin thighs or God in heaven we're trying to "get."

Many features have been singled out as the definitive difference between us and our creature cousins out in oceans and up in trees. We are the only animal that blushes, that prays. We're the only animal that cooks its food, paints its face, drinks bottled water.

Listens to Barry Manilow.

Most significant of all we are the only animal that tries to figure life out, that imagines what it feels like to die, that broods and dreams and imagines. We are the only animal that can talk our stories or, better still, write them down to leave behind or to share with others. Our dependence on each other's stories goes back as far in time as to when our ancestors, admiring their opposing thumbs, sat around campfires and talked the night away.

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Eli Wiesel is right. The only way to find the light, to puzzle our way through the forest, to remember who we are and whose we are, is to swap those stories. I tell you mine in hopes that you will tell me yours so that together we can understand our story. Why is that so important?

Because only in living our story will
we ever understand the story.

Perhaps that is why creative nonfiction is outselling, outsmarting, outpacing fiction. *The New York Times* consistently reviews more nonfiction than fiction. The growing popularity of reality TV (which may be the devil in the blue dress when it comes to nonfiction), the number of life-based documentaries and first-person tell-alls, plus the fact that we have at least one 24-hour biography channel, further testify that in today's world, nonfiction has gone to the head of the class.

It isn't doctrines and dogmas that save us when the chips are down. It isn't a working knowledge of the teleological, axiological and ontological proofs of the existence of God that will pull us through the rough patches. What pulls us through are the stories we have been told, or discovered for ourselves. Stories of lost sheep and good fathers, of a rich man in a purple robe, a little boy opening up his picnic lunch, and three women racing through the dawn to find someone to share their story with.

But we can't stop there. We need more than the old, old stories — the ones we know word for word, the ones whose endings no longer take us by surprise, the ones time and familiarity have all but sucked the life out of.

As odd as it sounds, the Age of Communication has made it more convenient to allow ourselves and our children to grow up on other people's stories. It's easy to become captives in that great alphabetized empire of ABC, CBS and all the rest, not to mention the bytes and chomps the Internet takes out of our imagination. We can't let technology be the cat that gets our tongue, tempting as it is. We need to share with each other our own situation comedies, commentaries, love stories, documentaries, mysteries. We need to pass along the songs and parables we discover within ourselves, from our own experiences.

Poet Gwendolyn Brooks longs for "a teller in a time like this." Kurt Vonnegut says we need to "become unstuck in time." William Zinsser points out that telling each other our stories is like "reinventing the truth." All of this is just same song, another verse, of all the old hymns and scriptures that call us to be storytellers.

It's how we do theology. ●

Ina Hughes is a columnist for *The Knoxville News-Sentinel* in Knoxville, Tenn.



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EMBODYING THE

An interview with James W. McClendon

by Ched Myers

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JAMES WILLIAM MCCLENDON, Jr., was born in Louisiana in 1924. Raised and ordained in the Southern Baptist tradition, he liked to call himself a "small 'b' baptist" theologian. McClendon has taught theology for 46 years at a variety of public universities and theological seminaries. These included the University of San Francisco (where he was the first non-Catholic theologian in the U.S. to belong to a Catholic theology department), Stanford, Temple, Goucher, Notre Dame, St. Mary's Moraga, Baylor, and Fuller Theological Seminary. His pioneering *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (Abingdon, 1974, Trinity Press, 1990) helped launch the narrative theology movement. He recently completed the last of his three-volume work in systematic theology: *Ethics* (1986), *Doctrine* (1994) and *Witness* (2000). Jim became my teacher in the late 1970s at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, and remained my theological mentor and friend over the years. McClendon pasted away on October 30, 2000. — Ched Myers

Ched Myers: As one of the pioneers of, and consistently articulate voices in, recent narrative theology, could you give a sketch of how this movement grew during the 1960s and 1970s?

James McClendon: These past decades have seen so many kinds of theological styles and trends: "death of God theology," the theology of play and so on. They had their day and then faded away. To many, narrative theology was just one more technique for doing the same old thing. But for others of us, the deeper concerns had to do with a growing awareness that in the course of the Enlightenment there had been a consistent attempt to de-narrativize the content of religion.

Enlightenment thinkers spoke of narratives as myths, by which they didn't mean anything complimentary. Their idea was to have a theology that was rational, based upon firm, self-evident philosophical foundations, and quite free of the stories that the Bible told. Those stories might illustrate the true theology, they might even exemplify it, but they couldn't be it. So the Enlightenment was a time in which the narrative character of human existence was reduced to secondary status. For example, John Locke doesn't make anything of the story of his own life or anybody else's life.

In the 1960s there was an increasing sense that the Enlightenment, for all its virtues, had let us down theologically. There was a strong casting about for other modes of doing theology and, in particular, a return to Scripture. It dawned on some of us that the Enlightenment's suppression of narrative was not a good thing, and that the only honest way to talk about God was to talk about the story of the world and God's relation to it. So there should not be such a thing as "narrative theology"; there should only be ordinary theology that ordinarily has narrative content.

Around this time (1970-71), while at Goucher College, I began work on *Biography as Theology*. It occurred to me that the only kind of religious experience that was distinctive and worth talking about was narrative experience — that is, life stories. So I researched lives of outstanding 20th-century Christians. I was particularly interested in those who were not trained theologians, such as the diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld and the composer Charles Ives, as well as Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Baptist radical Clarence Jordan, both of whom did have theological training but who were not professors. I was just trying to show how there is theology present in every life, including those of Christians in the 20th century. In their life stories I was able to find content that could speak to the main concerns of recent Christianity. Because humans are so story-engaged, I felt that narrative theology is not a popular fad, but something that is just as enduring as Scripture itself.

CM: What do you mean by "small 'b' baptist theology"?

JM: I was raised in Baptist churches in the south. When I went to teach at the Episcopal divinity school in Berkeley (Church Divinity School of the Pacific), they were fond of saying that they were both Catholic and Protestant. Since I had taught in both Catholic and Protestant schools I thought,

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‘GREAT STORY’



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"Well, I'll have no trouble fitting in." But I found I did have trouble fitting in as the ecumenical guest; there was a gap there between them and my lingering Baptist convictions and nature. I tried to think what that gap amounted to and decided that perhaps the thing was that Baptists were neither Catholic nor Protestant, but some sort of third sort of Christian thing that wasn't identical with the other two.

Soon after I got to CDSP I read John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*. It was a transformative experience that completely changed my life, because Yoder brought to the surface the things I had believed in as a Baptist and made me confront them. My efforts at ecumenism to that point had been to try to seem more Protestant rather than to be who I am. So I seized upon the idea of baptists with a small "b." This refers not just to those who label themselves as Baptist, but Christians of any sort (including Episcopalians) who see the radicals of the 16th century — the so-called Anabaptists — as their spiritual forbears, even if not direct progenitors.

As I tried very hard to spell out in *Ethics*, the "baptist vision" has two mottoes: first,"This is that"; and, second, "Then is now."

Each needs some explanation. "This is that" is taken from the King James Version of Acts 2:16, where Simon Peter on the day of Pentecost reads from the prophets and then says to the audience, this — in other words, what his listeners see here today — is that. It's what the prophet was speaking about. So the right way to read prophecy is not just as historical record of the past, but as a disclosure of the meaning and significance of the present. In a sense, the first century (the New Testament period) is the 16th century, and the Reformation (and especially the radical Reformation) is our own century.

"Then is now" tries to do the same thing. The "end times" about which we read in Scripture is not just information about how things may come out in some remote distant time. It's information about what is of final importance here and now. Eschatology is what comes last, but it is also what lasts, because it is enduring.

The thing that strikes me about the radical reformers is that they were so varied. There is no one person that baptists look to as their founder, no Luther or Calvin. And this is not accidental; there were so many leaders of such different sorts. For example, Menno Simons was indeed an important figure, but Mennonites would still be Mennonites without Menno. Hans Denck, Hans Hut, Balthasar Hubmaier, Pilgram Marpeck, Conrad Grebel — these were each different people with different concerns. What they had in common was this baptist vision that shaped their lives and often caused their deaths, because they were a martyred people. Indeed they believed that the story of the cross is the story of every Christian's life.

CM: In *Ethics* you state that "theology discovers and renovates its own narrative voice." Thus theology is a conversation not only with Scripture, but also with hymns, liturgical content and ministry practices. This is very different than simply being in dialogue with philosophers.

JM: Yes. It helps to distinguish between primary and secondary theology. Primary theology is the church trying to think out its own convictions, and this gets expressed in sermons, prayers, hymns — the sources of its ongoing common life. Eventually, primary convictions by which it tries to live get written down in creeds and confessions of faith or expressed afresh in new hymns and new sermons or simply lived out in the lives of existing members of the community. Secondary theology, which is the main thing that universities are concerned with, is theology about theology. It tries to take a step back from primary theology and ask questions about justification, truth, legitimation, and the significance of primary theology. Very often it forgets that there is primary theology and simply ends up talking about its own justification, truth, and verification, which is a regrettable lapse, a diminishing.

CM: One thing I and so many others have appreciated is that you help us understand some of the great theologians not only as secondary theologians, but also as primary theologians. Your dramatic lectures on Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a human being as well as theologian really fired my imagination, for example. And you include in your writing the biographies of non-theologians such as Dorothy Day as well. This seems to function to reclaim theology as an ordinary Christian "practice," and not just a profession.

JM: A primary practice, yes. Because to think about our convictions is already to be engaging in some degree in primary theology — whether my primary convictions are about God or something else.

CM: Your work on theology as a "science of convictions," as in *Understanding Religious Convictions* (with James Smith, University of Notre Dame Press, 1975) and *Convictions: Defusing Religious Relativism* (Trinity Press, 1994), was closely related to your work as an ethicist who was very much part of the emerging movement of "character ethics." Could you tell us a little about that?

JM: This does bring up a funny little story. When I went to teach at CDSP I had taught at a number of other places, but never had been assigned the duty of teaching ethics. Fortunately, in the interview there I was asked whether I could teach ethics — not if I had taught ethics. So I said, "Yes." And, sure enough, I could. I guess it's like discovering that you can play the violin — you pick it up and you get a sound. I've cast about for various ways to teach ethics. I was much influenced early on by Karl Barth, who scattered his ethics through the volumes of *Church Dogmatics*. I was then much influenced by my contacts with Stanley Hauerwas; it's really Stanley to whom we Christians owe the language of the ethics of character and virtue. He was laying claim to elements that he thought had been missing from Enlightenment ethics, just as I thought there were elements missing from Enlightenment theology. He and I gradually came to share the view that ethics and theology were not two things but one thing. Character and virtue were then picked up by others who were much more philosophical in their approaches, such as Alasdair MacIntyre.

CM: One of the many themes you were ahead of the curve in discussing was the concept of "embodiment" and of the body

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— both the individual body and the corporate body — in ethics. This has become quite popular in theological discourse in the 1990s.

JM: In the original edition of *Ethics,* I spoke of ethics as a three-stranded cord — the cord wouldn't be itself if all the strands weren't there. One of those strands was the strand of embodied selfhood. In the revised edition I link this with what my wife, philosopher Nancy Murphy, calls "physicalism." Human nature is not found in the old Cartesian dualism between mind and body, but rather in the identity of body and spirit. I found "embodied selfhood" in the 18th-century lives of Jonathan and Sarah Pierpont Edwards. He, in particular, is thought of as just a "talking head," a kind of detached intellect. But if you study their shared life you find that they had very rich emotional and physical lives and that what they had to say theologically was inseparable from those riches. So I used their lives to illustrate "body ethics," just as I used the biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to illustrate social ethics and the life of Dorothy Day to illustrate resurrection ethics.

CM: You've written that narrative in many ways bridges the gulf between experience and Scripture that was opened up by 19th-century theology. In *Doctrine* you go so far as to say that the Bible is best read by paying attention throughout to character, setting and episode, as well as to who is doing the narration and who is doing the hearing. This narrative approach to Scripture has begun to carry the day in biblical studies, though only belatedly. Yet there are still many who say you can't speak of a plot of the Bible; it's just a collection of random notes and moral traditions and so on. But you are very clear from a theological perspective that one can trace a plot throughout and pay attention to the various settings and thereby grasp the story of God and the story that God wants us to participate in.

JM: Yes. I refer to this sometimes as the Great Story, the big Bible story of which all the smaller stories are component parts. I don't know that we have any infallible way of telling the Great Story. I tried to paraphrase it in *Ethics* and *Doctrine*. In the Great Story, God creates in love and God's loved ones rebel, but that doesn't end the story for God. In a way it only begins it, because God loves the sinner, which leads to all of these God-initiated overtures, which in turn climax (for Christians) in Jesus and his cross. That's a kind of a plot and it issues in what Ralph Wood would call a comic or happy outcome. And the comic outcome is in the rest of the New Testament and the rest of our lives.

CM: Do you feel that your embrace of a narrative way of doing theology, history and ethics has something maybe to do with how and where you were raised?

JM: Oh, I'm certain of that. I grew up in Louisiana. My father was a Methodist — the Methodist Episcopal Church South it was called. My mother was a Baptist — Southern Baptist it was called, but we just said Baptist at home. I was taken along to the Baptist church so that's the one I ended up in. And I think that the way the Bible was taught in Sunday School and in my home did emphasize the stories — probably emphasized the parts more than the great story, but that came up also. I'm sure it shaped the way I thought about the Bible.

CM: You are well aware of the ambivalence — even suspicion — that many philosophically trained theologians and historical-critically trained biblical scholars have had toward what you call in *Ethics* (in G.M. Rophins' words) the "counter, original, spare, strange" character of the biblical salvation stories of Abraham and Jesus. Those old stories sit so uneasily with the modern mind and yet you insist on building theology around them.

JM: I don't have any quarrel in principle with the scientific, historical, critical approach to the Bible, but I don't think it's the most helpful approach. At the end of *Doctrine* I have a section on the temptations that face people who try to read the Bible. One of them is the historical-critical temptation: to try to penetrate through the Bible to find the alleged facts behind it and in doing so missing what the Bible itself has to say. There is, of course, historical or concrete reality behind the Bible — it's not all just fiction. But we don't get closer to the Bible if we get past the text and focus on our projection of the concrete reality.

CM: Why does this way of thinking and being — the narrative voice, the narrative mind, narrative discourse — continue to be seen by scholars as a second-rate way of knowing, when most human beings for most of history have lived and continue to live out of it? This seems to me another interesting case of the majority being ruled by the minority.

JM: I think that's still the heritage of the Enlightenment with us, and I don't think it will last forever.

CM: It's interesting that as a baptist theologian you conclude in your *Biography as Theology* that the role of saints needs to be revisited by Protestants. Subsequently there's been sort of a renaissance in interest in the lives of saints.

JM: Well, we all have saints, whether we're Episcopalians or Pentecostals. There is in every church some figure or figures who are perceived as larger than life, as more authentically displaying the way that we're all trying to follow. And when these figures pass into the past, they get posted on the wall of the church or on a marble monument or something like that and all the more are they treated as saintly. I think that's a good thing — the more local the better. Perhaps one of the mistakes that Roman Catholics make is to try to press too hard for universal saints and thus pay too little attention to the flexible possibilities of local saints. So I'm for saints and for sainthood, because it is just biography as theology. It represents the Christian life lived out in a given time and place, with all of its faults and flaws — and saints have always got those as well as the glories and hopes. ●

Biblical scholar ***Ched Myers*** is a former contributing editor of *The Witness* who lives in Los Angeles.

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BREAKDOWN TRANSFIGUR

New Beat Poetry as theological discourse

by Jim Perkinson

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THE POWER of language today has been lost in a fetish. Our post-industrial, globalized culture that is busy making the entire world into a parking lot has also sold the word for a dime. Here and there, however, weeds take root in the post-industrial cement, transform toxicity into chicory-blue, hide pheasants, frame rain in green and shout a silent "om" skyward. And here and there, amidst the mud, old griot voices emerge new and wet, wrap tooth around taunt, lip language fresh, and whisper like the first cry of crow. Spirit has never yet found an easy home in the flesh. Incarcerated in the "body" of the 10-second commercial, it begins to choke. It labors to breathe. But given a sensual body to gather in, it can still break open the wall between the worlds. Indeed, life can breed like infinity in the merest of cracks between a few spoken words. Listen to a piece entitled "Revelation," by Detroit poet Ron Allen:

open
the
head
walk
up
the
neck
look
in
the

open
the
head
walk
up
the
neck
look
in
the
cortex
read
the
bones
fly

open
the
head
walk
up
the
neck
look
in
the
cortex
read
the
bones
fly

ED INTO BREAKTHROUGH

But of course, you who read this can't "listen." You are not present for the performance. You can only read and imagine, through the medium of dead tree. Yet it is precisely imagination that Allen seeks to open here. Since you cannot hear the tone or see the motion, background and "breakdown" have to go bail for the body.

In fact, Allen is a former drug user and schizophrenic who wrote his way out of a different kind of breakdown 20 years ago and is now a renowned poet-playwright on the arts scene in Motown. More accurately, Allen has not attempted to escape his struggle with his pen, but rather has transfigured "breakdown" into "breakthrough" by doing art on pain. If queried, he equates his writing with his spirituality and talks about both as necessary to becoming "human" in a culture of triviality. In a society dominated by advertising, capable of instantly commodifying every new impulse of creativity and selling political resistance like an "X" on a T-shirt, poetry is prayer. But Allen is very sophisticated in what he means by "poetry."

Poetry taken seriously as spirituality means resistance to the form. Domination takes in the contemporary moment. Not just content is at stake in such a practice, but modality. It is possible to lose the spiritual battle even while speaking against the forces of violence if the form of one's speech itself partakes of violence. In a culture of the sound bite, where political discourse is dominated by trivialized perceptions and complex issues are reduced to comic-book-level reflections, resistance requires a new grammar. It is not enough just to get the content right. The very way one speaks through one's body must itself "break" with convention, if "Spirit" is not going to end up as a Budweiser commercial.

"Rhythm," in this grasp of spirituality, is the first word of creation. It precedes "meaning." It is the womb of meaning. The word of revelation defies repetition. Vision that is vital demands an ever new wineskin. Allen supplies that skin as a "skein" of syncopation. The "thread," the "yarn" of mere narrative — proceeding prosaically from beginning, through middle, to the end — is understood as itself suspect. It invites to predictability and routine. It promises the fiction of "control." It is easily taken over by the intention to dominate. Poetry that refuses the clear clichés of narrative, that works at the edge of surreality while remaining close to the passion of the street, can function as antidote. This is exactly what Allen's poetry does. "Listen" again (this time to an excerpt written for a benefit for imprisoned American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier):

The city village of aboriginal angst
The repressed fervor of exploded poetry
Blue black steel rhythms exploding funk
Absolute, absolute funk of blood
The blood of the struggle
Frozen in commerce
The mission of a transformed people
Bleeding poems through
The drum ...
... The deep drum drama of tree and soil
Drum speak time walking fist
Like arias and chants
Speak a new blues
A blues of octave drum riot time
change the riot of my nerves
Inside rain cement
and iron fences
The tongue is a bullet
Rippin, lyric media passion time
Speak like guru of kaleidoscope dreams
Round moon time ...
... Aboriginal lookin, for bullets
Lookin, for a new sky
Lookin, for sentences hung in space ...

By putting together images that "normally" are not allowed to dwell together, this kind of poetry incarnates contradiction. But it also "practices" in speech the possibility of something like different cultures dwelling together in the same neighborhood or warring "races" on the same street. It practices — immediately and spontaneously in a spiritual discipline of the present moment! — the old dream-vision of the "lamb dwelling with the lion." It does not pretend the world is pretty, but puts harshness and gentleness side-by-side in the same raw incantation. When words are used as much for their sound-effects as for their "pictures" of meaning, the result is new experience, a plumbing of the depths of experience, where it has not yet been colonized by conventional categories. Sight is here crossed with hearing. Words "tense up" in proximity to each other. Complexity is offered as the new "vessel" of identity.

Poetry performers like Allen push their audiences to stop settling for a narrow representation of themselves, in the typical images offered by commercials, and instead invite them to descend into the depths of their psyches and bodies where paradox lies. Schizophrenia, in this pilgrimage, becomes a matter of inhabiting parallel universes, of embodying multiple ways of being human. Rather than being banished as "disease," it becomes the dangerous ground of a transcendence that all human beings stand close to and are called to honor.

In traditional cultures, the break that modernity labels as "breakdown" was elevated as the sign of spiritual possibility. The community gathered around whoever was being so "disturbed" and provided a cultural idiom and a social intimacy that was poised to receive the "crazy communication" as "spiritual revelation" relevant for the whole community. The "possessed ones" were embraced as dramatizing alternative "possi-

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bilities of being" for the sane ones. Spirituality meant leaving "safe form" behind, and venturing into the chaotic waters of creation from which form first emerged.

And interestingly, when thus embraced, "craziness" in fact became craft. What appeared at first blush as aberration was disciplined into re-creation — of the entire community! Our own "recreation" industry is anything but that. Passive consumption of seductive images hardly re-vitalizes. It rather enervates. It inculcates resignation and atrophy. Real re-creation means re-visiting the primal stuff that predates the management power of control. What is "life"? Where does it come from? Who am I really? Who am I still "becoming"? If these questions ever cease exercising us in wonder or pushing us into innovation and risk-taking, we are already dead. Poetry that throws off the constraints of conventional communication and gives free rein to sound-associations and syncopated, "jazz scat-like" juxtapositions of words, may indeed open one's head to "flying." It becomes the very grammar of transformation. After all, isn't that what spirit does in the flesh? And inevitably such an "up-welling" proliferates.

In recent years, under such untamed influences, I, too, have become a poet. My own homage would be something like this:

preacher preaches flung notes of sun
foot in the grave-thump of dead rising
pelvic ground round world
gyrating limb of fruit
slice the plumb of night
bite the apple
peel the shadow
open the eyeball
climb inside the light and down
idea-root of raised hair
rib-walk of ancestor ta
talking my name
shouting cemeteries of summons
singing europe back to africa
singing america under water
singing me below the ground
singing unrepentant!
this! is the bliss of burn!

But we can say more. This kind of poetry promises not only the "breakthrough" of re-creation, but portends the break-up of oppression. It not only exorcises at the individual level, it "prophesies" politically. In our day, after learning from the likes of Martin King and Mahatma Gandhi, who themselves learned from sibyls like Sojourner Truth and Gauri Ma, prophecy has finally begun to come clear. It is less a matter of clairvoyant "foretelling" than confrontational "forth-telling." The Jewish nabi'im ("prophets") from whom we take the term were gurus gripped by the agony that was relentlessly quarantined at the bottom levels of their society. They were ordinary folk assailed by the unordinary anguish of the poor of their day who did all they could to carry that anguish into the public sphere as a cry of judgment upon the whole body politic. Their voices did not offer coherent narrative, but molten lava. Image tumbled upon image in a tumult of tears and anger and sudden blushes of raging affection. The Spirit that possessed them did not bother with beginnings and ends when the little ones were being raped continuously, but leapt straight into the middle of a hot verb.

In the history of violence that is our history, the tremor that is the ghost of spirit in the flesh is first of all a broken torrent, a meaning bent in two, a force of groaning, a cry full of night and blood and the tremors of too much feeling locked up in too small a space. Its first word is necessarily poetry, not story.

Poetry in its most ardent attempts to give expression to what has not yet been clearly "experienced" is poetry in the mode of prophecy. Offered as an uncertain probe of one's humanity rather than a "nice" effort to sound "beautiful," it leaves behind both clarity and security. Instead, it opts to explore what is still so fresh and "bloody" it may appear as "ugly." In such a moment, poetry serves the "underground" agenda of the community, the unfinished business, the needs that have not yet been met, the freedoms that have not yet been given flesh to live in. Here, poetry — along with other art forms and mysticism and shamanism and interestingly enough, in our time, science fiction — represents a first attempt to articulate the future. The drive of human beings to "speak" themselves into being, to make meaning out of longing, to shape aspiration into satisfaction, to transform pain into a power to change, is primordial. It also gives rise to "tomorrow." Poetry that is willing to break open the conventions and codes of the present for the sake of what has not yet been "birthed" in speech or gestured in a body, is augury. It is pointing toward the aching frontier from whence hope arises and toward which responsibility acts. In this function, poetry is pronouncing a pox on all of our compromises with injustice and saying, in effect, "You have not yet emerged as a full human being. As long as any person anywhere is still suffering unjustly, all meaning everywhere, all sense of yourself as living a coherent life in a secure narrative is false. Your narrative is not yet big enough. You must try to speak what still hasn't been said. You are not yet you. Say more! Say it more deeply! Speak your word with a greater body, with a more complex resonance, with more rhythmic room in it for the 'other' impulses — all the other words and desires and persons and communities and cultural codes of meaning and vibrations of Life — that are still trying to become 'you'! The real you has not yet found a home in language. Break the bread of speech open and give yourself away in new fragments of experimental meaning, that awaken new soundings of truth in those who are still locked away in prison. You will discover it is not just 'them' you are freeing, but yourself. Truth is a polyrhythm that is still trying to happen in history. And 'everything' is what it is saying. And 'god' is who is speaking." ●

Detroiter ***Jim Perkinson*** teaches courses on world religions, African diaspora philosophy, liberation theology, colonialism and racism, death and dying, and social ethics through a joint appointment at Marygrove College and Ecumenical Theological Seminary. He is also a performance poet who regularly reads around the city.

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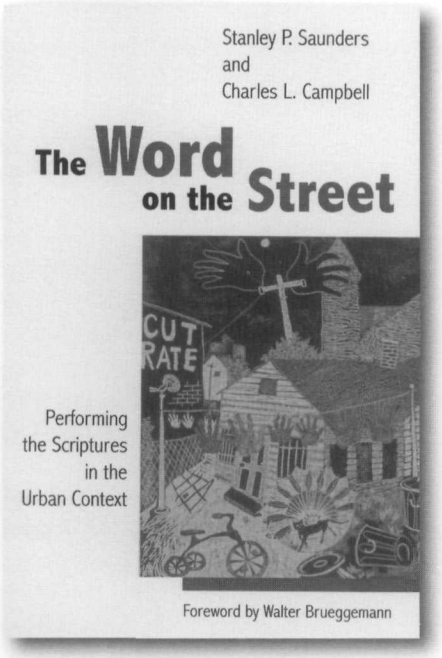
The Word on the street

by Bill Wylie-Kellermann



The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context

by Stanley P. Saunders & Charles L. Campbell

(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000)

IN *THE WORD ON THE STREET*, Chuck Campbell tells the story of taking a class to spend a night with homeless folks on the streets of Atlanta. After guiding them through the ordeal of locating sufficient cardboard to insulate them from the cold of the ground, James (one of the regulars who sleep in the backyard of the Open Door Community) quietly left the circle to return with his personal stash of doughnuts, which he broke and shared among the class. Campbell recognized this as a sacramental act. He discerned in it an emblem of the Lord's Supper.

This book is actually a series of overlapping and intersecting stories. One set concerns two seminary professors whose pedagogy involves changing the location of their classes, taking students into the city, the parks and public spaces inhabited by the homeless. Another are the stories of homeless people themselves, whose names and lives are given voice. Weaving through is also the saga of the Open Door Community, a catholic worker (small c) house founded by an activist Presbyterian couple, Ed Loring and Murphy Davis. There is also the story of Atlanta, its self-proclaimed glory, beneath which corporate powers ordain and enforce the criminalizing, invisibilizing, and scapegoating of homeless people. Where these stories interconnect or clash, the Word happens. It is there to be seen and heard.

In similar fashion this book comprises an assortment of stitched-together literary genres (like, I suppose, the scriptures themselves). The two professors contribute meditations and articles (written for the Open Door's political rag, *Hospitality*) along with sermons, footnoted scholarly works published in academic journals and supplementary material written expressly for the book. In the cracks are black-and-white prints by Christina Bray, each itself an evocative study in streetlife. Somehow it all manages to read, if not seamlessly, at least with an utter coherence (like, I suppose, the scriptures themselves).

Since Saunders is a New Testament scholar, his contributions are largely biblical and hermeneutical. These include close readings and striking new takes on well-worn parables, hymns, and resurrection narratives. But his emphasis is on reading site — and by that not simply social location, but actual physical placement. He tells a funny story of his class spreading out on a hot summer day in the plaza between a bank skyscraper and the park which was "home" to many poor folks. Their study? The fifth chapter of James with its devastating critique of wealth. As a student led them in an imaginative exercise of listening from the perspective of various people in the tower and the park, they were confronted by a security guard for posing some sort of threat! One of Saunders' most important contributions is a stunning analysis of how urban social architecture inscribes our hearts. It is a concise and wondrous examination of contested spaces as the locus of urban spirituality.

As a professor of preaching, Charles Campbell is struck with how the enterprise of proclamation is likewise altered by the location of the street. Whether his students are preaching good news to the homeless or to the principalities arrayed against them, they find their own voices changed and oddly freed in that placement.

All this strikes one as a new mode of public theology. And yet when Campbell rehearses a suggestive history, it seems more normative than aberration. From the prophets to Jesus, Peter and Paul, it is really the biblical mode. Add Francis, Luther, Whitefield, Wesley, or mention Abolitionism, The Great Awakening, and the Salvation Army and a recognizable tradition comes into focus. Think of recent movements: the Catholic Worker, Freedom Struggle preachers, or anti-nuclear liturgical direct action and this new mode is novel only with reference to the captivity of sanctuary and academy.

In like manner, marginal and neglected charisms such as solidarity and hospitality emerge in this volume as foundational Christian practices, discipleship disciplines embedded in baptism and eucharist, contesting the spaces of our very lives.

And that, it would seem, is the further story to be noticed: the tale of two professors whose lives get transformed by their own pedagogy. It is a story sometimes told in confession and tears, sometimes with the joy of new sight, always as gift. Let the reader understand (and beware): It is as well our own lives that are being read and told before our eyes. ●

Witness contributing editor ***Bill Wylie-Kellermann*** works for Chicago's Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE).

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LO COTIDIANO

Finding God in the spaces of the everyday

by Loida I. Martell-Otero

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Theological thinking among our people is like a woman who goes to a laundromat to wash her family's clothes. She sits and watches the clothes go round and round in that washing machine, and after a bit, she'll say, "Life in Christ is just like that. There are problems that tumble you around, but by the time the process is done, Christ assures that he will clean you with his blood, and you come out white as snow." Our people are a deeply theological people. —*Elizabeth Conde-Frazier*

One cannot understand the Latina/o worldview unless one sees the world of the everyday through our eyes. We consider *los del pueblo* (the people) to be the true theologians. Observing this, U.S. *feministas/mujeristas* have developed the concept of *lo cotidiano* as a theological category of knowing. María Pilar Aquino has defined *lo cotidiano* as the "whole of doing and thinking of our people in their daily lives and recurring routine." It encompasses the aesthetic and the celebratory (fiesta) elements of our lives, as well as the tedious and the mundane.

Daniel H. Levine views *lo cotidiano* as the space where the oppressed live in spite of the domination of sinful social structures. It is the space where people struggle daily to survive, where the effects of injustice, poverty and discrimination are concretely felt. It is also where the poor resist the religious, economic or social powers, and thus experience the salvific presence of God.

Feminista/mujerista theologians have criticized the patriarchal penchant for dismissing the "private" or "domestic" dimensions of life as being irrelevant to theology, to social analysis and to the struggle for change. They insist that *lo cotidiano* should not be reduced to what is "private" or "individual" and made secondary or subordinate to the "public" domain. The "public" has often been the space of the powerful (mostly men), who make invisible those at the periphery (particularly women), and who ignore those impacted the most by the decisions they make. For example, welfare legislation was debated, legislated and enforced by those affected the least by it; conversely, the greatest impact has been suffered by those whose voices were muffled or ignored in the debate. It is poor working mothers who must now face the day-to-day care of their children without safety nets and little community support. This "domestic" reality has a profound effect on the public domain, of course. So-called "welfare mothers" are forced into waged labor (since raising a child is not considered "work") in low-paying jobs. They must send their children to child-care or after-school programs — if they can afford to. This places a strain on public delivery systems and affects educational institutions.

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Lo cotidiano allows us to see how both the realities of structural sin and of God's grace, justice, and love are manifest in everyday occurrences, especially at the level of our communities of faith. It makes the social location of the U.S. Hispanic/Latina community explicit, and does so in the narrative tradition, allowing the voiceless to tell their stories. Here, we cry out to the heavens for justice and peace. Stories of living in overcrowded tenements with no heat or hot water, or of shopping in supermarkets with spoiled food and inflated prices, or of schools with racist teachers, broken chalkboards, unsafe physical plants, and dilapidated and outdated books are not irrelevant to the task of theology.

Hispanic religiosity is often misperceived in individualistic categories. But a strong sense of community, inherited from our indigenous and African foreparents, is central to the cultural and religious legacy of U.S. Hispanics/Latinas. The functional unit of the community is the family. *Familia* is not just the nuclear family, but the extended family, similar to the Hebrew concept of *mishpahah*. It not only includes blood relatives, but also friends, neighbors, and even those who come from the same town of origin. Puerto Rican society, for example, has the concept of *hijo/a de crianza*: a child that is adopted through the informal ties of community. If a child needs a home, a family who is able takes the child in and raises her or him as one of its own. No difference is made between *los/las hijos/as de crianza* and one's birth children.

Familia is a sanctuary. It is the place where one's identity is affirmed and the source of moral decision-making. Here one's language or beliefs are not mocked as in the larger society; here Hispanics/Latinas can feel they belong. "To be exiled from family and friends," writes Paul J. Wadell, "would be not to exist."

Community and family are thus central for a theology of *lo cotidiano*. Theologians who have analyzed structural sin at the level of political, economic and social institutions have ignored it at the level of *familia*. They have not paid enough attention to everyday problems such as alcoholism, domestic violence, sinful patterns of patriarchy, and other such problems. Neither have they adequately assessed the human impact of poor housing and schooling, toxic dumping, lack of medical or recreational facilities or police brutality upon *familia*. Poor and marginalized families and communities must contend with these realities on a daily basis with little or no recourse to justice.

Another important element in *lo cotidiano* is the role of religion. U.S.

Hispanic/Latina religiosity is, like our culture, a mestizo/mulata phenomenon that can be traced to our African, indigenous and European roots on one hand, and to biblical and pre-Tridentine religious traditions on the other. (Thus we are often mocked or rejected by modernists as pagan or superstitious.) These roots have contributed to an organic worldview that is deeply relational and incarnational. We do not perceive a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular or between the spiritual and the material. Rather, the material world is permeated with the spiritual. God is the One who has "tabernacled" in the midst of us, and Jesus is truly a historical person, part of our *familia.*

U.S. Hispanic/Latina religiosity is particularly indebted to Spanish Catholicism. During colonial times, the *conquistadors* would always build a central plaza in each town that was defined by two buildings: a city hall and a cathedral. Religion dictated the rhythms of daily life. *La vida cotidiano* was ordered around its sounds and liturgical celebrations. Social events revolved around church weddings, baptisms and wakes. The result is a culture that is deeply embedded with religious undertones, and explains why sociologists often refer to U.S. Hispanic/Latina Protestants as "cultural Catholics." A good example of this was my maternal grandmother, a life-long American Baptist and Sunday school teacher. Her typical exclamatory phrases were "*Ave María Purísima*" ("Hail Mary, most pure") or "*Ay Virgen.*" Even today Protestant Hispanics who do not recognize infant baptism will nevertheless ask friends or church members to become godparents (*padrino/madrina*) of their children.

U.S. Hispanic/Latina Catholic theologians have thus claimed that the most authentic locus of theological reflection is popular religiosity. This has not been studied as much, however, among Hispanic Protestants (or *evangélicos/as*). There are, however, some defining characteristics of popular Protestantism, particularly that which arose from the Holiness movements of the early 1900s and from the charismatic movements of the late 1960s.

The lives of *evangélicos/as* are filled with attendance at worship services, prayer meetings, Bible classes, and *sociedades*. There is also visitation to the sick, street revival services, and home evangelism. These are supplemented by *el altar familial*, a gathering in the home where the Bible is read and prayers are conducted among family members, friends and neighbors.

True to their Protestant roots, Scripture plays a central role among *evangélicas/os*. Scripture is considered to be the rule of practice and faith, but also is a source of comfort, guidance and assurance that God is indeed present in the daily lives of those who suffer and have faith. Bible reading is done from a nonmodern cosmology, which the dominant culture often disparages as "fundamentalist." But this approach to the Bible in fact can empower those marginalized by modernity, inspiring faith that God's saving grace pertains to their everyday lives.

Other elements that are important in popular Protestantism are *vigilias* (all-night prayer vigils), fasting, *coritos* and *testimonios*. *Coritos* are short refrains that serve as theological statements. They are often Scriptural citations put to music, and often play a subversive role. Missionaries taught their Latin American charges that truly "Christian music" was found only in traditional Europeanized hymnody, accompanied by the organ or piano. The charismatic revival, however, brought a surge of indigenous musicians, who penned *coritos*. Bongos, *timbales*, tambourines, guitars, *güiros*, drums, and other indigenous instruments are often used as accompaniment. Thus, popular Protestantism has affirmed U.S. Hispanic/Latina culture and music.

Testimonios are shared stories of God's presence and salvific actions among the community. Through *testimonios* Biblical interpretations and insights are tested for validity. *Testimonios* are how the community is encouraged and nurtured, celebrating victory over adversity and sharing in suffering. Most importantly, *testimonios* are a way to transmit the faith and oral histories of the community to the next generation.

In the U.S. Hispanic/Latina community, women are the primary transmitters of the faith and religious practice. In the Protestant community, most Sunday school teachers are women. They teach their children Bible stories at home and in the church. Visiting the sick in hospitals or participating in a street evangelism activity, women share their stories of triumph and pain through their *testimonios*. In this way many women who would be otherwise silenced claim their voices. Only they can tell their stories, which are then confirmed by the community of faith. These stories are conduits of liberation and healing, affirming the humanity of those who must survive in the midst of a society that dehumanizes.

Another important element in popular Hispanic/Latina Protestantism is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to those who are made to feel like nonpersons through discrimination and oppression. It is the Spirit that empowers the voiceless, affirming their worth before God in a society that makes them feel *que no sirven para nada* ("that they are no good for anything"). The Spirit is the daily presence of the divine, incarnating the salvation of Jesus Christ in the everyday lives of those who suffer and those who seek justice.

Lo cotidiano is a rich theological paradigm that opens up our ability to reflect both on the sin that assails our people and the salvation that appears in hidden and unexpected ways in the everyday. The rich and powerful are often perplexed by the celebration that exists among the poor, unable to understand how they can be so joyful in the face of overwhelming tragedy and loss. Perhaps because the powerful rely so much on their material resources and social standing, they are blinded to the presence and power of God that manifests itself in the everyday. For example, U.S. Hispanics/Latinas believe that disease always has a spiritual component. As a community that has often been deprived of adequate health care, we know that the true Healer is Jesus Christ. When we become ill, we go to church and pray. We may not be able to afford psychiatrists, specialists or expensive laboratory tests, but the God present to us without appointment and without charge is the One who created us and who walks with us daily. It is to this God we turn. Whether healed or not, we know that God has heard our cries, and that salvation will be experienced in some wonderfully unexpected way. Those in the dominant society often disparage such a worldview. But those who walk in the spaces of *lo cotidiano* live in "abiding astonishment" as we witness God's enriching grace in our lives. ●

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AND GOD GRINNED

First Adventist Church of Washougal

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EVERETT WAS CRAMMED — like all the other POWs (Prisoners of Worship) — into a crowded pew, cringing like a fresh-kicked dog as the sixty-member Walla Walla College Choir blared out what the church bulletin called "a rousing medley of Authentic Negro Spirituals." It must have been ninety degrees inside the church. Everett couldn't figure out how the choir was still standing. Must be their faith, he reasoned after a while, since it was primarily the brain that needed oxygen to function, and faith, as he saw it, was a kind of scripture-breathing brain-eating termite you turned loose in your head on the day you were baptized, causing your need for oxygen to steadily decrease. Loosening his tie when Mama wasn't looking, sighing three sighs to get one sigh's worth of air, Everett wished for the millionth time that he had Peter's constitution. But not (at least today) for its baseball ability. What he envied this day was its squeamishness — because when Pete had stood for the opening hymn he'd fainted on the spot, so he was now outside in the shade, basking in the oxygen-rich zephyrs. Most of the POWs looked as alert and slap-happy as the choir, though. Four-part "Authentic Negro" harmony was an unheard-of commodity in these parts. The choir was singing,

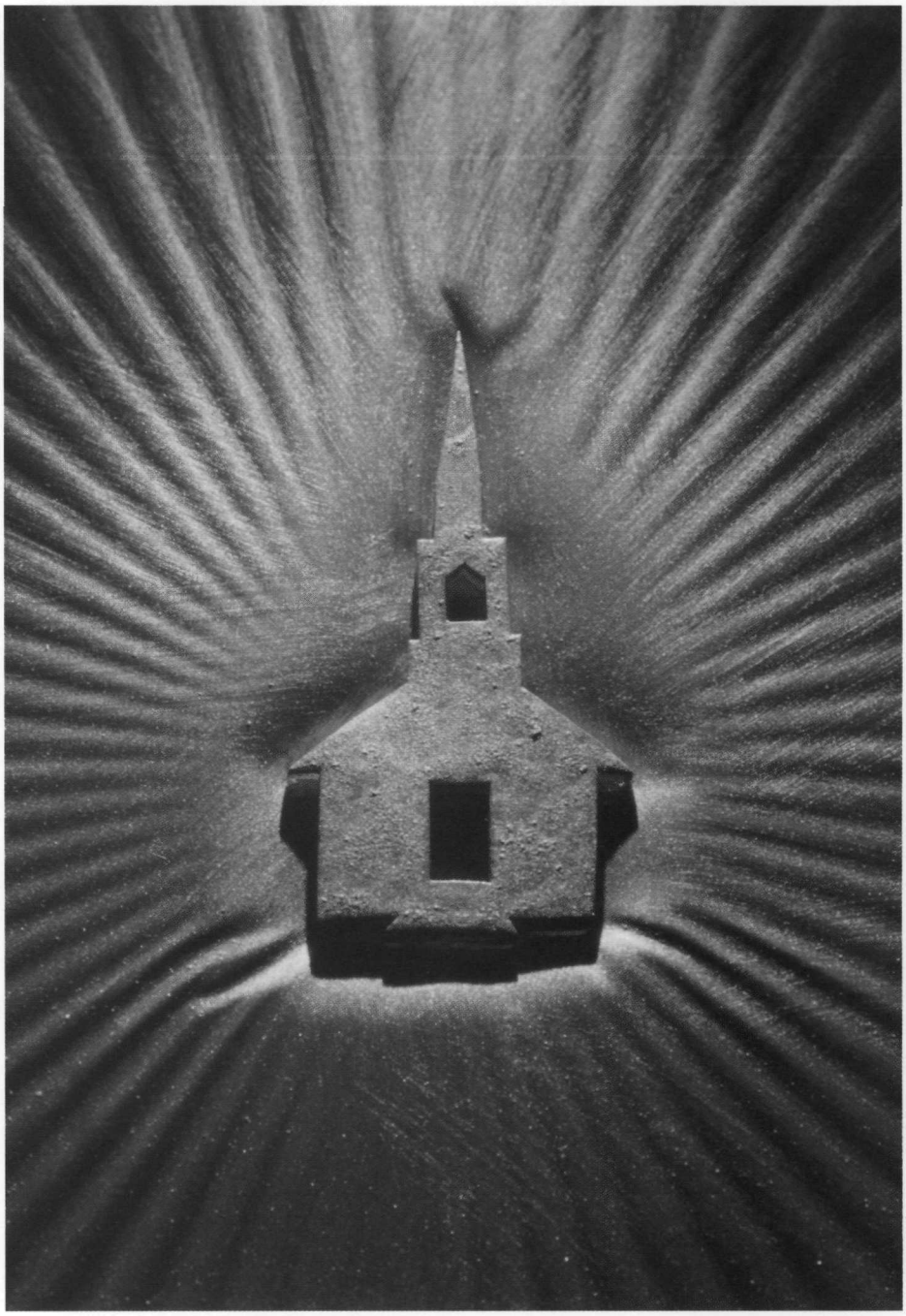
Keep so busy praisin' my Jee-suss, keep so busy praisin' my Jee-suss,

Keep so busy praisin' my Jee-suss, ain' got time to die!

That's what you think, Everett thought.

But he saw tears of joy threading down Irwin's cheeks; saw Bet's flesh covered with goose bumps despite the heat; saw Mama's stone-stolid face lit up like neon by the glory, saw behatted POW heads and shiny-shoed feet bobbing and tapping all over the place. Even Elder Babcock had busted out one of his Antediluvian Patriarch Grins and started tapping a big wing-tip against his throne chair — out of time to the beat, of course.

Mmmm, I praise Him in the mornin', mmmm, I praise Him in the evenin',



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Introducing 'A Global Witness':

Through this section of our website we are offering analysis and commentary from around the U.S. church and the global Anglican Communion. Our aim is to encourage a reclaiming of the Anglican vocation to doing "public theology" — and to expand awareness of the issues and struggles occupying the hearts and minds of Anglicans and other persons of faith worldwide.

This month look for public theologian Irene Monroe's latest "Queer Take" column along with other new postings.

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Mmmm, I praise Him in the mornin', ain't got time to die!

There was actually one "Authentic Negro" in the white-robed white-faced Walla Walla choir — an even greater rarity in this town than four-part harmonies. He was a short, overweight kid with a face almost as black, shiny and pocked as Babcock's wing tips. His wire-rimmed glasses gave him a scholarly look, and one front tooth, made of something silver, made Everett wish he had one every time it flashed. But the kid's face had been serious to start with, and when the choir eased into "Old Black Joe" it grew downright morose. Everett felt miserable for him. How must he feel — standing up there crooning crapped-out songs about whip-scarred plantation chattel to a big White-God-worshipping flock of crackers?

I's a-comin', I's a comin', dough my head is bendin' low,

I can hear dem faifful voices callin' Old Black Joe ...

bleah. The absurdity of it was too great, the oxygen too scarce, the sky outside too blue: Everett's mind began to drift, he started to compose his own little medley:

Stephen Foster wrote dis song, doo-dah, doo-dah,

An' he was white as de day is long, Oh, doo-hah day ...

He shut his eyes, smiled, realized no one could hear him over the choir, and started to croon it aloud.

He nevah ran no nights, he nevah ran no days,

He nevah put no money on no bobtail nag, No doo-dah way ...

Then Everett did Stephen Foster one better; he turned himself black; he became the sad, silver-toothed Walla Walla Negro kid. But once he became him he saw no reason not to stretch himself out, to make himself taller, thinner, stronger, better-looking, till he was no longer some Token Black Tenor surrounded by cross-licking hicks. He was the glint-toothed leader of his own scarlet-robed eighty-member all-black choir now, with a (why not?) twenty-piece blues band backing them, and a (what the heck?) dumpy Token White fat boy back in the percussion section — a dead ringer for Babcock in his youth — playing a ... let's see, a triangle. Yeah. Everett shut his eyes, gave his audience a solemn nod, and informed them in the mellifluous, almost Elizabethan English he'd learned as a lad in Trinidad that they were about to perform a *contemporary* spiritual, with *eight-part* harmonies — a song composed, of course, by the dashing young E.M. Chance himself.

He turned to his choir. The young Camas ladies, in unison, lifted their church bulletins to fan their lust-flushed faces. He raised his baton, and —

arrrrgh! The Walla Walla Warblers charged like rebels at Gettysburg into "When Dem Saints Go Marchin' In." Everett shuddered, scrinched his eyes and brain shut, focused on the rows of beautiful black faces in his mind, delicately raised an eyebrow, dropped it, and in a soul-stirring, hair-raising a cappella, the Big Black Plus One Cracker Choir thundered:

Dem heads are gonna roll when Jesus comes!

The POWs froze. The elders paled. The infants all smiled. The Lord God grinned.

Yes dem heads are gonna roll when Jesus comes!

Y'all gonna be sad you called us nigger

'Bout time He pulls dat heavenly trigger!

Yes, dem heads are gonna roll when Jesus comes!

E.M. gave the elders a little eye juju, sent a black fist skyward, yanked it back down, and his twenty-piece blues band crashed in behind the choir:

Well you fat cats are goin' to court when Jesus comes!

Yeah, you fat cats are goin' to court when Jesus comes!

Dere won't be no trick tax exemption,

You either gonna burn or get redemption!

Yeah! you fat cats are goin' to court when Jesus comes ...

Back in the stifling gray banality called "reality" the Walla Walla saints were marching out, and when Irwin and a few other kids started to cheer for them, Elder Babcock and all the other old war-horses who'd figured out that God hates gratitude quickly squelched it with massive scowls. But Everett didn't know it. His eyes were shut so

tight his lips were drawn up like a mummy's; he was covered with goose bumps, shining with sweat. Bet nudged Freddy, Freddy nudged Irwin, and Irwin nudged Everett and whispered, "Jeez! Looks like you liked the music!" But Everett didn't hear that either: he just nipped an eyebrow — raising his Blacks Plus Cracker Choir one step higher — and beamed beatifically as they roared:

Well we ain' goana be in yo' shoes when Jesus comes!

(when Jesus comes!)

No we ain' goana be in yo' shoes when Jesus comes!

(when Jesus comes!)

(Take it Ella): No I ain' goana be in yo' shoes

All o' you twisters o' God's Good News

(Billie Holiday): An' I ain' goana be in your sandals,

You gossipin' biddies and lovers of scandals!

(Ms. Chuck Berry): Or your shitkickin' red-neck boots

When Gabriel's horn goes a rooty-toot-toot!

(the Walla Walla kid): 'Cause I'll be singin' an' clappin' my hands

In my cheap loafers from Thom McAn's!

(Ever'body): No we ain' goana be in your shoes when Jesus comes!

(When Jesus cuh-huh-hummmmmms!)

"What's he doing?" Bet whispered.

"He's all sweaty!" said Freddy.

"An' he's getting so jumpy!" Bet added.

"Uh-oh," Irwin whispered sideways to Everett. "Mama's watchin'." But Everett was gone. "*Last verse*!" He told his choir. "Jump it, tromp it, whomp it!"

Yes dem heads are gonna roll when Jesus comes!

It be the Lord God's turn to bawl when Jesus comes!

You smart folks better clear de aisles

'Cause dere gonna be sinners heaped in piles!

An' you may think we's whistlin' Dixie

But the King o' the Kings, He ain't no pixie!

Dere won't be no trick tax exemption,

You either gonna burn or get redemption!

AN" DEM HEADS ARE GONNA RO-HO-HOLLLLLLLLLLL

"Everett!"

WHEN JESUS —

"Everett!"

"Huh? Oh. Yes, Mama."

"You tighten that tie!"

"Oops. Sorry, Mama."

"Quit Fidgeting!"

"Okay, Mama."

"And get that *look* off your face!"

"Sorry, Mama."

●

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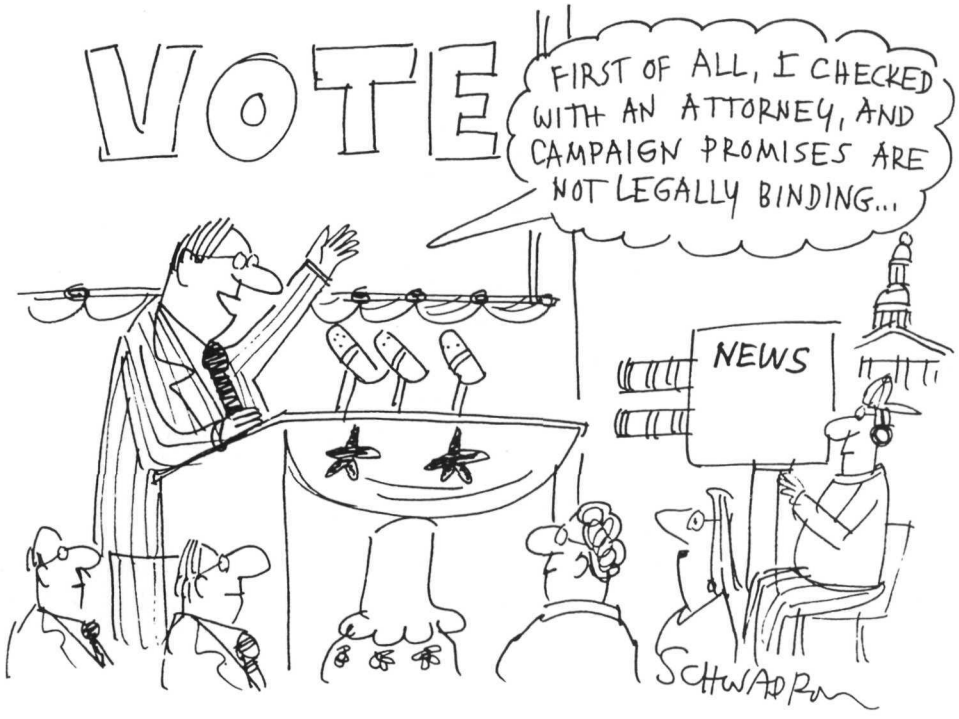

Confronting big oil

In a September article in the *Toronto Globe & Mail*, Naomi Klein raised questions about the portrayal of the oil blockades in Britain and France.

"Watched from a distance, the oil blockades in Britain look like spontaneous popular uprisings: regular working folk, frightened for their livelihoods, getting together to say, 'Enough's enough.' Indeed, the fuel protests began when a couple hundred farmers and truckers formed blockades outside the oil refineries. But the protests became effective only when the multinational oil companies that run those refineries decided to treat those rather small barricades as immovable obstacles, preventing them from delivering oil to gas stations.

"The companies — Shell, BP, Texaco et al. — claimed they wouldn't ask their tanker drivers to drive past the blockades because they feared for their 'safety.'

"The claim is bizarre. First, no violence was reported. Second, these oil companies have no problem drilling pipelines through contested lands in Colombia and political revolts directed against them in Nigeria. ...

"Third, the truckers' 'pickets' were illegal blockades since the protesters were not members of trade unions — unlike the cases in which union members form legal pickets and companies hire scabs to cross them anyway.

"So why would the oil companies tacitly cooperate with anti-oil protesters? Easy. So long as attention is focused on high oil taxes, rather than on soaring oil prices, the pressure is off the multinationals and the OPEC cartel. The focus is also on access to oil — as opposed to the more threatening issue of access to less polluting, more sustainable energy sources than oil.

"Furthermore, the oil companies know that, if the truckers get their tax cut, as they did in France, oil will be cheaper for consumers to buy, which will mean more oil will be sold. In other words, Big Oil stands to increase its profits by taking money out of the public purse — money now spent, in part, on dealing with the problems created by Big Oil.

"More mysterious has been the government response to the illegal trucker protests. While Tony Blair has not caved in to demands for lower taxes (yet), he didn't clear the roads, either, a fact all the more striking considering the swift police crackdowns against other direct-action protests in Britain and around the world.

"The oil blockades in Britain and France ... likely caused more real economic damage than every Earth First!, Greenpeace and anti-free-trade protest combined. And yet, on Britain's roads last week, there was none of the pepper spray, batons or rubber bullets now used when labour, human-rights and environmental activists stage roadblocks that cause only a small fraction of the fuel protest's disruption."

Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center, who forwarded this excerpt to *The Witness*, comments that "this whole scenario reinforces the sense that for people who are committed to social justice and healing the earth, it's important in the U.S. and Canada to prepare in advance a very different analysis and campaign — one that focuses on taxing excess oil-company profits, not reducing taxes on gasoline or heating oil. And on channeling the money raised to: a) assistance for the poor who will be hardest hit by higher prices for heating oil and natural gas, and b) to support for mass transit, biking, conservation of energy and renewable energy sources."

Sacred earth and space

On Sept. 9, the 20th anniversary of the first "Plowshares" disarmament action, five women entered the Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs to carry out a "Sacred Earth and Space Ploughshares" action. The women, all members of Roman Catholic religious congregations, were arrested after they hammered and poured blood on a mockup of the Milstar communications satellite and an F-18 A-1 plane, a type used extensively in the ongoing bombing of Iraq.

Colorado peace activist Bill Sulzman, director of Citizens for Peace in Space, said of their action that "the cutting edge of Christian anti-war resistance has for the first time come head-to-head with the cutting edge of futuristic, space-based war-making."

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According to a 1/00 *Progressive* article quoted in the Fall 2000 issue of *Nukewatch Pathfinder*, the U.S. military "explicitly says it wants to 'control' space to protect its economic interests and establish superiority over the world.

"Several documents reveal the plans. Take 'Vision for 2020,' a 1996 report of the U.S. Space Command, which 'coordinates the use of Army, Navy and Air Force space forces' and was set up in 1985 to 'help institutionalize the use of space.'

"The multicolored cover of 'Vision for 2020' shows a weapon shooting a laser beam from space and zapping a target below. The report opens with the following: 'U.S. Space Command — dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment. Integrating Space Forces into warfighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict.' A century ago, 'Nations built navies to protect and enhance their commercial interests' by ruling the seas, the report notes. Now it is time to rule space.

"'The medium of space is the fourth medium of warfare — along with land, sea and air,' it proclaims on page three. 'The emerging synergy of space superiority with land, sea and air superiority will lead to Full Spectrum Dominance.'"

The Sacred Earth and Space Ploughshares statement quotes Peter's words in Acts 14: "Friends, what do you think you are doing? ... We have come with good news, to make you turn from these empty idols to the living God who made sky and earth and the sea and all that these hold."

Welfare reform and civil rights

Gary Delgado argues that welfare advocates should reframe the issue in terms of civil rights (*ColorLines*, Fall 00).

"Studies of what happens to women forced off welfare into the low-wage job market are just beginning to come out. Not surprisingly, they show that most of those leaving TANF have found their way into the gender ghettoes of service, sales, and clerical work where, even in northern industrial states, they are earning barely above minimum wage. ...

"And for women of color leaving welfare, there is the old triple whammy of race, gender, and welfare-recipient-status to shape their experiences in the job market. A 1999 study comparing the treatment of black and white welfare recipients, conducted by Dr. Susan Goodman of Virginia Tech University, found that black women earn less than whites, are less likely to be employed full-time, and are overrepresented in lower paying occupations. Gooden also found that black job applicants were asked twice as often as whites to complete a pre-application and that blacks were less likely to receive thorough interviews (45 percent as opposed to 71 percent for whites). Furthermore, 36 percent of African-American respondents were subjected to drug tests and criminal record checks, while the 24 percent of whites who were asked to take any test at all were merely asked 'character questions.'

"While there is not yet an overwhelming body of research, the research that does exist clearly establishes that racial and gender discrimination is compounded by welfare reform. ...

"A civil rights approach to welfare organizing isn't traditional, but the new demographics suggest that emphasizing race and gender discrimination in the welfare system might be just the wedge we need to get into broader efforts to reframe the national debate as welfare reauthorization comes before the Congress in 2001. Race and gender discrimination may not be the most screwed-up thing about welfare deform, but it is one of the few areas in which legal rights exist."

Transcending repair

"Mending is a major occupation in traditional societies," Barry Boyce writes in a reflection on the demise of shoe repair in the U.S. (*Shambhala Sun*, 9/00). "It is one of the perverse virtues of advanced civilization to have transcended repair and renewal. We have abandoned a more basic understanding of economy — the careful ordering of the house (which is what it means etymologically) — and have redefined it as the sum total of our consumption.

"We need to repair and reuse not because the earth will run out, not because the cosmic meter maid is coming down the street to give us a ticket, but because it is the only way to live well. Our willingness to toss away that which we so recently valued, our unwillingness to repair the material things in our lives, speaks volumes about our unwillingness to repair other things that really matter — our errors, our relationships, our lives, our world."

CLASSIFIEDS

Open Door essay collection

The Open Door Community of Atlanta announces publication of *I Hear Hope Banging at My Back Door*, a collection of 12 of cofounder Ed Loring's essays from the community newspaper, *Hospitality*. The book is available for a $10 donation. For more information, call 404-874-9652, or visit <http://www.opendoorcommunity.org>.

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The storyteller's vocation: enabling an intimacy of relationship with God

by Marianne Arbogast

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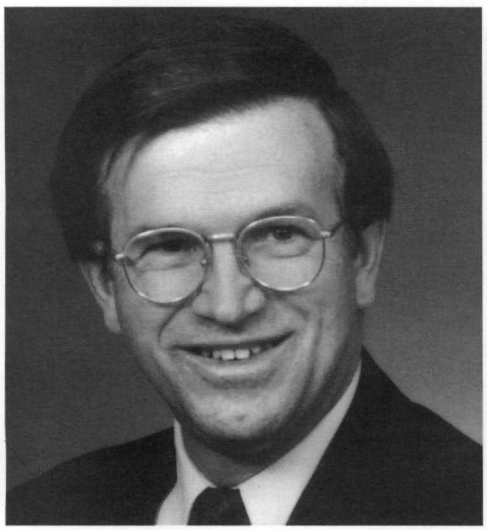

"I wanted to find a common language that would cut across divisions and be a common ground between people of different backgrounds and different educational experiences."

AS A YOUNG PASTOR involved with the civil rights movement in Chicago in the 1960s, Tom Boomershine listened to black preachers tell the stories of the Bible.

"I had never heard preaching like that before," he says. "I was studying the gospels and I knew about oral tradition, but when I read the stories I couldn't believe that anybody told them for more than three or four minutes because they were so boring. Then I went to black churches and I'd hear storytelling sermons that would go on for 45 minutes to an hour — and at the end everyone was cheering and wanted the story to go on! I had never heard storytelling that was so powerful and energizing."

This experience, combined with Boomershine's desire to understand the original form of the biblical narratives, led him to further academic study and to a unique ministry of fostering a revival of biblical storytelling.

"When I went back to New York to do a PhD. in New Testament, I went back explicitly with the purpose of trying to recover the biblical storytelling tradition," Boomershine says. "I wanted to find a common language that would cut across divisions and be a common ground between people of different backgrounds and different educational experiences."

Boomershine's approach was regarded with suspicion in the academic community, and his dissertation topic — the Gospel of Mark as narrative — was highly controversial. Colleagues tended to dismiss it as "naive, intellectually lacking in rigor, and essentially irrelevant," he says.

"In classic biblical study of Mark, there were two primary questions that were asked," he explains. "One was, what is the historical significance of a particular story? And the other has been, what was the theology that was implicit in the story? So the gospels have been studied for their historical meaning and their theological meaning. The meaning of the story simply as story was not a question that scholars asked."

Boomershine started with a different set of questions.

"What was the shape of the characterization of Jesus? What's the structure of the plot? What was the impact of the story of Jesus' passion and resurrection for those who originally heard it? How did the stories actually sound?"

His research took him to Orthodox churches and synagogues to hear the biblical narratives chanted in their original languages, and he memorized and chanted the passion narrative of Mark in Greek. He also began listening to contemporary storytellers, and then telling the gospel stories himself.

"During those years I was telling the stories in coffeehouses in New York and for youth groups or Sunday evening meetings," he says. "I was a kind of traveling troubadour."

Listeners responded with enthusiasm.

"The steady response, for 30 years, has been, 'I can't believe it — it's a wonderful story! I'd never heard the story before.' They'd heard it read in scripture lessons for years, but they'd never heard the story told. They respond with amazement — first of all, that someone could learn it by heart and tell it, and then, that it's so interesting and powerful."

When Boomershine was seriously injured in a car accident, he discovered another dimension of the power of gospel stories.

"I had a long period of recovery, and during that time I found that the stories that I

had memorized and that I could tell to myself were a primary gift from God. The story of the healing of the paralytic was a story that I told myself over and over in the whole process of my physical therapy, getting up and walking. And that was true with a number of stories that I had learned — at different times they would come up and they would be a way in which God would be present for me. So I decided that one of the things that was crucial was enabling other people to learn the stories so they could tell themselves the stories in times of crisis. I also remembered the importance that people who were in concentration camps during the Second World War gave to storytelling: Those who could recite poetry, who could sing songs, but especially those who knew stories — and especially those who knew biblical stories — were heroes."

Boomershine developed a storytelling workshop at New York Seminary, where he was then teaching, in which students learned to tell biblical stories, connecting them with stories from their own lives. In 1978, he founded the Network of Biblical Storytellers (NOBS), which has grown into an international association with a website (<www.nobs.org>), a newsletter and a yearly "festival gathering."

Members come from varied backgrounds and Christian traditions.

"Many of them are people who have had a lot of experience with art or music or literature or drama," Boomershine says. "Or people who have an interest in non-philosophical ways of talking and being, and so are drawn to the story."

They do not tell the stories in order to teach lessons or illustrate doctrines.

"In general, there has been very little interest in biblical storytelling in the evangelical community, especially among fundamentalists," Boomershine says. "Their interest and commitment is to the Bible as a source of doctrinal truth."

Boomershine's purpose has more to do with community and spiritual formation.

"I think the most accurate experience that we can have of the character of Jesus and who he was can happen in the context of a community of people telling the stories of Jesus from the gospels," he says. "There is a kind of community that happens among people who tell the stories of the Bible to each other, a depth of connection between people from radically different experiences. And there's an interiorization, a personal appropriation of that tradition that shapes and forms you in ways that are different from, say, learning the Apostles' Creed or affirming certain beliefs. It is a way of entering into an intimacy of relationship with God."

Boomershine stresses the importance of learning the stories by heart.

"The central metaphor is jazz," he says. "If you improvise on a song before you know the song, the jazz is usually not all that great. The same is true of biblical stories. People who know the stories well can improvise better than people who are sort of vaguely familiar with them. I encourage people to treat biblical stories with the care with which they would treat classical music or any other composition that is beautiful and that we value highly."

Boomershine recently took a leave of absence from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, in order to begin a new company — Luminon Digital Productions, part of UMR Communications (formerly the *United Methodist Reporter*) in Dallas. The company will produce digital resources for worship and church education programs. Boomershine regards this work as an outgrowth of his commitment to storytelling.

"I experienced it as a call from God to move from what I call the known areas of the church's ministry in literary culture, to the formation of a new institution and pattern for the church in electronic culture," Boomershine says. "The Gospel is increasingly associated with a culture that *used* to be the most powerful communication system of the culture. So in order to hear the stories of Jesus, the children of digital culture essentially have to step back into an earlier culture where there aren't TVs, where there aren't screens, where there isn't electronic music. This culture is a new global culture for which the church is largely inept in its efforts to communicate."

Boomershine rejects the "literate culture critique" of electronic culture.

"I think literate culture has seen electronic culture as a primary threat to its power," he says. "But literary culture has been the primary enemy of oral community. There's nobody who's more disassociated from normal human interaction than scholars, who spend all their time by themselves reading books. Electronic culture is much more interactive. In order to produce things in electronic culture you have to have a team that works together, whereas in order to write a book you have to go off by yourself.

"Electronic culture has been called a secondary oral culture. There are many lines of connection between post-literate electronic culture and oral culture — first of all the primacy of sound. And electronic culture is essentially a storytelling culture. Television is a storytelling medium. Film is a way of telling a story.

"And the global community is a product of electronic culture. So while there are new ways in which you can lose yourself on the Internet and have a kind of pseudo-community with people, on the other hand there's a reality to it that is even more immediate than writing letters.

"But I also see the way in which electronic culture and electronic media are creating a whole new structure of injustice and inequality. The church has been the primary agent of communication justice in the culture of literacy, the major agency in the history of western civilization that has extended literacy to those who were illiterate. The question now is, who's going to do that in relation to the digital divide? The church needs to be the advocate of the liberation of electronic communications from being used solely in the interests of profit, and for the power of that communications system to be used in the interest of the kingdom of God and for the sake of the poor. That's why I'm pursuing storytelling and why I'm pursuing this work now in electronic communications for the church." ●

Marianne Arbogast is associate editor of *The Witness*.

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INDEX 2000

AUTHORS

Arbogast, Marianne
Interview with Larry Rasmussen 10/00
A monastic experiment in ecology and ecumenism 10/00
The pro-life, pro-choice debate 4/00

Barwick, Mark
Advocacy works 6/00

Bower, Stephanie and Richard
L'Arche communities 10/00

Brown, Darryl K.
Law schools and corporate influence 9/00

Carpenter, Murray
When a global giant comes knocking 6/00

Carrier, Michael H.
The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado 7-8/00

Colatosti, Camille
The corporate takeover of the university 9/00
Punching back at the clock 1-2/00
Hamtramck: A small city grapples with diversity 10/00
The shadow conventions 11/00
A 'toxic tour' of Denver 7-8/00
Understanding globalization 6/00

Countryman, L. William
Anglicanism's entangled sense of authority 3/00

DeWitt, Robert
Time travel: When three hands bridge an abyss 1-2/00

Douglas, Kelly Brown
What's love got to do with it? 5/00

Douglas, Ian T.
Power, privilege and primacy in the Anglican Communion 3/00

Duncan, David James
And God grinned 12/00

Friedrich, Jim
Planting the seeds of transformation on the streets of Seattle 6/00

Fulkerson, Mary McClintock
'Neither male nor female ... in Christ'? 4/00

Goodstein, Phil
A short history of Denver 7-8/00

Hayes, Diana L.
A sexual ethic of singleness, built upon celibacy 4/00

Hernandez, Anna
Discipleship: the unpredictable stuff of life 5/00

Hughes, Ina
Doing theology through personal narrative 12/00

Hunt, Mary
What makes for good sex? 4/00

Kazanjian, Rosanna
Following a thread of silence 1-2/00

Keller, Susan
Jubilee spirituality 6/00

Kinney, Nancy
'Tis a privilege to live in Colorado' — but for whom? 7-8/00

Kondrath, William
Creating a 'ministering community' 3/00

Marranca, Richard and Orme, Dorothy
Reviving the gospel genre, an interview with James Carse 5/00

Martell-Otero, Loida
Lo Cotidiano — finding God in the spaces of the everyday 12/00

McThenia, Andrew W.
A missionary vocation in the university, an interview with William Willimon [9/00]

Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey
Overcoming the tyranny of the majority 11/00
Transgender terminology 4/00

Mueller, Cathy
Earth-linking 7-8/00

Myers, Ched
Embodying the "Great Story" — an interview with James W. McClendon 12/00

Nelson, Jeff
Bashra Diary 5/00

Perkinson, Jim
New Beat Poetry as theological discourse 12/00

Romano, Mary
The calling walk 10/00

Ruether, Rosemary Radford
Sisters of earth 5/00

Russell, Peter
No time, no space 1-2/00

Schoen, Lou
Maquilas and the search for cheap labor 6/00

Schut, Michael
Is it time for Christians to think locally? 6/00

Sehested, Ken
Accomplice in a consecrated conspiracy 5/00

Slaughter, Jane
Interview with Naomi Klein 11/00
Resisting work-faster oppression 1-2/00
Scapegoating the nation's young 9/00

Solomon, Norman
Overcoming the hazards of monoculture 7-8/00

Strohmier, Linda
Lifesharing communities 10/00

Temple, Johnny
Hip-Hop campus activism 9/00

Thatcher, Adrian
When does Christian marriage begin? 4/00

Thompsett, Fredrica Harris
Authority begins with baptism 3/00
Resurrecting a public theology 11/00

Tong, Robert
Lay presidency and appeals to Catholic 'order' 3/00

Waskow, Arthur
Free time for a free people 1-2/00
The Image on a coin 11/00

Wortman, Julie A.
Children in apartheid America: an interview with Jonathan Kozol 7-8/00
A conversation between Carter Heyward and Kelly Brown Douglas 3/00
An African revisioning of leadership: Simon E. Chiwanga 3/00
Jubilee 2000: an interview with Ann Pettifor 6/00

Wuthnow, Robert
Pursuing the sacred in the academy's 'hallowed halls' 9/00

Wylie-Kellermann, Bill
Globalizing civil society 6/00
Interview with Ralph Nader [with Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann] 11/00
Stringfellow on time 1-2/00

Wylie-Kellermann, Jeanie
On death and time 1-2/00

ARTISTS

Anderson, Kirk 3,4,6,7-8,9,10,11/00
Bacon, David 1-2/00
Beckett, Jackie 1-2/00
Bergt, Michael 5/00
Binder, Donna 9/00
Burkholder, Dan 12/00
Caponigro, Paul 1-2,3,4/00
Condyles, Kirk 11/00
Croon, Carolina 9/00
Davis, Arthur B. 12/00
Dix, David 1-2/00
Evershed, Jane 5/00
Fielder, John 7-8/00
Finkle, Harvey 9,11/00

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Glintenkamp, H. 11/00
Gunn, Herb 5/00
Heitner, Marty 9/00
Hickey, George 11/00
Homeless Photography Project 7-8/00
Hyska, Richard 10/00
Jackson, W.H. 7-8/00
Kernan, Sean 12/00
Kerner, Richard 6/00
Killough, William 3/00
Kowalski, Greg 10/00
Kurtz, Jack 6/00
LaDuke, Betty 3,5,6/00
Levitt, Jim 6,11/00
Lotz, Linda 1-2/00
Ludak, Mark 9/00
Marsh, Reginald 4/00
McKitterick, Tom 9/00
Peters, Mike 5/00
PoKempner, Mark 10/00
Reinhard, Rick 1-2/00
Schwadron, H.L. 1-2/00, 12/00
Seymour, Tim 1-2/00
Shetterly, Robert 5/00
Solheim, James 11/00
Soto, Fuminori 6/00
Stewart, Calvin 12/00
Stone, Les 1-2/00
Vine, Terry 12/00
Van Lier, Piet 6/00
Walsh, Brooks 4/00
West, Jim 1-2,10/00
Whelan, Timothy 12/00
Wong, Harvey 7-8/00
Wood, Grant 11/00

EDITORIALS

McThenia, Andrew W.
Unmasking the powers in higher education 9/00
Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey
Sex, gender and Christian liberty 4/00
Myers, Ched
The church, stories and "lower education" 12/00
Selby, Peter
Donning the face of liberty 6/00
Wortman, Julie A.
An authority that doesn't need guarding 3/00
Deadlines 1-2/00
Intending "queer" community 10/00
On collars and raising questions 11/00
Paying attention to the specifics of lives and places 7-8/00
Wylie-Kellermann, Jeanie
Sorting out discipleship 5/00

KEEPING WATCH

Schorr, Ira
Back from the brink 4/00
Selby, Peter
Unpayable debt — have they understood? 12/00
Thorpe, Beverly
Successful U.K. strategies for getting GE foods off supermarket shelves 5/00
Velasquez, Baldemar
International delegation to Washington to save Mumia! 1-2/00

POETS

Auden, W. H. 11/00
Berger, Rose Marie 12/00
Ecclesiastes 9/00
Hadewijch of Antwerp 5/00
Hughes, Langston 3/00
Mechtild of Magdeburg 5/00
Moraga, Cherrie 6/00
Piercy, Marge 4/00
Rich, Adrienne 7-8/00
Schreck, Nancy and Leach, Maureen 1-2/00
Shea, Janet 10/00

REVIEWS

Bach, John
Who Owns the West? by William Kittredge 7-8/00
Cox, Anne E.
For the Time Being by Annie Dillard 3/00
Here I Am, Send Me: Jonathan Daniels [video] 11/00
Joshua, Kazi
Eyes of the Heart by Jean-Bertrand Aristide 6/00
House, Gloria
The Big Test by Nicholas Lemann 9/00
Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey
Parenting the Strong-willed Child by Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long, *Sissies and Tomboys* ed. Matthew Rottnick, *The Case Against Spanking* by Irwin A. Hyman 4/00
Wakelee-Lynch, Joseph
Communities Directory 10/00
Wylie-Kellermann, Bill
The End of Time by Richard K. Fenn, 1-2/00
Saving Jesus From Those Who Are Right by Carter Heyward 5/00
The Word on the Street by Stanley P. Saunders and Charles L. Campbell 12/00

WITNESS PROFILES

(listed by subject)

Boomershine, Tom
The storyteller's vocation [Marianne Arbogast] 12/00
Doctor, Ginny
Go to other villages and live the Gospel [Marianne Arbogast] 5/00
Douglass, Jim and Shelley
Offering a Gospel-based, personal challenge to wrongful authority [Marianne Arbogast] 3/00
Halverstadt, Al and Weeks, Susan
Bridging the gap between community and conscience [Marianne Arbogast] 7-8/00
Ives, Ruth and Bobby
'Round our skiff be God's aboutness [Julie A. Wortman] 10/00
LaDuke, Betty
Probing global richness and diversity [Marianne Arbogast] 6/00
Levinson, Michael
Connecting 'ivory-tower' and real-world realities [Marianne Arbogast] 9/00
Perrault-Victor, Ann and Jackie
Working at right livelihood, 24 hours a day [Marianne Arbogast] 1-2/00
Peters, Peter
Taking on public policy as Christian stewardship [Marianne Arbogast] 11/00
Williams, Delores
Seeking 'a way out of no way' [Rachel Roberson] 4/00

THEMES

January/Feburary — Time and freedom

March — By whose authority?

April — No easy answers: Gender and sexual ethics for a new age

May — Discipleship: What does it mean to be faithful?

June — Globalization: For the common good or ill?

July/August — Denver 2000: Signs of justice and hope

September — The powers and academia

October — Intending community: honoring people and place

November — Resisting politics as usual

December — 'Evil is mighty, but it can't stand up to our stories'

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